

ART

By JEAN CHARLOT



Lime, toil, sweat and tears

I climbed down my scaffold at the First National Bank, shed my coveralls, carefully scrubbed my hands and face with soap and water, and went to the Cinerama Theatre.

There I watched Michelangelo climb on his scaffold in relatively clean coveralls. A hundred frames later he was indeed a mess, color and plaster trickling down his beard and his nose, with caustic lime dust burning his eyeballs.

Up to then, I felt that we were brothers under the skin. We parted company when, at the end of his workday, Michelangelo was washed and scrubbed and tucked in bed by an authentic Marquesa de Medici.

From this film one thing clearly emerges: art-making is not meant for sissies.

Their works show their greatness

It is impossible to project the greatness of a great artist otherwise than through his works. The opening shots of the film are heroic, with Michelangelo's autographic work projected immensely enlarged on the screen.

Be it done with chisel on stone or with quill pen on paper, the works from his hand cannot be contained even by the Cinerama screen.

Afterwards, in the course of the film, the drawings and paintings from the hand of Charlton Heston are of quite a lesser vintage. I could hardly refrain from applause when he defaced in a fit of impotency his first fresco essays.

His hero: the scaffold

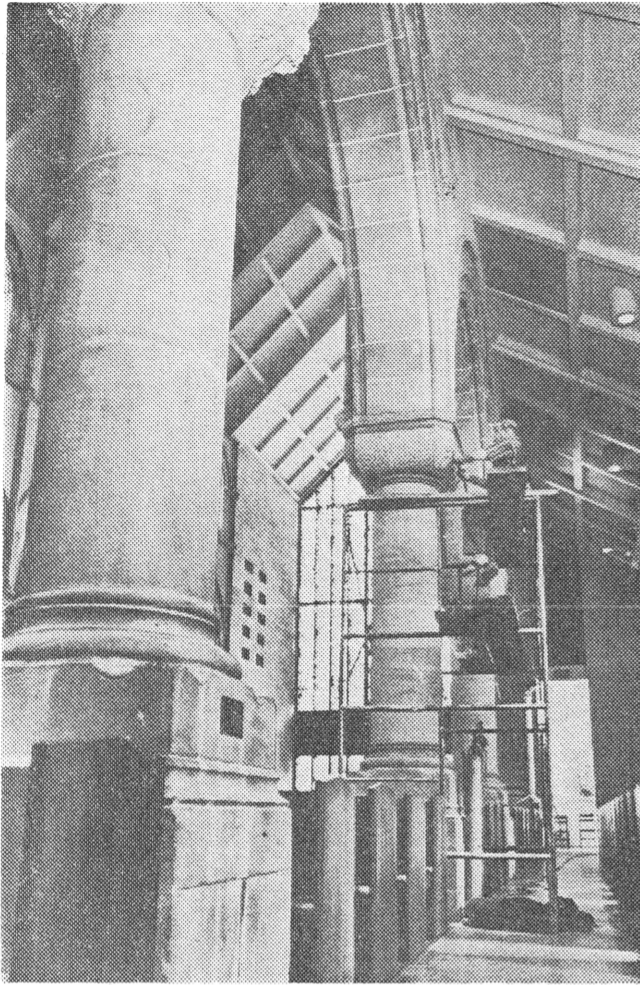
Where the film has a true lesson to offer is in the machinery of art-making. To my taste, the high scaffold erected in the Sistine Chapel remains the hero of the film.

One sees the mason laying with mortarboard and trowel a fresh coat of lime mortar. He works elbow to elbow with the painter brushing washes of pigment on damp mortar. Their movements synchronize.

These "visuals" make clear the fact that painting is a manual trade. Set in his dreamy ways, the art lover is liable to forget this all-important truth. There will always exist an easy relationship between artist and laborer. Always the artist and the art lover will remain at odds.

The film missed a major point

The major plot of the film is this strain between artist and patron, here no less than a Renaissance Pope. Professionally speaking, the film's shortcoming is that it fails even to hint at the friendship that grew between the two men involved in the painting of the Sistine ceiling, the painter and the



STONEWORK—Artist Marozzi works high on a scaffold in St. Andrew's Cathedral to carve the stone capitals—the top part of the columns that support the arches.

master mason.

Michelangelo's mason looms large in contemporary documents.

The Marchioness of Pescara, famous hostess, gave celebrated cocktail parties, or the contemporary equivalent. Fawning writers and artists begged invitations.

Michelangelo, who was always invited, seldom came.

Bring him back alive . . .

A guest, Francesco d'Olanda, was present when the hostess, affronted once too often, sent her servants to search the town for the elusive master, with strict orders to bring him to her party.

