



WOMAN WEARING A RUFF—"Cool geometric computations . . ."

ART

by Jean Charlot



Prints that have recently entered the permanent collection at the Honolulu Academy of Arts will be on display from Thursday through July 5.

Our age takes reproductions of works of art so much for granted that it may not be idle to emphasize the differences between original prints and reproductions. Color facsimile of masterpieces cram nowadays the polychrome albums that tend to replace, in cultural homes, the album of family photographs as piece de resistance. Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo, stand there at attention, ready to answer our call. So why lose time on lesser names.

In truth, a giant chasm separates these bedizened facsimiles from even the less showy among the original prints gathered at the Academy. The finer the facsimile, the more heavily have photography, chemistry and sundry pieces of machinery interposed their cogs inktroughs, levers, rubber mats and synchronized rollers between the original work of art and its shrunken image.

ORIGINAL PRINTS, such as those in this show, tend to look more humble, primitive and naive than the sophisticated end-products of up-to-date power presses. And yet, despite its often rustic flavor, the original print alone has true esthetic worth. The simpler the machinery concerned in the making of a print, the closer comes its possessor to commune with what makes the artist tick.

Among the prized prints treasured by museums and collectors are trial proofs that the maker — he may be a Millet or a Gauguin — made while at work, when in the heat of creation. Here are no numbered copies, no paper de luxe, no marginal niceties.

Laying down for a moment his tools, the artist would ink *au tampon* his block, lay over it a shred of paper and lift the proof at the pressure of his thumbnail. Cheap paper, uneven inking, lack of margins, mark such trial proofs. Yet they are precious above others, finely enmeshed they are with the spiritual core of the art work.

Contemporary eyes, sated on the spectacle of ever more perfect facsimiles of masterpieces, may sober from this jag by observing here truly original prints.

FOR THE student of art, prints are also a means of contacting, as genuinely as one would with more expensive and bulkier examples, great individual artists and great collective art movements.

French Fauvism was already represented at the academy, by Matisse and Derian among others. Not so the parallel movement of German expressionism.

Among the newly acquired prints is one by Max Pechstein, one of those expressionist masters. Two nudes in frenetic embrace appear jammed between a Wagneri-

an dragon and an African or Oceanic idol, perhaps a memory of the artist's stay in the Palau Islands.

Pechstein's inspiration merges into frenzy. The woodblock is cut, or rather axed with a woodsman's blunt strength. The crude coloring emphasizes the anti-classical style. And yet, one is not a true savage at wish.

UNDERLYING the uncouthness there lingers a subtle reminder of European know-how, a memory of the Byzantine mosaics that Pechstein so admired in Italy.

"The Kiss of Judas" is a straightforward lithograph by another master of germanic vintage, the Austrian Oskar Kokoschka. Its style marks an iconoclastic desire to run counter to all preconceived ideas of what religious art should be.

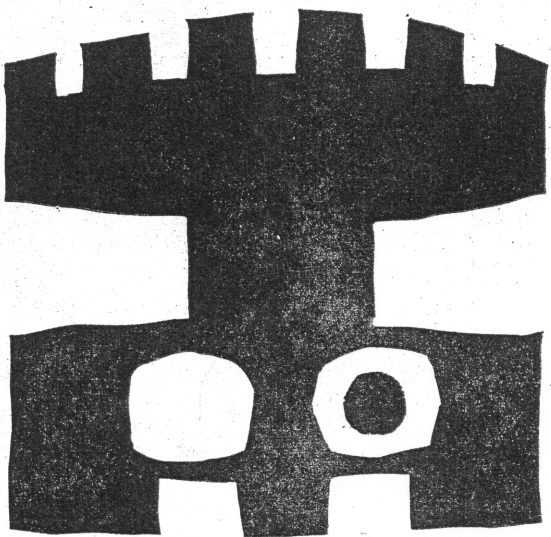
As happens with a Shakespeare play staged in modern clothing, to make away with Roman togs, Arab bur-noose and such antiquated paraphernalia, helps us reappraise on deep human terms the poignant episode.

Though fiercely set against the Pharisaic hue of much pious art, Kokoschka cannot pull away from the impact of tradition. Purely medieval in concept is his image of St. Peter, rotund and undecided, holding the sword with which, as in a mystery play, we know that he will soon sever Malchus' unholy ear.

