

# ART

by Jean Charlot



Human nature is a complex affair. One of the most telling among Gospel sayings underlines the fact. We are bid to blend the simplicity of the dove with the cunning of the serpent.

In practice, a fifty-fifty quota is unusual. More often than not, rather than a Jekyll and Hyde formula, we lean to the dove or else to the serpent.

## Shows illustrate different modes

Running concurrently, two shows illustrate the two modes in clean-cut manner.

At the Central Library, the show of children's art is dovelike.

The drawings and paintings exhibited were done this summer at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. The age level of the exhibitors ranges from kindergarten through high school.

The 10th Annual Exhibition of Advertising Art and Design opened last week at the Contemporary Arts Center. It is serpent-like in its cunning.

The serpent is more difficult to like than the dove.

The dove has obvious charm. It is as white as Mary's lamb, and as defenseless. Inclined to loving, it is loved in return.

## This serpent not the same

The serpent however, whose cunning is to be praised, is obviously not the one that helped foul things up in the primeval garden.

This other serpent is hyphenated with the dove. Innocence and cunning are favored alike by One who should know.

My intent in comparing the shows is not to rate the one above the other, but only to point to the fact that different cogs make the child artist and the commercial artist tick.

## Too many facts plague adults

Adulthood favors us with a knowledge of facts, alas for too many facts!

They embed themselves under our skin like so many porcupine quills. Sex is one. Money is another.

These two remain terra incognita for the child. Not to know is in his case a positive force.

For the child, money is so many pennies needed to buy chewing gum or a handful of dried litchis. He is free to paint as he wishes.

## Profit motivates the adult artist

Subconsciously the adult artist asks of himself as he

paints: "Will it sell, and for how much?"

It may poison his art at the source.

To quote again from the Book—it seems today my inclination—the artist would do well to heed another difficult advice. "Make yourselves again like little children."

Child into man is as much of a metamorphosis as is that of a tadpole into a frog. To look at children's art is to realize what we have irretrievably lost.

## No impediments bar child's way

Between a child and his model, nothing stands in the way.

By model I do not mean a detail singled out of context from the objective world.

For a child, an idea can be of more substance than an object.

Look at the accompanying photo of the blue lion painted by Eric Leong, age 5.

It is more of a lion than any we grownups know. We have watched the tired beasts at the zoo, as they slept, scratched or roamed to and fro, endlessly, dispiritedly.

## Essence, yes; reality, no

Eric's lion is the essence of what a lion should be. Its rendering defies alike anatomy, texture and color. Indeed, blue lions are as scarce a sight as are purple cows.

In the same spirit did the great sculptors of ancient Greece carve their marbles.

Presumably, the streets of Athens were peopled with men and women endowed better and no worse than we are. Some were thin. Some were fat. Some were knock-kneed. Some had pimples.

Intent on his ideal, the sculptor remained impervious to city sights.

## These artists ignored reality

The child and the Greek master, using a same mental pattern, attain a clarity dissociated from facts, at least from facts as the non-artist understands them.

Looking at the children's show one hears the doves coo.

The cunning of the serpent is featured as clearly in the second show, that of adver-

tising art at the Contemporary Arts Center.

## The two possess different goals

Whereas the child draws and paints to satisfy himself, the commercial artist draws and paints to please others. These others are non-artists.

The "god in the machine" of commercial art is the business executive who commissions the work. His soul's longing is to increase sales.

Shoes and men's clothing, sprays for hair lacquers, women's fashions, menus, annual reports, after-shave lotions, insurance and loans—the whole roster is present, spelled out and illustrated.

## The 'image' must project

To understand this show "image" is the key word.

The commercial image must strike us as a physical blow, or else charm us as a caress. Cunningly, devised, it makes us crave for goods that, minus its magic, we would not feel much need for.

The commercial artist compensates a loss of innocence by punctilious craftsmanship. The message remains the thing but there are various ways of getting it across.

Utter frankness: A theatre poster, Tom Lee's "Devil's Advocate," black on brown with the telltale note of a white Roman collar.

## Salesmanship in low key

The soft sell: A beautifully laid out pamphlet on Leonardo da Vinci, designed by Clarence Lee. It engrosses us throughout with the romance of his genius and of his inventions. On the last page, set in tiny type, a note informs us that the pamphlet is ours to keep by

courtesy of International Business Machines.

Gratitude presumably would induce the elect to buy their next computer from this firm.

The status appeal: This madly embossed paper and this dazzling blend of print-

## Some appeal to status wish

ing techniques were devised just for YOU. You are, Madam, this willowly woman born to sneeze in silk. And you, Sir, you are this athlete in tweeds, gaily alternating marlin fishing and elephant hunting.

The moment of truth appeal: Ten out of 11 have it. Madam, armed with false eyelashes and removable plastic nails, with a chin lift and a lavish perfume spray; you may fool your man, poor thing. Sir, your hair is thinning, your teeth gone. Depilate. Deodorize. Also a three-button jacket may help you keep your desk, nameplate and swivel chair for a while longer.

## Commercial art used as precedent

On one crucial point, the fine arts artist remains deeply indebted to the commercial artist.

Only yesterday, to paint subjectively was the one accepted form of fine art. Meanwhile, tied as he was to his job, the commercial artist remained pledged to deliver an objective message.

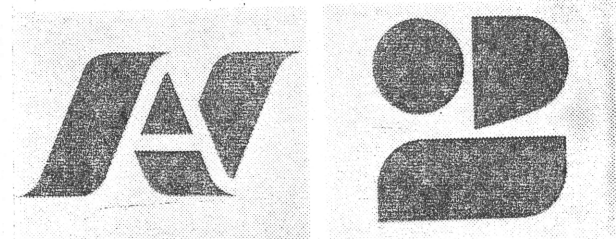
The winds of fashion change. Young artists, in their revulsion against subjectivity, looked to commercial art as a precedent for what they sought.

The leaders of the new trend in art—men like Rosenquist, Lichtenstein and Indiana—openly base their style on the clearcut clarity of ads and of photomontages, of packaging and of funnies.



**SELF-ADVERTISING**—Created by Tom Lee and Momi Cazimero as their own house promotion for the firm of Tom Lee Design, this emblem is on view in the current Advertising Art and Design show at the Contemporary Arts Center.

## Design show exhibits



**SHOW ENTRY**—Look for the "N" and "A" in this trademark design created by Clarence Lee for North American Mortgage. The trademark is on display in the current art and design exhibit.

**AWARD WINNER**—This massive "2" won a merit award for its artist, Bruce Hopper, who created it for KHON-TV. The design is on view in the current art and design exhibition.

Jean Charlot welcomes questions on art from readers and will answer selected questions each Wednesday on this page. Write to: Jean Charlot, Star-Bulletin, Box 3080, Honolulu 96802.

**ESSENCE of LION**—This is the way Eric Leong sees a lion—all teeth, mane, and wavy tail (and painted blue!). The picture is currently on display at Central Library, on loan from the Academy of Arts where Eric created it during summer art classes.