Michelangelo was nowhere to be found. He was not at

home. He was not on his scaffold.

Eventually the lackeys collared him as he was peacefully pacing through back alleys, engrossed in deep conversation with his mason.

On record in the film is the first scaffold erected in the Sistine Chapel by Bramante. It truly was a trap, viciously conceived to make the work of painting the ceiling impossible.

The film shows the drilling of holes in the ceiling through which ropes were meant to uphold a house-painter's hanging scaffold.

Maybe an angel could do it

The script writers failed to take advantage of the following exchange that Vasari

recorded for posterity:

Michelangelo (to Bramante), "What about the holes?"

Bramante, "Paint around them."

Michelangelo, "And then?"

Bramante, "You can plaster them and paint them over after the scaffold is taken down."

The moviegoer assists at the rage of Michelangelo confronted with this situation, and watches him rebuilding the scaffold to his taste. The film stops short of showing the touching sequel.

Again here the very special relationship of painter and mason is historically on record.

Rope financed a marriage

Once Bramante's scaffold was dismantled, its planks were reused in the new scaffold. For the valuable miles of brand new rope, Michelangelo had no use.

He made a gift of the rope to his mason to be sold as a dowry for his marriageable daughter.

In our own city and in our own day, we can check visually this role of the artist as preeminently a manual worker. Fresco painting needs no further mention. I would rather underline the work in course done by Eli Marozzi at St. Andrew's Cathedral.

Marozzi is carving in situ some of the stone capitals of the nave. Wearing the plastic shield that is the carver's face mask, meant to protect him from flying stone chips, the heavy workman's gloves needed to handle the air hammer and chisel, he works at the pulsating sound of the air compressor nestled between the uprights of his scaffold.

Marble became masterpieces

These tools are the modern equivalent of those that the quarry workers of Car-

rara used in Renaissance time to pry loose the blocks of marble that became the David and the Moses seen in the film.

When I visited Marozzi at his work, the parallel was fortified by liturgical goings-on reminiscent of those caught by the camera in Charlton Heston's Sistine Chapel.

A ceremony was being rehearsed. St. Andrew's was fragrant with freshly cut flowers. The organist practiced beautiful music that filled the air together with the humming and hammering of Marozzi's own instrument.

Conversation with a musician

Without stopping work, the sculptor reported a recent conversation with the musician, a minute parallel to the Cinerama doings between fresco painter and Pope.

Coming to the foot of the sculptor's scaffold, the organist gently hinted that, in their case, practicing at the same time failed to produce beautiful results.

Marozzi politely answered that, as far as he was concerned, the noise made by the organist did not bother him in the least.

With hindsight he remarked to me, "I should have used the word 'music' to describe what he does. 'Noise' may have been the wrong word."

It is said that Gothic cathedrals were built by the people and for the people. St. Andrew's makes a brave try at fitting this definition. It reflects nevertheless the somewhat disorganized age in which we live.

Some came from England

Some of its stone capitals were shipped from England already sculptured. Other capitals are made of cast cement in imitation of stone.

Of the capitals meant to be finished in place, some are still blocks of stone in the rough. Others were carved, and well carved, by Roy King.

Eli Marozzi was commissioned by Mrs. Lorna J. Desha to sculpture the remaining capitals with motives based on plants native of Hawaii.

A capital already complet-



ART IS HARD WORK—Marozzi uses a pneumatic chipping gun to carve flowers in stone.—Photos by Warren Roll.

ed is based on the leaf of the small fern, uluhe. The capital in course is a stylization of the hapu'u, or tree fern. It features the fern's budding leaf, shaped not unlike a bishop's crozier.

Towards the future work, I saw beautifully conceived work drawings. They include the breadfruit, one of our most spectacular native trees. Equally Hawaiian are designs based on the kukui leaf and nut, and featuring the hibiscus flower.

Tentatively sketched are the crown flower, the monstera and the anthurium. With their design based on native flora, Marozzi's capitals are contemporary examples of a tradition already milleniums old.

The Greeks decorated their temples with the native acanthus leaf. The French Gothic artists based their work on unassuming local growths, ivy or vine, with their leaves, stems and tendrils.

To think along traditional lines is to do what Marozzi does when he carves new designs based on the flora of our own Islands.

Others would dumbly borrow the Greek acanthus leaf or other obsolete forms that should have died together with the conditions that gave them birth.

Marozzi's work is proof that tradition, understood in depth, is one of the indispensable ingredients of true creativeness.



A MAN'S JOB—Michelangelo (Charlton Heston) on a scaffold in the Sistine Chapel, studies a sketch during the painting of the chapel ceiling. The photo is from the motion picture, "The Agony and the Ecstasy".