

PORTFOLIO/HIERON PESSERS

You can't confuse a painting by Hieron Pessers with one by anyone else. He is the only one who paints like that, who uses such colors, chooses such subjects. Where so many paintings one sees nowadays could have been done by any number of people, his paintings are absolutely original and one recognizes them at once as having been done only by him.

They are thoughtful, which puts him outside the mainstream today, in which the ideal – I can't think of any other way to put it – is of the artist as brute. But Hieron Pessers is not one of those painters who paint to express an emotional state, or to combine interesting colors, or to invent curious new forms. Each of his paintings mirrors a world of thought, each one is about something. He has something to say. To put it more precisely, he has a vision. Few painters have this nowadays because few painters think about anything else but the act of painting itself.

Pessers has simply chosen painting, instead of poetry, to present this vision. His paintings are like the illustrations for a book that has never been written – he himself is writing it, or rather, painting it. And the thing that so deeply interests him is sex- and love-relations just at this moment in 20th century society. It's as valid an interest as any other! His view of these relations is deeply pessimistic, and often sardonic. Many of the paintings reproduced here are from a series called *Scenes from everyday life*. But they should rather have been called

scenes from everyday war, because they are about the secret war that is raging quietly all the time without anyone ever mentioning it, the game of love as it is being played by all of us, every day, discreetly or blatantly.

It's a battlefield, as Graham Greene would put it, and it's not *bon ton* to refer to it. But it's there. The frantic glee of love, its foolishness, its melancholy, its dangers. The loss of love, the shame of that loss, the despair of it – hardly subjects for painting, one would say, but they are just the ones that interest Hieron Pessers and painting for him is a better way to approach them than writing, one that is more direct.

Paintings that tell a story have long been out of fashion. Perhaps because people got more interested in the story than in the painting itself, perhaps because such paintings eventually degenerated into the telling of stories that were trivial, choosing small subjects instead of big ones. But Pessers' paintings do not merely tell stories, they make statements. Because of this quality they might be called 'literary' – long a pejorative, but not when applied to this kind of work.

Loveletters, for instance, is literary in several senses of the word. It's about letters, and it's full of actual letters. It's about the power of words to unite, and to divide; to make, and to break. Hieron Pessers' paintings will be very much at home in a literary magazine like *Maatstaf*.