

ART

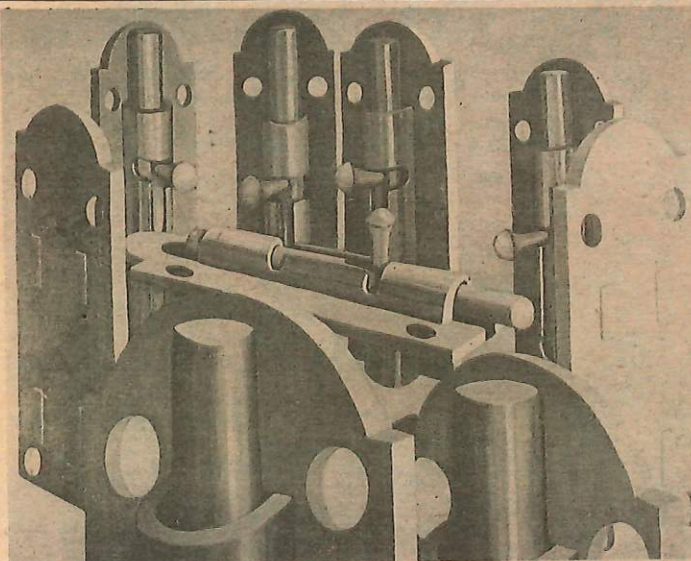
'ARTE JOVEN'

At the
Royal Bank
of Canada

THIR

FIRST PRIZE

'El velorio'
by Nera Luz Rodriguez



By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to the STAR

The Sixth Annual Young Art contest at the Royal Bank of Canada raises interesting points about photorealism in art, contest sponsorships, and about why man paints.

Our eclecticism in art, our general "Florid Mongrel Style," is sturdily affirmed once more in the works of our youthful island artists, age 15 to 21, now exhibiting under the sponsorship of the bank located in Hato Rey's Golden Mile. The bank's exhibition this year is as usual being held in its premises until June 17 but will then travel to the Catholic University of Ponce, assuring the neophyte painters of a reasonable display of their works, longer than the Ateneo, Sin Nombre and University of Puerto Rico exhibits of similar "rites of initiation."

More than 200 works came in for the contest from quite a few towns of the island, implying an acceptance of the contest which goes beyond that originally expected. Some of the works were terrible and too many were very derivative in style and much too eclectic, implying an islandwide need for more visual resources for the art education of our young. How can they learn about quality if quality art examples aren't shown nearby?

Selected for this exhibition were 69 works which you may enjoy. Realistic and semi-realistic imagery prevails.

Are our "geometric-statehood period" of 1966-71 (when way-out geometric minimalism reigned in Puerto Rico even in young artists' works) and our subsequent "geometry-cum-realistic figures-in-front period" still running strong going to be superseded by a pop and photo-realistic period? As in the U.S. and Europe? Some of the works are somewhat social-realistic but most are simply landscapes, the eternal "finca" (or world to hang onto) and intimate portraits and scenes.

This "realistic" tendency is hastened artificially by the obvious use of photographs as sources for painting ideas. Instant photos, instant Polaroidish or Kodakish paintings.

That may sound terrible but actually, there's nothing wrong about any painting idea source, including photos, provided the end result is painterly. But too many of these "realistic" youngsters haven't painted direct-from-life enough. They do not understand photography's limitation in the perception of the tonal and the hue ranges. Both can be seen by the human eye but not by the photo lens. The present works lack a cool-colored-penumbra area which the

SECOND PRIZE

'Camposcuro y lirio'
by Carlos Collazo Mattei



human eye can perceive between areas of light and areas of shadow in nature, but which the photo lens can not.

Also it can be seen in the lack of detail in the shadows of too many of these "realistic" works. Our eyes can see color and tone details where the lens can not, because the eye can accommodate for either light or dark areas successively, seeing the full range of each, whereas the instantaneous-photo-lens can be set for either the light or the dark ranges, but not both, unless lighting reflectors are professionally controlled to illuminate details in the shadow areas.

