

25 Years of Puerto

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
 Special to the STAR

"All of these graphics look alike," the woman said, "There must be a point to it."

I was appalled. Who was she anyway not to see the diversity in our graphics?

I still don't know the woman. She was not of my clan, the art professionals. She looked intelligently professional too, and quite pretty, which made it more significant, since pretty women, if only partly intelligent, always look doubly or even quadruply so. Don't they, dear lady chauvinist readers?

The graphics in question are in the Chase-Manhattan Bank. Do go to see them on the "Golden Mile" in Hato Rey. The exhibit is open during banking hours. After 2:30 p.m. you can only guess at them from the bank's great outdoor plaza with your nose to the great glass walls. The fine sculptures exhibited permanently on another part of the same floor are also best seen from inside.

The Chase has chased art before, as witnessed by the many works on its premises. Fortunes may start with doubtful hunts if for four generations they hunt for art as the Rockefellers have done, all may be for the best. The Chase is also chasing history in this dignified display of "25 Years of Puerto Rican Graphics."

The Institute of Culture helped with the selection of work as Francisco de Jesus Toro, Chase vice president, says in his introduction to the crowded though sophisticated catalog. Jose Antonio Torres Martino wrote the introduction in it to the various graphic mediums. He also prepared the seven-minute visual presentation of color slides and comments on graphic techniques which goes with the show.

The works, protected by glass, cannot be fully appreciated due to the reflections of the many individual indoor lights and the glare from outdoors. Important nuances in each work are lost. Maybe the pretty woman's reaction of "sameness" when looking at the works was due to the constant light reflections on all the pictures. Hanging the work low on the walls which helps in normal galleries, doesn't help here, I noticed. I am afraid the spaces were designed for sculptural and "flat" painting shows. Works could be cheaply hung without glass. But then, can the Chase do things cheaply and live on the Golden Mile where reflections count? And insurance premiums soar?

There are 108 works by 26 artists. If quantity of works accepted for this show were a measure of an artist's quality, then Lorenzo Homar is tops with 16 works, followed by Jose A. Rosa with 8, Rafael Tufino and Antonio Martorell with 7 each, Jose A. Alicea with 6, and Myrna Baez, Carlos R. Rivera and J.A. Torres Martino with 5 each. Manuel Garcia Fontebao, Consuelo Gotay and Nelson Sambolin each have 4 works. Isabel Bernal, Luis Hernandez Cruz, Carlos Irizarry, Antonio Maldonado, Luis Abruham Ortiz, Joaquin Reyes and Carmelo Sobrino each have 3 and the minimum 2 each were selected from the works of Luis Alonso, Analida Burgos, Luis G. Cajigas, Manuel Hernandez Acevedo, Dessie Martinez, Jose Melendez Contreras, Jose A. Pelaez, and Maria Emilia Somoza.

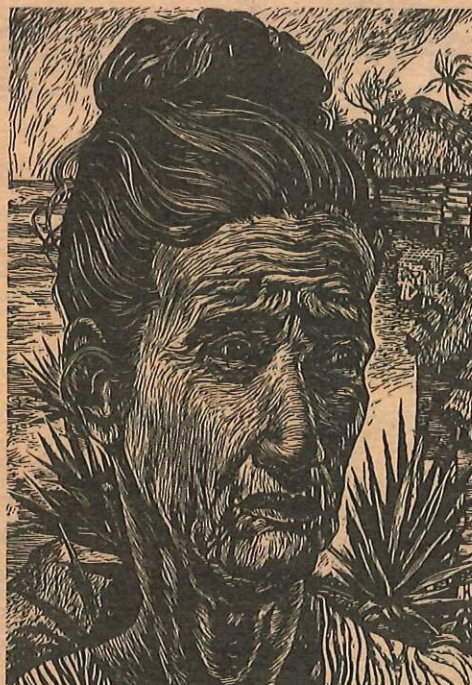
Of course, quality is not decided by quantity. But it must be said that in a tropical climate quantity is a triumph of will and dedication, as in Homar, Rosa, Martorell and Myrna Baez. Quantity with quality as in some of Homar's, Martorell's and Tufino's works, is something to applaud. But the quality of one Sambolin poster or of Carlos Irizarry's "Transculturación del Puertorriqueno" or of "Versos sencillos No. 4" by Jose A. Pelaez or "Pajaro de lo oscuro" by Joaquin Reyes or "El velorio" by Luis Alonso is as good as some of



"Tríplico: Revelaciones I" (mixed media) by Analida Burgos



"Piedad S. XX, No. 2" (serigraph) by Jose Rosa



"Mujer de Barceloneta" (linoleum print) by Lorenzo Homar

GALLERIES

CARNEGIE EXHIBITION HALL
 Carnegie Library Ponce de Leon Ave. Stop 1. Puerta de Tierra. 724-1048. Open Mon. to Fr. 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sat. 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

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.

