

FORTHCOMING

"The Arts of French Canada," by Walter Abell, an essay based on the exhibition originated by the Detroit Institute of Arts and now on view at the Albany Institute of History and Art.

"Philip Guston," by H. W. Janson, an estimate of the Saint Louis painter's recent work in relation to the paintings that preceded it.

"Design: Anonymous and Timeless," by Anni Albers, a plea for the coalition of form answering practical need and form answering esthetic need.

"Lambs in a Large Place," by James Thomas Flexner, condensed from a chapter of his forthcoming book on American Colonial painting, "First Flowers of Our Wilderness."

"Animals in Art," a portfolio selected from the recent exhibition organized by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

"The New Technique and New Work of Charles Smith," by Jean Brockway, an account of his original manner of making woodblock prints.

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MAGAZINE OF ART

A National Magazine Relating the Arts to Contemporary Life

JOHN D. MORSE, *Editor*

VOLUME 40

JANUARY, 1947

NUMBER 1

Detail of the tapestry, THE GREAT VEGETABLE UNIVERSE, 1944, by Jean Lurçat, Courtesy of the Jansen Gallery, Paris. (See page 15) . . . Cover

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PUBLISHED BY

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

THOMAS C. PARKER, DIRECTOR

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS: BARR BUILDING, WASHINGTON 6, D. C. PHONE NATIONAL 8178

The MAGAZINE OF ART is mailed to all chapters and members of the Federation, a part of each annual membership fee being credited as a subscription. Entered as second class matter October 4, 1921, at the Post Office at Washington, D. C., under the act of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions: United States and possessions, \$5.00 per year; Canada \$5.50; Foreign \$6.00; single copies 75 cents. Published monthly, October through May. Title Trade Mark Registered in the U. S. Patent Office. Copyright 1946 by The American Federation of Arts. All rights reserved.

All Mss. should be sent to the Editor, MAGAZINE OF ART, 22 E. 60th St., New York City 22. Unsolicited Mss. should be accompanied by suitable photographs (no sepia prints) of first-class quality required to illustrate them, and must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes, to insure return. The Editor assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited material. Payment is made on publication. Articles in the MAGAZINE OF ART represent many points of view. We do not expect concurrence from every quarter, not even among our contributors; we believe that writers are entitled to express opinions which differ widely. Although we do not assume responsibility for opinions expressed in any signed articles appearing in the MAGAZINE OF ART, we hold that to offer a forum in our pages is the best way to stimulate intelligent discussion and to increase active enjoyment of the arts.—EDITOR.

Editorial and Advertising Offices: 22 E. 60th St., New York City 22. EL 5-1050.

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Xavier Guerrero: GIFT OF WATER. Detail of a fresco in the School of Mexico, Chillan, Chile, commissioned by the Mexican Government, 1941. The hands of the people of Mexico offering aid to the people of Chile. Below: Xavier Guerrero.



XAVIER GUERRERO, AZTEC ARTIST

BY JEAN CHARLOT

XAVIER GUERRERO was born in northern San Pedro de las Colonias, whose native name is Cachuila. His Indian ancestry makes him by blood an Aztec, the one undiluted Indian of the original group of Mexican muralists who re-created Amerindia on modern terms.

To describe the warm ochre of the Chilean soil, poet Pablo Neruda wrote that it was of a color Xavier Guerrero. This elliptical image holds true both ways. The painter melts into a landscape as readily as its rocks or flora. He resembles the boulder-textured Aztec sculpture, squatting men apparently as immobile as the volcanic stone they are carved from. Compared with the Discobolus, these figures seem idle; feelingless, matched against the writhings of a Laocoon. The white man's eye needs get accustomed to their vegetative twilight, made to measure with the dense green of an underbrush. Once in focus, he realizes that Aztec sculpture is as alive as the Greek, only less blatantly. Belying the impassive features, the symmetrical fists of a figurine will press amorously to its flanks two half-hidden ears of corn, as a miser courts his gold.

Quiet Xavier Guerrero is the uncommon common denominator of the individual trends that weave into a Mexican Renaissance. He helped shape the medular marrow of its works by evolving most of the unusual techniques that did as much towards defining national forms as the painters' personalities.