If the camera is set for getting details in the shadow areas, it won't normally get details in the light areas. But have these youngsters gained such professional "realistic" knowledge? They have not. They have come into "realism" in an unreal, short-cut way, as you can see in many of these works now.

On the other hand, the present works do not follow the photo-hyper-realistic "esthetique" now in world fashion, where the painting tries not to be a painted reality but a literal copy of a photo, one of man's transient documents. They try to be painterly, not literal snapshots.

The young painters have to go to

real nature, where a shadow on a white shirt isn't as dark in value and is not the same color as a shadow on dark pants or on flesh. And I am speaking of "realism", in art, where "realistic" looking angles can show up in a painting; I am not speaking of "naturalism" a la Oller's teacher, Courbet. Courbet said: "Angels? I have never seen any, so how can I put them in my pictures?"

As for contest sponsorships, in my recent article, "What's wrong with our art contests," I decried the tendency of three of our "official" sponsors (UPR, the Ateneo and Sin Nombre), and the institute of Puerto Rican Culture to hold contests as if it were necessary for the sponsors to hold them, to secure a stake before history or Social Security. For like all rites of initiation, they should be held for love of the young and the future, not for love of the present parents of the young or of the art contest. Furthermore, the "official" art contests do not learn from each other, and do not help each other out in other ways. Should it be so when they fulfill the same social function?

As for sponsorship by the private enterprise sector such as the Royal Bank now, the accepted expectation is that the individual bank's "image" will grow in the "parental" minds of its customers. "Private" institutions do

GALLERIES

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.

"Current Show: The Art of the Watermark" and "Relatos de un paisaje asesinado," a book of serigraphs by Wilfredo Chiesa.

EL TRAPICHE GALLERY

200 Cristo St. San Juan. Open Mon. to Fri. 10 to 12 and 1 to 4. Sat. 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Current exhibit: "La postal Artística en Puerto Rico."

GALERIA BOTELLO

208 Cristo St. 723-9997
Prints, painting and sculpture, mostly by Puerto Rican artists.

GALERIA COABEY

Calle San Sebastian 101
Current Show: Ceramics by Agustin de Andino.

GALERIA DE LA CASA CAMPECHE

200 Calle San Sebastian Open Tues. to Sat. 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. 723-5251

GALERIA FOTOGRAFIA PL 900

Ponce de Leon 900, Santurce. 725-2617 open 9-5 daily except Tuesday and Wednesday. Current show: Photos by the Puerto Rican photographers Ass'n.

GALERIA GUARAGUAO

National Art Center. Callejon de la Capilla. Old San Juan. Current Exhibition by Rafael Tufino, Carlos Raquel Rivera, Manuel Hernandez, Isabel Bernal and Antonio Maldonado.

GALERIA GUATIBIRI

1003 Gonzalez Ave., Santa Rita
Open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

GALERIA ISABEL II

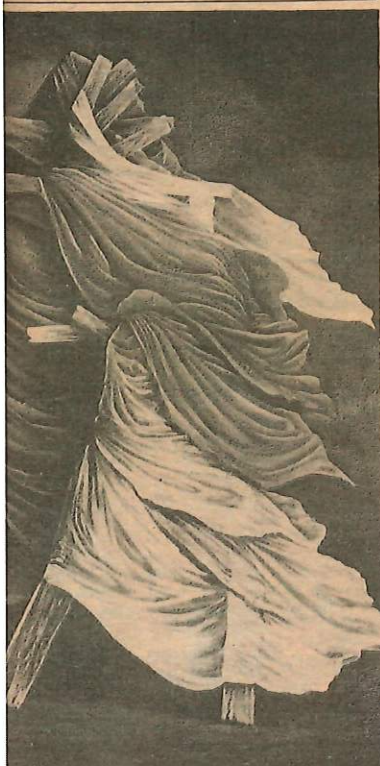
City Hall, San Juan Mon to Fri.
Current Show: "Discovering the World." Photos by the Natural Resources Department