EL TRAPICHE GALLERY
 200 Cristo St. San Juan. Open Mon. to Sat. 10 to 12 and 1 to 4. Sunday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
 Carved wooden birds by Elpidio Collazo

GALERIA BOTELLO
 208 Cristo St. 723-9987
 Prints, painting and sculpture, mostly by Puerto Rican artists.

GALERIA COABEY
 101 San Sebastian OSJ.

GALERIA CONDADO
 Convention Center. Open 11-7 every day. 723-6090 Ex. 1636. Exhibition of work by local artists.

GALERIA DE LA CASA CAMPECHE
 200 Calle San Sebastian Open Tues. to Sat. 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. 723-5252.

GALERIA FOTOGRAFIA PL 900
 Ponce de Leon 900, Santurce. 725-2617 open 9-5 daily except Tuesday and Wednesday. Photographs of Portugal by Robert Leith

MANOS
 Convention Center. Condado. Contemporary ceramics by the Caparra Studio. Current show: Miniatures and Small Pieces

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.

GALERIA OLLER
 Calle Escorial 366, Caparra Hts. 782-3171 Open Tues to Thurs. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Fri 2-9; Sat. 9-2 Paintings and Graphics by Puerto Rican artists.

HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF PUERTO RICO
 1396 Georgetti, Santurce. Mon.

Rican Graphics

the best of Homar, such as his "Julia de Burgos," or Martorell's dramatic "Argelia" or his painterly "Mariana o el Alba."

Happily the above fact suggests that Puerto Rico will continue strong in the graphic arts even after the elders disappear. We have been strong for 25 years, as this show proves, with a quality recognized internationally. The elders have propitiated the future by being good teachers. Profound social needs have been at work. Our nation and the artists have needed and used each other. That's the secret of all art movements.

But is it an art movement? "There must be a point to it," as the pretty woman said. What is the point, that these graphics look alike?

If all these graphics do look alike, it could mean we do have a graphics art style peculiar to us. But it also could simply mean that all Chinese look alike to the pretty woman.

After you get to know the Chinese, as you can get to know the work of our artists, you know they are all different. Nobody would believe Homar's sage, patient and controlled cuts into linoleum as if he were cutting into jewelry, are the same as Carlos R. Rivera's impatient, yet controlled sharp stiletto cuts, or the same as Consuelo Gotay's rhythmically contrasted and rounded dancing cuts, or the beautifully precise and organized cuts by architect Jose A. Pelaez using the same linoleum material and the same cutting tools. Each artist's soul is reflected in the way he or she cuts and in the way the tonal masses are organized.

Wood is trickier to cut than linoleum due to its risky grain. This same grain adds qualities to the print which linoleum would not add. So notice how Homar's cuts into the "aceitillo" wood for his "Unicornio" print differ from and are more economical than his cuts into linoleum. Notice also how much white background he leaves, as do Martorell, Alicea and others in their more modern wood cuts. They eliminate whole big areas, to economize fastidious modeling cuts into wood which they would not mind in linoleum or silk screen. Thus the material has decided a new tonal arrangement both for Homar and the younger, supposedly more modern, artists.