In the 1910's, Paris cubists talked of sign- and house-painters as being truer masters than many an academician, for they alone kept alive wise traditions long forgotten by fine art schools. A little late in life, Picasso and Braque proceeded to experiment with the recipes of the trade, and to handle its specialized tools. In Mexico, Xavier Guerrero tapped the same vein by birthright, as the son of a skilled master house painter who rated crews of his own.

Xavier learned to toddle his winding way between paint pots and ladders; the fat or flat brushes of the trade were his

toys. The future muralist watched his father at his job of painting walls, learned of a plastic alphabet before he was introduced to A B C. Soon, he tried his hand at it, challenging with juvenile exercises in makebelieve woods and *trompe l'oeil* marbles the paternal *chef d'oeuvres*. The training of hand and eye was rounded by practical experience as an architectural draftsman, and the fourteen-year-old branched south, trekking from Chihuahua to Jalisco.

In Guadalajara, a rich milkman, Don Segundo, was building up to his fancy a house that came to be known, from the source of his fortune, as the House of the Cows. Said loitering little Xavier to the master house painter, "I am a painter too."

Said the master house painter, without slackening the swish of his brush, "Well, put a river here."

Said Xavier, "I will, and with a sky too," and he did.

Said master painter, "Good, now put rocks here," which he did.

That done, "Put a child by the river."

That done, "Make him cry."

Once proved, little Xavier rated a scaffold of his own. He milked the milkman for his worth, selling him on the idea of a renaissance frieze, hand-stenciled at so much per yard, full of people that ended in fishtails, a feature that greatly surprised Don Segundo.

By 1912, a decade before the best-known Mexican muralists thought of painting walls, Guerrero was a seasoned mural painter. He did among others a ceiling in the chapel of the hospital of San Camilo, its theme a Resurrection. That was in mid-year, and there was a string of earthquakes that shook the high scaffold where he worked, while the nuns huddled and knelt underneath.

His participation in the military revolution began with a quid pro quo that caught him quietly at his job. "I was asked to paint a mural in a hacienda, that is to paint a new map of the grounds to replace one become obsolete. Such good meals they served there, large pitchers of creamy milk, and two desserts to choose from. But it did not last long. Came a troop

JEAN CHARLOT WRITES TO US FROM MEXICO CITY, WHERE HE IS LIVING WHILE WORKING ON A HISTORY OF MEXICAN MURAL PAINTING.

of armed men and they invited us outside, to witness the shooting of hacienda hands. Said the chief when he saw me, 'You will be my secretary. Get us some medicine.' Naturally I agreed, 'You can get some at Chapala.'

"They gave me a huge white horse, and I galloped at the head of the troop, and because I knew most people in town, I took my cavalcade all through the main street to the outskirts and back again. And people gasped and said, 'We did not know that you had been ascended to general!'"

Come 1920, the revolution was top-dog, mural painting was in the air, but not yet on the walls. Roberto Montenegro was first to receive a mural commission from the Federal Government, the decoration of the ex-church of San Pedro y Pablo, become a hall of free discussions. He was wise enough to give Xavier Guerrero the post of technical adviser. The advice given by the young veteran muralist was eminently practical: let Montenegro do the backwall in oils, as his fancy dictates, and Xavier would see to the rest.

The beautifully preserved decoration, painted in distemper on a white plaster ground, strews garlands of stylized pomegranates, blue birds, black birds, cornflowers and camelias over walls, pilasters, and cupolas. Guerrero also painted the dome of a lateral chapel with the signs of the zodiac.

When Diego Rivera returned in 1920 after a twelve year stay in Europe, he received for his mural lot the auditorium of the Preparatory School. Montenegro presented Guerrero to the cubist master, who also asked him to be his assistant. The new mural would be painted in encaustic, a wax method that Rivera had practiced in Spain on a small scale. His European trials included rare and expensive materials, *resine elemi* extracted from lemon trees, and *essence d'aspic*, a wild lavender base used in perfume making. These ingredients could not be bought in Mexico, and their importation in the quantities needed for making a mural was prohibitive. Xavier sensibly adapted the overseas technique to local purse and conditions by suggesting plain wax, turpentine, and the copal rosin still used by Yucatan natives as incense to propitiate jungle gods.

The job started from scratch, that is from the wetting and grinding of the dry pigment; but even the tools of this disused craft had to be made. A marble slab was chosen for a first grind; a glass slab for the final one. Xavier drew a plan and profiles of a marble pestle and had it carved to specifications. Carlos Merida, Xavier, and I were a willing team of color-grinders, and came to know pestle and slabs intimately, widely in excess of union hours.

