

Languid Grace Captured in Kelly Art Works

By JEAN CHARLOT

The John M. Kelly Memorial Show, which will continue at the Honolulu Academy of Arts until September 8, sums up the artist's long life's work.

It is a job well done, both as regards the choice of etchings, drypoints and aquatints, and the clarity of their presentation.

But why wait? John's work was as alive as it is now when he was alive.

Is it truly the unescapable fate of the artist that he must efface himself so drastically before his work is allowed to come to the fore? Or, more simply, is the belated accolade but a sign of our indifference to the living, especially if he lives "just around the corner?"

TRIBUTE

John Kelly is identified with Hawaii.

It is a tribute to the complex beauty of our land that it can give of itself to each



John M. Kelly

artist according to his needs.

Some have picked out of race and landscape the primitiveness they searched for: forms still identified with the primeval ooze.

John's quest was different. He searched for and found

languid grace. The sinuous hands and wrists of the hula dancer, the fine articulations of the dance itself, stamp his esthetics.

It is this other facet of Hawaii, of a beauty not shy of verging on prettiness, that he reserved for himself.

His early work is characterized by factual truthfulness and strong chiaroscuro. "The Grass House", a hut, a palm tree, a spherical, muumuu clad tutu, is stated simply and convincingly. Enlarged, the head of "Net Fisherman", one-eighth of an inch high in the original, would prove itself solidly monumental.

IMAGE IS SOLID

Soon, the dream image became more solid than reality itself. Man drops out of sight. Woman emerges, clad in abbreviated tapa skirt, handling timeless accessories: uliulis, fruits, flowers. Even when the body is at rest, a potential of dance is

suggested. Models stand against foliage giant in scale and tropical in kind: breadfruit, mangoes, hāla, birds-of-paradise.

The best way of summing up the spring within the spring that made John Kelly labor relentlessly, and that

raised him to etching eminence, is to quote from the catalogue of the show the opening sentence, written by John M. Kelly, Jr.:

"Of all the things a man may love—his work, wife, family, country and fellow-man—none can be truly his unless he loves life itself."