

June 19, 1977

ART

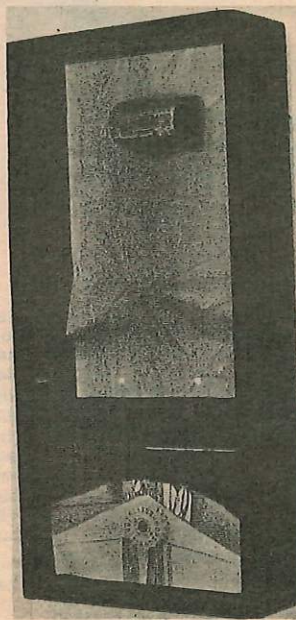
MICHELLI AND



"Box No. 1"



"Para Pensar en la muerte"



"Si hablara diria ta, ta...tata"



"The End"

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to The STAR

To be enjoyed by the eyes, id and fingertips, is a very satisfactory exhibit by Julio Micheli and Andres Rodriguez Santos at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture's Museum of Fine Arts in Old San Juan.

If you go this very Sunday afternoon you can also participate in the growing Encuentro de las Artes held every Sunday in the closed-off portion of Cristo Street near the chapel and the Parque de las Palomas. There, outdoors, a growing number of artists and poets do their thing in happy harmony.

The doves from the Parque de las Palomas do seem part of this joint museum exhibit as does the occasional liturgy in Cristo Chapel and the "Story of an Assassinated Landscape" held next door in Casa del Libro by Wilfredo Chiesa and printed by Joaquin Reyes with poetry by Tomas Lopez Ramirez and music

by Rafael Aponte Ledee. It is all in one nice book bound by Marisol Villamil complete with cassette sound by Francis Schwartz. (Casa del Libro, closed Sunday, is open Monday.) Now Micheli's real boxes and Rodriguez Santos; charcoal drawings add more sophistication and wealth to the scene, including the Fine Arts Museum's permanent collection of Puerto Rico art, now on view.

Yes, liturgical drama and control plus the free-swinging joy of the doves, the union of Apollo and Dionysus both, are in the very classical show by Rodriguez Santos and Micheli. Both are professors at Ponce's Catholic University, where Micheli heads the Art Department.

Your id enters into art appreciation when you react to such things as the efficient, possibly threatening insects and "ambiguous images" presented by Rodriguez Santos in his crisp, liberated charcoal drawings, and also when you feel like getting

inside and poking into Micheli's hauntingly symbolic boxes with their very real entrails. Your fingertips come into it when you sense the tactile credibility of the work of both artists.

Please do not sandpaper your fingertips as safe robbers do to multiply your touch sensibility. It is enough to desire to touch since these works invite such thoughts. That's why, darn it, they are all under glass. Besides, your fingertips may bleed. Bernard Berenson, on discussing tactile values in his "Italian Painters of the Renaissance," never meant for you to be a hog of touch as St. Thomas was.

My first thought on looking at Micheli's small closed boxes was: what prompts him to enclose and control reality in this way?

In my beginner's diagnostic "Theory of Color and Painting" course at the University of Puerto Rico, the making or keeping of

closed boxes or other containers to keep mementoes or secrets inside, is one of over 25 possible solutions to one of the 20 art problems or "human situations" I present to each student.

The pertinent problem or situation here is the "angst" one; the anguished man or woman who seeks peace and satisfaction by enclosing herself or himself peacefully in metaphorical wombs of many kinds, or by enclosing reality in a container, to hold onto its reality and thereby control himself or herself or the world. The closed geometrical box or womb or monastery cell are defensive solutions to all outside harassment known to mankind over a long period of time. Are Micheli's boxes a defense mechanism?

"Yes, there's a defensive element" Micheli tells me, "when I close the boxes down, each with its world inside, a world I created as God created his own. It is very satisfac-

GALLERIES

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 and art by young people of the
Art Students League.

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"

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.
Current exhibit: "La postal Artistica en Puerto
Rico." and "Relatos de un paisaje
asesinado" a book of serigraphs by Wilfredo
Chiesa with poetry by Tomas Lopez Ramirez
and music by Rafael Aponte Ledee.