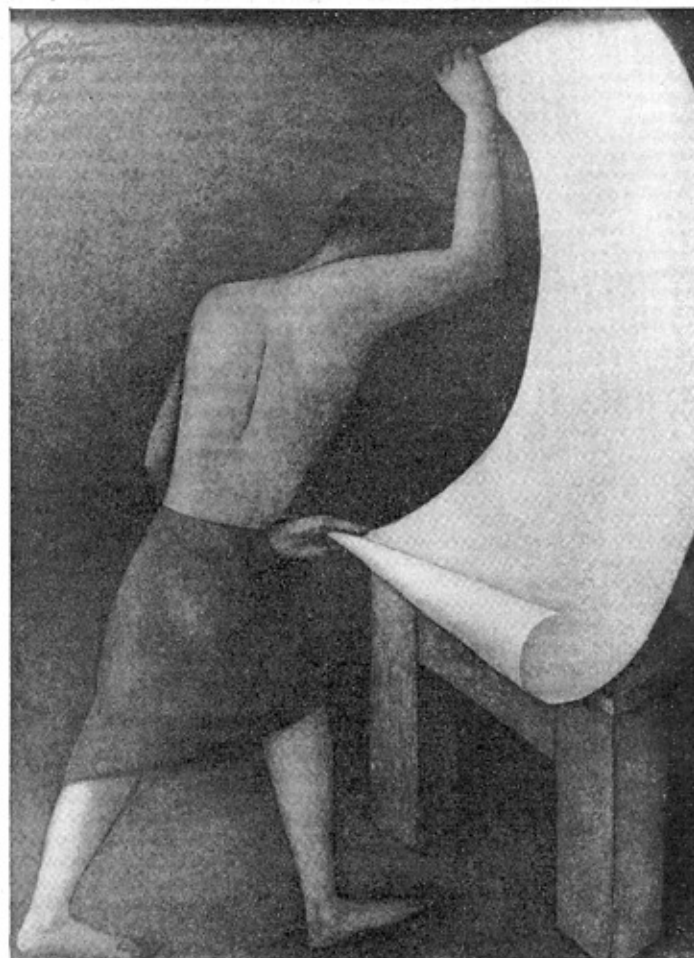
Other mural chores were the incising of the line in the cement ground, the pricking and pouncing of detail drawings, the priming of the wall with hot rosin at the instant of painting, and the synchronizing of a blowtorch lick with each stroke of the brush, to vitrify its load of pigment.

Rivera's conversion to mural painting occurred in front of Byzantine mosaics in Ravenna, and his first mural retained the hierarchic flavor of its source, gold backgrounds and gold halos, that presented another technical hurdle. Only Xavier could use the gold leaf with success on the roughly chiseled cement. We watched in awe as he rubbed the brush on his wrist to charge it with electricity, and how the incredibly thin leaf would leap to it and flatten itself on the wall as if by Indian magic. When I attempted the same, the leaf just crumbled into uselessness.

Rivera moved to the Ministry of Public Education in March 1923, to begin there a job that was to continue for years. This time he would paint in fresco. I offered what help I could from the experience amassed in making my first fresco, but the switch of techniques proved too much of an ordeal for Diego.



Xavier Guerrero: OTOMI MOTHER, *duco on celotex* (above); PAPERMAKER, *watercolor* (below). "Xavier succeeds in painting silence and repose, eminent characteristics of his race."



Late one of the first evenings that we were on the job, as I walked through the dark court, I noticed that his scaffold shivered as at the start of an earthquake. Climbing up to investigate, I found the master crying, and viciously picking off his day's job with a trowel, as a child will kick a sand castle in a tantrum. Guerrero came upon similar tableaus in these first hectic days.

The whole work threatened to wither at birth. It was imperative to find an out from this mental and technical emergency. Happily, Xavier remembered how his father would trowel a coat of mortar, lay on top a coat of plaster mixed with marble dust, then paint, then press the surface smooth as glass with a hot iron. He started from there, changing the plaster for lime, experimenting cautiously on portable fresco samples with mortars of distinct contents. Meanwhile, Rivera was sent on a farflung trip to sketch and rest.

Siqueiros wrote of Guerrero, as he remembers him at the time. "More than the fine art artist, he was a worker in practical painting, a studious searcher for autochthonous technical material, a good finder of traditional landmarks. A good walker, he ambled through the most remote of our regions, unearthing past plastic secrets. He was both the worker and the scientist of our group."

