



By **JEAN  
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# ART

## Bolivian artist's works displayed

Hawaii, as is well known, orients its taste Eastwards. Our Academy of Arts, our home interiors, are rich in Asiatic works of art. Ethnologists endorse the link to Asia as far as our prehistory is concerned. They picture the Vikings of the Pacific as coming from Asia over a millenium ago.

A neat picture, too neat perhaps, as truth is as a rule complex. The theory is marred by the humble and insistent fact that the sweet potato is an ancient staple food of our Islanders, and that it is a native of Peru.

Picture it as you wish, either drifting on its own and implanting itself of its own on Island soil, or else stored and carried in dugout canoes by South American Indians.

The fact remains that, like it or not, South America remains woven in the prehistoric fabric of our Hawaii.

## A mystery in ancient idols

Who knows if the striking images of pre-Columbian art have not a hidden share in the no less striking and no less mysterious forms of our native Hawaiian idols.

When an artist from what is now known as Latin America exhibits his work in our Hawaii, let us remember then that his art may not be entirely a stranger to this land and to its most ancient traditions.

The Bolivian artist, Benjamin Mendoza, is having a show at Gima's Art Gallery. The show opens tomorrow, and is sponsored by the Latin American consuls in Hawaii.

Like the ancestral sweet potato, Mendoza drifted to our shores by roundabout currents that, in this case, took him first to New York, where he received substantial recognition.

## The expectation: large size

His art may surprise those art-lovers who think of Latin America in terms of Mexico, and would expect of Mendoza monolithic images and a mural scale.

His is instead a gentle art. It has affinities with the art of Dufy, as one may check by seeing the current Dufy Show at the Academy of Arts.

Of the two, the Parisian, of course, remains a master of sophistication. Both men, however, understand art as a kind of short-

hand writing, as a swift jotting of emotions.

Both men are far from confusing artistic expression with manual labor. Both have a not inconsiderable knack of stopping work just a little before the idea or subject has been expressed.

In so doing, they force the onlooker into a species of collaboration. The painting is a clue that the spectator may follow to its conclusion, adding of his own what poetical or ironical comments suit his mood of the day.

## His favorite medium

Pastel on colored paper is the medium favored by Mendoza, and it admirably matches his intent. His is a dreamland of animals and children, wherein a few nudes stray that radically differ from the calendar type.

Mendoza's able calligraphy hovers between 'good drawing' as an older generation understood it and a sheer delight in wrist motions detached from the implied subject matter.

The intent is to merge style with stylish, and to conform to the present picture of international modern art.

Mendoza's dream actors, be they steers or steeds, fawns or nude women, are lighted by rainbow hues, lose reality, become weightless, exist rather through motion than through form. As the dream goes, Chagall comes to mind.

## Landscape barely suggested

Landscape is barely suggested and is in tune with the inhabitants of this unusu-

al planet: The carmine of a setting sun, the blue globe of a rising moon and, almost menacingly, the black on black of night scenes.

Improbable relationships are hinted at, between a horse and a rooster, a ram and a sleeping child, a striped tiger and a blue infant.

Americans, hallucinated as they are by the almost unbearable sweetness of Disneylands, may learn by looking at Mendoza's fawn and rabbit, duck and donkey, that these may have mysterious, almost threatening, implications.

For myself, being Mexico-bred, what interests me most in Mendoza's work is not its success in almost merging within the international picture, but its failure in not doing so thoroughly.

A local flavor remains, some substance out of Latin America. The large mother carrying two suckling infants, the small girl with black hair braided with colored ribbons, and overcost the curious 'Calvary', that shows only the bleeding contorted feet of a black Christ,

while rabbit and fawn munch grass peacefully at the foot of the cross.

These carry implications that I would call ancestral, and that Mendoza would do well to treasure.

## Calendar of events

1—Paintings and drawings by Raoul Dufy, on exhibition at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, until March 20.

2—Honolulu Print Makers 38th Annual Show, at the Church of the Crossroads Gallery, 1212 University Avenue, to March 31. Most of the prints may be purchased at the Gallery.

3—In the Hawaii State Library patio, paintings by Winnifred Hudson and Barbara Hogg, through March 21.

4—Work of the Hawaii Handweavers Hui with University of Hawaii weavers, Unitarian Church Gallery, 2500 Pali Highway, through March.

5—One man show by Benjamin Mendoza, Gima's Art Gallery, Ala Moana Center, opens tomorrow.

6—Faculty show, Art Department of the University of Hawaii, George Hall Gallery, opens this week.

7—Watercolors by Higa. Cherry Blossom Festival Art Exhibition, at Contemporary Arts Center, 605 Kapiolani Boulevard. To open next Wednesday.

Professor Charlot welcomes news and questions on art. Send letters to: Jean Charlot, Art Department, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.