

**The Donald Angus
collection of oil paintings
by MADGE TENNENT**

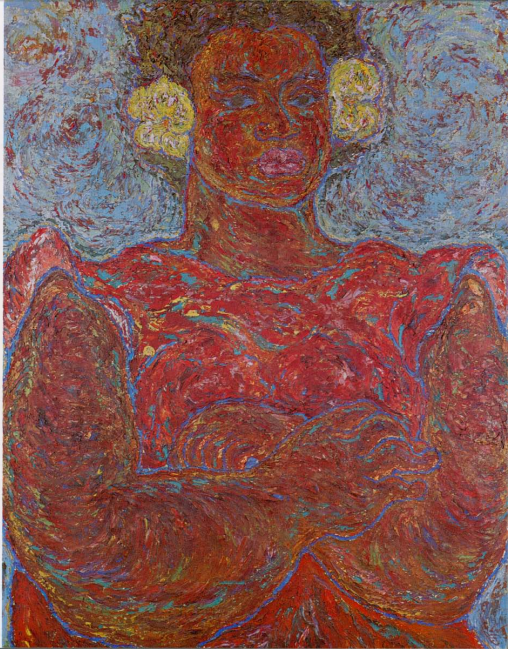
Contemporary Arts Center of Hawaii
February 22 to March 15

Sponsored by
The Dillingham Corporation
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and assisted by
The Junior League of Honolulu

For Jean Charlot
with sincere thanks

Donal

March 8, 1968



This is to introduce a major showing of the works of Madge Tennent—the Donald Angus Collection. It is the largest single collection of her works outside the Tennent Foundation and one which has been carefully culled over a period of forty years.

Most of the works have been infrequently shown and the whole represents twenty-four of the artist's significant oils.

The event is a must for the art lover and the lover of things Hawaiian.

Last year I reviewed another Tennent showing. As her major characteristics are consistent throughout the body of her mature work, thoughts I had at that time about the artist and her contribution are applicable now and to this collection as well, and I include them here as excerpts from an article I wrote that appeared in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin on Wednesday, July 12, 1967.

JEAN CHARLOT



Sketch of Donald Angus, 1942
by Madge Tennent

MADGE TENNENT

Photo Courtesy The Honolulu Advertiser





Madge Tennent is one of those rare artists so identified with a locale and its way of life that the two cannot be pulled apart.

Few artists stand in the History of Art as definitive symbols of a country.

Velasquez forever speaks for Spain. Fame casts Vermeer as a burgher of Delft. Renoir's rosy nudes could only come to flower in France.

Those artists were kamaaina, born on the land. With them no other choice was involved than the acceptance of this simple fact.

Other masters tie their fate and subsequent fame to a land of their adoption.

El Greco's Spanish-ness was acquired the hard way. Twice he was an exile, first from his native Greece and then from Italy. Because of this, the Greek master sees Spain with the intensity of a convert. The drama of his errant life loads the skies he paints over the Toledo landscape with storm clouds that native Toledans failed to perceive.

Gauguin and Tahiti remain bracketed in our memory because of the Frenchman's own wilful flight from civilization. The beauty of his South Seas paintings owes as much to his dream of a primitive Eden as it does to what sights greeted him at landing.

Gauguin chose Tahiti. El Greco chose Spain. Madge Tennent chose Hawaii.

In her case, perhaps it would be more exact to say that Hawaii chose her. It beckoned to her, asked her through its palms, its leis,

and above all through the opulence of its flesh, to state its case before the world.

Madge Tennent complied.

Newcomers to Hawaii should not think that because the artist did much of her work before the present rash of skyscrapers defaced the land, she found her subjects ready-made.

The quality of her art depends on her vision. It does not depend on the fact—doubtful as a fact—that she was privileged to see "the last of old Hawaii."

Since the 1770's, foreign artists who visited our Islands had the same privilege. Their renderings, even though good will was not lacking, were rather uncertain.

Throughout the 19th century, forms of beauty peculiar to Hawaii were assessed by the itinerant painters against the cold formulas of neo-classical esthetics.

The native ways were found wanting.

As an art student, Madge Tennent learned this same neo-classical idiom. In her earliest efforts there is latent a memory of studio accessories—plasters cast after fragments of Greek or Roman statues.

She also was taught to draw from life, to render the model with chalk and charcoal with exacting realism.

These first steps proved to be finger exercises, a limbering before tackling the more ambitious task she soon set for herself.

Hawaii sparked in her a passion that gave meaning to her craft. Going further than the



concept of beauty she had been taught as a student, she veered away from the neo-classical, and from realism as well.

She chose to worship another kind of beauty, the concept of plenty that the Hawaiian matriarch embodies.