Says Xavier, "I made trips to Teotihuacan to compare my results with pre-hispanic murals, then matched mural samples in the Ministry. At last, I made a successful sample, showed it to Diego who said, 'We will save this sample, imbed it in the finished work and paint by it your portrait, with the date of the discovery.' I suggested that Diego let me take the sample out myself as he is somewhat clumsy with his hands, but he insisted on doing it himself. He hammered the sample to bits, and the last, rather large fragment to fall, he crushed absent-mindedly underfoot and spoke no more of painting my portrait."

As he already had done with encaustic, Guerrero thus streamlined fresco to fit the Mexican milieu. One of the minor features of the modified technique was the use of nopal sap as an agglutinant. This picturesque touch stirred the newspapers into eloquence, and they dubbed Guerrero's method "The Secret of the Mexica."

In June 1923, EL UNIVERSAL said: "The artist painter Diego Rivera has rediscovered, in the opinion of certain technicians of painting, the process used by ancient Mexicans to produce their splendid frescoes, such as those that we admire today in the monuments of San Juan Teotihuacan. . . . It consists in mixing nopal juice with the preparation, completing the work with a special polish, adopted after numerous trials by the assistant of Diego Rivera, Senor Xavier Guerrero."

And in July, Rivera praises in an interview, "Xavier Guerrero, well versed in the craft of painting, who discovered in his noble approach to it as a laborer, a procedure that resuscitates the manner of painting of the ancient Mexicans. I use this technique,' adds Diego modestly."

By then, the danger of failure had waned. Bucked up by his esoteric share in "The Secret of the Mexica", Rivera gathered courage, and in a few weeks fresco had no terrors left for him.

In the chapel of Chapingo, Guerrero also worked with Rivera, and painted panels of his own, among them monochrome floral decorations that prove the care with which the Indian observes nature. Not content to look at a flower, he memorises its anatomy, sampling inner shapes with lateral and longitudinal slices from tip to roots, after the manner of his Aztec ancestors, the *tlacuiles* who left us exquisite botanical albums.

The decoration of the house of the director of the Chapingo

agricultural school is entirely his work, important as an isolated example of private decoration from that early period. Here, but *a sotto voce*, are the usual symbols customarily flaunted on public walls on a colossal scale.

When the "Syndicate of Revolutionary Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers of Mexico" was created, Guerrero was the only one of the painters to take the move for granted. His father had been a devout union man, and would take him by the hand as a child, to walk in street demonstrations of the painters' union. Unlike his artist friends, Xavier thought of painting as a communal affair since the days he had trotted on short legs



Guerrero: INDIAN COURTESY, line drawing. "We learn from Guerrero how an Indian visualizes Indians, and that is not as plumed, chanting, dancing natives, caught by the tourists . . . disgorged by motorcades on a given village, on the one day of the year when it does not look or act like itself."

behind the unfurled, hand-painted banner of his father's guild.

As a member of the new syndicate, he shouldered the responsibility for its organ, a newspaper that carried more woodcuts than news, the wrathful "Machete", its name borrowed from the curved blade, half hunting knife and half scythe, that the Mexican peasant knows how to use in war and peace. Its slogan, that many memorized in faith or in fear, read:

"The machete is used to reap cane,
To clear a path through an underbrush,
To kill snakes, end strife,
And humble the pride of the impious rich."

(Continued on page 34)

however seem to dictate certain conclusions. One has to do with the attitude of the institutions toward themselves. There is, I am aware, a vigorous and well armed opposition to the notion that museums and galleries should be more articulately conscious of their role as agencies of adult education than they are. It is a point of view which one can only respect whether one shares it or not. Beauty should never draw its own moral and art cannot be taught but only discovered. Nevertheless there would seem to be something a little hypocritical in pretending that the vast intellectual scaffolding of scholarships and history and geography on which these objects of art are hung is not there at all—that the accidents of discovery are accidents in deed and not, what in fact they are, the pitfalls set by skillful curators for the innocent in soul. The Sunday afternoon visitors may wish to believe that the delight they feel in a Florentine head and a Polynesian figure is as accidental as the delight they experienced as children in the disorder and surprise of their grandmothers' attics, but the citizens of a desperately tested world are entitled to the truth. If it is true that the human beings who inhabit the world are one with each other in those expressions of their lives which are most profoundly human, then it should be possible to convey a recognition of that fact to a generation of living men and women which stands in desperate need of just that certainty. It should be possible moreover without any vulgarization or betrayal of institutional integrity. For what is suggested is not that the institutions of culture should pretend to be something other than they are but that they should be what they actually are more openly and more explicitly and more eloquently than they have ever been before.

