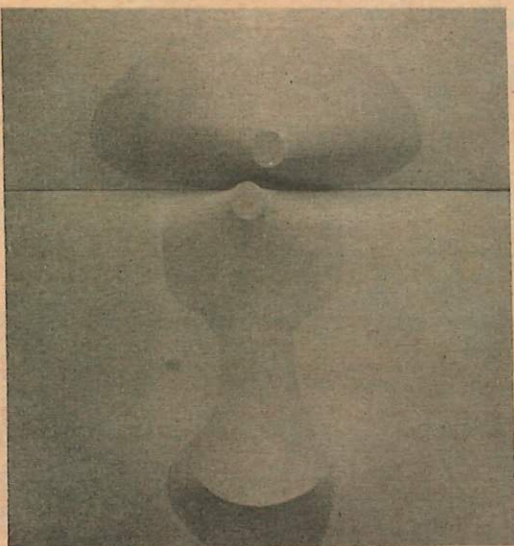


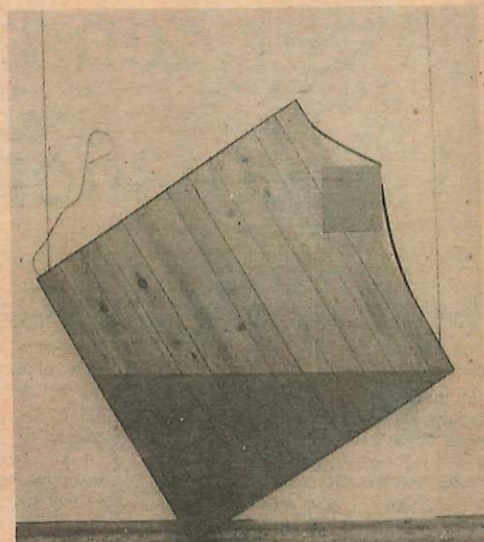
Signs of the times at the UNESCO



"Erotica I" by Zilia Sanchez



"El cordon umbilical" by Isabel Vazquez



"Collision" by Lope Max Diaz

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to the STAR

If you believe as I do that a country's artists are a country's psychic mediums, especially through their subconscious, then you should visit the UNESCO Salon to see Puerto Rican society in another light. You can be an aesthetic anthropologist for an hour as you visit the Salon at the University of Puerto Rico Museum this month and part of February; weekdays from 9 to 9, weekends from 9 to 3. Listen to what the pictures say.

Thirty-eight paintings are on display selected from about 200 entries, which speaks well of the interest of Puerto Rican painters in being present and accounted for in these days of Puerto Rican adversity and austerity.

They came to be measured professionally against their peers in a rite of passage this new year. Their rites of initiation were held years ago; they are the young professionals. Here present too as godfatherly figures in this rite are Osiris Delgado and Jorge Rechany with two oils of

congenial air and color, a luminous "Calle San Sebastian" by Luis German Cajigas and a textured landscape by Esther Shelley.

What do these 38 lively paintings say about our society if they are looked at phenomenologically, as anthropological objects?

Winners of the two first places were women: Zilia Sanchez and Isabel Vazquez. Thirteen chosen works are by women, more than one out of three. This means that our art society in Puerto Rico is open to women's rights. More women than men study art at the UPR. Now it's a matter of how deeply women can give themselves to the pursuit of art.

Other honors went to males: Lope Max Diaz, Paul Camacho and Carlos Suenos Ortiz, in that order. Considered for honors were the works of Edwin Mauras, Sandra Martinez and Oscar Mestey Villamil. I also initially considered Wilfredo Chiesa for his colorful Fauvistic experiment, Angel L. Rodriguez for his painterly construct and Rebecca Castrillo for her expressionistic figure. Notice that women were always in the running.

I prefer works with decided color emphasis. We do not see many of them in our art and society maybe because strong sunlight destroys nice colors and because it may be a commentary on social drabness. Notice how the Institute of Culture is after the owner of El Meson Vasco because of his use of red and green paint on the building, the colors of the Basque flag, I understand.

