

ART

by Jean Charlot



Art by the armed forces

Last Sunday, the Sixth Annual Armed Forces Art Show opened at the Ala Moana Center. Next Wednesday there is a preview of Vietnam Combat Art — from the 25th Infantry "Tropic Lightning" Division — at the Contemporary Arts Center in the News Building.

That art and war make strange bedfellows is obvious. That they are bracketed as such in the news is a fact.

The diversity that marks the Ala Moana display is pleasing. Being practicing artists, the three jurors acted humanely. They sacrificed that most elusive of goals, museum caliber, in favor of common-sense understanding.

Being themselves artists, the jurors did not confuse their role with that of executioners. They were cautious before inflicting death by rejection, even though those who do not know how it feels affirm that it is quite painless.

Thus there is in this show a wide variety of attainments. The professional and the amateur, the sophisticate and the guileless, the lamb and the lion, all bask at peace in the limelight.

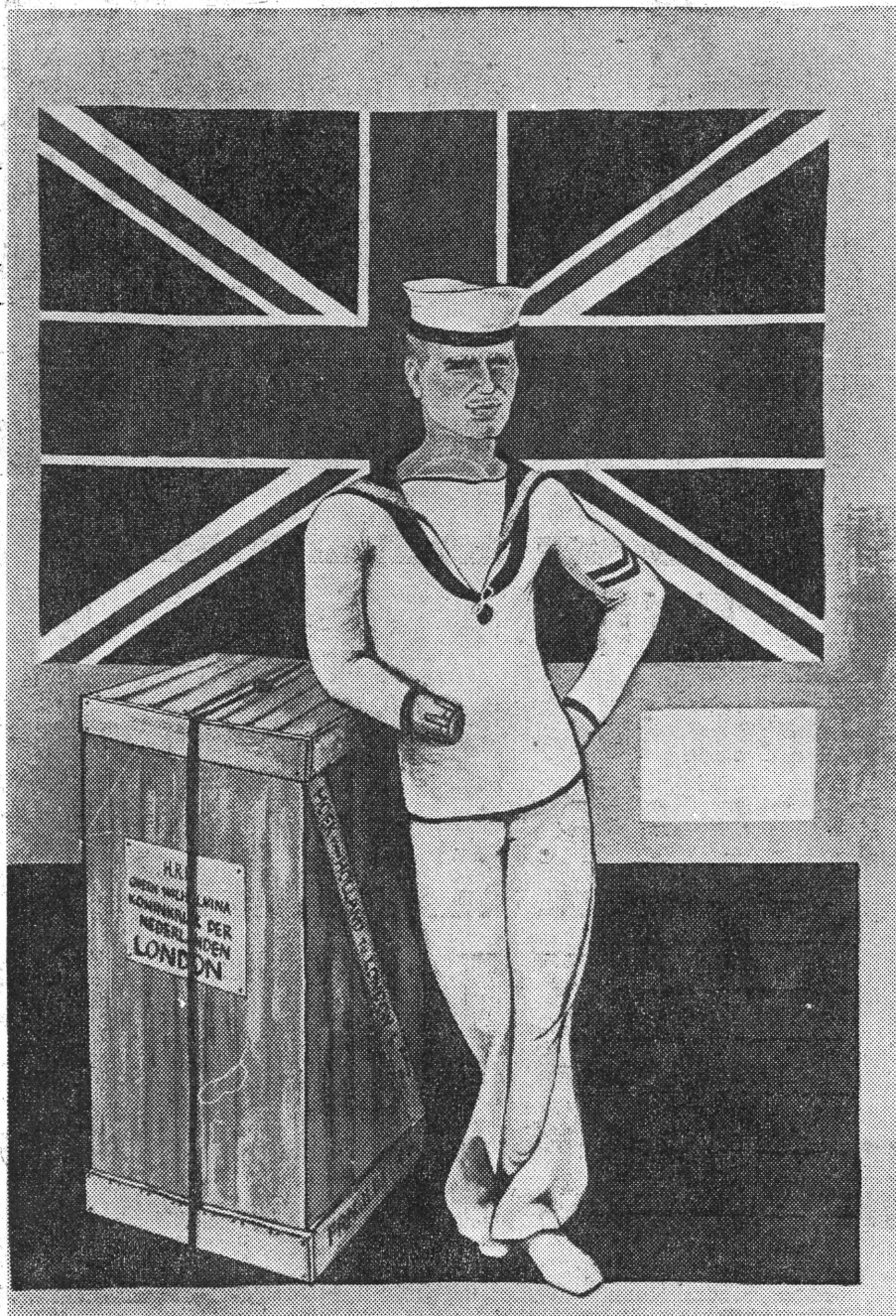
A subtle color harmony

Colette M. Mills displays in "The Lemon Nude" a drawing knowhow and a subtle color harmony that are a convincing reproof for some of her more blatant neighbors.

If Colette Mills knows how, Rafael Pena certainly tries hard. In "Second to None," he depicts President John F. Kennedy witnessing in spirit the landing of our spacemen on the moon.

Earth is seen as a geographic globe whirling in the night skies. Our heroes wear spacesuits and globular helmets. Even though their features are shrouded we could hardly take them for Russians. They plant on the lunar crust an unmistakable American flag, in a farflung repeat of the famed Iwo Jima tableau.

Neither knowing art by rote nor groping for it, Mar-



"Portrait of My Father" by Marney H. Baker

ney H. Baker is decidedly a personality.

"Portrait of my Father" assaults our retina with the brutal rendering of a flag, its blues, whites and reds undiluted by esthetic subtleties. It cannot be said that the artist makes the eagle scream, as the flag is an English flag.

