

IT'S GLASGOW'S ARTS CENTRE ... IN CASTLEMILK, WHERE ELSE?

Give them a brush and a pot of paint and they all want to be...



Picasso

ART wars are raging across Scotland, but the unexpected front line is in Castlemilk.

Here, the punters' Picassos are putting a smile on the face of the scheme.

Top local venue The Fringe Gallery is tucked away in a shopping arcade opposite a bakers shop.

Debate

Yet it has such a strong summer programme it recently said no to an exclusive show of priceless oil paintings by internationally acclaimed Glasgow artist Ken Currie.

World class artists, who sell work for tens of thousands of pounds, give free drawing classes to local schoolchildren.

Special Report by JIM McLEAN

The youngsters are the envy of thousands of others.

And, while the debate over Glasgow's new gallery of modern art rages, Castlemilk art fans have already enjoyed a sneak preview of what's in store for the millions who seek out Scots art.

"There was more than half a million pounds worth of paintings in the exhibition," said Hilary Nicoll, visual arts officer based at the Arts and Cultural Development Office in Castlemilk Arcade.

"It really is grabbing the public's imagination.

"We've people coming in who would never before have dreamed of looking at

art - and coming back again.

"We're so busy I had to turn down the offer to show Ken Currie's work from the People's Palace - something most galleries in Europe would kill for.

"Our standards are very high."

The Fringe Gallery's Mayfest show starred writer actor and artist John Byrne, controversial sculptor Ian Hamilton Findlay, and Glasgow-based Malaysian painter Hock Aun Teh.

Next year the martial arts expert has a show in Chicago and the Malaysian government has asked him to send them a completely new show.

It will mean filling his now empty studio at WASPS in King Street in Glasgow

city centre with bright oil paintings.

He regularly sells out in London and recent large oil paintings have gone for £10,000 each.

Yet he finds time to hold classes for Tony Bell (9) and Natalie Murray (10) and other youngsters from St Julie's Primary in Croftfoot Road.

Energy

He said: "It has to be something from the heart. As an artist that's what's important.

"These children are very much in touch with that energy."

● Next at the Fringe until June 10 is The Art Of Life, a photography exhibition featuring work of the famous master of black-and-white Bill Brandt.