

ART

EDUARDO ORTIZ AT GUATIBIRI GALLERY

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to the STAR

Eduardo Ortiz, the Puerto Rican sculptor, has exhibited his work over the years in New York, Florence, Rome, Milan, Naples, Athens, Cairo and Lybia. Recently he came back to Puerto Rico bringing with him gifts to his island from afar and from the past.

He also brought along, as if perchance, some of his own art in the form of drawings and sculpture.

He exhibited his gifts to the island in April in the UPR Library's Special Projects Gallery. They are the charming and personal beginnings of a small archeological collection which will eventually go to his native Barranquitas for exhibit in its cultural center until it has a museum. His drawings and sculpture are on exhibit at the Guatibiri Gallery in Rio Piedras.

The archeological exhibition consisted of Greek and Roman pieces from the 7th Century B.C. to the 2nd Century A.D., dug up by himself in hallowed Sicily. There are three horizontal display cases full. I saw the human figures first, at least three Kore, two votive heads, and a Roman head almost complete that still remains alive in my memory. (It lay down, so forlorn, so aware). There were eight lekythos or perfume containers and a perfume jar speaking of Sicilian woman's coquetry; 20 4th Century B.C. silver coins once minted and used in Syracuse and these, especially the coins of dolphin-surrounded Arethusa, are still lovely and tempting. They have been arrested here when they should be running around. Watch out! The rest of the collection consisting of jewelry cases, various lamps and cups, glass flasks and kitchen and water pots and jars complete the present lot. It is a beginning of sorts, a prayer of hope.

If all diggers of artifacts were as generous as Ortiz is; if they were less



Bust of a Woman

hoggish, commercial or attention seeking, I'd sing more often of human worth and dignity and I'd need less black humor to deal out. Black humor in our innate Puerto Rican variety of criticism or conceptual and process art is a defense mechanism for avoiding loss of hope and-or madness and for cutting invaders down to size, our size. It was used to avoid boredom and "kill father off" by such Dada bourgeois playboys as Duchamp and Picabia. It is used to kill boredom by the intellectual international jet-set, those elitist-cultists who play and lecture East-West or North-South for axis grinding purposes or to educate the natives everywhere with knowledge already frozen in books.

An Ortiz is welcome.

Ortiz told me that he will keep sending pieces for the collection as he digs them up in the Sicilian countryside. Syracuse is to be his present central haunt. The sacred Mediterranean archaeological past will come to rest in Barranquitas with the Caribbean geological past. The center is near Barrio Barrancas and there lie those marble mountains encrusted with fossils which are wonders to behold. I hope this collection doesn't become a fossil.

Drawings and sculpture by Ortiz are being shown in Guatibiri Gallery, 1003 Gonzalez Ave., just off Amalia Marin St. in Santa Rita, very near the UPR Campus. Most of my students "went-for" the Ortiz show. It has an enigmatic style of its own, as of a voice from a void, a voice from afar, a restless search under a curiously brittle and eclectic control.

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Accustomed as we are in Puerto Rico to a proliferation of colorful painting and graphic exhibitions, it is a marvel to enter a sculptor's show. The immediate sense of austerity and tri-dimensionality without color is very relaxing unless the sculptures are out of scale, (as Phidias' huge "Athenae" within the little box of the Parthenon). Imagine an Egyptian Empire piece in Puerto Rico. Even our capitol's rotunda would be small since the Egyptians designed with the eternal desert expanse as their sculpture hall. I am waiting to see what will happen when Buscaglia puts his large bronze works in our island landscape. I wish him well. This show by Ortiz has our sense of interior space. The white and grey drawings on the walls plus the beautiful dark greys of the sculp-



Madonna



tures sing a song of harmonious delight.

Most of the works on display however, aren't really sculpture in the full round. They tend to be frontal presences best seen against a flat wall. They are not reliefs projecting from their own ground but free-floating images without a background which insist on facing you always. Why? Are they protective or defensive masks put in front of an incognito or hidden god or spirit?

