

Drawings and Posters

by



J. Melique Contreras

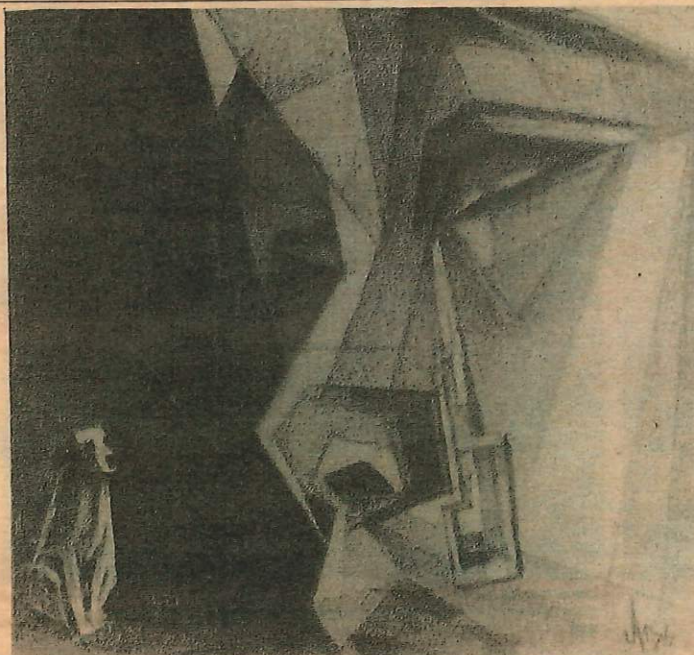


ART

Jose Melendez Contreras



Poster for a Division of Community Education film.



Illustration, "Palabras de las Naciones Unidas"

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to the STAR

Jose Melendez Contreras is showing 47 drawings and 24 posters at the Institute of Culture's Graphics Museum on the Plaza San Jose in Old San Juan.

This is Melendez Contreras' fifth one-man show and his first since 1964. There was a long quiet period between then and now during which he continued to paint but did not exhibit his work except in collective shows. He was also working at the Division of Community Education, as he had since 1952, as a book designer and illustrator and poster artist until he retired last year at the age of 58. He is now working full time on his personal art, at long last.

Melendez is a passionate man obsessed by the idea of perfection and it is typical of him that this show

was prompted by friends and not himself. Urged on by Maria Somoza, head of the institute's plastic arts section, Antonio Maldonado, head of the division's graphics section, gathered many of the works Melendez produced for his job and here they are. I wish they were paintings for Jose is a painter first, in my estimation.

"I like to paint very much because of color," says Melendez, "but I respect drawing and graphics too. I want to do everything in art. I look up to Rembrandt and Goya although I make my compositions differently."

Melendez constructs his forms with line and plane; he was born after the time of cubism. Baroque and Romantic artists modeled forms through variations in tonal values. Melendez uses local tones, saturations and areas of color to produce his work as can be attested to by his

paintings and by the posters in the show. Notice the soft blues, non-saturated yellows and yellow oranges and the legibility in "Chela," a poster to announce a division film on the handicapped. Many poster designers would have used stronger colors in a search for a rawer two-dimensional quality with the result of destroying painterly space.

The pencil drawings in the show were made for an as yet unpublished book by Emilio Diaz Valcarcel, "Un destino comun," which portrays the handicapped as exceptional people who seek a destiny common to us all. It is amazing how deeply the artist went into the book, as if he too were seeking that common destiny.

"Jose Melendez Contreras or la pasion dominada" is the title of the penetrating introduction Diaz Valcarcel wrote for the exhibit catalog. We who

worked with Melendez at the Division also recall him as obsessed with personal dreams to the point of being other worldly and sometimes rudely yanked back and exasperated by his argumentative peers. But then he would almost clandestinely retire to his desk with his assigned work and the resulting illustrations had a reality as strong as any by Homar or Tufino. Sometimes I thought they were even stronger stylistically because of his ever present geometric tendencies, as if he could dominate himself and transcend reality by using geometry as a fulcrum.

These days he is more mellow. "I learned from all of you," he says, "even when I didn't realize it .. The Division has such a level of excellence it helped all of us. This poster, for example, "Las Manos del hombre," was my test by fire with Homar. He

GALLERIES

ART STUDENTS LEAGUE

Rodriguez Army Hospital Building, Old San Juan. Current exhibition: Paintings by Shine, Lopez, Ortiz and Suarez.

CARNEGIE EXHIBITION HALL

Carnegie Library Ponce de Leon Ave. Stop 1. Puerta de Tierra. 724-1046. Open Mon. to Fri. 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sat. 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

CASA DEL LIBRO

255 Calle del Cristo 724-0354. Open Mon. to Fri., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 2 to 5 p.m. "The Art of the Calendar."

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.

GALERIA BOTELLO

208 Cristo St., Old San Juan. Tel. 723-2879. Paintings and prints by local and international artists.

GALERIA COABEY

101 San Sebastian St., Old San Juan 723-1018. Current show: Silkscreen prints and posters by Jose Alicea.

GALERIA DE PALMAS DEL MAR

Palmas del Mar, Humacao. Mon-Sat. 10-1 and 2-6; Sunday 2-6. 852-3450 Ext.2507. Works by Puerto Rican artists.

GALERIA ELUSTONDO

Cristo 200. Old San Juan, Mon. to Sat., 10-6. Paintings, drawings and woodcuts by Suenos, De la Maza, Merkel, Lucas and Elustondo.

