

ART

by Jean Charlot

An annual exhibition

Currently held at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, the 18th Annual Exhibition of Artists of Hawaii. It includes paintings and sculptures, prints and drawings and, as is unavoidable nowadays, mixed media.

The sole juror entrusted with the delicate task of separating the esthetic sheep from the non-esthetic goats was this year, as in previous years, a museum man: Paul Mills, curator of the Oakland Art Museum.

Though as a rule mild and well mannered, museum men may be as drastically explicit in regard to their taste as any archangel on Judgment Day. I know. More than once on similar occasions I have felt their steel at the nape of my neck.

At such a juncture I find myself communing by mail and phone with rejected artists, those who are symbolically thrown into the outer darkness. There they are left to gnash their teeth until the coming year. Then, with renewed hope, they shall again pay their entry fee.

There were times — some refer to them as the good old times — when a juror could win the praise of sophisticates by the simple expedient of rejecting all representational paintings while accepting all abstractions.

Today, styles are mixed

Not any more. Today, esthetic currents, far from flowing in one direction, are more in the nature of an eddy. Styles are so thoroughly mixed that the rule of thumb concerning abstractions holds sway no more.

In fact, in this show, some of the most "progressive" entries, by some of our most aggressive artists, are unmistakably representational!

Given this variety of approaches, is it not time to reassess past estimates? When the abstract movement was at its zenith, a roomful of the proper kind of art could prove rather monotonous.

I for one craved for distraction, for the sight of an apple or of a face, some recognizable part of objective nature.

Nowadays the new Roman-



BY DUANE PREBLE—"Dying Woman," a charcoal drawing.

ticism reinstates subject matter. It tugs heartily at our viscera. It tackles Wagnerian themes unabashed. Man, in his nakedness, is shown pursued by modern Furies, as in Sueko Kimura's "Paradox." Its tiny figures, wondrously drawn, could be escapees from Auguste Rodin's Gates of Hell!

The awesome goddess, its many limbs rotating like those of a Hindu deity, assails the unhappy humans.

Abstract art shunned punctiliously the least shade of



BY MEYER CUMMINS — "Ho'ohiwahiwa," an ink drawing.

literature. The new art courts the power of words assiduously. Tattooed on the chest of Kimura's goddess one reads its word equivalent: "Modern technology and homage to ancient ritual."

Lawrence Kaneshiro also mixes visual effects with elaborate literary captions. In his case, decal transfer — the up-to-date form of collage — brings together illustrations culled from newspapers and magazines.

I reproduce, "To Undo what has already been untidiously the least shade of done."

Incongruously thrown together are the blonde head of a wistful female and an army of bishops in full regalia. The female could be construed as a lost sheep. The herd of good shepherds could be searching for her. And maybe not.

Kaneshiro uses photographic "ready-mades" to plunge us in the thicket of representation. This, and his unabashed use of words to strengthen the visual meaning, forces us to realize how drastic the changes in the esthetic winds.

Compared with Kaneshiro, Duane Preble, only yesterday deemed our bad boy of the arts, acquires a sort of classical hue.

Discreet and enigmatical

His drawing, "Dying Woman," entirely wrought by hand, is discreet and even enigmatical in its portrait of human plight. Its dynamic elegance suggests some of the flowing elusiveness found in Rodin's bust portraits.

Doubtless, Art Nouveau, a half-century in eclipse, is now historical enough to make news!

Set against the new esthetic, abstract art acquires added dignity. Before, its scrupulous care in avoiding representation could have been construed as an affectation. Now that, thanks to decal, one small picture contains more news events than the eye can encompass, the relative emptiness of abstractions allows us to ponder over the laws of rhythm and color that are the very stuff of which the visual arts are made.

Granted that our minds are clogged by blood and blows, by Vietnam and racial strife, abstract art underlines the fact that these will not remain with us as long as art will.

Timelessness, away from headlines, is of its essence. One contacts it in Joan Gima's "Two," a near monochrome rich in Oriental insight.

One contacts it in John Kjargaard's "Yellow Garden," based on Occidental values. Its balanced aloofness tells us much concerning human dignity, as much as would outspoken cries of rebellion.



BY LAWRENCE KANESHIRO—"To Undo What Has Already Been Undone."

"Yellow Garden" has just been acquired by the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. It will eventually decorate one of the State buildings. The choice is an auspicious beginning for a program meant to become Statewide.

When abstract art alone reigned sovereign, one wished for new trends to rise and challenge its dictatorship. The wish has come true.

The new objectivity clamors for a place in the limelight. In this new context, abstract art grows in stature. A museum aura already surrounds it. Its place is safe in art history.

Only artists may go "on a trip" without need of an artificial stimulus. Neither abstract nor realistic, some of the works exhibited pack hallucinatory powers.

Richard Carse's "Untitled," though leaning to Art Nouveau, departs from the decorative. The colors are psychedelic: liver green and lemon yellow flashing against electric blues. Wriggling curves, suggestive of a bucket of live bait, stop moving long enough to expose a haunting Medusa mask.

The theme of Medusa, here a head expressed on a heroic scale, is also seen in

Canes Arancan's "Porque lloras Alba."

Purposely disjointed brushstrokes, a classical flavor distorted through terror, are, in their mad way, curiously reminiscent of late Roman mosaics.

As to its Spanish title, it

may refer to Federico Garcia Lorca's play, "La Casa de Bernardo Alba," or simply to Dawn, timorously refusing to light still another day.

This year, the sole juror rejected over 300 entries. Doubtless, professional qual-

ity results from this ruthless weeding out. But there is also a danger in this single-minded pursuit of perfection.

I do not refer to the sorrows of rejected artists. It is said that artists thrive on sorrow.

But as art is concerned, the accent on technical pulchritude may lead to impoverishment. Professionalism is too often coupled with a loss of innocence.

Praiseworthy as the Academy annual show proves to be, I would suggest as an antidote to the taste of this quasi-official event a visit, on a weekend, to the outer fence of our Zoo.

Of the artists that exhibit along this fence, not all achieve esthetic absolutes.

Innocence, oftentimes, proves more precious than academic knowhow.



BY RICHARD CARSE—Untitled, an acrylic.