Sexual paranoia meets the floating rock-pile

By ANDREW SAW

The question flexing Sydney art minds at present is: Are women artists better than men artists, and if not, why not?

This burning, though obviously silly, issue has been brought to a head by the Women and Arts Festival which has virtually run amok with ladies' art exhibitions.

Now, before feminists with firm views begin flexing their biceps, it should be pointed out that all these exhibitions (at least a dozen) prove but one thing: There are as many hopeless women artists as there are hopeless men artists.

And, just to make sure there is no confusion, it also proved (he said taking a deep breath), that there are as many good women artists as... well, you get the drift, I'm sure.

The point, I think, is that aside from fundamental plumbing differences, there are people in art, artists are artists and that's all there is to it.

Nevertheless, sexual politics being what they are one couldn't help experiencing some paranoia while doing the galleries round.

The fact that the first three galleries were filled with what I perceived to be boring, derivative, hopelessly bland rubbish didn't help. Was this the male perception being incapable of appreciating female per- ception?

Was I a victim of (slightly unfashionable) heterosexuality?

Then, all of a sudden, other galleries have come into view, and to everyone's immense relief, gems begin to appear, strong paintings, beautiful prints, wonderfully innovative sculpture.

Limitations of space preclude a mention of all the good stuff, and there is, as far as I can make out, no point in torturing artists by slamming their endeavors in a national newspaper.

However, deep in the heart of trendoid land (Glebe) where Proust and polo-necks mix with bean sprouts and portions of the cosmos, there is the Irving Sculpture Gallery.

And in the Irving Sculpture Gallery there is an installation by Gudrun Klix called Hope Rises in the Form of a Mountain, and what it is, is a room full of floating rocks.

Actually they're glass fibre casts of rocks hanging from the ceiling on transparent plastic strings, but believe me, after all those galleries filled with tortured junks of bronze, it was a brilliant surprise. The most valid direction in modern sculpture if you ask me.

Up the road at the Glebe Town Hall, Susan White and Sally Robinson are part of an eight-woman show (sorry everyone else).

Susan White's paintings, while being slightly cluttered with the occasional pusseycat or duck, are strong social realist images which one can imagine in a museum in 100 years telling it like it was in the late 20th century.

Sally Robinson's screen prints are much more humorous, but her visions of ladies playing giant marbles (sorry, good work) may have something to do with the professionalism.

Whatever the reason, the work is good, and capable of standing up in any gallery anywhere in the world... well, most of it is anyhow.

The tribute to strange Stan consists of a sort of three-dimensional, highly colored abstract painting, in the middle of which are old bones covered with plastic blowflies. If you've ever sat through the film 2001, you'll know exactly what it's all about.

In the matter of Australian post-impressionism verging on abstraction, there are two paintings by Jean Bellette which, at the risk of being overly arty, are triumphs of paint quality and draughtsmanship.

The work I found most impressive was the masterful lyrical abstraction by Janet Dawson (at least I think it was lyrical); one painting by Dumbrell's fantastic piece of semi-colorfield painting, and a most amusing thing called Hi There. Stanley Kubrick.

The tribute to strange Stan consists of a sort of three-dimensional, highly colored abstract painting, in the middle of which are old bones covered with plastic blowflies. If you've ever sat through the film 2001, you'll know exactly what it's all about.

In the matter of Australian post-impressionism verging on abstraction, there are two paintings by Jean Bellette which, at the risk of being overly arty, are triumphs of paint quality and draughtsmanship.

The work I found most impressive was the masterful lyrical abstraction by Janet Dawson (at least I think it was lyrical); one painting by Dumbrell's fantastic piece of semi-colorfield painting, and a most amusing thing called Hi There. Stanley Kubrick.

The tribute to strange Stan consists of a sort of three-dimensional, highly colored abstract painting, in the middle of which are old bones covered with plastic blowflies. If you've ever sat through the film 2001, you'll know exactly what it's all about.

In the matter of Australian post-impressionism verging on abstraction, there are two paintings by Jean Bellette which, at the risk of being overlyarty, are triumphs of paint quality and draughtsmanship.

The work I found most impressive was the masterful lyrical abstraction by Janet Dawson (at least I think it was lyrical); one painting by Dumbrell's fantastic piece of semi-colorfield painting, and a most amusing thing called Hi There. Stanley Kubrick.