

ART

by Jean Charlot



Opening Dec. 2, Hawaii Painters and Sculptors League presents the second half of its annual show at the Hawaiian Savings' Gallery, downtown. I surveyed the entries before they were hung. A few artists had not as yet brought in their works. To them my apologies.

Entries, as is to be expected, range from detailed representation to total abstraction.

In the nineteenth century, the story of Greek art was held to be a beacon of good taste. Greek art, having escaped early from its primitive beginnings, had progressed swiftly to masterpieces so natural that marble had become flesh.

love with the nude he had just carved is a fable that pleased our ancestors. The anecdote would be hard to transpose to our own times, to let us say, a Brancusi.

In the 1930's, taste took an opposite tack. Downgrading classical statues, art-lovers enthused over Cycladic statuettes — ca. 800 B.C. — of women so abstracted as to suggest violins and New Guinea sculptures.

Thirty years later, taste teeters either way. If abstraction, for the onlooker, is still a novelty, then observing picture after picture, he will form his own graph of progress, from naturalism to minimal art.

If a long exposure to abstractions has rubbed off its

veneer of novelty, then there will be a refreshing surprise in choosing as a climax such a detailed scene as Adele Sommerfeld's "Two Girls."

"TWO GIRLS" suggests a true humility on the part of the artist when confronted with the complexities of natural sights. So entranced is she by her models that she proves reluctant to let go even of the smallest detail.

A dark skinned adolescent sitter holds on her lap a haole girl and on the lap of the girl is a rag doll. Each protects and fondles the smaller one. Unity there is, but not a didactic one. It is rather achieved by the centripetal force that binds all three together on the base of their alohas.

Shirley Russell enters "Rosies No. 2." To those who do not know the artist or her work a woman who paints flowers suggests a childish set of watercolors and the dainty handling of a fine sable brush. Instead, her approach is robust. Boxed in the squares within squares of an abstract rainbow of colors, the central bouquet of flowers, pink ones, yellow ones, white ones, swirls aggressively.

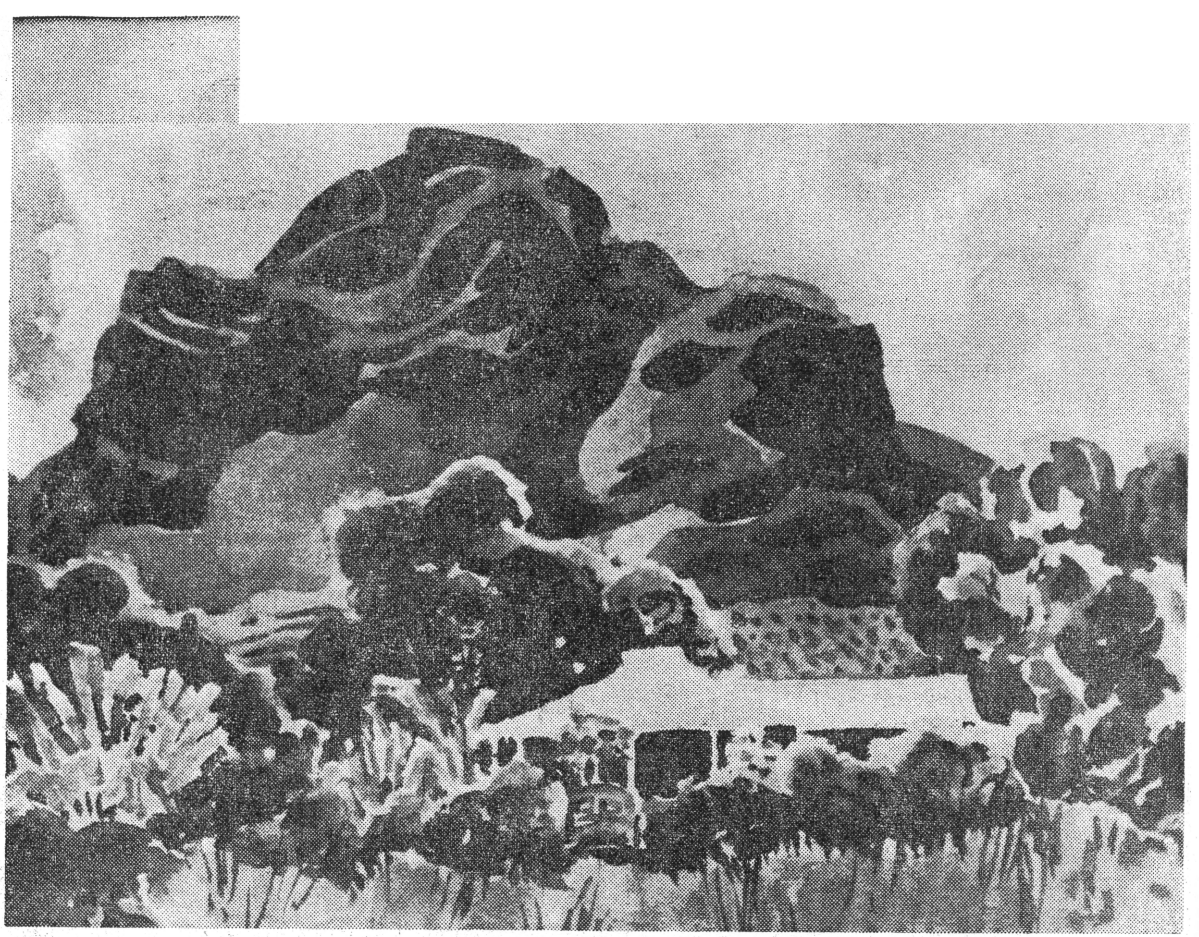
In "Quest" Clare Loring builds a baffling image, somewhat brutal in its black and white contrast. What sighted scene, if any, triggered this particular pictograph?

