

ART

By JEAN CHARLOT



A display of books

Art, regardless of its setting, remains art. Of the two shows I review today, one is an outgrowth of academic endeavors, and the other was realized on the battlefield.

Rarely does the University of Hawaii Press hold open house. The past week, Hale Laulima, its quiet abode on Dole Street, displayed 25 books culled from the output of American University Presses.

Entitled "An Awareness of Quality," the show made a handsome display, in the cool and collected way that mostly appeals to scholars.

The contents of the books were somewhat forbidding, at least for an artist. All the paraphernalia of studies I shied from was here. Books about science and bugs, books about math and city planning. Mostly these were books about books.

Package rather than product

The true appreciator of books is as specialized as the true specialist of wines. The wine taster gargles and spits out his wine. Rarely does the book taster read a book. For him the text is not the important thing. The margin is the thing.

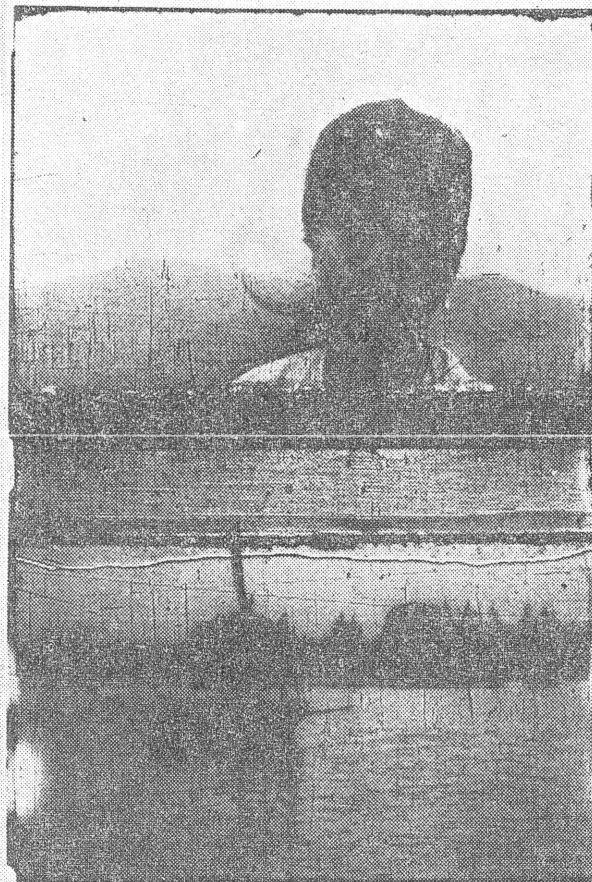
Choice of paper, style of type, refinements in leading and spacing, those are the points that rate a book a thoroughbred, or else a nag.

Illustrations are somewhat of an imposition on the true connoisseur of books. At best they are a necessary evil. Thumbing through the items exhibited, I pleasantly puzzled at mathematical diagrams, traffic maps and zoological charts.

An educational experience

Perusing this show of high educational worth left me, however, with a musty aftertaste.

Could it be that the jury-



"Vietnam Girl" by Joseph F. Martin, Jr.

men who picked these books—25 were selected out of 184 entries—live secluded in an ivory tower set in a moat filled with ink, and encircled by ivy walls?

Happily enough, there was an antidote at hand, the books published by our own University of Hawaii Press. They too are scholarly. They too are put together by men who know their trade, but with a difference.

It may be just the air of our Hawaii. It may be just the easy proximity of the beach where the scholar, should he feel inclined, may swim his worries away and roll in the sand.

Or it may reside in the fact that our Hawaii is not just another neck of the woods, but a crossroads for continents.

The influence of the Orient

The Japanese fishmonger, the Chinese herb dealer, summing their daily ac-

counts with ideograms shaped from the tip of the brush, accustom us to a kind of beauty that lacks its counterpart in the visual experience of most Mainlanders.

The University of Hawaii Press reflects in its output the varied heritage of our Islands. And at hand for each task it has men steeped in the culture that the book typifies.

Haole esthetic at its finest is reflected in the layouts of Alfons Korn's "The Victorian Visitors" and in Frankenstein's "Angels over the Altars", both designed by Ken Kingrey.

The Japanese poems of Sokeishu, "A Grass Path", showing side by side Japanese ideograms and their English translation, invited the unusual format and the bi-colored paper. William Ellis designed this one.

A Chinese approach

In "The Poems of T'ao Ch'ien" the uneven length of the lines, the bold blank areas, approximate the spaciousness of Chinese scroll paintings as do, for good reasons, the brush drawings of Tseng Yu-ho.

My own heart goes to the 'Poi Pounder' series, concerned with Hawaiian culture. Illustrated on this page is one of May Fraser's compositions, cut on wood for her album, "Ke Anueue". One of the earliest among the Hawaiiana items published by the Press, it remains the most beautiful.

