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ART

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PONS

at the Maria Rechany Gallery



Costado de la catedral, Havana (1940)

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Special to the STAR

A flawed work, "Evocacion," brought me to the decision to write about Jose M. Pons whose pen and ink drawings and reproductions of those drawings, "San Juan romantico y otro piedras," are on exhibit at the Maria Rechany Gallery in the Conado.

I wish his works would suffer to say more, which they would if he suffered more in their making. But Pons himself seems to be aloof from his work. He struggles not with the inward devils of choice, he doesn't even struggle with technique since very early in the game, in 1940, he mastered his pen and ink language and still uses it.

So he reports. He is a good-day-to-day-building-to-building reporter in his pen and ink scenes — fit for tourists but, since he is an architect, for architects too. The drawings show

a feeling for constructed space and its integration with the touchable landscape but not with clouds. Clouds are missing from Pons' work, quite significantly. The few that appear here are very schematized, as if he didn't trust angels or the air. There's an occasional body of water, so-so-ishly presented in his work, and there are no fireworks — so he is left with the earth element alone.

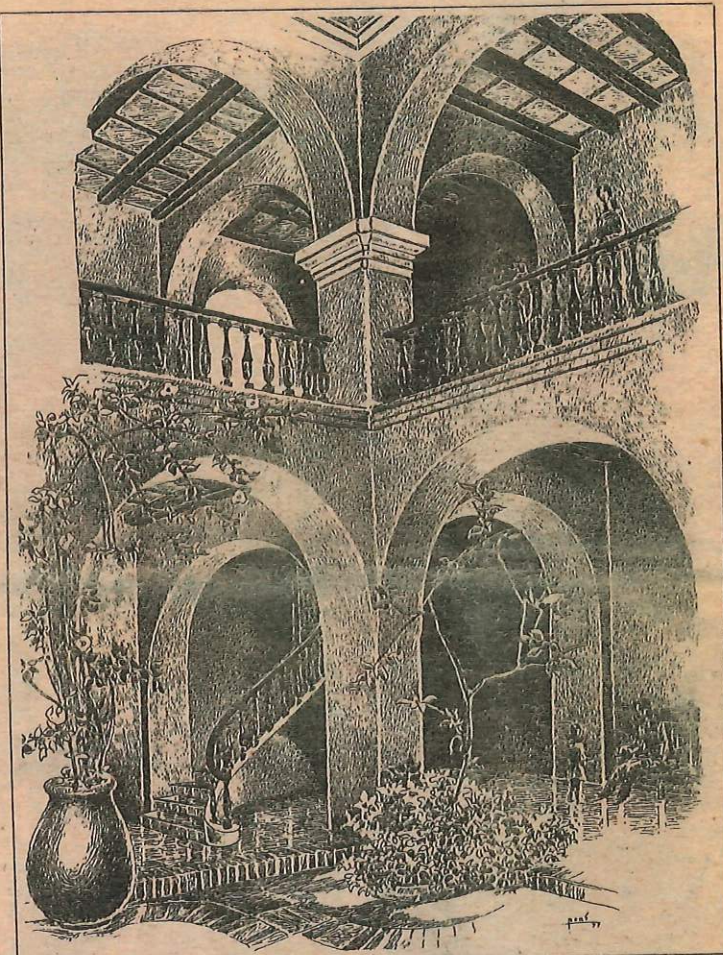
His is a builder's world of baked earth, stone and wood and their thrusts to keep up with the roof. Not much metal is needed in their post-and-lintel simplicity. His arches are kind of decorative; they do not aspire to carry great weight or span great space.

Maybe Pons, with the help of his sculptress wife Elvira Coya, on their announced trip to Europe, will make his arches work more as he draws those European scenes. Maybe angels and clouds will then creep into his work with fountained water at least

and a fire or maybe a glow here and there, for completeness.

Jose Pons is a Catalan who left Franco Spain for Cuba in 1939 at 16. Twenty years later he came to Puerto Rico from Cuba. Now 18 years later, he and his wife have decided to go to Europe, voluntarily. Notice the two 1940 scenes in this show, "Iglesia de Paula" and "Costado de la catedral," they are light, almost painterly renditions of Cuban scenes. His language is complete already. Compared to his '77 "Garitas" and "Puerta del Morro," not much growth is seen. But in his '76 "Evocacion," done nostalgically now that he is about 50, there is a pregnant struggle between light and darkness and somewhere in the darkness there is an angel he can fight with. He has to seek it.

It was this tense "Evocacion," so unlike his other pieces, quite flawed in its tonal contrasts and technique, which makes me think he can fight, since in it, no matter if he lost — he fought.



Convento de los dominicos, San Juan (1977)



Iglesia de la Merced, Havana (1940)