

ART

by Jean Charlot



Two Hawaiian Madonnas

Today, I find myself uneasily poised between Christmas and the New Year. In journalistic terms, Christmas has "gone stale." As for the New Year, it would be silly of me to ring it in hours ahead. Nevertheless, I shall use both as my theme for the day.

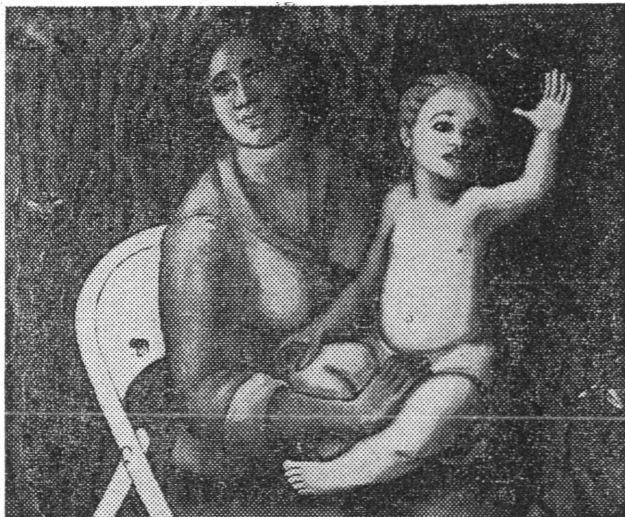
Throughout the Christmas season, we have been treated to many Madonnas. Most of them were the work of Italian masters. For a change, the two I choose to illustrate are, each in its way, Hawaiian.

Approximately one year ago Juliette May Fraser, the kamaaina artist, left for Greece, leaving me the task of replacing her as an art critic. May's Madonna, though an easel painting, is a by-product of her mural decoration in the chapel of Vazilon, on the island of Chios.

To meet the requirements of Greek Orthodox rites, the artist immersed herself deeply in Byzantine stylistic traditions.

Her Madonna illustrates a quote from St. Matthew: "I came not to send peace, but a sword." As a monumental mural reminder, the vertical of the sword held by the Child modifies the tender relation of Mother to Son.

Being a true Kamaaina,



Nancy Lane's "Madonna With Blue Flies."

May Fraser softens the severe layout with a good deal of native aloha.

Painted in Pihai Valley

The other Madonna is the work of Nancy Lane. "Madonna With Blue Flies" was painted in Pihai Valley, on Maui. One misses in the reproduction the electric green of the buzzing flies, set against maroons and purples.

The Mother is represented as a full-blooded Hawaiian. The Child, with hapa features, attempts to catch one of the swift flyers. At the moment, engrossed at play, He is quite oblivious to the

fact that He is the God-Child. So much for Christmas. Now, the New Year.

At this date it is customary for political pundits, journalistic seers and assorted powers to reflect on the happenings of the past year. With hindsight, commentators extract from events of the near past meanings not caught at first.

Wringing out the old . . .

I too shall leaf through my yellowing clippings of the year 1966. It is instructive, at least instructive for me, to re-read past columns at leisure, without fearing the hanging sword of imperative deadlines.

What strikes me most on reflection is to realize how art pervades so many unconnected realms. Besides art, I can think only of termites and mice as equally able to amble at ease through so many diverse milieus.

One of the top art shows this year was not properly an art show but a botanical display, Flora Pacifica, presented in April at the East West Center. Its re-creation of a mangrove swamp still thrills me in retrospect.

In May, my reporting paired together two good stone cutters, Michelangelo Buonarroti and Eli Marozzi.

To write it, I sat through a long film, experiencing in turn agony and ecstasy. Ecstasy when original works of Michelangelo were projected enlarged on the Cinerama screen. Ecstasy, too, when the plasterer, squatting on the high scaffold, with mortar board and trowel laid fresh lime plaster for Charlton Heston to paint on.

The writer knew little of frescoes

The agony came when the code of ethics that rules the making of frescoes was rudely shattered by script writers. Heston, leaving the lovingly laid fresh mortar half painted, would throw down his brush and mumble, "Enough for today!" What is the mason to do the next morning, lacking a cleancut edge to abut the day's task!

On the whole my conclu-

sion was that art manages to exist, even in Hollywood.

In June, on a visit to the atomic submarine, Kamehameha I, I wound my way through a frightening and beautiful display of machine art, a forest of steel totem poles.

And on the screen that faces the pilot, radar contrived abstract geometries, projected white on red, reminded me of the 15th century perspective diagrams of that great master, Paolo Uccello.

Art in bed coverings

Needlework can be true art. In September, I reviewed the display of Hawaiian quilts at the Iikai with all the respect one owes to masterpieces of op art.

And architectural blueprints can be thrilling. In November, "Hawaii's Historic Architecture," at the Central Library, clarified Hawaii's past. The measured and ruled renderings proved more eloquent in recounting the story than the many words of many novelists.

Art had its day in court. Art as a mouthpiece for dissenters has through the centuries been a potent weapon. The so-called flag, a cut-paper affair, displayed at a University rally, stirred enough emotions to bring its creators before a judge.

In itself it was not exactly art but stood directly within the current of a long tradition: Daumier in France, who, with searing political lithographs, helped topple from their thrones a king and an emperor. In Mexico, Jose Guadalupe Posada, etching for the people at large the meaning of their own Revolution.

I also found art in art



Juliette May Fraser's Madonna and Child-With-Sword.

shows. But we may take that for granted.

'Tis the season to be prophetic

It is also at this time of the year that a spirit of prophecy seizes many a writer. As the New Year is ushered in, assorted seers will spell for a believing public the events

to come in 1967.

Of course, exactly one year from now there will be no few mea culpas, and discreet admissions that some of the visions had been vastly out of focus.

Following the hallowed custom, I shall now lovingly dust my own crystal ball.

Here goes:



First Prophecy: Provided with more than ample funds to achieve its noble purpose, our Council for Culture and the Arts will enter the second phase of its activities. It will contact individual artists and give them active help.

Second prophecy: Bolstered by the designation of Hawaii as a natural and national treasure, all City planners and City Fathers will resolutely reject any attempts to instigate variations. The master plan will be their Bible.

Fine Arts fund for the Capitol

Third prophecy: In the new Capital building, the two and one-half percent originally allotted for the Fine Arts will be used strictly for that purpose. If by inadvertence this sum has already been diverted to general construction costs, an equivalent sum shall be raised to make operative the original purpose.

Crystal balls have no vocal chords. Nevertheless they have feelings, and a sly way of making them known. Mine, from crystal clear suddenly turned opaque and cloudy.

Next year at this date, I intend to take a short vacation, if only to some other Island. I admit that prophecy is with me more of an avocation than a true vocation. I did my best!