

ART

Photographed by Jose Garcia

BALOSSI

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By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to the STAR

At the Maria Rechany Gallery on Magdalena Avenue in the Condado, a most personal exhibit is being held. In 69 works John Balossi and Augusto Marin have dared to face themselves and us as they approach the angel of death. Do go. See them at very serious play.

Artists were invented by society to teach both young and old about how to deal elegantly or wittily with any formal problem, especially the problem of so much life and potentiality which has to end in death and nothingness.

John Balossi and Augusto Marin are very much alive and they intend to remain that way, and watch out, Death, you may end the loser if you insist on fighting them.

Being the younger of the two (45) and once a Marine, Balossi faces his situation squarely. His 14-foot-high "Extractions from Space," is in welded aluminum, very difficult metal to weld. Balossi makes it airily capture skies, clouds frost and ice.

Then to confuse the Reaper with a quick change of scale, he puts out 20 bronze and aluminum ones he titles "Spaces towards Infinity," challenging the eternal void with the sucking black holes in space, hoping for a permanent vital continuum. The bronze ones he titles "The Angels of death." Why?

Balossi is worrying about not being able to develop his potentialities to the hilt. Marin is worried about being detained by sirens in the way. Both are going through that adulthood rite of passage.

In these pages over the past year you have met quite a few artists in the same Jacobean rite of passage. The tactics, strategies and ruses used are endless and quite elegantly metaphoric. Since the fight is always about our very present moment of truth, the middle of our careers, our here and now, a good technique to confuse the Angel is to open warfare in far-away lands. Larry Rivers and Rolando Lopez Dirube hark back to 18th Century Japan, with the Samurai as allies; Balossi climbs way up in the clouds and infinite spaces and Norman Mailer in his new "colossal" novel looks back to over 3,000-year-old Egypt.

Colossal size or its opposite, "miniatureness," as in Balossi's work, is another tactic broadly used to keep the Angel guessing. So is Myrna Baez's positive-negative figurations and her countless stenciled veils of transparent not painterly, air-brush effects. Larry Rivers uses air brush effects, also and Balossi catches mirrored reflections in his billowing captured clouds. Augusto Marin's use

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"Man in Search of Liberty" by John Balossi



"Woman" by John Balossi



"Spaces Toward the Infinite" by John Balossi

"Horse and Rider" by John Balossi



BALLOSSI AND MARIN

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of the term "aqua-drawings" in this show and desintegrating figures which he aqua-draws, suggest this same fluidity in front of the enemy that Julio Rosado del Valle is practicing in his present studies in the University of Puerto Rico natural-science laboratories. Julio even got a camera to capture fleeting processes and moves, to work into his future abstractions.

Some of us, at this point, change careers or jobs. I became a professor. We throw worthy causes, books, manifestos, travels- researches and other "works" at the Angel's face, to disorient him.

Balossi's small bronze and aluminum sculptures are a delight to hold in your hand. Tectonically and spatially well resolved, the "space extractions" in aluminum are deliciously small and roly-poly whereas his bronze "Angels of Death" are elegantly slim. All of them are very satisfactory also to the touch with their textural variations. Most of the angels have truncated wings. He is riding them, Bronx-cheering them even, by furnishing them such ridiculous short growths. If his angels are short-winged, do you blame Balossi?

The titles are self-explanatory: "Man in Search of Liberty" is my favorite. Then there is a levitated "Women," plus "Woman with child." "Life" is another. All of them sport inefficient wings. So in the metaphor, man, woman and life itself are hindered-or-hindering death-concepts to be superceded by something better. Perhaps his future works. We know not what, that's Balossi's present dilemma: what what? He is going to make large-sized welded-aluminum sculptures out of his present miniatures. It is typical of his present stage that he should tackle a difficult technique. Aluminum is very difficult to form and weld. It is too brittle and easily burned. So he loves it.

Besides the 22 sculptures, Balossi shows 10 small acrylics dealing with horse-women-and-rider figures. Agility of execution is also seen in his seven water-colors a portfolio of 20 smaller ones, a portfolio of 20 drawings and five extra drawings.

There are 46 works in all, most tactically small, as if riding strong winds or storms. Many of the works show angel riders on horseback (but with the inefficient wings), fluctuating women in dialogue and some landscape. They all speak metaphorically about his present energies.

Marin introduces his work thus: "The 12 aqua-drawings series is based on the love theme. Love, both profane or profound, without pre-judgment. The series of 15 mixed-media drawings is based on the relation of man and woman."

