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# The History of Isle Art Hangs Briefly at Center

By JEAN CHARLOT

We can well be proud of the part that the artists of Hawaii play in the dedication celebrations of the Honolulu International Center, in three splendid displays: Old Masters, Contemporary Artists, and Junior painters of school age.

Our pride is mingled with sadness at the thought that the life range of these three shows is a single week. Obviously the profit motif hardly allows to lower barriers longer than this short span as regards these notoriously non-profitable crafts, the fine arts!

Of the three, "Master Artists of Hawaii," presented by William McGonagle, is both most sophisticated and novel. It is a first attempt to gather together elements of our own Hawaiian tradition, from the end of the Eighteenth Century to the beginning of our own.

The earliest masters shown, men like Webber, Choris and Arago, came together with the early explorers, English, Russian and French. Their sketches were a sort of a hit-and-run affair that resulted nevertheless in a few masterpieces.

Resident artists are more typical of the mid-Nine-

teenth Century. Faint echoes of the French Barbizon and the American Hudson River School hover over their approach.

The sights of Hawaii, tropical, exciting, romantic, may have at times taxed the scope of their art to excess.

But after all even a Corot or an Eakins would have hardly felt equal to the task when confronted with Hale Maunau, Haleakala, or even the Pali vista.

These men managed to tackle their impossible task honorably.

From the vantage point of today, even more touching seems the work of their less experienced colleagues, the Sunday painters.

"Hilo Bay," by Joseph Nawahi, with its recurrent browns unrelieved by the lessons of his betters, is of an intense originality.

A similar innocence pervades the landscapes of Bailey, ca. 1860. His uncompromising "Iao Valley, Maui," devoid of any of the graces one associates with landscape painting, develops contoured volumes as strong as a cliff scene by Courbet.

Tavernier acted the bad boy in our missionary milieu. Now that his pranks and irregularities are for-

gotten, his art looms large as a part of our heritage.

His volcano landscapes are unique.

In contrast with their hellish sights, there is a delicately sunny landscape featuring two girls in muumuus, of a type solidly rooted in Hawaiian soil, pre-figures of Madge Tennent's classic types.

Of the following generation, Hitchcock is a master of atmospheric renderings.

His small "Rain on Pali Cliffs" is, in its delicate grays, as impressive a performance as the best of Whistler.

As one century blends with the next, modernism discreetly intrudes.

William Bartlett's "Fishererman," better known in the color print version, though conscious of esthetic problems, expresses well the patience of the net-thrower and the vastness of the sea.

Joseph Whittle's "Fishing" is treated as a mural should.

Since he painted it, we have learned to love primitive arts and forms, and for us, his nude Hawaiians cling too close to Greek standards.

But the vast Pacific landscape, in its calm amplitude, equals Puvis de Chavannes' own vision.