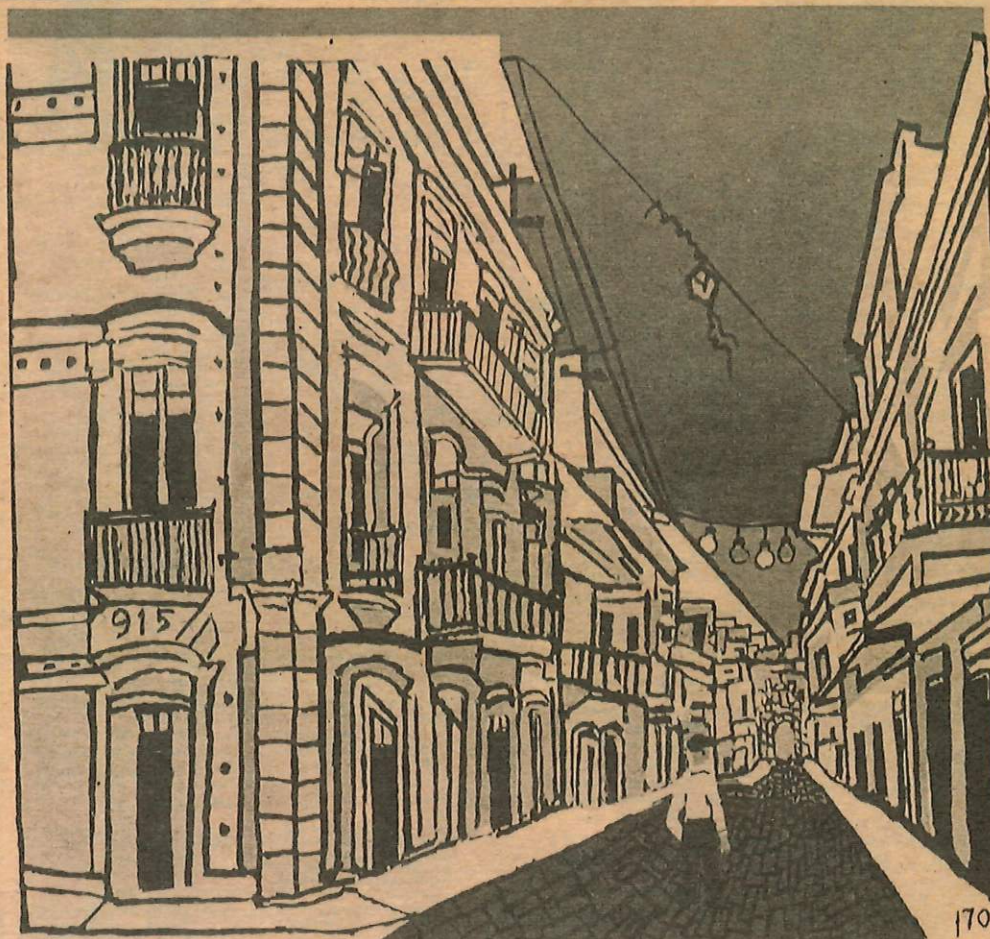
The point I am trying to make is that our artists do have an innate sense of each material used in their work, something that comes with a communion between the artists and themselves and their pure materials. It's almost a tradition, which is the most any "art movement" in any country can claim to be nowadays. We do have this tradition as Torres Martino brings out in his introduction, more than many other places where collagraphs and other mixed-media predominate and original materials such as linoleum and wood have been abandoned as too "classical" or academic.

We don't mind being classical and academic even in our sense of figuration. Most of the works here are reasonably realistic to start with not abstract. Most of the subjects have to do with cultural or popular scenes. Artists who work in institutions which consistently advertise their cultural events have an advantage over other artists who only work occasionally.

The letteristic posters by many such as Homar or the "Simple Verses" by Pelaez are homages paid to our patriotic forefathers. The scale of practically all the works in this show is small, discreet and decided pragmatically by bond-paper factory-sizes.

To sum up, we are a very discreet, paso-fino people by tradition. Pragmatically patriotic, we know when we are beaten but our tireless paso-fino gait goes on. It will carry us past the trotters and the epic gallopers who will tire and drop out along the road.

That is the point of this show, dear pretty lady: a hope for the future.



"Calle del Cristo" (serigraph) by Manuel Hernandez



"Petra Rentas" (linoleum print) by Consuelo Gotay



"Huracan del Norte" (linoleum print) by Carlos Raquel Rivera



"La Prensa" (detail) (lithograph) by Myrna Baez

to Fri. 9 to 4. A summary of history of P.R. in antique objects.

MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES
Instituto de Cultura 253 Cristo St. 723-2320. Open every day 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oil, prints and graphics.
Current Show: drawings paintings and graphics by Carlos Sue-

nos. Also "Conceptual" installations.

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: photographs, "Petroglifos de Borinquen" by Oscar Mendez Carallini

MUSEO DEL GRABADO LATINOAMERICANO
Casa de los Contrafuertes, 101 San Sebastian St., Plaza San Jose second floor. Open every day from 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: Puerto Rican paintings.

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, San Juan, paintings and graphics by Luis German Cajiga, Calle San Sebastian"

UPR MUSEUM
764-0000 Ext. 2452 or 2456. Open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays; 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 5. Current show: prints
By Jose Rosa