An example is his mixed media, "Deterioration of the Races of Man" which is a strange title since he is no racist. It's a lovely constellation of different masks staring at you silently. Though the results are beautiful, I wish he hadn't used so many materials in one single work: wood, metal, plaster and aluminum plastic. The plastic is the "bondo" which mechanics use for car-body patching.

It is crawling into sculpture since it is metalized and permits "direct" sculpturing. Julio Rosado del Valle is producing excellent work with such a texturological medium. It avoids modelling in clay, then casting in plaster, then casting in bronze in a foreign foundry.

GALLERIES

CARNEGIE EXHIBITION HALL

Carnegie Library
Ponce de Leon Ave., Stop 1
Puerta de Tierra 724-1046
Open Mon. to Fri. 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Current Show: Oils by Katherine Newson;
Jewelry by Walter Newson.

CASA DEL LIBRO

255 Calle del Cristo 723-0354
Open Mon. to Fri. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sat. 2 to 5 p.m.

GALERIA BOTELLO

208 Cristo St. 723-2879 Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Closed Sun. Oils, graphic, acrylics, sculpture
and Santos. Work of Latin-American Artists.

GALERIA COABEY

Calle San Sebastian 101
Graphics, Drawings and sculpture.
Current show: sculpture by Rafael
Lopez del Campo

GALERIAS DE LAS AMERICAS

152 Fortaleza Street 723-5787. 725-1455. Open
Tues. to Sat. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Current show: oils and silkscreens by
Emilio Sanchez; photos by Fritz Henle.

GALERIA MARIA RECHANY

Magdalena 1363 Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mon. to
Sat. 725-4828. Paintings, and prints by Puerto
Rican artists.
Current show: Group exposition by Puerto
Rican artists.

GALERIA GUARAGUAO

Callejon de la Capilla
Corner of San Francisco
Current show: "Muestra Colectiva Puer-
torriquena"

GALERIA GUATIBIRI

Gonzalez and Gandara Sts., Santa Rita, Rio
Piedras.
Current show: Drawing and Sculpture by
Eduardo Ortiz.



Albizu Campos, el Maestro



Forms Within an Eight



Deterioration of the Races of Man

The most beautiful and straight forward piece in the Ortiz show, as far as I am concerned, is his "Bust of a Woman" in repoussé lead. A flat plank of the soft metal was hammered front and back until bossed into the haunting brooding shape which was fittingly displayed in a niche, a quiet secluded spirit very much alive, waiting in its appointed space yet able to fly away.

Another beautiful hammered lead sculpture is the more agonized, "And My Son?". It seems to fly unto itself in a very particular rite of consecration, slightly ego-centered.

Four sculptures in the full round that he does have in the show seem to be very eclectic student work: a fluid "Madonna" in plastic aluminum a "Forms Within an Eight"; a "Winged Thought"; and a much handsomer "Thin Reality" symbol of womanhood. In silver, "Woman is the eye of a needle," it seems to say in its aloneness.

Chided about the above works, he said he hadn't wanted to exhibit the but was pushed to do so. "Relleno," he said. Fillers of space. He should be more adamant about excluding pieces not up to his present stan-

dards. Less is much more in art most times. Italy holds his best art so far. Sculpture is heavy to cart.

The most ambitious and powerful sculpture in the show is his "Sin Forma Precisa" image of Puerto Ricanness. "Without Precise Form," that's us! A man hangs from raised hands in empty space, a Saxon mask covering his face. The solar plexus is a hole a-gape, the pubic region covered not by a fig leaf but by a little mirror instead. The spectator can see himself in the mirror to check up on his own face or Puerto Ricanness. Nice metaphor! Reasonably sculpted in the round, the figure however is best appreciated frontally.

