

March 19, 1978

ART

Art at La Fortaleza (the best guarded

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special To The STAR

Next time I have to cover an art exhibit at La Fortaleza, I shall have to use my limited alpine climbing techniques and enter over the rear walls behind the San Juan Gate which lies asleep and unattended while the officious guards at the front gate scrutinize every visitor minutely.

The guards are so trained that they have developed focused tunnel-vision, therefore I'll bet they won't see me coming from the rear. I notice that once you are in and walking around with possessive elitist steps, nobody, stops you.

It's the front gate which has become the focus of the guards. It's their temple and they invent rites-of-entry to properly dignify their cult. I say invent because one guard told me I could visit the art show until 5 p.m. whereas his boss later insisted I leave at 4:30.

The other way to do my job would be to arrive by helicopter, but I don't want to upset people.

I had arrived at 3:30 p.m. to take a

last overall look and more notes on Galeria Caleta's exhibit of 54 paintings by 44 artists in La Fortaleza's courtyard. After a wait at the gate I was told I had until 5 p.m. so I went out, as the guard directed, to telephone La Fortaleza's Cultural Affairs Office to arrange for photographs of the show for the STAR.

On my return I had to sit down again to wait — from 3:50 to 4:15 — for the next La Fortaleza tour. I begged the chief guard to please let me in for a short time to do my job, since I wasn't interested in the complete tour.

At 4:16, the chief guard allowed me to proceed, accompanied by another guard whom he grandly assigned to me. The guard stuck by me through thick and thin while I took fearless notes from picture to picture. At 4:30 I felt another Orwellian breath on my neck. It was the chief guard nicely telling me my short time was up and besides it was supper time for the guards. Just then, Aureo Andino, an aide to Gov. Romero, passed by and certified that I was one of the good guys. I had been one of his profes-

sors at UPR before he became an architect.

As a result of three similar experiences at La Fortaleza I must conclude that the place is no good as an art gallery. La Fortaleza is not bringing art to the people but to its elitist self.

The present exhibition at La Fortaleza was arranged by painter Luis German Cajigas of Galeria Caleta in San Juan. His posters are concurrently on exhibit at the Bayamon Central University Library, and he is inaugurating another exhibit in Galeria Caleta itself of religious art by 15 of our painters, a show you can see when you visit the Fortaleza one. Religious art hasn't been explored often in our history, yet it exists.

All La Caleta shows have to be visited as you would a country fair with bazaars for grown ups and phenomena and rides for the kids. The Fortaleza one is no exception. "All schools are present," Cajigas told me. "And painters of all ages too, from 65 years of age to 18-year old Abdias Mendez here." The latter's "Landscape" has nice neat light areas

of scattered buildings set against dark landscape greens.

The Cajiga landscapes of Old San Juan are vari-candy-colored and negate the Institute of Culture house painting recommendations for the zone. "They should consult me about colors for old San Juan" he flashes when I point out the unreality of his colors. Maybe nature will follow art once again and the crisply painted San Juan houses will show no wear and tear, just as in Cajigas' paintings. They can be quite luminous at times as paintings, though not always. His is a San Juan found in encounters of the third kind, out of this world.

Of the 44 artists in La Fortaleza show, eight are women.

I liked Isabel Bernal's by now orthodox "Parque de las Palomas" serigraph and her original acrylic of "Central Coloso," with its ominous greys and touches of moisture. Then I saw "Casona en Trujillo Alto" by Cayey University teacher Marta Heros with its orderly rustic habitas lovingly cared for and as lovingly reproduced here. Three orthodox "Flamboyantes" are by Margie Carrion, Olga Reyes

The Galeria La Caleta collective exhibition



"Mujer con guantes" (oil)
by Manuel Acuna



"Desnudo" (oil) by Sally Diaz



"Paisaje de Cayey" (watercolor) by Ramon V. Feliciano



"Central coloso" (acrylic)

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.

GALERIA BOTELLO
208 Cristo St. 723-9987 Prints, painting and sculpture, mostly by Puerto Rican 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: Polygraphy by Joaquin Reyes

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. Second Salon of University Art

GALERIA COABEY
101 San Sebastian St., Old San Juan. Current Show: Silkscreen by Eliseo Echevarria

GALERIA CONDADO
Convention Center. Open 11-7 every day. 723-6090, Ext. 1632 Exhibition of work by local artists.

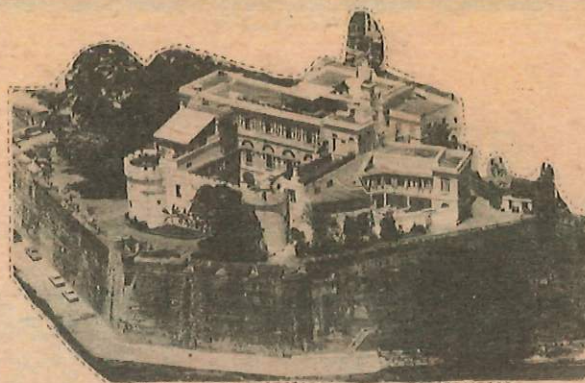
GALERIA FOTOGRAFIA PL 900
Ponce de Leon 900, Santurce. 725-2617 open 9-5 daily except Tuesday and Wednesday. Current Show, Photographs of Albizu Campos.

