

ART

by Jean Charlot



The three essentials

The game of art can be likened to a game of billiards. You need no less than three ivory balls for billiards. Subtract one of the three and no game is feasible. To say the least, it would be very, very monotonous.

In the game of art the three units are the artist, nature as it impacts him, and the work of art, result of this impact. Some players have made a brave attempt to subtract nature as one of the components of the game. Once the novelty has worn off, such a game played according to the new rules does prove monotonous.

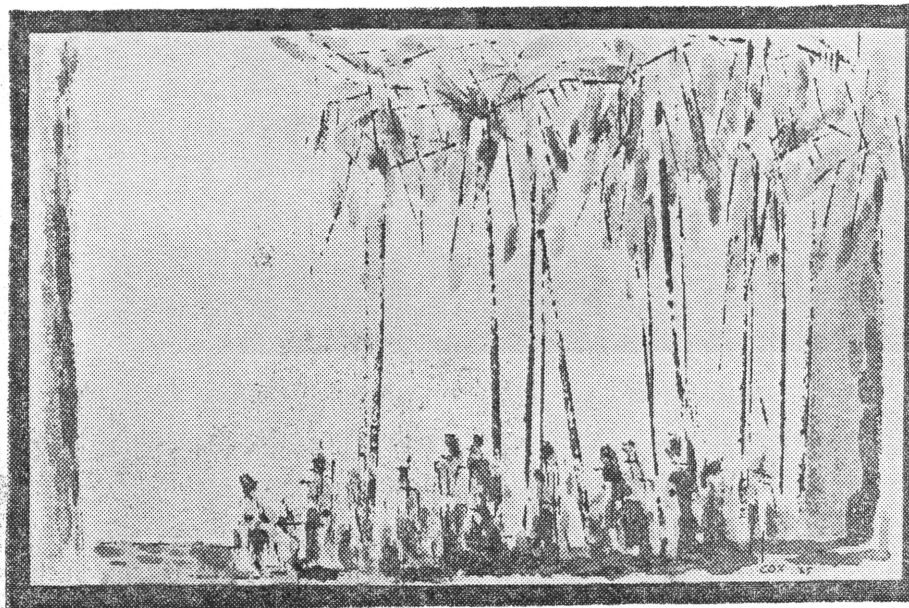
In the art game, combinations are infinite. The personality of the artist is as unique and varied as any set of fingerprints. The manipulation of material, the combinations of colors and lines are equally diverse.

Nature, that starts the artist on his task, ranges from cows in the field to queens on their thrones, from panoramic views to a single tuft of grass.

Opposite points of view

Running concurrently, two shows stake the extreme ranges of this game of art. Lloyd Sexton exhibits landscapes and seascapes at the Contemporary Art Center in the News Building. Halley Cox exhibits, mostly seascapes and landscapes, at Gima's Art Gallery.

Both artists take their stand at the opposite ends of the art spectrum. The visible color spectrum fades into invisibility as it crosses the borderlines that lead to infra red and ultra violet.



Halley Cox's "People and Palms"

The esthetic spectrum extends also at both ends into another range, that of non-esthetics.

Should Sexton move a teeny weeny bit further to the right, his landscapes would not be art anymore, but nature.

Should Halley Cox slide a mite further to the left, his landscapes and seascapes would fade out into pure abstractions.

A conservative painter

Lloyd Sexton is an excellent conservative painter, a rarity in our days. One expects the present-day artist to object, to picket, to clamor, and sock the onlooker right in his bourgeois eye. Many a living painter has built his work and his fame on such a record.

A well informed man, Sexton watches the parade of 'isms' pass by. He hears the applause of the connoisseurs as each succeeding float bedecked in novel fashion makes its appearance.

Indeed it takes courage to decide, consciously and conscientiously, that these heady happenings are right for others but would only be an artificial exercise for oneself.

