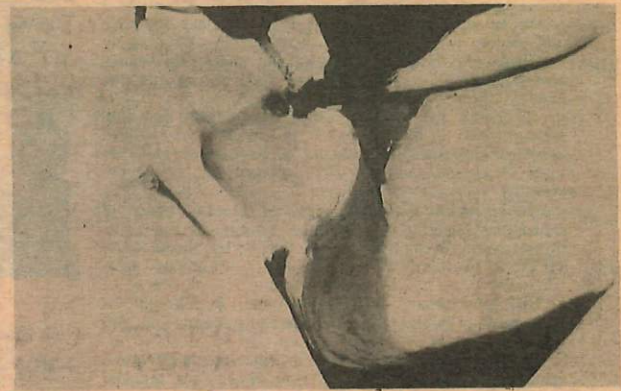


The warm and cold



First nighters at the Museum of Fine Arts were shown a display of 35 mm slides of works, both by Carlos Suenos Ortiz himself.



"Deminan" by Carlos Suenos Ortiz

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to the STAR

The Institute of Culture, in its Museum of Fine Arts on Cristo Street, is exhibiting two groups of work which contrast art as "warm" sensuous percepts and art as "cold" intellectual concepts. So go ready to exercise both hemispheres of your brain, your "cold" logical left and your "warm" spacio-temporal right. Your brain won't short-circuit in the process, if you act nonchalantly.

The exhibiting perceptualist is Carlos (Suenos) Ortiz. The conceptualists are Nitza Tufino, T. Fleming, Edgardo Franceschi and Domingo Lopez, all of them Newyoricans. Their "conceptual" works arrived late for the recently closed Show of Painting and Sculpture at the institute's Dominican Convent and, commendably, they are being exhibited now.

The conceptual artists did not touch the present works as they are displayed. They sent many disparate parts by mail, with instructions to the museum crew about assembling them up here, even to drawing squares with diagonals on the wall, as part of Domingo Lopez' display. It is a most economical way to exhibit overseas. I wonder if conceptualist ethics can allow the same work to be exhibited the same day on five continents. Would that be over-kill? Minimalist Donald Judd used to order his metal constructions by phone, and the metal shops would ship them to a museum where the work would be put up for exhibit as per Judd's written guide. He had never touched his work ever. Very left-brain stuff, isn't it? Right!

Carlos Suenos does everything by hand, caressing his art objects as if they were his children. He filled the museum's upstairs galleries with paintings, prints and an excellent display of about fifty 35 mm. slides which he worked directly by hand on opening night.

The 1 1/4 inch slides were projected to 5 x 4 foot size on the rear wall of the middle upstairs gallery which was draped in black like a little theater. The results were very colorful and satisfactorily touchable, with crisp details even at the blown-up size. The compositions are nicely abstract-expressionist and varied except for some over use of wire mesh images.

His terrible existentialist poster with its horror of empty spaces and helter-skelter gothic letters produced for the show with Antonio Nava, is no proper way to measure Suenos' compositional sense. He composes as lava would compose over a country; as the powers of air, fire, water and earth would compose a geological countryside. But in the poster he found too many large stones along the way, unlike his usual works which flow nicely.

No stones top his luminous projected compositions nor his drawings and graphics of which we spoke not long ago when they were exhibited at the Coabey Gallery. As for his painting, I am happy to report some progress. But he is still too interested in stylus and pen for his graphics, to really be painterly in his paintings. Since paintings could in principle be abraded or burned as film can be punctured, burned or scratched, I expect some day he will try it in painting but it is a fire and acid hazard.

Better to continue with the brush, as up to now. He does better with oil than acrylics, for the latter are too "lean," not pasty enough. His "Guabancex, Serpent Mother of the Twins" is a good painting. "Guani Cielo" has nice transparencies; "Peregrinacion," and acrylic, though unfinished is quite luminous. The acrylic, "Guani Protective Symbol," is tired in color. He over-worked the abrasions over heavily pigmented areas, showing chalky results underneath.

To sum up, he is beginning to use color as a quantitative element in a picture; that is color within a general atmosphere but his use is not thorough enough. He still localizes color as light and dark due to his predominant sense for tonal graduations which is exquisite for his graphics but not useful for his paintings.