Let us be thankful then that, in our climate, the ivy has not grown so thick as to obscure for us the grandeur of sky and sea, nor those sights beyond the sea.

Photographs from Viet Nam

Art and war is the theme of the other show. Photographs taken in Viet Nam are in view at the Crossroads Book Gallery, University Avenue at Moiliili. For the gallery and for the photographer as well—Joseph F. Martin, Jr.—it is their first art show.

Naturally, the hackneyed question shall be raised, "But is photography an art?" This show answers the question in the affirmative.

Allow me to reminisce. When I was very young, Desire Charnay, the pioneer archeologist, was very old. In the 1860's he had been first in bringing back photographs of pre-Hispanic ruins, such as Mitla and Palenque.

In his day, one worked with glass plates and in the wet process. Just before exposure, the plates were coated by hand with a film of



"Kana and the Turtle" by Juliette May Fraser.

collodion. In the jungle a makeshift tent served for a darkroom.

Bugs in the chemicals

The chemical aroma attracted tropical bugs in swarms. As a result, the sensitized plates recorded not only the sight of famed ruins but, as well, the criss-cross flights of mosquitoes dipping their wing tips into the emulsion.

At times it preserved in the collodion forever, as if set in amber, the tiny bodies.

Charnay's tales and plates gave me an awareness of what a photograph is: It is not only a window open on a sight, but possesses a reality of its own.

On these glass plates, scars and blemishes unfolded a worthwhile story. They added to the archeological data a romantic subjective commentary.

He served in Viet Nam

Joseph Martin was a photographer in uniform for a Signal Battalion in the Viet Nam of yesterday, when our men still were labeled advis-

ers. Most of the items in the show are enlarged stills, culled from his own 16-millimeter films.

There are no wilful manipulations for esthetic purpose. Taken under war conditions, without benefit of light meters or leisurely exposures, the photos may well be out of focus at times, and at others underexposed.

For his show, Martin chose to make stills out of two frames at a time, favoring the telltale value of technical happenings.

To break the continuity between frames, he features the hiatus of a spliced segment, underlines the scraping of the emulsion and the overflow of the splicing glue.

Serried scratches on the cellulose backing, the result of previous rough handling, battle against but do not destroy the intense validity of the image.

No intent to moralize

Two themes are developed side by side without conscious intent at building up a case or at moralizing.

Theme one: Viet Cong prisoners, arms tied elbow to elbow at the back, are cargoes in helicopters from battlefield to waiting jeeps.

Art news

Artists of Hawaii show

The 17th annual Artists of Hawaii Exhibition will be held from September 22 through October 30 at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

Entries must be presented at the Academy on September 1, 2 or 3. A Mainland art authority will be invited to Honolulu to select the works to be presented.

Last year, more than 450 entries were received and judged at the Academy, with 99 selected to be shown in the exhibition.

At Punaluu gallery

Bashir Baraki's one-man show at the Hunnicutt Gallery in Punaluu will open Saturday, June 11, with an invitational cocktail buffet.

Baraki, an abstract-impressionist who says his work is somewhat similar to that of Paul Klee, gave a showing last year at Teell's Gallery.

Ceramics by Virginia Sieburg will also be on display.

Baraki studied with Anna Lou Musgrove at the Petersburg School of Fine Arts in Petersburg, Virginia, and won the best-in-show award there in 1958. He attended the Richmond Professional Institute Division of William and Mary College.

The artist was born in Beirut, Lebanon, and returned there in 1964 to teach painting and a general art course. He had two shows there.

Baraki is now teaching arts and crafts at the Vocational Development Center for Retarded Children.

At the University

An extensive show by six art department students getting masters' degrees at the University of Hawaii has opened in Jefferson Hall. Such shows are an annual event at graduation time.

At the State Library

Selected output from workshops conducted by Brother James Roberts will be displayed in the court of the Hawaii State Library for three weeks beginning May 23.

Both 10-week workshops, held last fall and this spring, were sponsored by the Hawaii Arts Council.

Next stop shall be at some interrogation point...

Theme two: The slaughtering of a pig. Brought alive, it hangs helpless, feet tied to a pole carried on two men's shoulders. Next comes a close-up of a hand with a knife. Next a slit throat and a blood-filled bucket.

One among the photographs was not taken by Martin. It was found, soiled and ripped, on a Viet Cong. Rephotographed and analyzed for intelligence purpose, it was then torn and thrown away. Martin patiently put together the pieces.

A group of Viet Cong adolescents, boys and girls, squat, posing for the photographer. Barefoot, they are clad in the black pajamas that are the usual garb of the peasant.

The smooth texture of fea-

tures, the delicacy of wrists and ankles are typically Vietnamese.

Two among the boys are decked in uniforms. One of them holds a gun. The other one holds a bouquet of flowers.