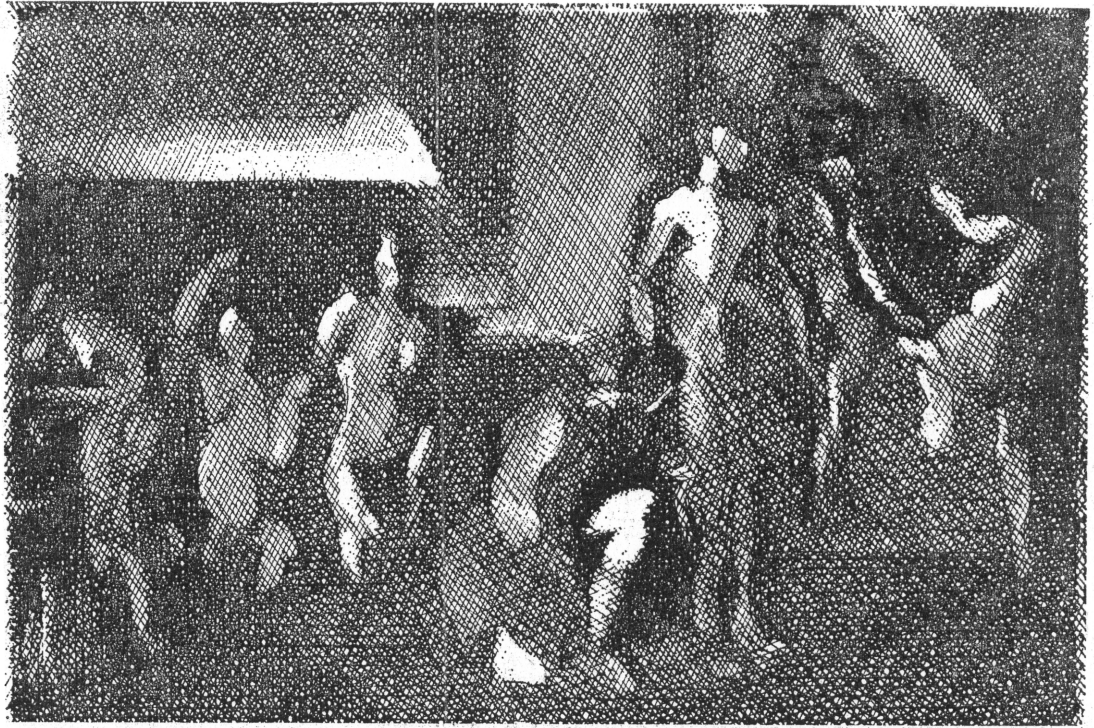
ART MAY be equally valid when served hot or cold. Expressionism emphasized the excitement of art-making. Cubism instead meant to keep on a short leash all animal spirits. The cubist sifted his models through a fine mesh of abstract computations. Having thoroughly plumbed the three dimensions of the objective world, cubism often uneasily skirted the forbidden problems of a fourth dimension.

The cubists were as intent in strengthening their ties with tradition as had been the expressionists in severing them. Among the cubist prints, Marcoussis' noble composition, classical nudes perceived through a haze of analytical prisms, reminds one of similar pyramidal arrangements by that great

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RUKU—Werner Graeff—"strict disciplines."



THE PROUD TWENTIES—"Disciplined technique of ruled lines . . ."

classicist, Nicolas Poussin.

Jacques Villon goes further in his "The Proud Twenties." This print is classical not only because of the noble proportions of its figures, but by its disciplined technique of ruled lines, etched as cleanly as those of a steel engraving.

THOUGH THEY happened in this century, fauvism and cubism are already a part of history. Among strictly contemporary artists one may also find masters. Werner Graeff sums up in his linocuts a lifelong esthetic experience, rooted in the strict disciplines of the Weimar Bauhaus.

Unlike Pechstein, Graeff does not equate the primitive with savagery. His calm images hark back to the first examples of abstract art, the so-called coat of arms painted on the walls of the prehistoric cave of Lascaux.

A loner, the Chilean Sergio Gonzalez Tornero, distills art out of art by aptly commenting on "Vincent Van Gogh's Left Shoe." Based on the Dutch master's still life of a pair of shoes, made of leather but so humble and worn as to suggest wooden sabots, Tornero's visual commentary transforms the mud-spattered leather into a glorious extravaganza.

PERHAPS the Chilean remembers the mystique of Latin American chapels, with their gessoed and painted statues of saints, wherein the wounds of martyrdom are made to glow like rubies.

Thus does our unconcluded century already yield a rich harvest of art. But other centuries, sparingly represented though they are in this show, imply a past fully as rich as is our present.

In his etched roundel of 1644, "Woman Wearing a Ruff," Wenzel Hollar shows himself a master of chiaroscuro, not unlike that to be seen in the portraits that the young Rembrandt painted within that same decade.

And to this expected old-masterly flavor Hollar adds cool geometric computations surprisingly modern in their abstract content. Such as the role played in the composition by the ruff of the lady, that repeats in depth what the circular shape of the print states in two dimensions.