

ART

Epifanio Irizarry

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to the STAR

Epifanio Irizarry is exhibiting his work this month at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture in Old San Juan. His is a known song with here and there a new lyric.

There is the drum! drum! of the Bomba, the neigh! neigh! of the "Horses... Running," ... Trotting," ...Galloping," ...Falling," ...in Contortions," or ...I," ...II," ...III," or ...IV." Forevermore.

His paintings are "Flowers" swerving against each other or "Boats" rowed or sailed in the early morning or "Inundations" or "Galleros" always in motion and for evermore splitting into cells and more cells.

"Blame it on the apocalypse," he told me to explain the cellular growth of his pictures. Each is a proliferation of cells much like Marcos Irizarry's geometric constructions except that in Epifanio Irizarry's pictures they are horses, flowers, cocks, boats, or dancing figures and in Santos Rene Irizarry's they used to be squiggly lines of nervous energy while in Carlos Irizarry's they are the growth of picture upon picture.

These four Irizarrys of Puerto Rico pack a lot of energy by way of accretion or organic growth. Their pictures grow together out of naturally separate parts. Under law, increases in land boundaries by reason of the action of natural forces are legal and these Irizarrys, though unrelated, seem to be natural forces also and they have gathered together a lot of land.

Some day the four Irizarrys should exhibit together to put people at ease about such a natural phenomenon since it is less awesome if it comes in four pieces. Now they may be one Irizarry in people's minds. That's unfair to their competition.

Of course, the trouble with growth by accretion is that it can pall through sheer numerical activity such as Epifanio Irizarry's many potboilers in this show of horses or flowers or boats, etc.

But an Irizarry can cannily defend himself. Notice the pictures in the middle of this show. "Apocalypse" shows disintegrating horses and in "Radiacion I" or II" or III" they have disintegrated.

"Blame it on irradiation," continued Epifanio, "or else the phoenix. What you see here are the ashes of what was. Remember I was a soldier in the great war." Which he was.

What can you do against an argument like that?

So do go and enjoy the watercolors on the far wall of this show. There is no cellular proliferation there. "Tar-



"Caballos" (oil)



"Balle de bomba III" (drawing and oil)

rayazo," "Marina," "Mirando al palo encebao," "Llamado a Dulcinea" and others are simple gestalts. The proliferating and atomizing touches of impressionism with which he "finishes" and thus grays his pot boilers, "because," he says, "people prefer finished pictures," are absent here and direct color can be appreciated.

In this kind of work, which takes Epifanio Irizarry about a half hour, he is a painter and a man, both of them alive, as the pictures are too.

(Photos by Jose Feliciano)



"La pesca en apuros" (watercolor)



"Flotando en las olas" (watercolor)

Ramiro P

Ramiro Pazmino is exhibiting seven oils and eleven drawings in the new and attractive Art Students League in Old San Juan. The exhibit will continue to April 26 when it will tour Latin America.

Pazmino is calm, quiet and serious with soft, somewhat sad eyes. There is a sadness in his expression as if he once knew paradise. Why has heaven been denied to such a sensitive soul?

Perhaps it is the Indian in him, as poet Edwin Reyes intuitively in a poem which he wrote in Pazmino's home and studio on Norzagaray Street in Old San Juan and which has been reproduced in the show's catalog. Pazmino's place has the black and white tiles, the dark door against the white walls and the blue sea beyond the balcony — and all of these are beyond the walls which have consistently appeared in his previous paintings. His new paintings in this show are a backdrop for a reality beyond San Juan yet they are in a San Juan peopled by tensely quiet presences looking with sad eyes at something inside or perhaps outside that which lies beyond our eyes. The same something is denied to us in the paintings, perhaps because their author has been denied his proper place among us. But maybe they are denied even to Pazmino, who knows?

The suggestive oils have no titles just the general title of "Presences" which Edwin Reyes gave to his poem.

