edited by David Lister



Painter takes his revenge on 'thug' critics

DAVID LISTER Arts News Editor

The Royal Academy has been thrown into consternation by a painting submitted by the distinguished Royal Academician R B Kitai for next week's Smmer Exhibition.

The artist has painted a portrait of his late wife, fellow artist Sandra Fisher, who died of a brain haemorrhage last year. He has written on the canvas the words: "The Critic Kills."

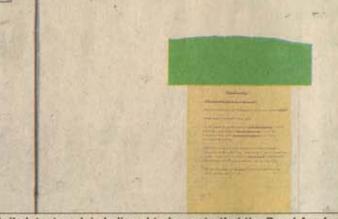
Kitaj's last major exhibition, at the Tate Gallery, was panned by a number of art critics and both he and his wife were devastated by the criticism.

However, the clear message that the brain haemorrhage is understood to have startled statement and there is no questhe Royal Academy.

If the picture is hung in the of people. If it is not, it will be a slap in the face for one of the Royal Academy's most famous members.

Sir Philip Dowson, president of the Royal Academy, said yes-







Message in the medium: Kitaj's latest work is believed to have startled the Royal Academy and caused 'considerable hand-wringing' over its inclusion in the Summer Exhibition

tion of not hanging it."

However, one source inside Summer Exhibition it will be the institution said that there hang the picture or not.

Sandra Fisher died in September 1994 during the Kitai terday: "It shall be hung in retrospective at the Tate. She

was caused by unfeeling critics Gallery 1. It is a strong personal and her husband married in the towards Kitaj's retrospective

hen, who knew the couple and seen by hundreds of thousands had in fact been "considerable who wrote Fisher's obituary hand-wringing" over whether to for the Independent, said: "Fisher was unswerving in her con-Kitai was not available for viction that she was married to one of the great artists of the up, just as the suicide of his first late-20th century."

tagonism of newspaper critics eleven.

Eighties but were together for -in contrast to the response of an admiring public - made for The art historian David Co- a stressful last summer for a woman who will be remembered by many for her almost one of the most "outstanding saintly happiness."

Her death left Kitaj, at 62, with a 10-year-old child to bring wife, 25 years earlier, had left He added: "The fierce an- him with children aged six and

saw the Kitai show and the cat- a vain painter puffed with alogue proved so popular that amour propre, unworthy of a hearted never begin to achieve." it had to be reprinted.

The Tate described him as figurative painters" of the late were unsparing.

the exhibition as "wretched adolescent trash ... a pox on

More than 46,000 people foisting on us as heroic master footnote in the history of figurative art".

Another wrote: "R B Kitai is doubtless familiar with the old 20th century. But the critics French expression 'He does not take himself for a piece of One of the fiercest described excrement'. The absolute assurance with which he views himself as an artist of world hisfawning critics and curators for torical significance lends this ex-

hibition a poignancy which the paintings themselves, so cold-

Kitaj, who had never given interviews, responded: "The criticism was lower and shittier than even I am. God knows what went on in the minds of these savage reviewers ... The thing is thugs travel in bunches. They like the smell of the enemy."

He has now exacted his own strange and bitter revenge.

Attacks and a counterblast

What the critics said: "R B Kitaj is doubtless familiar with the old French expression 'He does not take himself for a piece of exprement'. The absolute assurance with which he views himself as an artist of world historical significance lends this exhibition a poignancy which the paintings themselves, so coldhearted, never begin to achieve."

"A pox on fawning critics and curators for foisting on us as heroic master a vain painter puffed with amour propre, unworthy of a footnote in the history of figurative art"

Kital replied: "God knows what went on in the minds of these savage reviewers ... The thing is thugs travel in bunches. They like the smell of the enemy."