


ART AT FVS

By JEAN CHARLOT

 Somebody has characterized art as a beautiful disorder, and it is true that in the Fine Arts there are many qualities that take precedence over neatness. Any one paying a surprise visit to our art room can understand what is meant by this statement: even an orderly arrangement of tables and stools, and rows of artists sitting "under" their teacher, all busy at solving a single assigned problem, would not mean that accomplishments of note would follow. Inspiration is not the privilege of geniuses, and an ingredient of masterpieces exclusively. The most tentative water-color, the roughest of clay modelings, may come into being, thanks to inspiration—a far from orderly process. Our art room is thus more of a studio or workshop than a class room, and much attention is paid to the notion of individual freedom; for art—and especially contemporary art—is based on the peculiarities of the individual. The visitor may be struck by the variety of occupations, some copying the model, others—drawing from the model

"REST FROM FLIGHT INTO EGYPT," BY JEAN CHARLOT

also—abstracting what they see into a composition. Drawings and water-colors range from scenes remembered to pure abstractions. In modeling, much activity goes

into the preparatory steps of pounding the clay—a necessary step, but sometimes an irritation to our more sedate neighbors because the throwing of clay and plastiline on wood sounds like so many jungle drums—, of making pellets of sundry weights and shapes. This should be followed by the building of the statue, a step that short hours do not always permit. Some of our more successful realizations cannot, alas, be seen any more, since, in the heat of creation, the sculptor destroys his work to follow his next inspiration. Only the memory remains of such complex scenes as a guillotine that was not only sculptural but functional, its blade a razor blade, with an assortment of heads that could roll realistically in a basket, and such refinements as sculptured pools of blood. In contrast to this dramatic subject, the more American one of a complete hockey team, with goals built on a drawing board, and the players propped on two legs and their stick, is another masterpiece that

TILES ON HACIENDA PATIO FOUNTAIN BY CLASS OF 1947-48

never will be cast. Excellent assorted activities that educate the hand and head to the complexities of three-dimensional achievements have been the construction of airplane models, of racers' bodies, and boats whittled from wood, and of moulds from clay originals for the purpose of casting. Noteworthy for having been carried through all those phases is a football, by Billy Cronkhite, modeled in clay, moulded in plaster of Paris, cast and fired in terracotta, glazed and unglazed. Here, again, even though the finished work is of the size, color and shape of a hazelnut, its importance lies in the ingenuity displayed.

Around Christmas time, our knowledge of drawing was put naturally to the making of Christmas cards, the favored technique for their reproduction being that of linoleum cuts. For a while nearly everybody worked with knives and burins on the linoleum blocks. The finest Japanese paper for proofing was furnished, and even envelopes and cards! Though the technique was the natural one of a white line on black, the subject matter varied greatly: an automobile, a duck, a nymph not unlike that who advertises a brand of mineral water, sundry Pikes Peaks, a skull-and-crossbones, deers, penguins, and even Santa Clauses—all were heralds of Christmastide.

A little later, our activities centered around another art—music. For *The Sorcerer* our assignment was to conjure an old English village, complete with castle and Shakespearean cottages, and not to clutter the stage or clog entrances and exits. Even though the final painting of the set was done at the Fine Arts Center, the preparatory steps were taken in our class room.

Our last communal activity of the season, and one long in preparation, has been the decoration of the fountain in the Hacienda patio. It seemed to me that here was a spot that fell somewhat short of the exacting care with which the rest of the locale had been planned

"Luz," BY JEAN CHARLOT

and furnished. Friend and ceramist Heller helped with the shaping of the tiles and the preparation of the glazes. Nearly every one of the FVS art students pitched in to make a success of the decoration. Again here the youthful imaginations brought to task such a variety of ideas that this fountain is doubtless one of the most versatile tile collections in existence. Mexican motives, desert and mountain scenes, beasts of the earth and the sea, boots and hats,

birds' nests and donkeys, harmonize surprisingly against the pink "adobe" wall and green vines. Only the goldfish seem unmoved. One of the tiles provides an inscription in cornerstone fashion: "Art Class of 1948," proudly dedicated to history. Placed as a kind of keystone in central position is a tile designed by Tidmarsh, a stylized galleon, successful in its bold spotting of color.

The attention and good will of the younger students is somewhat

unpredictable, but increases with age. Among Sixth Formers, Pyzel is noteworthy for a sense of humor and sure line, seen to advantage in his linoleum cut of a football player, his expression that of the morning after. Sherin is outstanding in his sophisticated semi-abstracts, which sometimes only he can interpret.

In addition to the regular course, a series of exhibitions have been given, ranging far in time and place. Emphasis here has been laid upon originals rather than upon mechanical reproductions. The first featured the colored lithographs that made up my "Picture Book," a number of these being copied in color by students. The next show was that of engravings by the Mexican master of the turn of the century, Jose Guadalupe Posada, struck from the original plates. After that, thanks to the disinterested cooperation of the Denver Museum of Art, came a show of original Japanese prints, mostly of the eighteenth century.

When Geography took possession of the Carnegie Art Room, Art had to flee to First House, where, besides the adequate walls, we had the use of a showcase for correlated material. After an exhibition of the photographs of Edward Weston, there came a splendid choice of lithographs printed at the Art Center by Lawrence Barrett. This was followed by a set of silk screen prints of Mexican folk costumes, by Carlos Merida. The next exhibition presented authentic Chinese "rubings" from stone reliefs of the Han period. Now on exhibition for commencement is, of course, the work of Fountain Valley's own art class.

If any central directive could be stated out of this year's experience, it is that the students should be made to realize the valid place that art deserves to take in any well-rounded life, and how it is not the caprice of the few that brings it into being. If art could take its place in the School with a footing as sure as that of sports, it would exceed my expectations.