Stylistically, the show is very eclectic and the five jurors also demonstrated a very catholic taste. Of the five prize winners, three are known for semi-geometric works, Zilia Sanchez, Paul Camacho and Lope Max. But the titles of their works demonstrate individual dynamic interests and tensions beyond pure geometry. The other two prize winners, Isabel Vazquez and Carlos Suenos, are expressionistic. The above stylistic duality runs throughout the rest of the show, as if symbolizing our search for a synthesis in other facets of our life. Of the 19 works, five are semi-geometric, seven are expressionistic and seven are a classical synthesis of geometry and biology.

But now, here is a surprise. What does it say about our society if 19 paintings, or exactly the symbolic half of those on display, are "anonymous." These 19 works bear no signature or other personal sign on their faces and some of them have no marks even on their backs which begins to be a very careless or even offensive professional attitude when presenting individual work for exhibit.

Entries in painting contests had to be anonymous in old times but no longer. In our national milieu an artist's figuration and personal style are sufficient for recognition even now, when abstracted works almost predominate as they do in this show, both in geometric and expressionistic abstraction. In any case, anonymousness was not a condition of entering the Unesco or other recent salons. In fact, it's antediluvian by now. Anonymousness was understandable when artists were shamen in caves or employees of palaces or cathedrals.

Understandable too would be the anonymousness of hard-edged pure geometric shapes, such as Mondrian's.

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.

GALLERIA BOTELLO
208 Cristo St. 723-9987 Prints, painting and sculpture, mostly by Puerto Rican artists. Current show: Collective exhibition of it artists.

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 show: Puerto Rican primitive paintings.

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. "The Art of the Calendar"

CASA BLANCA MUSEUM
Casa Blanca. (Entrance at San Sebastian St., Old San Juan. Current exhibit: Drawings, paintings and watercolors by Lydia Collazo.

GALLERIA COABEY
La Casa de las contrafuerzas, Calle San Sebastian. Current Exhibition: "Paisajes" by Analida Burgos, Lyzette Rosado and Jose R. Alcea

GALLERIA CONDADO
Convention Center. Open 11-7 every day. 723-6090 Ext. 1632 Exhibition of work by local artists "Voy pa' viejo," paintings by Domingo Garcia

GALLERIA FOTOGRAFIA PL 900
Ponce de Leon 900, Santurce. Ponce de Leon 900, Santurce. 725-2617 open 9-5 daily except Tuesday and Wednesday. Current show: "Volando," an exhibit of photos by Marco Kalisch.

GALLERIA LA CALETA
70 Caleta de San Juan, Old San Juan. 723-8627. Paintings and prints by proprietor Luis Cajigas, ceramics, graphics and sculpture.

GALLERIA GUARAGUAO
Callejon de la Capilla, Old San Juan, 723-3896. Current show: Collective Exhibition.

GALLERIA MARIA RECHANY
Magdalena 1363. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mon. to Sat. 725-4828. Paintings, and prints by Puerto Rican artists.

Salon

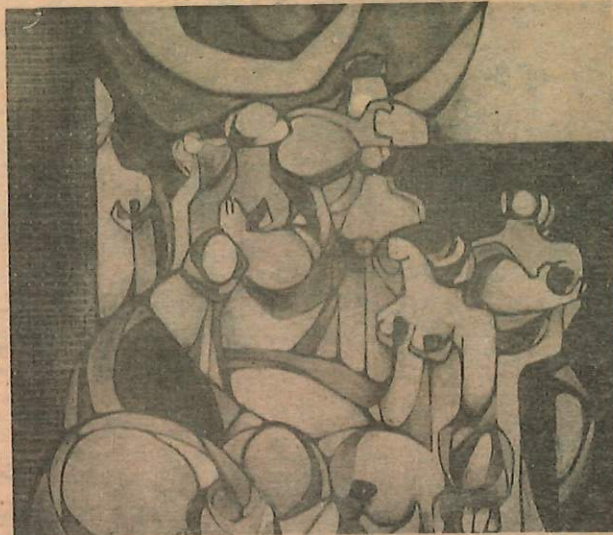
Photographed by Eddie Crespo



"Compromiso" by Paul Camacho



"Cemi y cielo" by Carlos Suenos



"Ocho mujeres" by Sandra Martinez

Pure geometric shapes which reject biology and thus reject signatures, dates or other "accidents" like diamonds do, can almost be seen in this exhibit in Carola Colom's "Continuum," an "op" work in fine blues and a light yellow green. All the other works are semigeometric at the most, showing "realistic" structures as in Osvaldo Garcia's two works; earthy physical tensions of gravity, springs and rope in "Collision" by Lope Max Diaz and an expanding universe in "Compromiso" by Paul Camacho. The work by Zilia Sanchez is a case apart. She does sign her nicely erotic canvas reliefs but not, on the faces, only on the sides.