The poem speaks of the presences of doors which leave tracks in a house that may be infinity's fence or the power of wind and sea spray and of Pazmino's horror on finding that it is his "other's" hands which have done his work so that it has to be erased. It tells of the mist around Pazmino's crouching figures; of the fear of distances, distances from which he returns sometimes with desires to tear down whatever has been created so that his Indian eyes won't die. I is of such things Pazmino's drawings and pictures speak. Now in this show the old realities are being erased. They are disintegrating.

Is the Indian the disintegrator? Perhaps poetically. As a matter of fact Pazmino will soon return to exhibit in Latin American countries including Colombia, where he was first educated and maybe in Ecuador where he was born. The Indian in him is on the make.

Actually it is Pazmino the professional who is tearing his old world down. His previous oil paintings had become academic. They were resolved with cold dark and light tones which produced mystery and an anguished atmosphere, but color as such was missing.

He began by painting a semblance of a canvas pulling away from the stretcher, first in only one upper left hand corner as in oil No. 5 (a view of the entrance to his studio), then all around the edges as in No. 4 (a wrinkled canvas going by itself into a

Pazmiño

forlorn closet). Pazmiño must have felt critically low in spirits when he did this painting and the dejected human figure being carried away by the canvas folds shows it. It is really a critical picture.

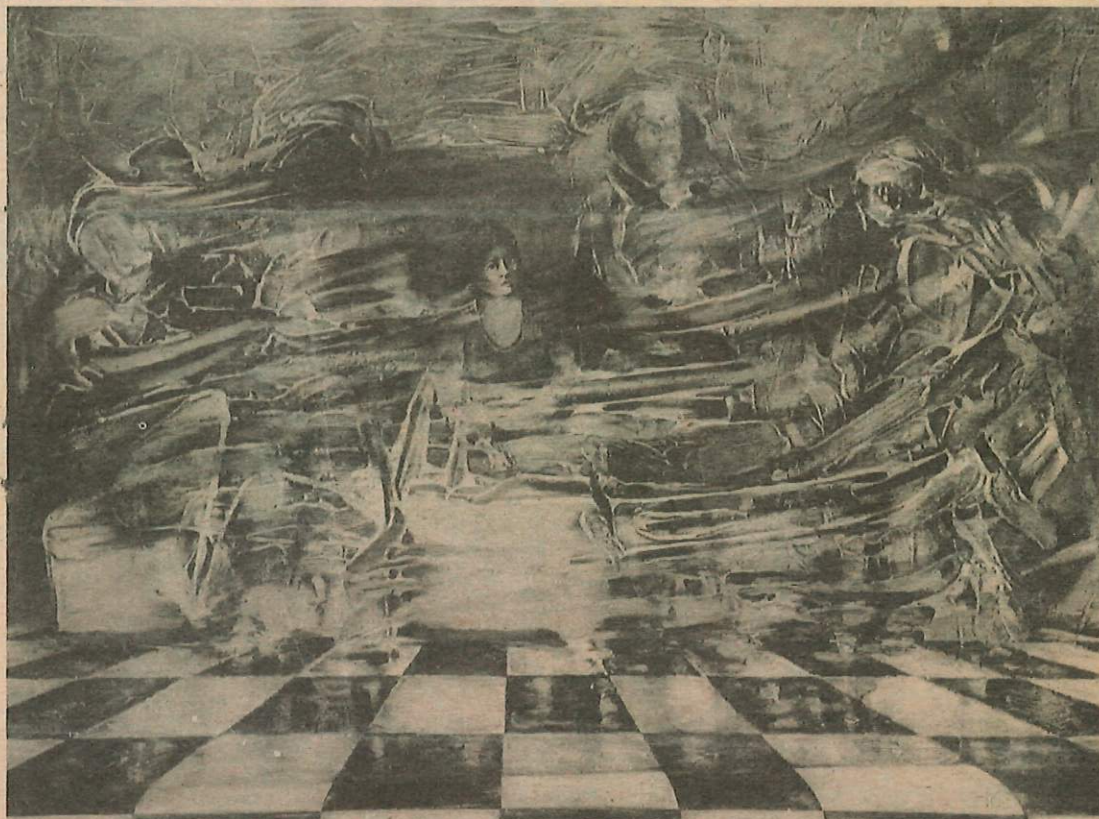
But painted semblances of wrinkled surfaces were obviously a renovating approach. He pounced on his No. 6 oil which began as an academic study with gobs of white to create a heavily textured mass which practically obliterates the study. The head and shoulders of a woman and the black and white tiles on the floor remain to act as anchors for the new and fully textured gobs. It obviously represents Pazmiño's old values anchoring his present renovating energies but in too obvious a manner which results in a stylistic duality.