Right or wrong, from my bag of French memories I brought out remembrances of fireworks in the park of Versailles where, as the rocket soars and explodes at the zenith of the night sky its reflection plunges equally deep into the pool, to depths unplumbed.

TOM PUNDYCK enters "Love." Be it ingenious or ingenuous, "Love" is a contemporary comment. At first sight, one sees an austere scaffolding of verticals and horizontals, a la Piet Mondrian. Then one discovers caged in it at the center of the sober composition, a tiny heart.

Logically, it is totally out of place. Somewhat like the gesture of the hippy girl pinning a flower onto a burly cop's uniform. But it also adds its note of humanity. After all, both the police and Mondrian stand stolidly for law and order.

Juanita Vitousek in her watercolor, "Rural Oahu," plays one more variation on the elusive and yet meaningful mirage of old Hawaii. An unassuming architecture lost in the thick of foliage hud-



"RURAL OAHU" — Juanita Vitousek — one more variation on the meaningful mirage of old Hawaii.

dles against a heroically scaled pall.

Restraint is the key word as to style. Modeling and coloring are achieved by flat, nearly stenciled areas. The artist refuses to play the impressionistic game of dissolving the mountain in atmospheric haze. Instead she emphasizes the faceting of the giant rock.

Slowly, an affinity has matured between this artist and all pohakus, pebbles on the beach, lava flows, rock walls. Kahunas of old, whose task it was to choose among many rocks the few fit to be inhabited by a god, give us a preview of Juanita's vision.

PAUL ROCKWOOD, in his beach scene, barely tampers with his subjects. Two men, a beached outrigger, the sea a long horizontal that the low cliffs repeat. Bathed in light, the values tend so much to white as to make the light blue of the ocean seem dark. Most telling is the fact that the scene is viewed from a very low point of view, as if by an idling beachcomber, lolling in the sand, head barely above ground.

With Louis Pohl's "Beach Wall No. 2" we enter a

realm of sensations not entirely visual. The composition is basic, the vertical of the stone wall crossed by the horizontal of the sea. The upper fourth of the canvas is made of stone and air, textured stone and mauve sky.

To survey the lower three-fourths we should put on snorkel and mask, and dive under. As we dive deeper, the sea changes: from light blue to deep blue. Wall and water coagulate visually as the darkness increases. A russet growth of seaweeds clings to the foot of the wall, its ribbons swirling with the waning and waxing of the sea.

