

Islamic Crafts Shown At Academy of Arts

By JEAN CHARLOT

Now current at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, the show of Islamic crafts is more than that. It is truly a show of fine arts.

Egyptian pottery and Persian stuffs were undoubtedly produced as merchandise to be bought and sold. Yet how distinct they are from our own brand of commercial art, executed under the pressure of deadlines, for the lure of pay envelopes.

Islamic potters and weavers added love as the soul of their complex crafts.

Potteries range from thick, sturdy forms to egg-shell-thin elegances.

Their colors exhibit a whole rainbow of blues. Sea blues so deep that they match for depth the black

calligraphy that swathes the form in whirlpools of motion. Turquoise blues so pale as to blend with the highlights of gold brushed over them.

Practiced by orchid growers, cross-pollination is also an ingredient of the arts. Persian miniatures are the astonishing fruit of Mesopotamian monumentality mating with Chinese brush painting.

Masterpiece of this group is the picture of a turbaned, elegant youth.

He kneels in a garden and picks at a dish of pomegranates. So tiny is the scale that one marvels at the brush that did it, and as well at the minute motions of the painter's fingertips that managed these serried strokes. Their liquid grace has a beauty all its own.

In this show, no true borderline exists between representation and abstraction. In a miniature that represents a lawn party there is a flowering tree that shades people at play. The same tree reappears in the fabrics as a 'tree of life', stylized but recognizable. A further change transforms it into a free form, a sort of tear shape that highlights with its silver and gold ruby-red velvets and creamy silks.

Even a horseman and his horse can be 'abstracted'. In a miniature we see them engaged in a leopard hunt. Translated into fabric, adapted to the limitations of woof and warp, horse and horseman lose their identity, enter the realm of the abstract.