

Culture will out in Aguadilla

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Aguadilla might become an art capital if Antonio Loro's work is allowed to fructify unhampered by our adversary games and if he is aided by our Institute of Culture as he is happily aided by an enlightened municipal government and by promised federal funds.

Several Caribbean nations have already donated and others are in the process of donating works for one of Loro's various projects, the Museo de Arte de Aguadilla y del Caribe, soon to be inaugurated. Plans for the biggest academy of art and technology in the Caribbean are also being drawn up and several beautiful acres of land have already been secured for

Other projects are in the tentative stage, such as a painting biennial and art review with international aims. Since many people have failed in similar ventures in Puerto Rico, mainly because of one of our curious cultural quirks, our love for adversary games, we must study the Antonio Loro phenomenon. Envy, individuality, locality, and the desire for perfection are the normal cultural motives behind such adversary games. But though he denies it, Antonio Loro, even more than Ricardo Alegria when he founded his museums, has to deal with the added exacerbation of our present excessively partisan politics. Cannibalism is rampant, unhappily.

Let's study the "disease" first, then let's look at Loro's tactics for success. Success in the game demands very dedicated individuals who can dream a dream for all of us: hampering the dream could simply mean our desire for its perfect resolution. Sometimes.

It's a wise nation that develops more than one capital city in case marauding huns or plagues capture the official one. It is even wiser if a nation's culture has more than one generating center, since culture like democracy is a proud grass-roots product, not a flower to be distributed to the sticks from any centralized garden source. The adversary attitude can start between both such sources.

Our Institute of Culture is a suspect centralized garden source but happily the institute is trying to develop cultural centers in all our island communities. Many times certain art and other cultural "finished packages" are sent around to these local centers from the centralized Institute; after all, the many local creative sources can be fed by producing some generalized national cultural product of interest to us. The Department of Education is also talking about decen-

are home products pre-consumption in the various centers? Very humbly, cultural centers have very is indeed; but at least

Antonio Loro plays the adversary game of art vs. politics

the presentational efforts are really made, though some cultural centers are more creative than others.

The trouble is that island tastes have gotten to be quite sophisticated so that any old kind of stuff or presentation won't do, especially when the visiting public senses that budgets for sports and far away primaries appear magically when needed but art has to make do year after year with whatever is left over. That's the trouble with people when their expectations have been aroused by aspiring politicians or by any centralized garden of power. People then want more, including the flower or cake of "culture".

When a local cultural center with or without the Institute's help produces a hit, everybody, especially the politicians, wants to be the only father: they smugly proclaim they are bringing art and culture as promised to the masses, even against the interference of their "enemies", as if culture were an adversary game, which maybe it is to lawyers in court.

But that's just the trouble with the culture of our law and our politics. They are in the hands of lawyers. They are adversary games far too partisan just now for permanent usefulness to our nation where good things can be produced only when consensus is reached in any field including culture. All our political parties are in the hands of lawyers and lawyers love to duel in court. We need Biblical philosopher-kings who do not dillydally ritually in courts, including those courts in muddy fields where mud is a natural arm, not an art material for lawyer politicians.

The people at the Institute of Culture's "Promocion Cultural" have admitted to me that in some towns their job is made difficult by such politicians—they want the paternal partisan credit for productive cultural centers, as if culture like Venus the goddess of beauty could ever have any particular father. Culture is a collective child, period, unfathered and unbridled by parties. But in towns such as Catano and many others I have checked, the election of local directing boards for the local "Cultural Centers" becomes a partisan adversary game—the party in municipal power tries literally to railroad its political "enemies" out of the game or meeting; they want to win by any means, thus alienating non-partisan people who could help promote culture for the community.

On the other hand, when the major

of a town legitimately develops a desire to help promote culture, the people he chooses as his helpers are suspect to the official Institute of Culture promoters in the field: they too feel possessive of culture in some cases of perfectionism. This too can alienate non-partisan and humble but willing people.