But she certainly makes the lion roar.

In front of the flag a blond English sailor, leaning on a

packing case, displays a steel stump at the end of his mutilated left arm.

Is it naïvete? Is it boldness? The question is answered by a second painting, a triple portrait of the Bronte sisters "Anne, Charlotte and Emily," tuned to feminine hues of gray, off-yellow and violet. In each painting, Marney Baker has consciously achieved her goal.

The problem of war

And what of the war? Granted that victory or defeat are its end product, that is not the end of the story.

More important, war throws two sets of people together who otherwise would not have met.

In Mexico, the clash between conquistador and Indian resulted neither in vic-

tory nor in defeat, but rather in the birth of the Mexican nation.

A similar osmosis, a capillary interaction more persuasive than any slogan coined by hawk or dove, seems already at work in our first head-on clash with the mainland of Asia.

Witnesses are Thomas Lawson's "Why?," showing a Vietnamese mother holding her infant dead from starvation.

And James Mercado's soberly titled "V.C.," a powerfully restrained pen and ink drawing of two Viet Cong men scanning the threatening unseen.

And Lawrence Prado's "Pride Overcomes Death," a Viet Cong prisoner, arms roped behind his back, eyes and mouth taped, defiantly accepting his fate.

In Barbara Bronson's "Soldier of Con Thien," the meticulously rendered droplets of rain on the helmet and features of the huddled marine set an anguished mood more convincing than would a spattering of blood.

Drawings from combat zone

A show within a show are the wash drawings, made under combat conditions by Marine First Lt. Leonard H. Dermott.

Under fire, men try to write letters home. And men try to read letters from home.

The bachelor life of the lonely warrior is displayed in "Laundry in Khe Sanh."

A giant death machine, an M109 self-propelled howitzer, is caught plodding along in "The Hulk."

The sight of art in war set me reminiscing. I too, long ago, experienced art under combat conditions. I still have the sketchbook carried through gassings and shellings, through advances and routs, on the Oise front.

Of those incredibly distant times I remember the monsters we became, in maculate blues, with archaic gas masks for snouts.

The biplanes that seem a gag to the movie goer of today streaked the doomsday skies.

To refresh my memory, I leafed through my World War I sketchbook. I found no war scenes. Instead, with patient attention, I had chosen to delineate what meager herbs or lilies of the field



"Why?" by Thomas Lawson

came my muddy way.

Indeed, how could I tell how many weeks or how many days were left to complete my taking stock of the sights of this earth!

War brings good, evil

Were it not for war, Jacques Callot would not have etched his "Miseries of War," or Francisco Goya his "Disasters of War."

Granted that war inspired

great art, it also subtracted from this world great artists, by the simple expedient of killing them in their youth.

Who can assess the loss for France when Jean Frederic Bazille — the equal of Renoir in his day — was felled in 1870 by a Prussian bullet.

Who knows what greatness was lost for Germany when Franz Marc — pioneer expressionist — was killed in 1916 by a French bullet.

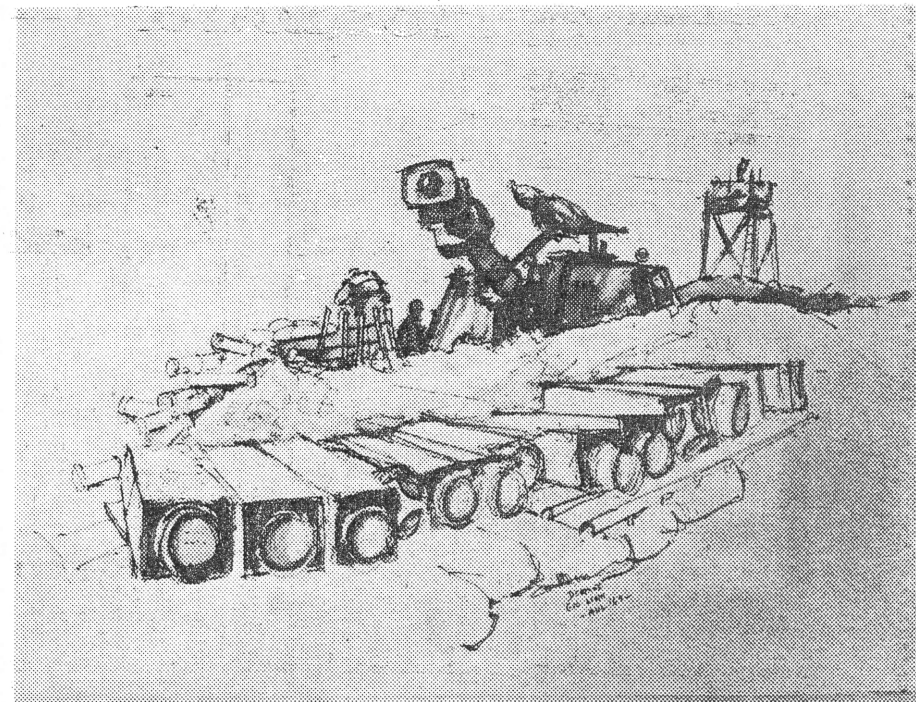
According to the newspapers, a group of business ex-

ecutives, hesitant as to the validity of our war policies, has coined a slogan designed to appeal to a great majority of people.

The slogan, "The man you kill could have become a customer."

I realize how thoroughly that slogan would fall flat, should it be modified thus, "The man you kill could have become a great artist."

Genius is a commodity most people think they can do without.



"The Hulk" by Leonard H. Dermott