Less dual because the gobs of paint have disintegrated the entire world is oil No. 7, also on paper. It shows a crumbling balustrade against which two almost abstract figures mourn a third fallen one. Pazmiño painted it at the same time that his brother died far away as if in extra sensory communication, something which produces goose-pimples on Pazmiño today. The upper left hand corner of the picture is getting loose too as if to remind us that the whole thing is a painted world.

A more successful yet also dual effort which I like because of its directness is a drawing of blurred unfocused figures moving on the focused balcony ever present in Pazmiño's work, as if he were by nature a life observer not an actor. Passing life is blurred as photography has taught us; only geography or the outside world remain steady, at least for a moment before they too blur away.

All of the above tactics in search of modernity ended, however, right back in Pazmiño's initial world where light not color was the modulator. It is apparently very hard for him to get away from his old light-to-dark pigmentations; hard to get good color.

So Pazmiño tried a reasonably modern tactic to attract color for his paintings. He subdivided the picture plane, by breaking it into separate rectangular parts parallel to the original picture plane. In each rectangular area he adds color touches at will, as if each part were an independent abstract picture. The realistic presence under all of the parts gives unity to the whole single work. Examples of this strategy, which he has tried only in drawings with color so far and not in painting, are the rest of the drawings in this show, especially Nos. 13, 14 and 15. In numbers 15 and 16 he also varied the approach by contrasting two different techniques with pigmentary materials and eye movements. In No. 18 the two underlying heads and hands form one gestalt as of a rib-cage topped by a pantheistic landscape.



"Oil No. 6"

Pantheism is not a bad solution when Gods or styles fight among themselves. Nature desintegrates all gods unto its diffused landscape, its cosmic dust. Thus Jackson Pollock disintegrated all his previous images into a linear vital continuum.

Notice how disintegration or atomi-

zation is played up in Epifanio Irizarry's paintings at the Institute of Culture's joint exhibit of drawings, paintings and graphics by beginners Dolores Conde Vargas and Gabriel Cruz Diaz. They are composed in Dolores Conde's case by the addition of organic cells and in Cruz Diaz' case by joining various photo-images

to form one picture making the path to disintegration clearly possible.

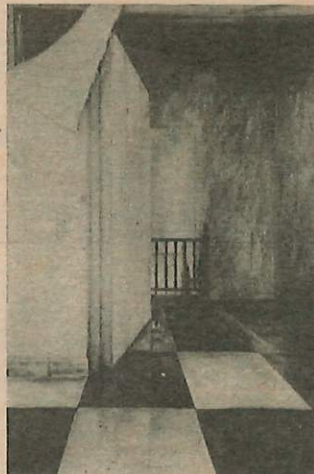
Also take a look at the work of Roberto Alberty in the Cafe-Galeria on Callejon Borinquen in Rio Piedras (near the Paradise Theater). His work, which he calls "collages, frottages, ensembles and three-dimensional jokes," builds up from random parts joined by a poet's eye. Tomorrow they may fly apart. See them now while you can.

Such atoms form our present Puerto Rican reality. Maybe these artists are trying to tell us something.

—FELIX BONILLA NORAT



"Oil No. 4"



"Oil No. 5"



"Oil No. 7" (detail)