

ART

by Jean Charlot



Fair time again

Magic Island already held a touch of magic. For it was magical enough in our land of plenty to conjure out of the sea the desolate mirage of an Arabian desert!

Its sand dunes lacked only a train of camels silhouetted over the horizon to be believable.

Until July 9, Magic Island houses another kind of magic, one of a gayer kind.

For the duration of the 50th State Fair, the synthetic desert shall be filled with the noise and motion of Ferris wheels and merry-go-rounds, of Twisters, Tilt-a-Whirls and — my favorite — Mad Mouse!

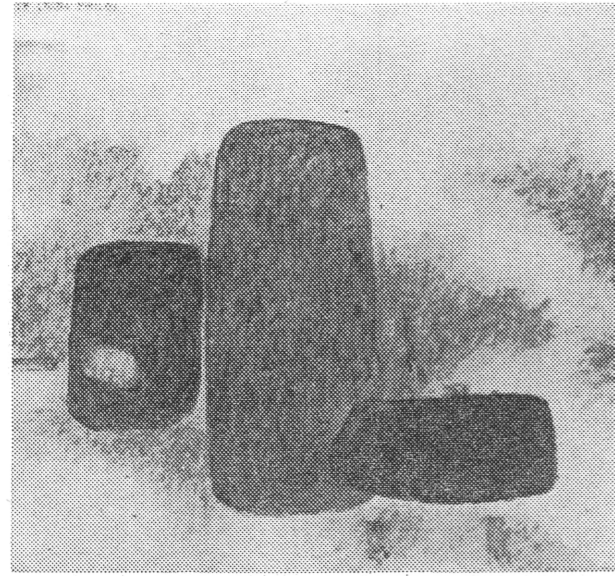
My visit to the Fair proved somewhat premature. The fur and feather contingent had not yet arrived. Flowers, vegetables and fruits, however, provided the genteel atmosphere of a true country fair.

The goal: Culture

My goal was the Cultural Tent where the Fine Arts are displayed.

On the way there arose many tempting sidepaths. Genuine Pop art popped all around me!

Be they high or low, con-



"Rocks" by Joan Gima

cal or mushroom shaped, all tents are clothed in a bold arras of giant stripes.

Given another century of wear and tear, the mounts of the merry-go-rounds will doubtless be put to pasture in some museum of American folk art.

The daubers who transformed these wooden horses into polychromies showed a blatant disregard for realism. As did before them the

Renaissance master, Paolo Uccello, in his famed battle paintings.

I saw a crimson horse with blue mane and egg-yellow trappings. A green horse sports an orange mane, and an orange horse a green one. Drug addicts would chose to straddle the giant pink rabbit, with its saddle painted a strident yellow.

Here, an ancient folksy concept joins a new and so-

phisticated one. The sculptures of a merry-go-round are not made merely to be looked at. They are Happenings: to sit on, to move with, to rejoice at!

Circus wagons

After that, I loitered among circus wagons embellished with dynamic pictures painted directly on their planks.

Wagon panels are as jolly as circus posters. A clown devours an ice-cream cone shaped like an inverted clown's hat. A lion tamer forces his snarling lion to jump through a hoop; but the man takes fright at the sight of a floating pink elephant.

My last distraction was a boldly painted mural. It piled together giant pimientos, onions, a steaming cup of coffee, lettuce leaves, 12 eggs in their carton.

But this was not yet a part of my promised land. It was the backdrop for a booth utilitarian in purpose, "Food Prices in Perspective."

The photographs

My first care as I reached the Fine Arts section was to have another look at the display of photographs. I knew them well, for I was one of a jury of three that gave the prizes.

The jurying had lasted until midnight. We did it by pushing buttons that activated a home-made computer.

We were asked to translate our esthetic reactions into numbers. Beauty, or the lack of it, was electrically recorded as ranging from one to five. Jurying had been both fun and hard work.

That noon, my feeling was that of the morning after. Even so, the prize photographs looked good. Among others I further singled out for quality Bren Breneman's "Embrace," a close-up of two iron links in a chain, intensely textured.

Also "Cane Fire," by Tyrus Tanimoto, outfocused in grays and suggesting, despite the camera technique, Oriental brush painting.

In the sculpture section stood the seven models of the Damien statue contest, over which such a battle was fought.