There may be—there undoubtedly are—difficulties in the way which are not obvious to the inexperienced. But the peculiar appropriateness of the means to the end and the critical and urgent importance of the end must be obvious to anyone. As we stumble and pitch and slide deeper and deeper into misunderstanding with Russia it must be increasingly apparent that the ordinary instruments of international communication are no longer adequate to the preservation of the peace or even to the preservation of an atmosphere in which peace remains the absolute end in view. The more our officials talk together in their capacity as representatives of their nations the further apart the nations drift. And the further apart they drift the more obvious it becomes that only channels of communication which touch the peoples themselves can restore the human interchange upon which the hope of understanding must be built.

The officials of the press services who contend that suspicion and mistrust would vanish if the Russian censorship came down and American correspondents were admitted to the Soviet Union can hardly have thought the problem through. What is lacking on both sides is something more fundamental than news—something that news alone could never supply. What is lacking is a sense on both sides of the people as people—of the people as human beings—of the people, in brief, as their arts and their literature and their technology and their physical and intellectual life express them. It may seem a surprising statement in a country which has always regarded the expressions of its cultural life as of minor importance—a country which can elect a congressman who feels himself competent to announce to the world that the American people are sick of culture—but it is a fact notwithstanding that the great institutions of American culture offer a better and more practical and useful

means toward the essential end of Soviet-American understanding, than the whole machinery of the American press, and a great part of the American political structure beside.

What is true of the immediate problem of *defending* the peace—or what passes now for the peace—is even truer of the affirmative problem of *creating* the peace in the future—of creating a true and lasting peace in the few years, the few months, in which that labor will still be possible. The great cultural institutions which express and make palpable the common civilization of this earth—or which can express it if they have the will, for they do not lack the means—the great cultural institutions have a part to play in the critical decision of our time as important and as responsible as the part to be played by any man, whatever his office, or by any agency of public life, whatever its claim to influence or power. If the museums and galleries and libraries of any considerable part of the earth were to devote themselves explicitly and affirmatively to the demonstration of that unity and wholeness of knowledge and of art to which in fact they are dedicated, they would do more to prepare the world for peace than can now be done by any other means. What they consider their duty in these circumstances is for their officers to say, but the facts, I think, are plain.

XAVIER GUERRERO

(Continued from page 28)

Left of the left, its contents were such that neither right, nor center, nor left, could find any solace in it; and it was butted in turn by enraged politicians. Guerrero, Orozco, Siqueiros, contributed to it some of their most mordant graphic works, got fired from their mural jobs in retaliation, were hounded by a not too gentle political police.

The paper was paginated in reverse, the contents of the first page being printed on the verso of the last sheet, an apparent artistic oversight that allowed the paper to be read straight as a poster. Siqueiros and Guerrero, loaded with a pail of glue and a roll of "Machetes", used to sally forth at four A.M.—after the street lamps were extinguished and before the first stirrings of day. They stealthily pasted the paper at strategic street corners, where its illustrations, cut in wood on a mural scale, took added impact from the red glow of dawn.

More than a decade of travels interrupted Guerrero's technical researches and art realizations, taking him to eastern Europe and western Asia, to live among Caucasians and Kirghiz, Cossacks and Tartars.

Most important of the murals executed after his return are those he did in Chile, as a cultural ambassador of the Mexican Republic. The town of Chillan had been destroyed by a lethal earthquake in 1939, and help came from the sister republic. Mexico donated a school and its decorations. While Xavier painted the hall in fresco (two floors, a staircase, and ceilings, an area close to 400 square meters), Siqueiros decorated the library in Duco. (See *MAGAZINE OF ART*, December, 1943—Editor.)

No sharper contrast could exist between two stylistic temperaments. Siqueiros recreated the bloody dynamism of the catastrophe under guise of the maimed, shrieking figure of a semi-mythical Indian hero. Guerrero, with selfless respect for a people sated with tragedy, painted symbols of reconstruction and of hope. Wrote Chilean Pablo Neruda, "An outer harsh

grandeur, an inner clear core of medular freshness. The peasants of my country will detain their horses alongside the decorated school, and look long at Guerrero's figures, obscurely conscious of the secret roots, the hidden waters that link our nations under a vast continent."

