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ART

There's A Fortune

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Special To The STAR

This is, in its humble way, a search for our insular creative ethos, pathos and bathos.

Besides the tremendous wealth of our conscious and subconscious imagery banks as explained in my last article, our art can and does borrow occasionally from our peculiar Great-Noise Bank. I wish our art would borrow more from it, in the sense of being more noisily lustful and free, less dutiful or respectful of the rules.

Our sub conscious and too much of our conscious collective self is like a caldron full of chirping and humming insects going full blast to protest or applaud whatever is happening to them, or else for the hell of it. "Olla de grillos"-potfull of crickets. Let's see way.

Our subconscious and too much mature and aroused insects, or whether the infantile conceptions of our father or our mother are involved, they all make a noise to assert themselves within ourselves, as people do in a traffic jam.

Then our tripartite Fighters join in. The Independentista Id is in charge of creating and maintaining our national individualized culture; (notice our Ateneos, the Institute of Culture, and other socio cultural and educational institutions are usually under the guidance of Independentista-leaning persons.) The Estadista Superego is in charge of contacting the paternal or avuncular sun of the metropolis, the source of power and gold, or, in extreme cases, of submerging into the primeval motherly waters in the Earth, the source of all life (and of blissful oblivion too). Then the Popular Ego groans under its charge of the Reality Principle, which has to keep house for itself, plus for the screaming creative spontaneous and demanding child, plus for the feudal old ancestor who chastises us in the name of Father-Sun and Mother-Water and Earth but not of Mother-or Father-Land.

Now to the many imagoes and the "Three Fighters" inside the caldron you apply the "Puerto Rico Synecdoche" which allows the whole caldron to speak for one of its parts, which is never satisfied. (As for example, when the Institute of Culture speaks for what's good for us artists. We are not satisfied!) Or else, and more interesting, when the synecdoche allows one part to speak for the whole "olla de grillos", as the Independentistas in the United Nations or in Lares; or the Estadistas in Republican Washington and on the Fourth of July; or the Populares on the Fourth and the Twenty-Fifth of July and in Barrinquitas; all of them claiming to represent the sum total of Puerto Rico, which equals more than all the parts put together.

That's a lot of decibels! Especially when all our powerful and variegated image banks work all the time, also trying to assert themselves. (What a wondrous art could be wrought by composing from this chaos!)

And then the heat generated by the noise vibrations begins to make the caldron perk up. Under the heat let's say one of the fighters reverts to infantile imagoes. A heretofore balanced Statehood, or a balanced academic painter, or a balanced medic may become the opposite of what he was.



Now throw in the avuncular interests of Uncle Sam as expressed by U.S. senators and by Coca Cola or Ford. Now throw in your age brackets, which cause changes too, plus the various educational levels, plus the outside temperature and humidity, plus TV and cinema images of violence, plus Weber and Marx, etc., plus the cost of living, plus the cat. (Nice social-realist art, is it not?)

The "grillos" in the caldron keep

either protesting or applauding, it does not matter which. In any case the noises resound inside the vessel, deafening everybody. Since they can't hear each other, no grillo stops making his noise, chirping and humming ad infinitum within the resounding amplifying vessel of our Puerto Rico. An epic art can be born here! Music-drama-art... Kinetic!