In a series of pictures of which this is one, Pohl has proved himself a master of the sights of the edge of the sea, this thin ring of beauty that encircles our islands, blending to sights the acrid smell of seaweeds and the cadenced motions of the tide flow.

John Wisnosky's "Evening Painting" is, in this series of landscapes, landscape at its most abstract. With minimalist means he has caught that moment, at night fall, when, as the Arab saying states, one cannot differen-

tiate a white thread from a black one. Here, not only a thread, but the horizon, is fast on its way to invisibility.

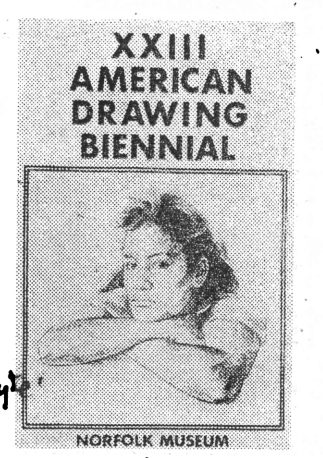
FROM TOP TO bottom the imperceptible gradation carries the eye from the rose mauve of the afterglow in heaven to the mauve rose of an earth soggy with rising mists.

According to taste, each onlooker may read progress or regress in this series of landscapes. It is better yet to remain keenly aware of what makes each artist unique. Max Ernst succinctly phrased it thus: "Painting is not a boxing match."

One of the few three dimensional objects in this show is ~~Cover-Lux~~ "Bone No. 2." The bone is made of glass and would not be out of place in a sixteenth century rendering of an alchemist's lair. It would undoubtedly be the strangest among the mysterious alambics watched over by a stuffed alligator hung from the low rafters. "Bone No. 2" is surrealism without need of an anecdote.

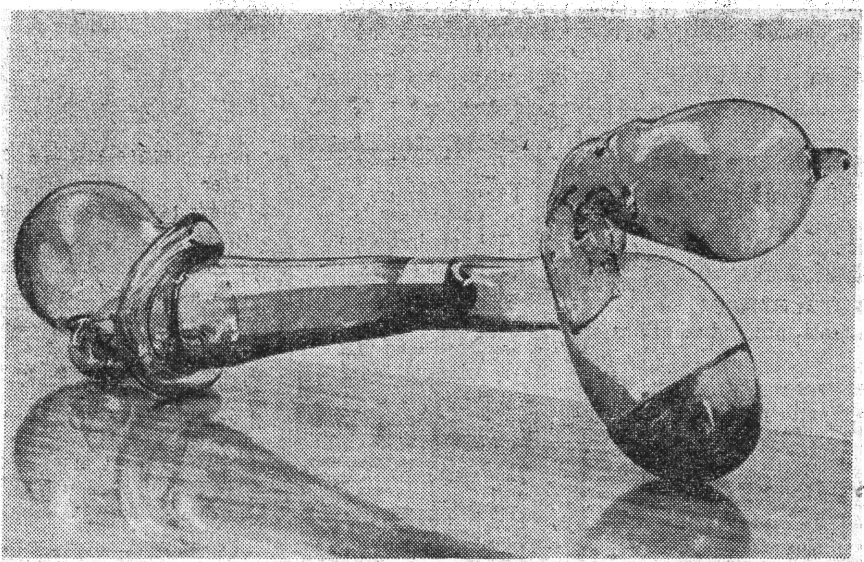
KUDOS: The American Drawing Biennial held at the Norfolk Museum is a hard to

enter show. Franz Griessler has been accepted twice. Critic John Canaday, who juried this year's show, chose Griessler's portrait of an Island girl for the cover of the catalogue. Quite a kudo indeed.



KUDOS — For the second time, Franz Griessler has been accepted in the American Drawing Biennial at the Norfolk Museum. Critic John Canaday, who juried the show, chose Griessler's portrait of an Island girl for the cover of the catalogue. It's a real honor.

PYGMALION FALLING in



"BONE NO. 2" — Surrealism without need of an anecdote.