CARNEGIE EXHIBITION HALL

Carnegie Library Ponce de Leon Ave.
Stop 1, Puerta de Tierra. 724-1046 Open Mon. to Fr. 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sat. 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Current Show: First UNESCO photo show

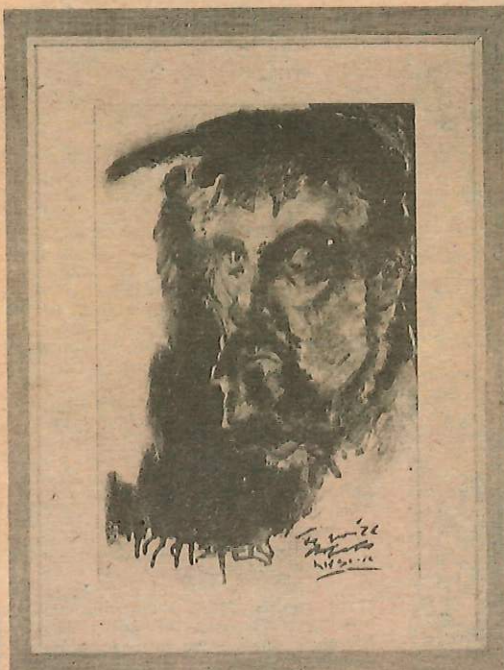
RIZE

'El vuelo de los paños'
by Ramon Guzman

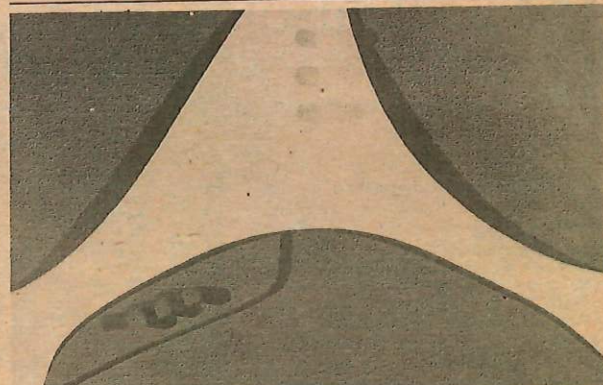


FOURTH PRIZE

'Autoretrato'
by Dionys Figueroa



HONORABLE MENTION



'Ferran No. II' by Carlos Ferran



'Riachuelo'
by Ernesto de la Vega



'Y tu abuela, ¿donde esta?'
by Gabriel Cruz Diaz

not have to get together about competing. Should they? Maybe...Anyway, customers may not buy the art works and some few may even wonder what in hell is the bank doing putting those contraptions up in the middle of their normal path to quick service. But by and large the customers tend to think better of an institution which demonstrates cultured interest in our young, especially since it doesn't cost the client anything extra. Bank service charges tend to be standard. So everybody is happy when a beautiful social function is taken care of cheaply. Both art and tax-reductions are accepted goals in our collective contraband minds.

Now we come to question: Why does man paint? And then, why do these youngsters paint?

I am appalled by the fact that out of 69 works hung in this show, 36 are not for sale as if their authors, except for those who already sold or gave their works away, needed them for narcissistic enjoyment at home, or for self-completion as "parents' "creatures."

Holding unto one's "creatures" or art works is the act of a parent who insists on having his children around him because he doesn't feel complete and autonomous within himself. He will educate children who do not feel

complete and autonomous within themselves. All art works also should stand on their own. They are then the best possible advertisement for their "parents."

When you visit the present show, think of the above points, for an education in art should be a preparation for life, not a hot-house flower for the elite alone.

The jurors for the present contest were four university professors and an art critic: Carola Colom, Luis Hernandez Cruz, Juan R. Melendez, Felix Bonilla Norat and Antonio Molina. We acted eclectically in awarding prizes to "pop," "informalistic," "pseudo-surrealistic," "expressionistic," "photo-realistic," "constructivistic," and belatedly "impressionistic" works, in that order. What a florid melange! Nobody can accuse us of favoring any particular style! We love them all. Should we not? You decide...

