

Deluge of youthful talent

galleries

with Sue Smith

BE careful what you wish for, you just might get it. After this column complained last week about the lack of interesting new work in a certain young artists' show, a few galleries were quickly on the blower.

Moet, schmoet, said one caller, there's a lot of good new work around.

A deluge, more like it, I decided, after a somewhat dizzying tour of only three Brisbane venues which are showing more than 400 paintings, sculptures, drawings, collages, ceramics and photographs by around 140 promising young artists this weekend.

My first stop was at the Doggett Street Studio, 85 Doggett St, Newstead, which is celebrating its 100th exhibition with a group show surveying the past 2½ years of the gallery's existence.

As the show documents, Doggett Street has played a useful role as a no-frills, low-cost venue, where emerging artists can flex their artistic imaginations without having to worry too much about whether their work will sell or win the approval of the curatorial cadre.

The exhibition presents a satisfying, resonant selection of work, ranging from small-scale collages, sculptures and drawings with a poetic or whimsical flavour to strong paintings and photographs (often of the urban environment but also extending further afield to such exotic locales as a rodeo and Venice during Carnevale).

Stand-out works include Vincent Long's photos of the Tamworth rodeo. These present an intense scrutiny of the masculine, self-contained culture of bronco and bull riders, who seem to take their rituals and performances every bit as seriously as, say, a matador in Madrid.

Long has printed these fascinating images in dark, plum-coloured, shad-

owy tones and in a very wide format, giving them a lush, cinematic feeling, as if they were stills from an old 1950s cowboy epic such as *Giant*.

In a completely different vein, there's also an evocative collage by Ann Buzolic which seems to invite you to step into an odd dreamscape: St Madeleine emerges, like the lady of the lake, from a rippling expanse of waves, set against a piece of rusted tin the colour of dried martyr's blood.

Perhaps the best show so far is up-town, at the Bauhaus Art Gallery, 129 George St. Featuring the work of 15 male artists, including Ken Bull, Sebastian di Mauro, Andrew Frost and Christopher Trotter, the show is called *Masculinity*.

Before setting foot into the gallery, I wondered (hopefully) if the show might be the beginning of a contentious, anti-feminist backlash — but no, there's nothing here to upset anyone.

Which is not to say it's a wimpish show — far from it. Among the stronger works are some erotic, mixed-media constructions by Andrew Frost and a witty machine-parts sculpture by Christopher Trotter, which resembles a kangaroo with a penis for a body and leaping forward like a zooming Exocet missile.

Much less overt, but also attention-grabbing in their exploration of the theme of the male life-force, is Sebastian Di Mauro's series of surprisingly emotional, small black and red abstract paintings, whose surfaces appear to be melting down or erupting with lava-like explosions.

My last port of call was at the 1996 Churchie Exhibition of Emerging Art (Anglican Church Grammar School, Oaklands Pde, East Brisbane). One of the most worthwhile local initiatives to encourage artists under 35, there are more than 300 entries this year, competing for a major

prize of \$3000 (won by Christine Morrow, with an installation featuring towels) and a \$1000 painting prize (awarded to Mandy Ridley).

Now in its 10th year, the Churchie exhibition is a throwback to the huge, egalitarian, open prize shows which we don't see so much now but which were very popular in the 1950s and 60s — where just about every young hopeful could enter, with the hope of being picked up by a commercial gallery or a museum.

As you'd expect, the standard is up and down but it's a fun browse whose highlights include attractive paintings by Scott Whittaker and Jennifer Jones. The exhibition is open today and Sunday from 10am to 5pm.

The school is also presenting an exhibition of 20 paintings by well-known artist Ian Smith, who has been in residence at the school this week after a stint in Cairns, where his work was presented in a retrospective survey at the regional gallery.



YOUNG ARTIST: Venetian masks by Lesley Pollak, on show at Doggett Street Studio.