Before painting on it, Xavier observes an architecture with the same oriental minuteness with which he dissects a flower. The standing building is, unlike its blueprint, a fragment of a larger habitat, ruled remotely by sea, sun, and stars. The painter encourages natural phenomena to intrude upon his geometrical schemes and to propose optical accidents that he will make his norms. Outside the Chillan school, a pool of water strews shivering slivers of sunlight through the windows and on a ceiling at certain hours of the day. Guerrero slanted figures in movement after their diagonal play, in contrapunto to the ceiling square. This obeisance paid to the immaterial is repaid when, every late afternoon, the figures swim in reflected light.

His other Chilean mural is inside a modern hall, used as a recreational club for workers. A man and woman, each over thirty feet long, fill walls whose strong inner slants join at the top in a V barrel vault, where a child levitates in zenithal position. Of a sustained, fruity *goyava* pink, the fresco is painted on a mortar rich in cement, modeled in part with thin airbrushed films. The mood is one of lassitude after an exertion that may be work or war.

Guerrero usually does not paint to a scale that fits exhibition walls, nor subjects flattering to a period drawing room, and yet he has experimented in small scale, subdued, non-didactic, surprisingly intimate easel pictures that contrast with his public style. These he paints in Duco over *costal de ixtle*, a local gunny sack that comes in graded textures, from the tough, hairy fiber of the common *magueye pulquero* to the medium roughness of the Yucatan *hennequen*. He coats the coarse stuff with a mixture of fine plaster, sulphur, zinc white, glue and varnish, that hardens with the paint to wall hardness.

We learn from Guerrero how an Indian visualizes Indians, and that is not as plumed, chanting, dancing natives, caught by the tourists (be they foreigners or Mexican citizens) disgorged by motorcades on a given village, on the one day of the year when it does not look or act like itself.

Xavier succeeds in painting silence and repose, eminent characteristics of his race, so forgotten by artists who specialize in painting Indians. To open a vast store of Amerindian knowledge, he needs but close his eyes to disturbing exterior spectacles, of which he has so often and so forcefully been an actor, and let speak an ancestral voice. That his easel pictures are so surprisingly quiet proves that they are the unadulterated echo of such a wordless meditation; they do not attempt to "put over" anything. They are simply the essence of a nature pitched finer than most to that which is of wide human worth in a given blood and locale. The deep root nurtures a calm blossom, like the black spears that stretch against a white moon in one of his finer flowerpieces. Far from modeling itself after a Fenimore Cooper yarn, the Indian art of Xavier Guerrero treads on feline padded paws.

CHRONOLOGY OF FEKE'S PICTURES

The Feke exhibition, which brought roughly half of the artist's known pictures under a single roof, offered an unrivaled opportunity to make a chronological analysis of his work. Using his dated canvases as starting points, I have attempted to divide his portraits into groups that were painted at about the same time.

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and had submitted them to Mallarmé for corrections. We learn from the introduction that he even complained to the poet: "It is not ideas which I lack. I have even too many of them!" and that Mallarmé replied: "Sonnets are not done with ideas, Degas, but with words." Of course, words were not exactly Degas' medium, yet he used them rather cleverly and his sonnets have a definite though somewhat old-fashioned charm. Some are a little awkward in their expressions, others a little self-conscious, but all have the touch of a highly cultivated personality who achieved distinction in anything he did. American readers will probably not be sensitive to their dainty flavor of days gone by, yet they will nevertheless want to own this exquisite little volume, presented like a de-luxe edition and beautifully illustrated with a number of unknown drawings in black and white as well as in color. The lovely typography of this book preserves the illusion of the small, privately printed edition as which it originally appeared.