It takes courage to keep one's mouth shut, to medi-

tate, hermit-like, facing the dilemma of grandiose sights, armed with a blank canvas, a paintbox and infinite patience.

The landscapes are nature itself

In the good old times it was valid approval to remark of a painted portrait, "If it could only talk!" Of Sexton's landscapes it could innocently be said that they are nature itself.

On opening day, I brought with me a traveler from Fiji. He knew little about art and nothing about Hawaii. Each picture was for

him an open window. He could compare his Fiji surf with the Hawaiian surf, his rain clouds with our rain clouds, his jagged mountain line with the serried folds of our palis.

Thus can a well staged play communicate the vividness of actual events. Of course a visit to the wings destroys the illusion. The make-up of actors, the levers manipulated by stage hands, the prompter and his book are all too real.

Sexton's nature is such a well-directed play. The clouds that cast fleeting shadows on mountain slopes have been arrested in their



"Ships" by Halley Cox

gliding motion at the instant of maximum effect.

The sun that lights the kukui groves in the hollow of the cliffs has been stopped in its course by this modern Joshua.

Intelligence and sensitivity

Sexton believes the intelligence is on a par with sensitivity in art making. Craft of a high order is needed to put on canvas the glissandos from light to dark and from hue to hue.

Never is a color used at its primary strength unless it be an electric blue that Sexton favors as a foil to the delicacy of his color blends.

I singled out "Mountain Shapes" for its sculptural monumentality. "Queen's Bath" features the cubic shapes of black rocks bathed in an aura of spirituality.

Here Sexton reaches further than patient craft, towards certain realms of art that may be felt but cannot be analyzed.

The artist, art and nature, are also the three components of Halley Cox' paintings. While Sexton emphasizes nature, Cox underlines esthetic.

Both artists, however, efface themselves behind their chosen preoccupation. Neither one is desirous to thrust himself into the spotlight.

Sexton shyly hides behind the beauty of ocean and mountain ranges. Cox trusts the impersonality of a ruler more than he does a free twist of the wrist.

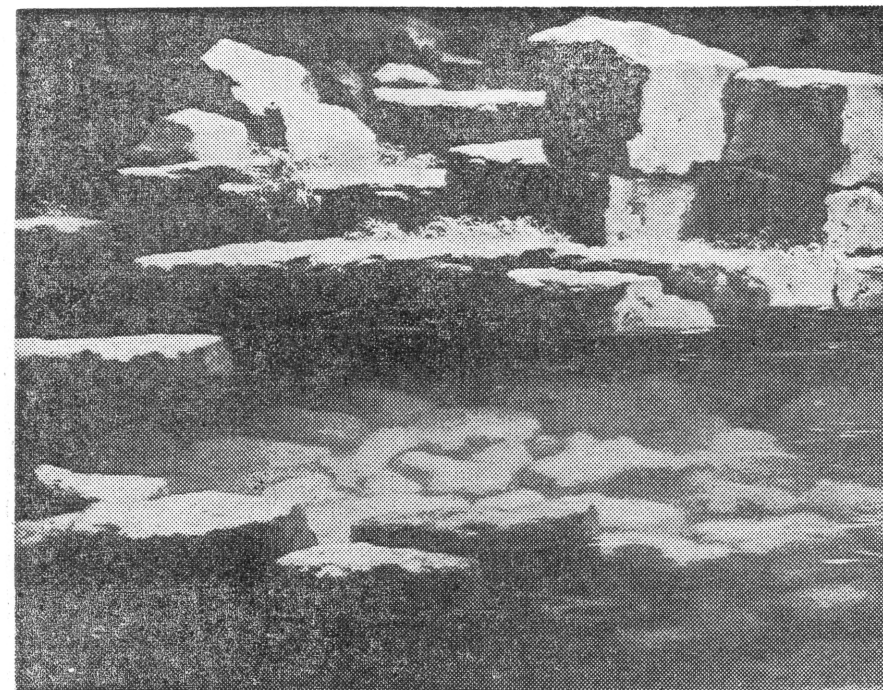
Ruled lines basic to his art

At the core of his art are ruled lines, their ordered maze and carefully planned intersections. His is a cold sort of passion that leaves no place for piled up pigment and feverish dynamics.

