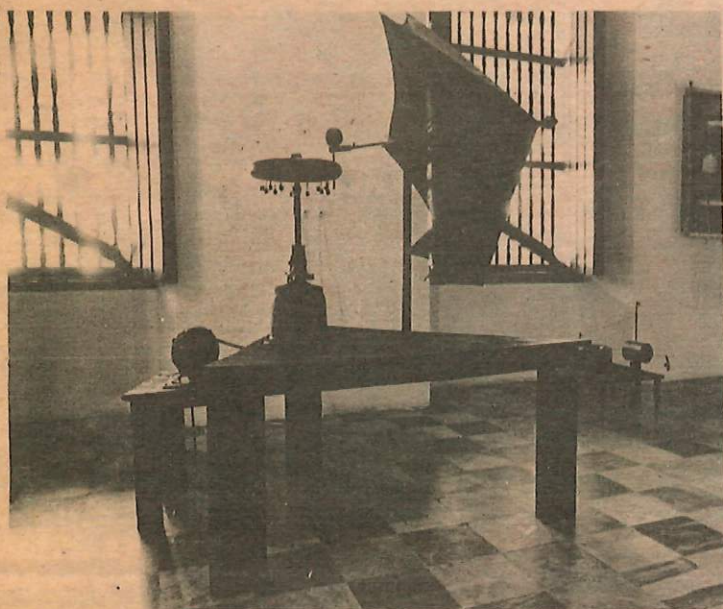


March 26, 1978

ART

Another way of looking at the world by students of the Plastic Arts School Experimental Workshop



"Myself Looking at the Nude" by Hector Rodriguez



"De la vida y de la muerte" by Dionys Figueroa

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT

Special To The STAR

The Institute of Puerto Rican Culture School of Plastic Arts is paying off as a teacher of artists. Witness the recent, successful exhibitions by the students in its various classes and workshops.

In the beginning of the year, Antonio Martorell's silkscreen workshop students exhibited a calendar of prize-winning quality. Last month, the students in Ernesto Roselle's stained-glass workshop exhibited smallscale windows of very likeable color and composition—but perhaps not with enough consciousness of how large-scale windows withstand 60 mile-an-hour winds.

Now it is the turn of Julio R. Suarez's Experimental Workshop Class. Expansive work by Suarez and five of his students possess the central hall and two of the school patios.

The ultimate in realism or space literally possessed in body, is in two works by Suarez, who captures more than half of one courtyard with two long canvas streamers hung up in angular tension and controlled by ropes. The wind makes the canvasses flap as they slap their captured spaces to enhance your spatial imagination. The otherwise static school courtyard was never as alive. Notice how movement is created by the school's architecture through use of motifs in sequences such as the arches and arcades and then compare such suggested movement to the real one created by the two Suarez works. Even the wind is made "visible." The black work is dramatically free, the red one is in firmer tension but could explode. Neither is as epic as Christo's 18-mile white nylon fence crossing California farmlands to the sea but they flap as gaily in the wind and their smaller scale and angular tensions say different things proper to our insular skies and sea. El Morro's ground winds like them and so should you.

The rest of the courtyard space is possessed by an unstable cement block and wood beam structure by Dionys Figueroa. Its ramshackle, even danger-provoking construction suggests its title "De la vida y de la muerte." No building inspector would

ever approve it. It reminds us of the jerry-built cement block structures that go up on our island without benefit of architects or engineers. The owner of the house keeps building annexes as the initial nest gets crowded with our life-and-death population growth.

Building blocks can be dangerous as Dionys found out when one of his upright "walls" fell down and could have broken his leg—so he allowed the broken wall to stay as part of the design. "The idea I wanted to emphasize is growth and its dangerous corollary of consumerism," he told me. He is personally opposed to such haphazard growth. Nobody likes cancer with its wild proliferation of cells which are the building blocks of tissues, organs and organisms, just as cement blocks are the building blocks of the housing. Dionys' construction is a metaphor of. It is better than a painting on the same subject and more realistic.

Other works that capture space literally in this show are by Gabriel Martinez and Hector Rodriguez.

One of Gabriel's captures it through its long title "Repetir un color es repetir una mentira, o, auto-empanetarse con el color acustico." Two painted boards with nails driven through them stand up vertically in front of a falling-down but official looking sign under an electric bulb. The sign begins, "Notice: \$50 reward for..."

"The sign makes the work look legal," says Gabriel. I wonder if he stole the sign from some official place and is now using it as a contrabandist stamp of approval. "The nails are to help bring the color frontwards and they add three-dimensionality to the frontwards-pushing boards. The work dramatizes actual physical painting," Gabriel continues. "Consumer painting" is dramatized in this other work of a pair of pants pressed down by a trowelled application of paint. Evidently Gabriel is trumpeting his criticism of orthodox art with its consumeristic color and figurations.

Another Gabriel work is of a chair hanging seat-down from the ceiling.

In both Gabriel works the exhibition spaces do not help. The building'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.