GALERIA FOTOGRAFIA PL 900

Ponce de Leon 900, Santurce 725-2617 open 9-5 daily except Tuesday and Wednesday.

GALERIA GUATIBIRI

1003 Gonzalez Ave., Rio Piedras.

GALERIA LA CALETA

70 Caleta de San Juan. Old San Juan. 723-8627. M-Thurs. 10-6; Fri 10-3, sat closed Sun. 1-6. Paintings and prints by proprietor Luis Cajigas, ceramics, graphics and sculpture.

GALERIA MUNICIPIO

City Hall, Old San Juan. Current show: Prints and posters by Luis G. Cajigas.

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.

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RUNNING

Take it easier

By JAMES F. FIXX
New York Times News Service

After you've been running for a while it's tempting to imagine that you've become indestructible. Day after day you put more effort into your running, and a sort of continuing miracle occurs: nothing falls apart. So you take this as a license to run faster and longer. Sooner or later something does break down — a muscle, a tendon, a bone or your good disposition — because you simply can't continually run harder unless you do so in extremely small increments.

If you don't take it easy occasionally, you won't improve. You can easily tell how much rest you need if you pay attention to how you feel. Sometimes, for no apparent reason, you'll feel sluggish or lazy. On those days, once you start running you'll discover that you're not really tired at all. You'll feel springy, and in no time your laziness will vanish. Sometimes, though, even after a thorough warm-up your legs will feel heavy and you just won't want to run; if so, don't push yourself, run slowly and patiently, keeping in mind that better days will come.

Fatigue isn't the result of speed and distance in themselves, but of running at a speed and over a distance greater than you can comfortably handle. If you tire yourself day after day, fatigue accumulates. One of the first signs of the fatigue-on-fatigue effect is an out-of-sorts feeling. For no good reason you're cranky, ill-tempered and impatient. Routine tasks seem formidably difficult. Among

other signs of cumulative fatigue are these:

1. Pain in the joints, muscles or tendons, especially if it's more severe than usual.
2. Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.
3. More colds, fever blisters and runny noses than usual.
4. Continual thirst (a result of dehydration).

5. A tired feeling, especially if you still have it after a night's sleep.

If you have only one of these symptoms, it's nothing to worry about, but if you have two or more, it's an almost certain sign you're overtired. The remedy is to ease up for a while. Above all, don't do any fast running. Wait for your energy and zest to come back, and only then resume normal running.

If you race, particularly long distances, you'll have residual fatigue for several days after competition. You may think you feel fine, but the tiredness is lurking inside you, waiting to tell you with a cold, a muscle pull or worse.

Probably the chief enemy of sound training is dogmatism. Once we have planned our regimen, we're reluctant to change, feeling weak-minded if, for example, we set out on a two-mile run and end up doing only a mile. It may not, however, be lack of will power, but the smartest thing to do.

NEXT: Preventive Maintenance—advance stretching

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Illustration, "Malen el ciegoito"

kept at me ceaselessly until I learned the difference between a painting and a poster. It was my crucible...

"This exhibit is of simple things. I did them to earn my daily bread. They are workshop things without any pretensions, but I loved doing them... Now, all I know is that I have to learn to work in solitude, away from family and others, alone with what I have to do."

Melendez is a complete professional. Notice that many of the exhibit's pencil sketches, such as that of the lonely man running forward against a large emptiness, need only color to become effective paintings. Notice how impressive as murals would be such compositions as "La Comunidad tiene una funcion," or the "Cresus" story. Notice the dramatic plastic and psychological interchange between the figures of "La Burla,"

the wistful "Los logros del lisiado," the abstract yet direct symbolism of the meshing wheels of "Innumerables las causas," the strong mural relationships of "La Familia, piedra angular en la rehabilitacion" and the charm and glowing pathos of the four illustrations on "Malen el ciegoito."

I was particularly impressed by the various psychological interpretations of the emotional states of incapacitated people before they find their "common destiny."

Melendez Contreras will soon find his "common destiny" too but with his fellow painters. Whether he distributes colors as planar patches in his handsome posters or simply as in his well known "Campanario" in the UPR painting collection, I am betting on him as a complete painter in form and in color. It's a matter of time and solitude.

GALERIA RAQUEL

San Jose 257, Old San Juan. Mon. to Sat. 10-6; European oil paintings.

GALERIA SAN SEBASTIAN

104 San Sebastian St. Puerto Rican paintings and Sculpture.

INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

Convento de Santo Domingo, Old San Juan. Current show "Muestra Nacional de Pintura"

MANOS

Convention Center, Condado. Contemporary ceramics by the Caparra Studio. T-F 12-3; S&S 12-4.

GALERIA W. LABIOSA

4-5 Sol St. Old San Juan. 724-6293. Mon.-Fri. 1:30-5:30, Sat. 9-5:30. Puerto Rican art.

INTERAMERICAN UNIVERSITY

San German Beverly Student Center. "Tapices" by Beatriz Sanabria

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 DE LA FORTALEZA

Governor's Mansion, Old San Juan. Open only during business hours.

Current show: Paintings and drawings by Janet D. Esopo

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: posters and drawings by Jose Melendez Contreras.

UPR MUSEUM

Rio Piedras Campus. Open daily 9-9, Sat., Sun. 9-3.

UPR MAYAGUEZ MUSEUM.

Student Center. Current show: paintings & sculpture by Bill Birdsall.