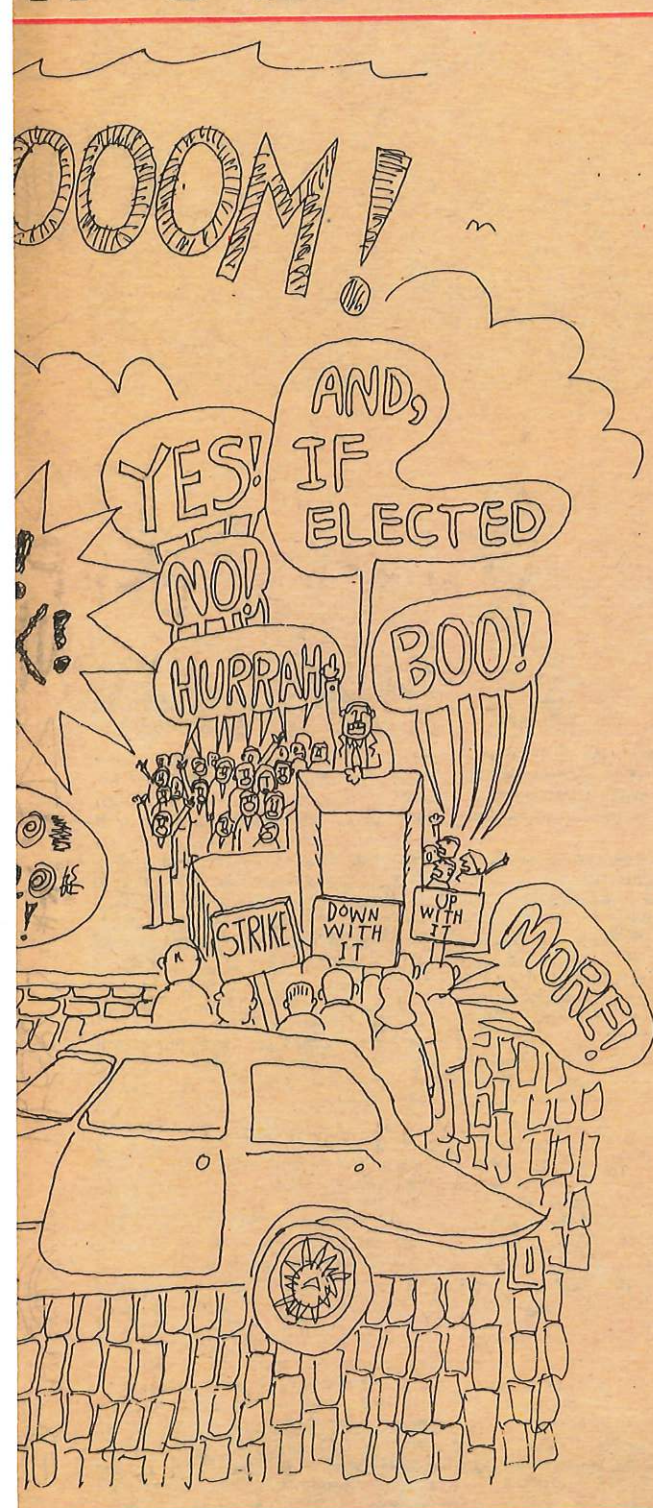
It is understood that most of us

take it for granted that Puerto Rico is the center of the Universe as our inward-looking mirrors prove. So imagine the noise when an outsider like Kissinger asks "What treaty or pact are you talking about?" Or else, "where is Puerto Rico's art?"

Yes, we are one of the noisiest people on earth.

Why do we make so much noise as a people?

n Our Noise Vaults



More important, does our art make as much noise in art as we do in politics or the social sciences, in sports or as a people?

We confuse being noisy with being alive. We make noise because we have a horror of dead silence, which to us means moral or aesthetic tired-cynical-rebellious ambivalent UN-approval. An artist is happy here if you approve or disapprove his art, as long as you make a noise in front of

it. But if you remain silent! Then, he worries.

It was this un-approving blanket of silence in front of his original impressionistic portrait of "El Caribe," at the Puerto Rico Ateneo, which castrated our Francisco Oller. Nobody had seen a man with vivid greens, violets and purples in his face and clothes, so they kept silent in front of "El Caribe's" portrait. So Oller repainted the portrait: that's what an

ambivalent un-approving silence can do to a man in Puerto Rico. Oller was used to our noise. (even then we had much noise, though not as much as now.) So the sudden silencing blanket of NO-noise castrated him. He never recuperated. Maybe he never really believed in Impressionism.

So, happily, because we are a kind people and don't mean to hurt, we keep our noise bank going on all the time, approving or disapproving, it doesn't matter which. (Sound is our caressing notice of love or of interest.)

Noise also covers a horror of death, of non-entity. Is this an inferiority complex? No! Because all living creatures fear extinction. But not all are as noisy as we are.

Maybe we try to make up in sound what we lack in size as the proper center of the universe. Or else, maybe the noise bank, added to our collective body heat (a lot of heat per square mile) produces a very dense cover which prevents hurricanes from finding us in the Caribbean.

