

ART

by Jean Charlot

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As the year 1970 gets in its stride, original prints will be featured in two shows, both running through the month of February.

Thursday the forty-second Annual of the Honolulu Printmakers will open at the Hawaiian Savings and Loans Gallery, downtown. Beginning yesterday, prints done during the interim session at the University of Hawaii went on exhibition in Jefferson Hall at the East West Center.

Printmaking has to do with community and communication. Oil paintings are only

too often priced for millionaires and museums only. Even the best reproduction of a painting will never pack the thrill of the model. Original prints, for the art lover who is not also a rich man, are the solution.

IT HAS BEEN so ever since the days of medieval pilgrimages, when the penny sheet representing the patron saint was a bona fide woodcut, cut with a knife into a plank au bois de fil, and hand-printed on a screw press. Though his concern was

hardly with art but rather with the salvation of his soul, out came the penny from the pilgrim's knotted kerchief. Returned home, the image nailed to his wall exuded through lines and colors esthetic beauty together with spiritual grace.

Print making and print watching are two distinct kinds of activities. It could prove instructive, even surprising, for the appreciator to observe the print maker when he is at his work.

The interim session just concluded gave the man in the street just such a chance. Organized by the University with an assist from the State Foundation for Culture and the Arts this unusual session lasted two weeks, morning, afternoon and evening.

Tools and materials were free, at least until the original stock became exhausted. No formal registration being required the doers — in this case one should avoid the word students — ranged in age between 18 and 83. Their skills proved as varied as their age. And the styles of their choice ran the gamut from abstraction to photographic.

There was a workshop in lithography — basically drawing on stone — taught in regular session by Russell Davidson. For this off-season session, Val Pikulski acted as instructor. I, myself, was one of the many who took

part in the intaglio workshop — etching metal plates.

RONALD KOWALKE was our instructor, ably assisted by Herbert Warner Jr. Given our great diversity of backgrounds and intents esthetic problems were wisely played low, while emphasizing the practical ones of craft.

Equally diversified were the activities of the intaglio workshop: Scraping, polishing, furrowing the plates, etching, inking, wiping, manning the wheels of presses large and small.

Each artist had his way of doing these things. Some used a jeweler's magnifying glass to scan the plate, some weighed ingredients as carefully as would an old-fashioned druggist.

Others handled their tools as rapiers, as if the muscular effort increased their inspiration.

Others hypnotised, so to speak, the metal plate with intense looks, as if to fix on its smooth surface a psychic image, minus the drudgery of elbow work.

We gathered around the trays filled with acid much like braces of witches stirring malefic potions. In etching, bubbles indeed do spell trouble. Some sly ones coaxed the bubbles away at the caress of a feather. Robust ones exorcised them with a seesaw motion of the whole tray.

Once the plate etched, its inking proposed further choices and further mysteries. A thorough wipe meant a print of clean classical clarity. A more casual wipe superposed to the web of lines trailing fogs of romance. Colors are somewhat frowned upon by intaglio masters. Values alone should shoulder the burden of telling the story.

SITUATED ON University Avenue at Moiliili, the workshop had been once a doughnut shop. Its large window, originally meant to offer edible displays, functioned as a perfect picture window. Lost in their respective inner worlds, the printmakers had hardly leisure enough to steal a glance at the outer world, in this case the bus stop for the Woodlawn line.

Bus passengers, however, grounded as they were between sparse buses, had no other choice but to take advantage of the free spectacle. They could observe artists at their tasks under ideal sous cloche conditions.

So strange were the sights and sounds for the uninitiated that a bus driver even felt impelled to leave his station and investigate such goings-on. It was May Fraser who took time from her work to soothe the inquirer. She explained that, though we acted "high" the end product was entirely legal and, generally speaking, worthy.

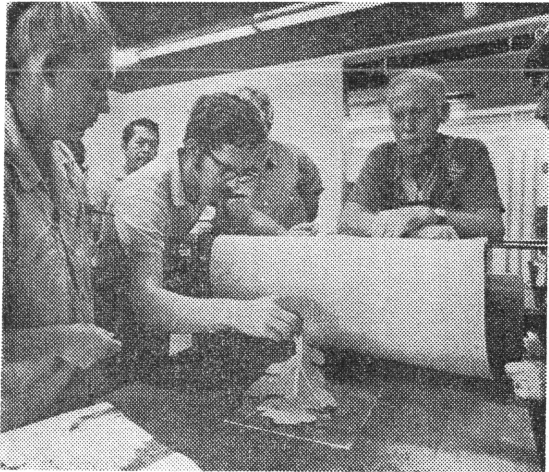
WHEN LAST seen, the driver was still shaking his head in disbelief as he proceeded through the depths of Manoa Valley.

Both exhibitions, on the campus and downtown, will feature quite a number of original prints hatched within the two busy weeks of this interim session. Come opening day, the infant prints, the hectic pangs of birth now a thing of the past, will each be swaddled in a clean white mat, given a title and a number. All will parade in file on the walls in quiet, well-drilled fashion.

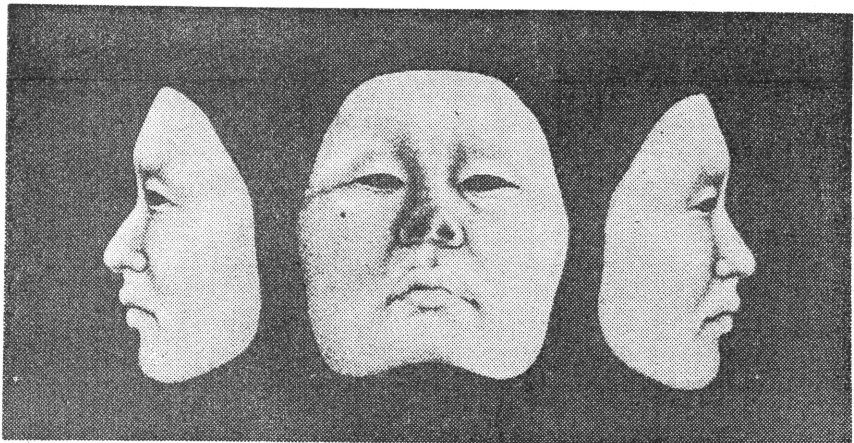
An art lover visiting one of these shows may — for a small sum — take home one of the foundlings. At first its lines and values will give him pleasure. He will appreciate this new spot on the wall. On deeper acquaintance, beyond lines and values, beyond even esthetic considerations, the art lover may contact through that print the throbbing soul of its begetter, the artist.



"ESTHETIC BEAUTY WITH SPIRITUAL GRACE"—Birds which were executed by Juliette May Fraser.



"THE THROBBING SOUL"—Artists at work: from left are Nita Buggs, Ron Kowalke, John Kjargaard and Barbara Engle. — Photo by Francis Haar.



WORK OF A STUDENT — Carl Kaneshiro is the artist who created the three masks.



CONTRAST—A study in moods is the work of a student, Martha Bell.