

FELDMAN

at the Fine Arts Museum



El escultor español Alberto Sanchez

They are passing small things, not monumental in size but they are very well done, as a nightingale's song is. Her portrait heads are charged with the inner currents that flow whenever a sitter poses alone facing herself, himself, or destiny, with no indiscreet sculptor around, only a communicant, only Carmen Alvarez de Feldman.

There's an art in Mrs. Feldman's and use of clay it is from clay that all life emerges. And then the spirit came with a swab, a pinch, a pat, a push, a pull, a scratch or line impressed into the clay-y mass to compress a thought or express the turnings of a mind.

The result is then cast in bronze, "cire perdue," (lost wax) was the method used, wherein the melted bronze runs into the molds as its heat melts and expels the wax out through ventilating flues designed into the mold. Then the metal result is filed, burnished and patinaed darkly. Now they are here at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture Fine Arts Museum on Cristo Street near the pigeons, the Cristo Chapel and the Casa del Libro, of which things these bronzes speak also. They are locked inside transparent plastic cages attached to each pedestal to prevent theft but which also imprison the sensitive souls on display.

Mrs. Feldman's full figure works are not so convincing. Her "Pregnancy — Cruz de Arevalo" is a nice sketch but like too many others. And her "Founder" is forgotten between the images recalled to mind by Meunier's "Miners" and Rodin's "Balzac," sketchy too.

A native of Santurce Mrs. Feldman studied here, then in Buffalo, New York, then Paris. Her works are shown in many excellent places.

Half of the portrait heads are half-foot miniatures, a few are larger than life. I understand her first work was the monk-like "Vicente Geigel Polanco," where the man is seen tamed, bending as if resigned, yet surging forth also. Mrs. Feldman's home-grown technique is very sensitive; the volume is nicely stressed and rounder than the succeeding works done outside Puerto Rico, which are more expressionistic.

Among the bronzes, the tone of Spanish sculptor Alberto Sanchez, is both a presence and a screen; his elliptic spirit is caught with swift expert modeling strokes which are left unretouched — as if in transit. Then there's Jose L. Aranguren, the elongated aspirer; or the five inch head of Atohualpa Yupanqui, charming in its masterful aliveness. Enjoy the wistful "Maria del Carmen Rodon," firm of bony structure, and sultry of lips, quite economically realized with her meditative pulling-in of one inward eye while her other eye faces the world. This kind of eye interplay is seen in several of the heads, as if the sitters were introspective, all of them, but also knew of time's passing.

In some of Mrs. Feldman's works the swift swab imprinted on the clay

remains as just a swift swab, does not build structure up as crisply as in others. Sometimes too the clay is pulled outwards and pinched, tortuously producing scraggly textures, such as in her large worrying "Morris Graves." The smaller "Graves" has more sweep and is more animated, I think, though the worrying "Graves" is more intent and intense. Is the bulk of Grave's poetry and other work animated and extensive or is it worried and intensive? Whichever it is, decides which of the head is the better portrait.

Carmen Alvarez married poet Irving Feldman and her portrait of him, "To the Six Million" seems to have a loose melting structure, textured grainily. From an open empty throat issues a tremendous cry and here too is the interplay of the inward with the outward eye.

But the biggest cry of all issues from "El Negro Melao's" throat. He is all throat as he cries "Liberta!" — a ritual cry, expected of all liberals and slaves. What is not expected is the size of the empty throat and the large empty eye sockets. Somehow the life spirit and its terror of nothingness and death are made very explicitly poignant by the empty spaces in Melao's face vibrating with his sound.

If Mrs. Feldman can thus charge emptiness with life, beyond her only son Fernando, she can do anything she chooses in sculpture. Her present scale of work is bibelotish — but these heads aren't bibelots, not quite, they are too charged with independent life to need the stroke of any hand.

— FELIX BONILLA NORAT



Robert Graves

CORRECTION

Last week in the article, "What's wrong with our art contests," Sin Nombre exhibit was inadvertently placed in the Institute of Culture's Fine Arts Museum. It was in the Dominican Convent. The STAR regrets the error.