Madge Tennent did not become a revolutionary for the sake of the turmoil and noise and mayhem attendant upon revolutions. Before leaving the well trod path for the unknown one, she checked her star by worshipping at the altar of the Old Masters.

She is one of the few among modern artists who acknowledges the cult of ancestors.

And because she is pre-eminently a doer, she does so with pencil or brush, rather than giving lip service.

She titles her studies after the Masters, "Lineal Moments with the Great."

"Lineal" is the key word, implying the idea of linear rhythm and, as well, that of lineage. In true humility, Mrs. Tennent claims these ancient masters as her spiritual ancestors.

Her studies range from Egypt to Crete, from Tanagra to Daumier, from Renoir to Picasso.

Madge Tennent's paintings already have run the gauntlet of successive art fashions. At the time that her message took shape, she alienated genteel friends by the sheer boldness of her distortions.



9. The Lei Sellers

She stood accused of doing violence to nature.

Another generation of artists came into focus with abstractions their goal.

Mrs. Tennent's obvious delight in bodies, solidly set and fleshed, endowed with weight and girth, was at odds with the one orthodox adventure these men approved of—voyaging into one's inner self.

Younger artists, somewhat sated with introspection, again look at the world with fresh eyes. They try their hand at *figural* painting.

This new generation will doubtless discover,

or rediscover Madge Tennent, pre-eminently a figure painter.

To better understand her beloved Hawaii, she searched for the spirit of the race threading its way undisturbed through the many phases of Hawaiian history.

Her wahines may hold the fly whisk of the pagan chiefess or thumb through the Paipala, the Bible, without essential change.

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Madge Tennent feels content that no preachment ever diminished the carnal reality of her models, wrapped in mu'umu'us and swathed in flowers.

The large and heavy bodies she loved to paint, with delicately set wrists and ankles, with small feet and hands in perpetual and rhythmic motion, stand for her as the ultimate beauty and as well for the ultimate good.

Today, skyscrapers mushroom. The bulldozed land is not spoken of as land anymore, but as real estate.

In this stark new setting, even the ancient aloha may wither.

Eventually, people may have no clue left in nature, or in their heart, as to what it was that made Hawaii unique.

It is reassuring to know that the body and spirit of the genuine Hawaii is caught forever in the generous impasto and uninhibited rhythms of Madge Tennent's life work!

2. Hawaiian Pattern





14. *Sleeping Girl*

1. *Young Model of Hawaii*
Oil on Canvas, 15¼ X 18 inches, 1927
2. *Hawaiian Pattern*
Oil on Canvas, 48½ X 38 inches, 1927
3. *Young Chinese Girl*
Oil on Canvas, 25 X 38 inches, 1928
4. *Portrait Study of Loraine Kuck*
Oil on Canvas, 28 X 37 inches, 1928
5. *Japanese-Hawaiian Girl in Blue*
Oil on Canvas, 16¾ X 23¾ inches, 1928
6. *Design on Burlap*
Oil on Burlap, 35 X 59 inches, 1928
7. *Polynesian Still Life*
Oil on Canvas, 18½ X 20¼ inches, 1929
8. *Recumbent Woman*
Oil on Canvas, 56 X 35½ inches, 1930
9. *The Lei Sellers*
Oil on Canvas, 57½ X 38 inches, 1930
10. *Girl with Guitar*
Oil on Canvas, 30 X 42 inches, 1931
11. *Young Hula*
Oil on Wood, 35 X 77½ inches, 1931
12. *Two Sisters of Old Hawaii*
Oil on Canvas, 44 X 82 inches, 1933
13. *Hawaiian Girl with Flowers in Her Hair*
Oil on Canvas, 31 X 39½ inches, 1933
14. *Sleeping Girl*
Oil on Canvas, 25 X 30½ inches, 1933
15. *Sleeping Lei Woman*
Oil on Canvas, 36 X 46 ½ inches, 1934
16. *The Red Holoku*
Oil on Paper, 17½ X 23½ inches, 1934
17. *Sitting Hula*
Oil on Paper, 16 X 20 inches, 1934
18. *Pa-u Rider*
Watercolor on Canvas, 42 X 78 inches, 1935
19. *Hawaiian Spring Song*
Oil on Canvas, 44 X 56 inches, 1936
20. *Spring*
Oil on Wood, 30½ X 41½ inches, 1936
21. *Sunday Afternoon, 1822*
Oil on Canvas, 40 X 64½ inches, 1937
22. *Ehu Bride*
Oil on Canvas, 33 X 42 inches, 1940
23. *Princess Miriam*
Oil on Wood, 30 X 30 inches, 1941
24. *Two Impressions of Isami Doi*
Oil on Cardboard, 17½ X 23¼ inches, 1942