GALERIA GUARAGUAO
Callejon de la Capilla, Old San Juan, 723-3836. Current Show: Collective Exhibition.

GALERIA INTERAMERICANA
Interamerican University, San German. Student Center. Current Show Works by former students.

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

gallery in the west)



and Mercedes Grana de Iriarte. The latter two belong to Artists Equity Association, Inc., of Puerto Rico, along with Marta Heros and Margot Jimenez, who painted the orthodox "Hongos." Are all "Equity" artists so academic? Are our similarly orthodox santos academic?

Isabel Vazquez has a very nicely textured and erotic "Torso" and Sally Diaz presents a firmly drawn "Desnudo" with quite a painterly rendition and freely brushed golden color. I understand both her mother and daughter paint.

Old timers in the show are Epifanio Irizarry with a masterly grey note in "Don Quijote," then Bart Mayol, Jorge Rechany and Osiris Delgado, the latter with his warm "La Nueva Zafra" wherein a man waits while a sugar cane field burns. The Mayol acrylic, "Atardecer," is a quiet landscape in horizontal with saturated almost luminiscent colors and the Jorge Rechany "La Perla" contrasts the grey San Juan stone walls with the impetuously brushed flimsy La Perla houses, sky and waves. Very oldtime baroque, yet firm, is "La Catedral de

San Juan" by "Mezas." And very nostalgic is the tender "La Llegada" serigraph by Eduardo Vera Cortes, hidden away on one of the columns.

The most nostalgic phenomenon in the exhibit is the old Manuel Acuna "Mujer con guante" oil. It's a very "Brachman impressionistic" portrait of a New York Art Student League model who also posed for many other Puerto Rican painters including Fran Cervoni, Carlos R. Rivera and Epifanio Irizarry. Acuna has changed style since then. A further old-timer is Jose R. Alicea, present here in two color woodcuts, the strongly contrasted "Paisaje de Cabo Rojo" and the Japanese-like "Playeras," a group of birds standing in shallow waters next to a small island.

Among the young artists, I picked Julio Santiago's two intaglio-cum-serigraph works, especially his "Por siempre viviras en mi recuerdo" with its fine blues, reds and toned oranges and its enigmatic portrait of "Her." His "Penumbra" is a textural intaglio experiment with a serigraphed window in its midst.

Eli Barreto's modules are printed

against a strange sky in "Formas," a serigraph. I must congratulate Julio Diaz Santos for his economic serigraph, "Mi Escalera," printed in three colors only, and Avilio Cajigas for his nicely tactile and fine colored "La Jataca," a serigraph. Ramon V. Feliciano has two clean watercolors, though his "Cayey," hills refuse to lie down atmospherically.

The opening-night lighting of the Fortaleza show was terrible for the pictures. The present system is too directional and shadows move as people move around. The tops of heads and shoulders of visitors are nicely lighted, but not the pictures, especially those in the three niches where coaches and horses used to park in olden times. During the day, the light is OK for the walls, though it changes with the sun. But then the pictures hung on the pillars lie in a penumbra against strong lights.

Rafael Rivera Garcia, in charge of the Fortaleza Cultural Affairs Office, presented me to Joseph A. Baldizzi, of Jostan Electric Inc., who has the tremendously testy problem of design-

ing better illumination for the place. Between the expected no-no's from the Institute of Culture in defense of the venerable building, and the crunchy issue of economy, he has quite a challenging job. He does seem bright and his eyes know how to smile, thank God, I do wish him well.

I still think that sufficient fluorescent lights of the proper wavelengths for color set in banks against the ceiling itself between the crossbeams of the roof would be approved by the institute as non destructive of the architecture and yet would not be as directional as the present regular floodlamps.

The nicest picture in the exhibit was the unobtrusive visit by First Lady Kate herself with her young son. No trumpets blared as she calmly visited the show, she with such nice Irish skin and dark hair and eyes and an earnest yet bemused air about her. I noticed she touched her nicely skinned strapping young son tenderly once as she spoke with him.

We all belong here.



Isabel Bernal



"Calle San Sebastian" (acrylic) by Luis G. Cajigas



"Playeras" (woodcut) by Jose R. Alicea



"La Llegada" (serigraph) by Eduardo Vera Cortes



"Formas" (serigraph) by Eli Barreto

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.

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.

HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF PUERTO RICO

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

LA FORTALEZA

End of Fortaleza St., Old San Juan. Current Show: Collective exhibit sponsored by Galeria la Caleta.

MANOS

Convention Center, Condado. Contemporary ceramics by the Caparra Studio. Current Shows: A collective exhibit and works by Daniel Rhodes.

MUSEO DE LA ESCUELA DE ARTES PLASTICAS

El Morro Grounds. Mon. to Fri. 8 to 5. Sat. 2 to 5. Current Show: Innovative student works.

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: Arts of San German.

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.

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.

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 Show: Retrospective exhibition by Lorenzo Homar.

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: Paintings by the Argentine artist Perez Celis.