I do think we should research the relationship of Body-Heat-cum-Noise-Bank Densities in the years when we had San Ciriaco and San Felipe, as compared to non-hurricane years, especially lately, with the population explosion and the growing vocality of our University-trained masses. Weather-research is part of the air-and-fire domain, with its combustible gods and images plus the water-domain, with its dousing gods and images.

I used to make a lot of noise whenever at dusk in Albonito I had to pass next to the cemetery. I was afraid, so I made noise. With my sounds I could drown the noises of the little crawling things and snakes in the underbrush. I was facing a moment of truth in my youth: vis-a-vis the noise-making-but-unseen-crawlers, (eternal images of sin, plus of atonement through medicine by our Bohigues or Taino shamens, together with the women, oh! Marian territory) in front of the crawling symbols I had to define myself as an entity.

I asserted myself through noise which is usual, to scare crawlers away. But I said "I had to define".....In other words, I didn't think I was complete without my noise. My noise or song defines me...

But that could be natural with extroverted people, pushing forth into this world, unafraid of others who also make noise. Everybody has to make his noise, his song of life, his song to life and to the chase in every other nation in this world, so why not we? We definitely are a nation already, though we don't have the marriage and birth certificates to prove it: but we can feel and act like it, like "natural" children who can function even if born out of wedlock.

So let's paint and sculpt our song, dance and dramatize our song! Which we do a little every time we create something in Puerto Rico. Every art work is a song, a noise to define an entity.

But then, why are the colors of our paintings normally so songless? In Haiti they use very trumpeting colors, intense colors. "But they are primary colors," we say, "used by primitive peoples who make sounds to delight the tourists. They paint for dollars. I paint to express myself." But we do

pursue the dollar. Besides, Van Gogh, Gauguin and the Fauves or Expressionists of many lands, they too used trumpeting colors, yet they were very sophisticated artists of many lands, gathered in Paris or Munich. Why, then, are our colors so subdued in chroma and limited in hue when we know we can use the rainbow?

Don't tell me our artists paint greyish because our present Puerto Rico is grey because we are not a nation, because we need the marriage and birth certificates to prove it, or we feel ashamed if we are not listed in the United Nation's Exchange. Didn't El Greco use trumpeting colors in Spain when Greece was nothing? Don't Latin American plus American expatriates do their best works in Paris, away from their father-motherlands? Official nationhood papers are not the medicine, I am afraid. We have to prescribe beyond, and deeper. Nationhoods are transitory in the realm of art. There must be something else to explain our paso-fino-gaited art, sure of itself, but almost never fully lustful or alive. Maybe our silence blanket drowns bawdy expressions, frowns on exploration...

Why is the compositional sense even of our best works so songless? We compose and have composed always according to the rules. Whoever made the rules, we obey them. Are we slaves? Born professionals, specialist slaves, often produce nothing but an artisan's work. An artist plays a ruleless Master Game.

The Master Games are those in which you make the rules as the game is played, yet nobody is killed along the way because each time somehow it is the game itself which decides the rules, not the players, nor the strays, nor the State. Certainly no nation or state decides the rules when we paint: each picture rules itself!

Our compositions usually are small in scale; but that's decided by our geography and economy, our sense of interior space. Our small pictures maintain our usual paso fino tonal gradations, our mostly symmetrical planar progressions within the picture's plane even in our best artist's work. Plastic weights could be distributed every-which-way, in sculpture too, especially when using metal. As against those possibilities, we play it cagey, we play for sure, so we never miss. Nothing ventured, nothing missed. And naturally, nothing gained. Lazy game!

We have gained international recognition in the graphic arts. Why? Mostly because of the celebrant quality of our posters. Our posters are labors of love, not hate. Even when done against something, say the State (which permits it here) what our posters really display is the love of something important to the artist. Whatever love it is, it is stronger than the State.

We artists don't need the State: what we need is to love whatever we do, and we must do it lustfully, noisily, using all our wealth of the Image Banks and the Great-noise-Bank, and accepting our tripartite personality as a nation, just as all persons must learn to love and live with the inner physical workings of the self, including the images and the reptiles and insects in our midst. We can create our Empire!