The battle is over. The Ma-



"Cousins, Age 11" by David E. Thompson

risol winner rates a plaque of its own. I would have patented my own entry on the head but the chicken wire that protects the statues got in the way.

The paintings

The paintings are a refreshing sight. Either there was no jury or an extraordinarily well informed one. Artfulness and artlessness rub elbows. Realism and abstraction fraternize.

The paintings jostle each other regardless of size, color or style. In fact, their informality reflects that of the fair crowd, fed on malasadas, that looks at them.

Outstanding is a double portrait, "Cousins, Age 11," painted by David E. Thompson. Its realism is almost exacting. Yet it is so delicately wrought that it may be savored as pure color harmonies.

Thompson's entry is repre-

sentational and excellent. Joan Gima's "Rocks" is thoroughly abstract and equally excellent. Relations, positions, the amount of space between bulks, help us to concentrate beyond appearances.

Semi-abstracted and in a more Western vein, I also liked Carol Ann LeGoullon's acrylic, "Banyan Roots," illustrated here.

A fair of this sort remains unique as a visual experi-

ence. Too often is art sheltered as if it was an invalid. Museums and art galleries should not be its only habitat.

Art in the streets

Indeed, it is good that art should be taken away from those cities of refuge and made, so to speak, to walk the streets. Art must be good and tough that can resist such exposure.

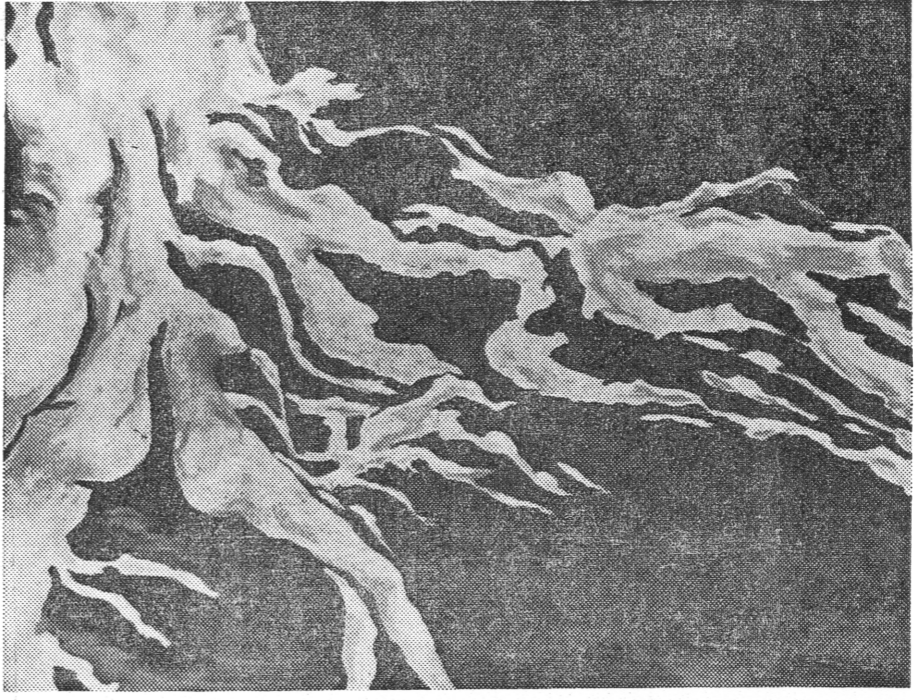
Also the Fair, by coupling folk art and the Fine Arts, reminds us that the borderline between the two is tenuous indeed. Great Masters always were respectful of folk art.

In his workshop, Michelangelo hung a single work of art. It was a coarse woodcut representing a skeleton, printed to sell at fairs for a penny.

The skeletons that the Master frescoed in the Hell of his Last Judgment are Turn to page C-3, col. 4



Panel on a circus wagon



"Banyan Roots" by Carol Ann LeGoullon

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likely to have been inspired by this penny sheet.

Art of the cities

In contemporary art also, there exists an undoubted give-and-take between folk art and the Fine Arts. But present day folk art is not anymore of the rustic kind. It is the folk art of our big cities.

Before James Rosenquist rose to fame as a master of Pop art, he was a none-too-successful abstract expressionist. For a living, he painted billboards.

One day, as he tells the story, the scales fell from his eyes. He realized that what he painted for a living — objective renderings of mercantile goods — was more beautiful than the dark abstract broodings he put on canvas as a means of self-expression.