ESTUDIO 1818

1818 Fndz Juncos. 727-7860. Mon to Sat 9-5.
Oils, Woodcuts, Graphics by local artists. Current
show: Woodcuts by Enrique Elustondo

GALERIA BOTELLO

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

GALERIA COABEY

Calle San Sebastian 101

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
Capilla. Old San Juan. Current Exhibit
by Rafael Tufino, Carlos Raquel Rivel
Manuel Hernandez, Isabel Bernal and A
tonio Maldonado.

GALERIA GUATIBIRI

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

RODRIGUEZ

Photographed by Jose Garcia



"Insecto"



"Hueco rectangular"



"Imagen ambigua II"

'Michelli's works with their tactile and contained reality are handsomely complemented by the zestful clarity and tactile quality of the beautiful charcoal drawings by Rodriguez Santos.'



"Paisaje extraño"

tory to close each box against outside interventions. Furthermore, it is defensive to create ambiguous and non-concrete images in my boxes, unlike Cornell's very concrete scenery in his."

I remind myself now of the excellent non-concrete or "abstract" boxes done by Jesse Fernandez some years ago, and how significant they seemed to me. Evidently Latins go abstract and ambiguously metaphorical, when defending themselves. "God created his own," though I doubt he expects to enclose the oceans in his boxes. In any case.

Only Micheli could tell us which early family pattern eventually pushed him to make his present boxes, so charged with life, so pregnant of meaning, and yet so controlled by their geometry.

Micheli agrees with me that there's a symbolic eroticism in some of the boxes. But it was much more prev-

alent in my previous "almohadones" which were unboxed." (The "Almohadones" or large pillows were stuffed foam-rubber works which he used to exhibit years ago. They had very suggestive shapes, were quite open and quite sensuously touchable. There are two of them, a medium and a small sized one here but both "Box No. 1" and "The Large Box are under glass.

"Black humor is present in my boxes too," Micheli continues "as a defensive offensive tactic if you will. Each box presents a front to the world, a reality. Behind that reality there may be things only I know about, such as a cross under that one there, which you could feel if you poked inside behind the sealing glass. It gives me a certain satisfaction to know which ones have these hidden objects inside, as added meanings."

It is very important that at no time during my visit with Micheli at his

show did I ever visualize any of his boxes as Pandora's box. They are too lovingly made, and you can look inside them really, unlike Pandora's box.

Micheli's works with their tactile and contained reality are handsomely complemented by the zestful clarity and tactile quality of the beautiful charcoal drawings by Rodriguez Santos. Both artists have limited their use of color to handsome grays. Texture is their forte along with restrained composition. They show a classical combination of expressionistic freedom and content within formal restraints.

The charcoal drawings by Rodriguez Santos show Dionysiac insect-like presences living in a nicely consistent (therefore Apollonian) bottom-of-the-page world with plenty of open granularly nebulous atmosphere behind and above them and with absolutely no fear of empty spaces. A calm, contemplative, al-

most oriental tonal atmosphere about them charms and relaxes you.

But then one of them seems to move and your id is on the alert. Hum! Though not precise, they look like efficient insects or primeval prototypes of animals which could bite, sting or liberate themselves any minute.

So a tension builds up, to be nicely resolved by the consistent bottom of the page placement: they are dregs, after all. Sometimes those blobs displace themselves sideways to suggest landscapes. Or they straighten up to suggest the ridiculous beginning of a totem.

It is amazing how so much can be suggested by such little effort. Quite an economist in art, Rodriguez Santos is.

So Ponce did take over San Juan for a little while, with the very strategic arms of art from the hands of two professors, excellent artists both.

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. Current show: Paintings by Michael Anguelo

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.

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

MANOS

Convention Center, Condado. Contemporary ceramics by the Caparra Studio.

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 Santos

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: "In honor of the Tainos of the Dominican Republic.

MUSEO DEL GRABADO LATINOAMERICANO

Casa de los Contratuertes. 101 San Sebastian St., Plaza San Jose second floor. Open every day from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Current show: Peruvian prints from Taller '72.

MUSEO DE LOS SANTOS

Instituto de Cultura, Casa de los contratuertes, 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.

Current show: Sculpture by Tomas Batista

MUSEO HISTÓRICO

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.

SALON ISABEL II

City Hall Old San Juan. Opening Wednesday an exhibition of paintings by Wilfred Labiosa.

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.