Such adversary games are most unproductive.

In Aguadilla just now a most happy conjunction of events can create an exemplary pattern for all of Puerto Rico in the future. Because of the quality of the people involved the normal rivalry between the locals and the Institute people and between political parties is being put aside in the general interest. And Antonio Loro, the local enterprising sparkplug may see his plans become a reality. Poet Jose de Diego of Aguadilla would certainly approve. Aguadilla may thus become one of our needed art capitals in the Caribbean.

Antonio Loro didn't want me to mention rivalries of any kind when discussing his work. "Mention the constructive things" he advised me. He was born in the Italian Veneto region which has been invaded countless times in its history and therefore has developed a marvelous kind of diplomatic citizenry. Then his family pushed on to Argentina and from there he proceeded through Latin America and the States to fall in love with his very Puerto Rican wife, Susan Albee, an insular paso fino champion not long ago.

Officially non-partisan Loro does like paso fino diplomatic manners. It is the secret of his success so far. But I felt it my duty to present a complete realistic picture for my readers, also as a warning to all concerned both in Aguadilla and the Institute of Culture, lest the personal qualities of those now involved be unhappily swayed by partisan passions in the future.

Jorge Luis Caraballo Estremera, the representative for the Institute's Promocion Cultural in our western region, considers Antonio Loro a great asset for the job to be done in the region. I saw no envy in his eyes when I met him at the inauguration of Aguadilla's beautiful and quite useful Municipal Art Center. The Center was started by the former Popular party administration. Supposedly to be given to Institute of Culture interests, it was finished and inaugurated recently by the Statehood party and was offered to non-partisan

Antonio Loro to keep busily in cultural use.

Loro has other even more important plans on the move for Aguadilla. His idea for a "Museo de Arte de Aguadilla y del Caribe" is certainly catching on nationally and internationally. It will soon be tentatively inaugurated in one of Aguadilla's finest public buildings and he has been assured that federal monies will be available to complete or restore the building. The Aguadilla municipal government is helping Loro with the plans for the restoration and the application for funding, part of which may have to be assumed by the municipality. He has already started to receive donations of art works, principally by Venezuela and Colombia, but also from Honduras, Guatemala, Santo Domingo, Haiti and Jamaica. He has requested donations from Cuba, though they haven't answered yet. I do hope they help too, regardless of partisanship. I also hope that the quality of the donated works is up to the nice building and up to Loro's expectations. I haven't seen the works yet but intend to do so as soon as convenient.

Municipal and Federal monies will also be used in another Antonio Loro and Susan Albee idea. The "Escuela de Bellas Artes y Tecnicas de Bellos Oficios Para el Caribe", wherein all the arts and crafts will be taught, including technical, industrial and architectural drawing and design. It will be one of the largest such academies in the Caribbean. Susan has donated the few necessary acres and municipal engineers are already drawing up the plans required by the federal funding agency.

I hope Loro's other plans fructify too: the "Oller" international art review, and the "La Bienal Internacional de Pintura" to be held at Ramey, very near Aguadilla. Let us hope. Certainly his Aguadilla Art Center and Oller Art Gallery and School have been quite successful so far, with students coming even from far away San German and Ponce. We covered his 1977 "Expoeste" biennial exhibit of "Art from our Western Towns". His 1978 "First Salon of Historical Aguadilla", or old Aguadilla seen by its new artists, is coming soon to San Juan. The sophisticated and saturated color of all those student works, and I mean all of them, without exception, were a revelation to me. Loro is a good teacher.

Loro keeps telling Aguadillans it's all due to their efforts and interest: that's his secret. Just now he is trying to organize activities for the Municipal Art Center where art exhibits can be held, lectures can be given, films can be projected, theater and dance programs can be presented, and classes can be offered, all of it within 200 feet of the central town square and the upcoming Art Museum.