He should try mixing many color patches in one area, each color having the same tonal value, so that none jumps out. An effort along that way is seen in some atomized impressionistic areas of "Toupan, señor que hace llover y tronar," but other areas look punished by excess handling.

The contrast which would be possible between an art which is to be seen through the "warm" senses — in a dance with materials and techniques, such as Suenos' work — and an art to be seen mostly through the mind, as conceptual art tends to be, is diminished in the present show by the "in-between" tendency of the works on exhibit and of the artists themselves.

The in-between "Reality Principle" which we tend to



Three of the conceptual art works: from left, "Modular Performing Installation" by Domingo Lopez, untitled painting on paper by Nitza Tufino and untitled installation by T. Fleming.

"Modular Performing Installation" by Domingo Lopez.

Old San Juan

minus of San Sebastian street. This lovely complex is open daily except Mondays, and guided tours are offered between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Casa Blanca is where Juan Ponce de Leon first governor of Puerto Rico, built his home. The first one, a frame house was destroyed by a hurricane. A stouter masonry dwelling was built on the same site by his son-in-law, Juan Garcia Troche, in 1523. The descendants of Ponce de Leon lived there for 250 years. The Spanish then acquired it as a residence for military commanders. Later it served as official residence for U.S. Army commanders. Today, it is one among many buildings on the site.

The home has been restored as a museum to show the way the more affluent Puerto Rican family lived during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The lovely grounds in front of the home, on which restoration has not been completed, are not yet open to the public, but there is a beautiful garden that is. It is a cool, quiet and pleasing place to pause for a rest after a day of museum touring.

TOUR THREE: This tour could be planned to include visits to two museums, La Casa del Libro and the Fine Arts Museum, on the south end of Cristo Street, a stop at the charming park to feed the pigeons, a peek at the small but impressive chapel at the foot of the street and perhaps a tour of La Fortaleza.

The Governor's Palace, as La Fortaleza is sometimes called is an historic complex that serves as quarters for Puerto Rico's Governor and his family and also includes office space. La Fortaleza can be toured any day except Sunday.

Guided tours are offered to groups as they form from 9 to 11 a.m. and from 1:30 to 4:15 p.m. Monday through Friday. Saturday hours are from 9 to 11 a.m.

Up one block from La Fortaleza to the right, is the "pedestrian" block of Cristo street. On the left hand side are Casa del Libro and the Museum of Fine Art, both in beautifully restored buildings.

Across the way is Parque de Las Palomas, which overlooks both the mountains and San Juan Harbor. The little park runs along a remnant of the wall that once rimmed San Juan Viejo. There are benches and shade, pigeons aplenty and bird feed on sale.

The tiny chapel at the entrance was built at the end of the street as a memorial, the story goes, to a young man who raced his horse down steep Cristo Street, failed to rein in when he reached the wall and fell to its base. The ornate silver altar can be viewed through glass doors.

TOUR FOUR: Yet another museum excursion can be planned, this one including La Casa del Callejon on Fortaleza street, the Museo de la Fundacion, an Archeological museum on Norzagaray and Museo del Mar, which is on Tourism Pier I. This one can be coupled with a lunch break and a cruise of San Juan Bay.

La Casa del Callejon, which was restored by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture also contains the Museum of Colonial Architecture and the Museum of the Puerto Rican Family. The latter which shows the way the San Juan family lived a hundred years ago is on the second level and has a long balcony overlooking the interior patio. A small admission fee is charged here for adults. Children are admitted free of charge. Guided tours are given.

A few blocks away, behind the restored Tapia Theater, is the Museo de la Fundacion, located in what was once the Public Baths. The building was donated to the Foundation of Archeology, Anthropology and History by the city of San Juan and now contains pre-Colombian artifacts and changing exhibitions.

From this small museum, museum tourists can go downhill to the ferry pier to lunch or launch. A vendor sells delicious hot dogs with chili made out of black-eyed peas just to the side of the entrance, and sandwiches and Puerto Rican snacks are served at the restaurant inside. Or families can be "brown baggers," bringing a lunch from home to take aboard the launch that circles the harbor on Sundays or holidays or aboard the ferry for a trip to Catano and back.

On return, another museum can be seen at Pier I. Hours are listed as 9 to 5 daily, but a check should perhaps be made with the Ports Authority or the guard on duty if no ships are in. Getting into the piers is no problem if ships are in. If none are at anchor there, however, gaining entrance is not all that easy.