We have already seen in literature,

myth and religion how heroes can be detained in their quest by sirens on the way. We have also suggested that Jacob, who had various wives (as did Marin ~~too~~), had to fight the angel on going back to his patriarchal grounds possibly because he felt guilty about once cheating his brother with his mother's connivance. So maybe Jacob, sibling rivalries possibly overcome, was fighting Mom. I don't know. Is Marin?

Maybe as is proper for his situation, Marin surveys the territory to be covered, and feels he has been unnecessarily detained by the apparitions presented in his works such as "Feminine Agressiveness," "Do Not Detain Me," "The Glutinous Beast Is Never Satisfied" and his "The Fire of Creation." And he grows philosophical as in his "Man Obsessed With the idea That He Controls the World."

That he can see himself in his struggle is suggested by his "Couldn't Help It"— Was exhibitionist." Who was the exhibitionist? Maybe he means himself; it must be. Else, how can he produce such decided pictures of a definite state of mind? If he were 20, I would marvel at the author of those visions — but not at his age. (Furthermore, it takes guts and wisdom, Marin, to see oneself as ridiculous as any man can be in such a tight situation.)

All of Marin's visions are appropriately shown in disintegrating forms, not very pretty ones because "memento mori," they'll die. But Marin shows "mens agitat molem" (the spirit agitates matter). He agitates the forms lineally; that's why he calls them drawings — aqua-drawings. They are not paintings: Paintings are planal, not lineal. He does have a large painting on show, his "Christ" with many hands a la Buddha, which is nicely textured and golden brown-monochromatic with paso-fino tonal graduations but surprisingly for the Christ theme, the tonal scheme is in minor contrast with no highlights against a jet black background. A melancholy Christ. It must be a psychic portrait of his soul just now but it is not his best work as he thinks it is now. However it does speak for him.

If you think, however, that Marin is throwing the fight, look at his "Moon-Man Challenging Earth-Man." both men are within him; they are fighting each other, spirit versus matter. But he can record the fight all right. So he is going up for higher marks.

Altogether a very satisfactory personal show when two "Marine" spirits, sure of themselves, stand nude in front of us. Smaller spirits need clothes.



"Venus del mar"



"Feminine Aggressiveness" by Augusto Marin



"Moon Man Challenging"

MARIN

AT GALERIA MARIA RECHANY

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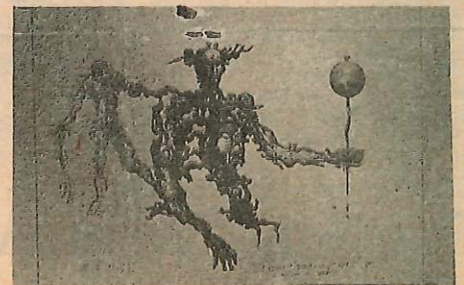
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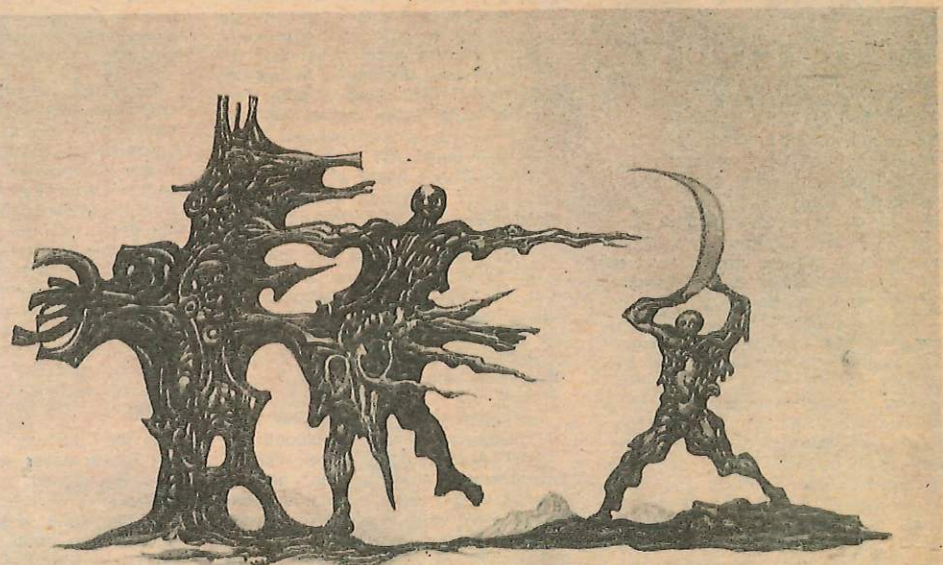
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