We recently mentioned Marcos Irizarry who neither signs nor dates his semi-geometric work on the face of the plates, though custom decrees that graphics be signed underneath which he does with pencil and without dates. We suggested in Irizarry's case that he was submerging his self in the self of his professional work, a curious devotion. But are all the anonymous cases as devoted?

Parenthetically, almost all of the paintings in this Unesco show bear

no date on their faces. We are thus dealing with a dateless anonymousness, a double anonymousness of time and of person, as if we were smugglers afraid of the police. We seem to prefer to carry no incriminating evidence on our goods.

The artists came freely with their private works to this public show. They are supposed to be proud of their works since they sent them out to be measured in a contest, as champions are measured.

Do champions act anonymously? Champions of political parties have asked voters in Puerto Rico to vote "tapaitos," or under cover. Other champions have asked political favors "under the table." To do things "por la izquierda" or under cover is quite current in Puerto Rico whether it is having a mistress or an illegitimate child, or committing an act. But I feel stumped about "tapaito" painters. It is contrary to everything that Freud and Jung and others have written about artists. They are supposed to be exhibitionistic and narcissistic with big egos. Are we breeding a race apart?

The styles of the seven expressionistic and the seven "classical synthesis" paintings we mentioned above demand that the work be signed normally, especially the expressionistic ones. Such works often feature bold large signatures. So the answer to our question may be that the 14 artists do not know or sense what their styles call for.

There may be more than the above mentioned reasons for the anonymousness. For example: we produce works as honey for the socialist-collective-beehive; we are careless; we try to be offensive to the establishment; we prefer to be judged anonymously; our work is as pure geometry or gems; we go against Romanticism, Freud and modern individualism; we are smugglers, we are shamen or palace and temple slaves; we are as devoted to our profession as Marcos Irizarry; we paint "por la izquierda," as we vote "tapaitos;" we don't know what our styles call for.

And there are other motives for my anthropological reader to pick from such as: We hate to be policed by history and historians or critics so we will make them suffer. This is a sub-

versive cry and sabotage against "father," who represents all of the above including Freud.

My choice is the latter very necessary motive of killing "father" or "mother" off plus a last unmentioned reason, that our young painters are not sure of their works or not quite satisfied with them.

What else is new? More power to them. We artists shall never be satisfied with what we get in life.

Another "symptom" of this exhibit is that of the 38 works, 21 are acrylics, eight oils including enamels, five officially "mixed media," two by Jaime Suarez use clay and acrylic, and one by prize winner Isabel Vazquez uses both acrylic and oil.

The preponderance of the acrylic medium implies a getting away from the sumptuously rich impastos and sensuous fine modelling possible with oils. Pragmatic acrylics permit rapidity of execution and drying, nice easy transparencies and very portable pictures for export if need be. Acrylic leanness of paint is preferred to the richer, sensual, unctuous oils...

The Baroque spirit is gone. Plastics have taken over, they are quicker.

GALERIA OLLER

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

GENERAL ARCHIVES

Old Bacardi Building, Puerta de Tierra. Current exhibition: "Body Sculptures" by silversmith Robert Friedmann.

HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF PUERTO RICO

1396 Goergetti, Santurce. Mon. to Fri. 9 to 4. A summary of history of P.R. in antique objects.

MANOS

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

MUSEO DE LA ESCUELA DE ARTES PLASTICAS

El Morro Grounds. Mon. to Fri. 8 to 5. Sat. 2 to 5. Exhibit by Silk Screen Workshop students.

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: (Opening Saturday) "Reproductions and falsifications."

MUSEO DEL GRABADO LATINOAMERICANO

Casa de los Contrafuertes. 101 San Sebastian St. Plaza San Jose second floor. Open every day from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Current show: Prints and photos by Francisco Copello.

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: Posthumous exhibition of works by Ismael D'Alzina.

PONCE MUSEUM OF ART

as 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.

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. Saturday and Sundays, 10 to 5. Current show: Fourth Unesco Painting Salon.