

ART

THE CHILD

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to the STAR

*Anton, si el muchacho ves,
baila y hagamonos rajás,
aquí llevo las sonajas*
—Pastores de Belén
Lope de Vega

"Anton, if you see the child, dance and let's drink, I have the rattles with me..." Thus ends University of Puerto Rico Museum director Arturo Davila's introduction to the charming show of sculpted Christ Child images which there is still time to see at the Rio Piedras Campus museum. The exhibition will continue until the end of January.

The Christ child exhibition is in a small simple hall devoted to American studies. It is one of the hall's first offerings and the premises are chastely green-decked for it, as if in hope. The show boasts not only a catalog with notations on each of the 11 sculptures but a simple introduction and furthermore, the images are listed in order chronologically. A small miracle.

The child is quiet in the little hall, as ever on expectant call. Away from temples' light, He is here in profane daylight.

You could go in irreverently: nothing but wooden dolls. One of them is (ugh!) stark naked except for golden sandals (No. 8 in the show). "No,

I am not lost on this beach," he seems to be saying brightly, "I know I am going up." Another smaller bright-eyed cuddly doll (No. 9) has his night-shirt on, his hands down in disapproval. "I am laying me down to sleep," he is saying sweetly, "to rest from these stigmata. Please keep the noise down." Another one lies down, twisting charmingly, half clothed (No. 4). Still another (No. 7) acts very seriously in concentration as he timidly triumphantly puts his foot down on a skull. Another (No. 11) has been sat-down maybe in punishment and yet seems to intercede for us.

Yes, you could go in irreverently, but then, what have you won? Proven a point about idolatry? Puncture the psychiatry of the north-Mediterranean mind, which long before Greece needed man's scale and image to explain God? That's just the point for us, that Christ was a child like us, that God's wonderful essence is here a kissable presence, dimples, belly-button and all.

These sculptures are symbols, signs made by man as are seals, banners, flags, portraits of dear ones and monuments of dead ones. It is not them you adore, but the essence left behind, the remembrance of things past. So do go in, any which way, the Child will understand.

The 11 sculptures in the show range from early 17th to late 19th



No. 1. Circa 1620



No. 9. No date given



No. 11. 19th Century

Numbers 1, 9, 11 and 4
Photographed by
Pipo Grajales

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 9 p.m. Sat. 9 a.m.
to 5:30 p.m. Current show: Ceramics and
graphics by Rolando Gutierrez

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.

GALERIAS DE LAS AMERICAS

152 Fortaleza Street 723-5787. 725-1455 Open
Tues. to Sat. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Paintings by John P. Stewart

GALERIA COABEY

Calle San Sebastian 101
Graphics, Drawings and sculpture.
Current show: First anniversary exhibition.

GALERIA FOTOGRAFIA PL 900

Ponce de Leon 900, Santurce. 725-2617 open
9-5 daily except Tuesday and Wednesday.

GALERIA DE LA CASA CAMPECHE

200 Calle San Sebastian Open Tues. to Sat. 12
p.m. to 6 p.m.

GALERIA GUARÀQUAO

Callejón de la Capilla, Off San Francisco
Current show: "Exposición colectiva de
puertorriqueña

GALERIA GUATIBIRI

1003 González Ave., Santa Rita
Open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6
p.m.
Current show: Paintings by Rafael Rivera Rosa

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: Drawings, paintings and sculpture
by Augusto Marin and John Balossi



No. 4. 18th Century



No. 5. No date given

AT UPR

century and represent the Castilian, Sevillian and Quito schools as well as sculptors in Puerto Rico. Some of them were masters, others artisans. Our native Espada family of sculptors isn't represented. Didn't the Espadas sculpt the Child? Was the Child always imported for official church uses? I don't know for sure just now. It is a fact that the native santeros were never well patronized by the church.

Collectors Rosario Ferre, Francisco Barrenechea, Jorge Garcia and Anonymous lent items numbered 4, 5, 6 and 8 respectively. (I mention private energies first on purpose.) Then come the Ponce Museum (No. 3), the Institute of Culture (No. 7) and the San Juan Bishopric (No. 11), all confirmed collecting institutions. Then come two nunneries; the Carmelites in San Juan (Nos. 2, and 9) and the Caridad nuns in San German's Concepcion Hospital (No. item 10). Last, on purpose, comes No. 1, the Candelaria Virgin Christ Child, by far the oldest living citizen of Puerto Rico.

Yes, living. Since HE came to us, about 1620, to the Santo Domingo, now San Jose church in San Juan. He has lost two feet, one arm and one forearm, not that He was ever a brawler, to the contrary. He was always the sweet one. But as they do on us, the climate, pollita, and history

have left their marks. From fires, to pirates, to colonizers, from Spaniards to English to Dutch to Corsicans, Catalans, Mallorcans and Canarians, plus Venezuelans and Cubans and French and Americans, they have left their marks, good and bad. Throughout it all this Child, carved to life in Spain, has kept calm. His face has a sad, introspected look, a soft meditative short smile that is both world-weary and world-wise. His animus and anima are intact; He is dignity personified.

But hold. This is the "critical" 20th Century. From the notes I cannot tell whether He works full-time now or has been retired from church services. He doesn't talk. After the centuries, has He learned to be like us? So I timidly ask Him, what do you think of celebrating Three King's Day on Christmas morn? "The Three Wise Men did come to me; it doesn't matter when. I hope I cheered their stay. The gifts they brought were not consumer's gifts; they were symbolic gifts. They showed the Way. What do gifts mean to children today? A right to be demanded? A hunger to be expanded? Where does the circle end? So do unto your children; educate your children in the noblest way: with a giftly kiss each day. Every journey is Three King's Day."

Amen.

Numbers 5, 2, 7 and 6
Courtesy of the
UPR Museum



No. 7. 18th Century.



No. 6. Late 19th or early 20 Century.



No. 2. Circa 1640

GALERIA PITIRRE

Condado Convention Center. 723-6090 Ext. 1632. Open daily 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Current show: Works by Jose Alicea and a collective show.

MUSEO DE LA FUNDACION

Behind Tapia Theater, Plaza Colon 725-5962. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Mon. Indian Artifacts and sculpture. Current show: "History of the Tapia Theater"

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. Current show: "Mestizos" 14 miniature works in copper

MUSEO DEL GRABADO LATINOAMERICANO

case de los Contrafuertes. 101 San Sebastian St., Plaza San Jose second floor. Open every day from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Current show: Graphics by Columbian artist Gloria Duncan

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.

Current Show: Paintings and drawings by Felor-Felix Rodriguez Baez and Nativity scenes by artesanos.

MUSEO DEL MAR

Pier One, Old San Juan. Open Monday through Saturday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or until ships sail. Current Show: "Lighthouses of Puerto Rico" by Ramon A. tinez Montes.

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.

SALON ISABEL II

City Hall. Open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

UPR MUSEUM

University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras. 764-0000 Ext. 2452 or 2456. Open daily 10 to 5. Current Show: "The Child" Exhibition of sculptured Christ Child images.