

ART

by Jean Charlot

Roosters, rabbits, ribbons and art

KAHULUI, Maui—I am here to jury the fine arts exhibition, one among the many displays of the annual Maui County Fair.

This fair is quite an affair. It features the usual carnival paraphernalia, colorful tents and modern day versions of Ferris wheels and merry-go-rounds. For most residents, the heart of the fair is in its display of local produce, both vegetal and animal.

My job took me to the building reserved for the fine arts. Subsequent visits to the fairgrounds were to other exhibits. The "fur and feathers" hall held many surprises—live rabbits and cackling poultry that, in Honolulu, we see more often than not neatly quartered, frozen, and packaged in plastic.

Masterpieces in cages

There were marvels to behold in that hall: pedigreed pullets that laid deep brown eggs, proudly displayed beside their makers.

And rabbits: tawny ones with tawny ears, white ones with charcoal gray ears, charcoal gray ones with pink ears. And the dazzling pinwheels of pheasants and peacocks in motion.

While I was tiptoeing about, judging was in progress. With sage noddings of the head and whispered consultations, the connoisseurs of feathers and fur awarded the prized ribbons.

I had just gone through the same process about art. Being a one-man jury, I had nodded to myself and talked to myself, looking at paintings and sculptures instead of roosters and rabbits.

Suddenly I was glad that both kinds of display were kept apart. As far as beauty of form and color is concerned nature would prove a tough competitor pitted against man-made forms and colors.

Everyone gets a chance

Back to the fine arts. This being a County fair, all exhibitors are residents of Maui or of Molokai. All entries were accepted. None were refused.

At the start of my task, I too was given ribbons, a boxful of them—white, yellow, pink and purple, stamped with gold lettering. They were mine to distribute as I saw fit. My task was to give joy.

Shows based on County residence have a flavor all their own. They bring together side by side art of many sorts. Some are from the brush of artists fluent in cosmopolitan know-how. Some are from the brush of



"Untitled" by H. Matthew Rockwell

men totally unaware of what current art magazines favor and art dealers push.

As I react to quality rather than to style, both kinds of art sway me equally. In cases of equal merit, I admit a sly tendency—that I try hard to repress—to favor innocence.

Maui has its nationally recognized artist, Tadashi Sato. In deference to his quasi-official status, his en-

intent on discovering what life meant, forgot his dashing cavalier stand.

The first prize in sculpture

First prize in sculpture went to W. M. Robinson for his woodcarving "Madame Pele and her sister Hiiaka." I was told afterwards that its author had weak eyesight and that, as he carved, the

aside. The work remains haunting. The two mythical sisters, taking turns at mortar and pestle to mash pulp for tapa making, are rooted deep in tradition.

The president wins a prize

First prize in oils went to Anne Whittemore for her landscape "Up Country." She is president of the local art group, Hui Noeau. Needless to say my choice was based solely on quality, given my total ignorance of the local scene.

Hui Noeau, dedicated to the making of art and the appreciation of art, has been in existence for now close to 30 years.

Its goals are identical with those stated by the newly founded Council on Arts and Culture. Yet, those members of Hui Noeau who flew to attend the Honolulu conference went through mixed emotions.

Life on Maui is geared to a tempo based on old-fashioned aloha rather than by the clock.

For Mauians, some of the experts brought here from the Mainland were truly disconcerting: of the type that consults a wrist watch every other minute, even when timeless art is their subject.

For those for whom art means vocation, it was hard to adjust to the reasoning of some of the speakers, who saw art as merchandise, whose suggestions related to impressive packaging and the multiplication of retail outlets.

The opinions of educators

Another active group on Maui is the Arts Curriculum Study Group that focuses on the role of art in education.

Mrs. William F. Crockett was kind enough to summarize for me the reaction of the members to the Honolulu gathering.

These were first-hand reports, thanks to the understanding of the district superintendent, Gerald Pangburn, who released for the occasion some of his art teachers to take part in the Oahu discussions.

To summarize in turn the

form was checked with the hand as often as with the eye.

That the sculpture follows tactile logic may explain its unusualness. A straight-forward symmetrical rendering, cuts consistent with the use of a pocket knife, a disregard of "classical" proportions, bring to mind the term "primitive."

But to label is not to explain, and even less to push

maui county fair

try "Rocks and Twigs" was judged hors-concours, not competing for prizes.

"Best in show" was an untitled oil by Matthew Rockwell. It straddled astonishingly the two categories of know-it-all and of know-not.

Brutal color chords and bold patterns bespoke at first sight the extrovert.

They were paired with passages delicately introspective wherein the artist,



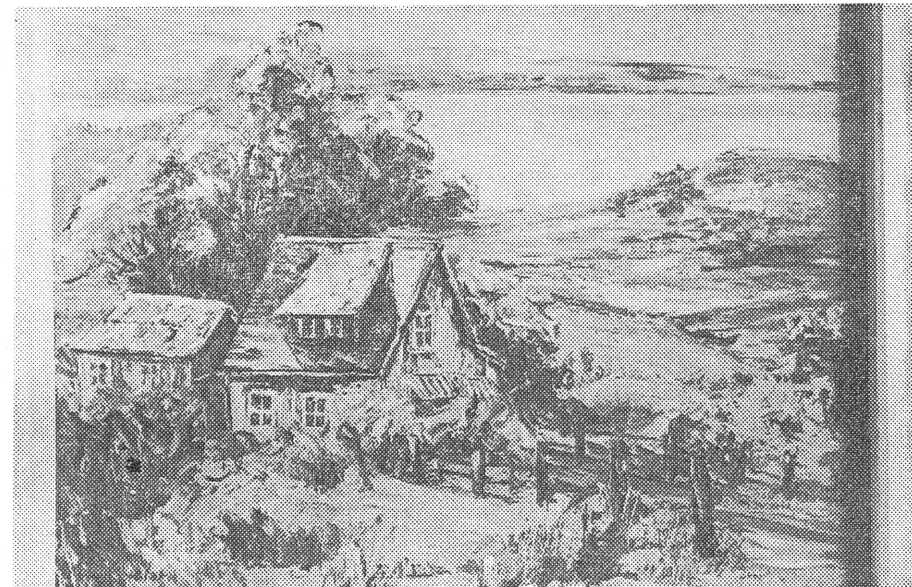
"Madame Pele and Her Sister Hiiaka" by W. M. Robinson

summary: the field is immense, the Maui men and women of good will are many, the present resources meager, and keyed high is the confidence of members in what the State can do to help in the near future.

All in all, the art projects being launched on Maui remain within the scope of the possible and are firmly rooted in a democratic approach.

Typical is a plan for an outdoor show to be displayed along Lahaina's sea wall. It is planned along the lines of the art show that brightens every weekend the fence of the Honolulu Zoo.

It only awaits a Government permit to become a reality.



Agnes F. K. Yuen's "Kalae Homestead"