First prize (\$500) went to the pop "El Velorio" by Nora Luz Rodriguez, wherein common door bolts are so related in the design as to suggest a corpse surrounded by upright attendants. The execution is so crisp and the black humor of the composition so forthright that it won the spontaneous unanimity of the five jurors. I wish the artist hadn't used such a saturated bright-orange-red for the background since it jumps out of the

canvas at times, with unnecessary Op violence. It could have been darker.

Second prize (\$300) wasn't as unanimous but was awarded to Carlos Collazo Mattei for his three works ("Relatos y un solloquio," "Campos-curo y lirio," and "De romanes y faltas"). They are all nicely texturological with a sophisticated sense of collage design, and quite color, though maybe too low in tonal contrast.

Third prize (\$200) went to "El vuelo de los paños" by Ramon Guzman for its grayed immediacy of figure and its surrealist suggestion to something else behind the figure. The drapery folds are too monotonous and stereotyped, I think. He should have tried studying them from nature with its infinite variety.

Fourth prize (\$100) went to several works by Dionys Figueroa, especially his "Autoretrato". All are verily expressionistic in both form, color and context, nervously alive, and yet economical in execution.

The three photo-or-hyper-realistic works by Gabriel Cruz Diaz, especially his "Y tu abuela donde esta?" with the black ancestor coming out of a dark central rectangle, won the first honorable mention. My initial generalized comments on photo-realism in art apply to this work and many others in the exhibit which I can't mention for lack of space.

Parenthetically, I wonder if I could have some readers' feedback on whether they prefer generalized comments on meanings or omens suggested by the art shows, or else, blow-by-blow accounts describing more individual works. The latter tends to get rather monotonous in the absence of the works themselves, though the mentioned artists prefer it, of course. I like looking for "omens" for the future, since I am an elder of the tribe on the way out to other hunting grounds. We paunchy "senators" tend to generalize anyway.

An architecture student, Carlos Ferran, won another honorable mention for a modular construction, "Ferran No. II" harking back to our "way-out period" of 66-71, therefore academic. But it stood out by its rhythmic simplicity of color, tone and form and its economy of means. Its pyramidal composition is too obvious, though.

The other honorable mention went to Ernesto de la Vega for his "Riachuelo," a golden-yellow impressionistic calendar picture, which is better than too many other in the show. Unlike most beginners, he was very discreet in his use of the blue pigment, which would have destroyed the nice yellowness. Also, he shows details in both shadow and light areas, unlike the photo-realists here.

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. Also, in the Jury Room: Paintings by Raul Fernandez Vega.

GALERIA PITIRRE

Condado Convention Center. 723-6090 Ext. 1632. Open Tues to Thurs. 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Fri to Sun. 12 to 8 p.m. Current Show: Paul Camacho, paintings and graphics

GALERIA OLLER

Calle Escorial 366, Caparra Hts. 782-3171 Open Tues to Thurs. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Fri 2-9; Sat. 9-20 Paintings and Graphics by Puerto Rican artists.

MANOS

Convention Center, Condado. Contemporary ceramics by the Caparra Studio. Current exhibition: "Platos"

MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES

Instituto de Cultura 253 Cristo St. 723-2320. Open every day 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oils, prints and graphics. Current show: Drawings and boxes by Julio Micheli and Andres Rodriguez Sanyos

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.

MUSEO DEL GRABADO LATINOAMERICANO

Casa de los Contralueres. 101 San Sebastian St., Plaza San Jose, second floor. Open every day from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Current show, works by Antonio Diaz

MUSEO DE LOS SANTOS

Instituto de Cultura, Casa de los contralueres, Plaza San Jose. Open every day 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. Opening Friday: Sculpture, by Tomas Batista

MUSEO HISTORICO

1396 Giorgetti St. Santurce 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mon to Fri. Collection of art, history culture, industry, costumes, stamps, coins. Guides available.

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.; Current Exhibition: Works by Angel Botello, Roberto Moya and Rolando Lopez Dirube.

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: 9th annual exhibition of Fine Arts students work.