Degas is the subject of still another book, this one devoted to his various techniques as an artist. The author, Denis Rouart, is the grandson of one of the painter's most intimate friends and the son of one of his rare pupils (besides being a grandson of Berthe Morisot and a grandnephew of Manet). Nobody could be better suited to inquire into Degas' various and not always orthodox methods of procedure. But Mr. Rouart did not rely solely on what he might have learned from his parents; he has done considerable and most careful research, besides having studied, with extreme care, a great number of works by Degas. The result is a succession of essays on the painter's methods in working with gouache, with oil on paper or on oiled paper, with pastels or oils, on his monotypes, etchings, drawings, etc. In every case a special effort is made to show how far Degas followed the customary procedures, how he ventured into experimentation and how he achieved new forms of expression. "All his life was spent in research, in the esthetic domain as well as in that of technique" is Mr. Rouart's conclusion. It is quite fascinating to embark with him into a minute examination of Degas' works, facilitated for the reader by a number of well-chosen illustrations, sometimes even by details of particularly revealing paintings or pastels. I understand that Bruno Cassirer in London is considering an English edition of this book, which will certainly be welcome in America.

—JOHN REWALD.

Mexican Heritage. Photographs by Hoyningen Huene. Text by Alfonso Reyes. J. J. Augustin, Inc., New York, 1946. 136 pp., \$7.50.

Mainly an album of photographs, this book is beautifully put together. The halftones are especially successful in rendering the vast scale of grays that are the palette of Hoyningen Huene. Captions are printed at the end of the volume, so that the plates are free to tell their plastic story unhampered by written data, however pertinent.

The rambling, deceptively casual text of Alfonso Reyes stresses nuances, takes for granted the main lines of the story, and thus may puzzle north-American readers intent on factual estimates. Its virtue lies in its mood, based on the spiritual qualities and racial traits peculiar to the Mexican. This text gives an insider's account of a story that the photographs retell through the eyes of an experienced traveler.

In the pre-Hispanic section the plates of archeological specimens accomplish miracles of resuscitation. They never show

the chunk of clay or carved stone alone, against the neutral ground of a showcase and with a label reminiscent of the number in a rogues' gallery. Even when his subject is lifted out of a museum case, Hoyningen Huene suggests what climate, what landscape, and often what spiritual mood concurred to produce it. Architectural fragments are caught in the process of being digested by green leaves that soon remake temple into hill and mock the meanders of gesso ornaments with webs of roots not a wit less baroque.

The dosage of mystery in these photographs deepens in the same ratio as the sunlight increases. Sunlight brings out, from the core of the carved stone, marks even more ancient than those left by the pre-Hispanic chisel, the mottled volcanic texture, the congealed geological fierceness that matches (and perhaps in the beginning inspired) the fierceness of the theological concept. The tropical zenithal rays that beat upon the ancient remains, by disclosing every trail of the tool as well as every chip of erosion, make all the more clear to our Greek-fed, routine taste the uniqueness of an esthetic that could just as well have evolved on another planet as on this continent that had not yet tasted of Europe.

Hoyningen Huene is at his best in a make-believe world where he may use the technique of the show window, with its pretended scale and elusive depth. When his model is really colossal, like the staircase at Teotihuacan, crawling with pagan gargoyles, the photograph lacks the conviction evoked by tinier spectacles. To his camera, truth is not quite as convincing as the white lies of ingenious fiction.

Of the landscapes, which show the configuration of the Mexican earth long before the most archaic civilization had intruded upon it, the best are the close-ups of leaves and rocks, modeled by the sun with the same precision with which it heightens the quality of pre-Hispanic sculpture. When the lens takes in larger vistas, the tendency is to eschew substance for filigree, to cut out artful black silhouettes against a backdrop of clouds. Nothing is trite and postcardlike; there is instead a certain "Vogue" impeccability, and a curious suggestion of perpetual moonlight at variance with this arid earth which sows the spiked maguey over the sharp volcanic rock, and in the tropics engineers a *machine infernale* which none has yet conquered.

A third section, concerned with colonial remains, is the one in which Hoyningen Huene adjusts more easily to his subject. The catholic architecture that fell upon Mexico as a spread arras of liturgical embroidery is now in tatters; it fits only loosely over a land churned deep by successive revolutions. It is this metamorphosis of one era into another, this tension between past theocracy and present laissez-faire that here informs the sensitive camera vision. The monastery steps smoothed concave by the long traffic of sandaled feet, the deserted refectories and fireless kitchens are as much ruins in these plates as the pagan temples that served forgotten cults; and the planners who had the faith and muscle to build these *machines à prier* are present as a mound of skulls piled in a niche of the splendid habitat which their brains once wished and wrought.

Here again, Hoyningen Huene is at his best in close-ups. A single tortured face of a saint with enameled doll's eyes convulsed in ecstasy, its nose eaten by time's leprosy, revealing a core of gesso and wood, tells more about colonial *mores* than a battalion of saints drilled to stand in the beehive of a baroque alterpiece.