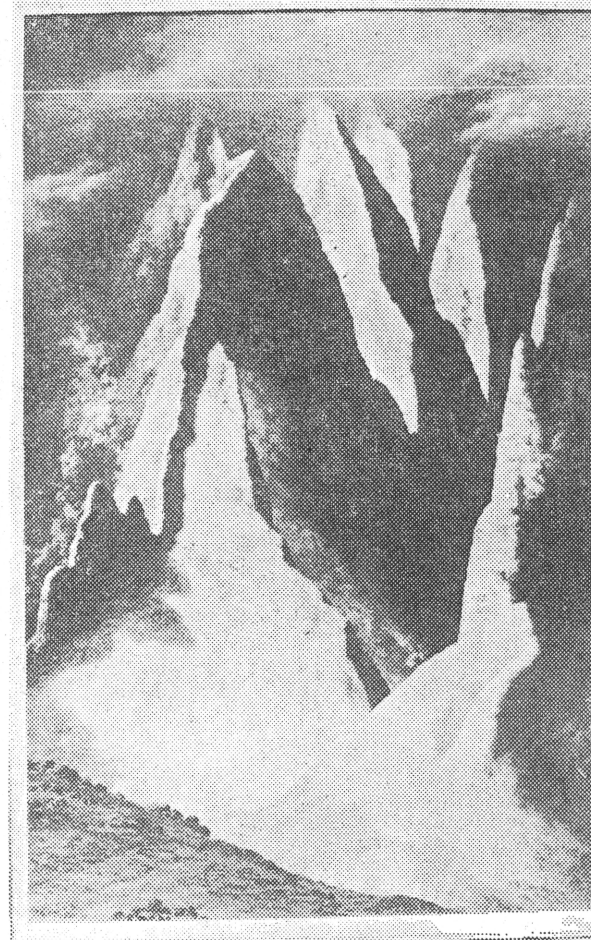
Beauty, for this artist, is the relationship between outer format and inner elements. It is a beauty based on balance, conceptual rather than visual, almost ready to desert natural sights and spill into absolute abstraction.

Cox remains, however, a landscape painter. Cityscapes are made to order for this architectural flair. Already ruled, already plumbbed and leveled, buildings are cut to fit his taste.

The artist reshapes the ocean to fit his exacting specifications. The calligraphic beauty of waves vanishes. He focuses on the static horizon, one of the few con-



"Queen's Bath" by Lloyd Sexton



"Mountain Shapes" by Lloyd Sexton

stants in our confused visual world.

He adds to this major line another natural sight that is pure geometry, the disk of the sun. A dialogue between the straight line and the cir-

cle sums up Halley Cox' seascapes.

A touch of humor

In his latest approach, Cox relaxes his taut perform-

ances. In "Gallery Opening," dry humor softens the intellectual concept. In other works, a casual wobbling of the brushstroke pleasantly endangers the carefully balanced act on the tight rope of strict esthetics.

Surrealism, too, deflects the initial approach. There is magic in "Document," an open book written in undecipherable script.

My favorite is "Five Suns," a watercolor a few inches square but in its way immense. Free washes are its sole means. Totally shed is the spiderweb of ink lines with which Cox, in his more orthodox pictures, entraps art.

Art professor at the university

Besides being a creative artist, Halley Cox is a professor of art at our university. It may be somewhat in the margin of a review to comment in the fact. Yet, so much has been published about a new type of teacher, progressive, bent on research and prolific in authoring learned publications, that a point should be made, especially for the benefit of men who are not visually minded.

Such a show as this one corresponds in its field to a lifetime of scholarly research and volumes of learned dissertations.