The frontality of most sculptures in this show can be a limiting factor unless sought for on purpose, for special architectural reasons. In this connection I am reminded of the formidable tri-dimensionality of Rafael Lopez del Campos' small animals, as good as any by Mateo Hernandez the Spaniard or by the Egyptian "animaliers." I am also reminded of one reclining woman figure Tomas Batista which can stand next to the best of Maillol, the serene Mediterranean. Such fig-

ures can stand alone under the sky, approached from any angle.

I mention the above Puerto Rican sculptors because they are of the same generation. Ortiz, Lopez del Campo and Tomas Batista exhibited together once in Barranquitas, a town which has produced four sculptors: Lopez del Campo and Ortiz, and Andres Sierra and Hiram Collazo. Batista I understand comes from Ciales, another Jibaro town, not far from that mysterious mountain of marble.

As for the nice simple white-and-grey drawings, Ortiz calls them "estados animicos," states of mind or animus. A stylized realism, a crystalline brittleness, a luminous transparency pervades them all as if they were designed for windows. I enjoyed his "Albizu Campos, el Mastro," "Ausencia en el Yo," "Fetichismo" and "Recogimiento Interior," also maybe "Obliged Hermetism," a picture of a nun and a bad pun. Other titles, such as "Uniform Penetration," "Fusion," "Soul Search," "Vision of Transcendence," "The Unknown" and "Towards Tomorrow" are indicative of his state of mind.

Also indicative is his own written

introduction to the catalog of the show. "Mi caracter inquieto," is his explanation for his wanderlust. "Inquieto" means restless, unquiet, disquieted. In some places in America it means unsatisfied, hankering for or given to something special.

Ortiz studied business administration at UPR, then drawing at the Institute of Culture. He went to work in a N.Y. metal foundry, then in a marble works before pushing on to Europe for "polish." Now in his mid-thirties, every year he goes back to Italy for many long months where he exhibits in three or four collectives and one annual individual show and does a "thousand enredos mas."

"Just now," he tells me with soft patient eyes, "My best works are in Florence, Italy. I am soon going to have a show at the 'D'Este' gallery. 'La Quadriga' gallery also has others. Then on back to Sicily where I work and show most."

"I am sorry I didn't see more of your best," I tell him, as he hurries away to some friends. They are going to a discoteque and seem happy chasing happiness.

Inquieto characters. But some bring gifts! Thanks, Ortiz!

GALERIA LUCARI

Patio Mall, Mayaguez, Open 10-5 Mon. to Sat.
Current show: Collective exhibition:
Puerto Rican artists.

LA GALERIA

Callejon de la Capilla, Old San Juan.
Current show: "The Animals Within," Linoleum
cuts by Consuelo Gotay.

MUSEO DE LA FUNDACION

Behind Tupa Theater, Plaza Colon 725-5962.

Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Mon. Indian
Artifacts and sculpture.
Current Show: Pre-Columbian Meso American
Art.

MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES

Instituto de Cultura 253 Cristo St. 723-2320.
Open every day 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oils, prints
and graphics.

MUSEO DE ARTE

Universidad de Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras
764-0000, Ext. 2452 or 2456. Open Mon. to Fri.

9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sat. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed
Sun.

Current show: Latin-American prints
from the Museum of Modern
Art in New York.

MUSEO DE LOS SANTOS

Instituto de Cultura, Casa de los contrafuertes,
Plaza San Jose. Open every day 8:30 a.m. to 5
p.m.

MUSEO DEL CONVENTO DE SANTO

DOMINGO
Instituto de Cultura. Open every day 8:30 a.m.

to 5 p.m. Corner Cristo and Norzagaray. Plaza
San Jose, 724-0700, 724-0702.

PONCE MUSEUM OF ART

Las Americas Ave. 842-6215. Open Wed. to Sat.
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.:
Sun. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mon. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.:
Closed Tues. Current sqow: art by Emilio
Sanchez.

UNIVERSIDAD INTERAMERICANA

San German. Beverly Student Center. Current
show: Annual exhibit by Art Students. Also col-
lective graphics show.