A view of a whole carved and painted ceiling ornate with angels, birds and curliques, is no more rewarding as concerns

human values than a patch of jungle vine. The camera must come closer, catch a unit of the artificial forest to release its stylistic and spiritual flavor. One naked putti with its suggestion of flesh pink, of blueberry magenta lined with gold for a flying scarf, fluttering in its childishly holy way among thick stemmed buds as gaudily daubed as he, magically concentrates in a single plate the anachronistically medieval fervor with which churches were built in Mexico from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, with the compact crudeness and sincerity that in Europe one associates with the twelfth century.

From colonial to folk art the borderline wavers, and Hoyningen Huene includes ex-votos and clothed sculptures that carry us straight into the nineteenth century. So intent are the sacred dolls, attired in velvets and damasks and moth-eaten linens, on performing convincingly their sacred mimics, that it is difficult to think of them in terms of *objet d'art*. Blood oozes lavishly from wounds in all-over patterns whose brutal and holy meaning is neutralized by the photographic refinements of an unusually selective eye. Beautiful as are some of these plates, one may feel that the deviation from the original exegetical meaning towards decorativeness has been only too successfully realized. As one appreciates the delicate tracings drawn in red on white by the martyr's blood, one remains callously unaware of the meaning of martyrdom.

Only a very few people are pictured in this book and these furtively. Live Indians are the heirs of this "Mexican Heritage." But they would intrude in this world which is less their native land than a vision that the artist has engendered from delicate balances of shapes and refined textural contrasts. The plates also stress a clash of two cultures, but fail to indicate how both cohabit in their common heir, the Mexican of today. The mixture is dynamic, as witness the many flourishes of social changes, and the few modern works of art that would rate nobly, placed alongside the best of pre-Hispanic and colonial works. A few such plates are needed to take us from past into current life, and to justify in plastic terms what use modern Mexico has made of its contrasting heritages. It would also correct the sense of lethal split, of frightful bilocation which—after the plates have yielded the kind of abstract delectation that Hoyningen Huene's trained shutter finger rarely fails to convey—emerges from a survey of the two Mexicos described.

—JEAN CHARLOT.

LATEST BOOKS RECEIVED

- ANNA KARENINA. Tolstoy. The Living Library. World Publishing Company, Cleveland, 1946.
- ART OF RUSSIA. By Helen Rubissow. Philosophical Library, New York, 1946. 32 pp., 164 plates. \$6.
- THE BAYEAUX TAPESTRY. By Eric MacLagen, C.B.E. The King Penguin Books, London, 1945. 32 pp., 8 color plates, 82 hl. & wh. illus.
- BOARDMAN ROBINSON. By Albert Christ-Janer. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1946. xv plus 132 pp., 126 plates. \$15.
- BURNING LIGHTS. By Bella Chagall. Schocken Books, Inc., New York, 1946. 268 pp., 36 drawings by Marc Chagall. \$3.
- CANADIAN PAINTERS. From Paul Kane to the Group of Seven. Edited by Donald U. Buchanan. Oxford University Press, Phaidon, 1946. \$6.50.
- THE DRAWINGS OF HENRY MOORE. Curt Valentin, New York, 1946. Portfolio, 15 x 11", thirty plates, two in color. \$8.50.
- THE RAPE OF LA BELLE. By Harry Hahn. Introduction by Thomas Hart Benton. Frank Glenn Publishing Co., Inc., Kansas City, Mo., 1946. 274 pp., illustrated. \$5.00.

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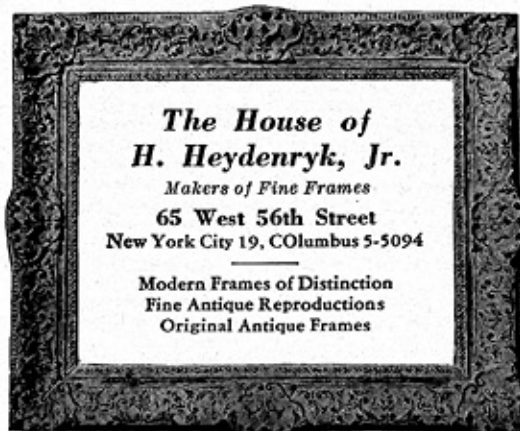
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