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: Poligraphy 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"

EDUCATION DEPT. GALLERY
Central offices corner Cesar Gonzalez and Kalaff Sts. Urb. Las Monjitas. Mon to Fri. 8 to 1:24. Current show, works by ceramic and drawing students at IAU in San German.

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

GALERIA INTERAMERICANA
Interamerican University, San German. St. Center. Current Show Works by former dents.

GALERIA W. LABIOSA
415 Sol St., San Juan. 724-6393. Open Mon 1:30-5:30 p.m., Sat 9-5:30 p.m. Watercolor other works by Labiosa.

GALERIA LA CALETA
70 Caleta de San Juan, Old San 723-6627. Paintings and prints by pro Luis Cajigas, ceramics, graphics and scu

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dark windows on each side of "Repitir un color" close the work in and as for the hung-up chair, the ceiling beams and electrical installations interfere with its visualness. Similar architecture prevented the maximum visual effect of the works of the "Frente" exhibit at the Institute of Culture Headquarters. Colonial architecture is no good for unorthodox and out-of-size art. Our art is growing up faster in size than our exhibit spaces.

The most charming works in the show are the two black-painted "erotic machines" by Hector Rodriguez. In one of them, "Myself looking at the nude," a horizontal umbrella is made to open and close suggestively. Even the noise made in the process sounds erotic. The two triangular bases with legs on which the motor, differential and umbrella are mounted could be simplified, no matter how harmonically similar in color and shape the parts are. Marcel Duchamp would have loved this contraption too, but might have suggested a more streamlined mounting such as that of his own crazy machines which they work even now.

The other erotic machine produces pictures of reasonable composition, depending on the ink colors it is fed and how the paper or canvas is guided by hand. Its parts produce suggestive noises at the same time it "paints." it is really quite a happy machine. I understand Hernandez Cruz has bought it already. "You have to see what is there, not what it looks like" says Hector of his creations.

There are the reasonably large but orthodox paintings in the exhibition. The one by Dionys Figueroa was seen before, at the UNESCO Salon "Elegy to the Dominican Republic," a black and mournful composition with uninspired low tonal contrast. "Passport," by Gabriel Martinez is a dirty texturollogical copy of an application blank "for an imperial passport for use in the provinces," as he bitterly says. The work seems to have a horror of empty spaces and even has an added wood balustrade attached by a cord. But then, bureaucrats frown on unfilled application blanks.

Angel Nevarez, who believes in art

history, has two paintings on exhibit which stress bold play with the painting materials "Luminiscencia" and "Estructura Mental." They are straightforward and the paints produced nice textures as they were guided along. Color is second to texture, unhappily. Victor Maldonado's "5 x 10" is a screen painted with random designs and scenes including food ads with a cross made of artificial flowers glued on. A small figure of a woman in the middle scene seems to suffer the cross of it all.

The next show at the school premises will be one on experimental graphics.

Jose Bonilla Ryan in a note in the exhibit catalog urges us, "Let the child in us flower without the tiresome veiling effect of the discriminating mind... as one would look at the sun in a film which is not real but accept it as real." The visitor is thus prepared for the metaphoric constructions in this show with their new visions of man's spatial reality.

Felix Rodriguez Baez, the school director, leaves the intelligibility of what you see up to you. But he defends the artist's need for facing new problems and transforming others. Suarez is not stressing novelty, but experimentation "even with its quick-sands." Student Dionys Figueroa thinks the class is "fabulous, and non-inhibiting. But we don't assume that we will ever find the black string."

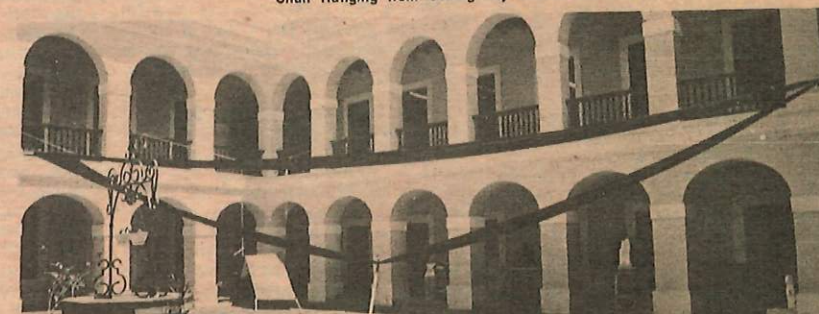
Black strings don't exist, do they?

And so the Plastic Arts School is paying off. Its artists are developing new metaphors or figures of speech, new images of man's struggle, through a more realistic art than copying nature. It is, in fact, an art which may help all of us to cope better with man and nature.

The University of Puerto Rico system in Rio Piedras, which eliminates any class which has less than 10 students, does not permit such advanced material experimentation except through extra efforts in the less advanced classes. Imagine what Luis a Geigel, Balossi, Buscaglia or Hernandez Cruz and Lope Max could teach if they each could give one advanced class without the limits of enrollment.



"Chair Hanging from Ceiling" by Gabriel Martinez



The black canvas streamer in the school courtyard is by the Experimental Workshop professor, Julio R. Suarez.

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.