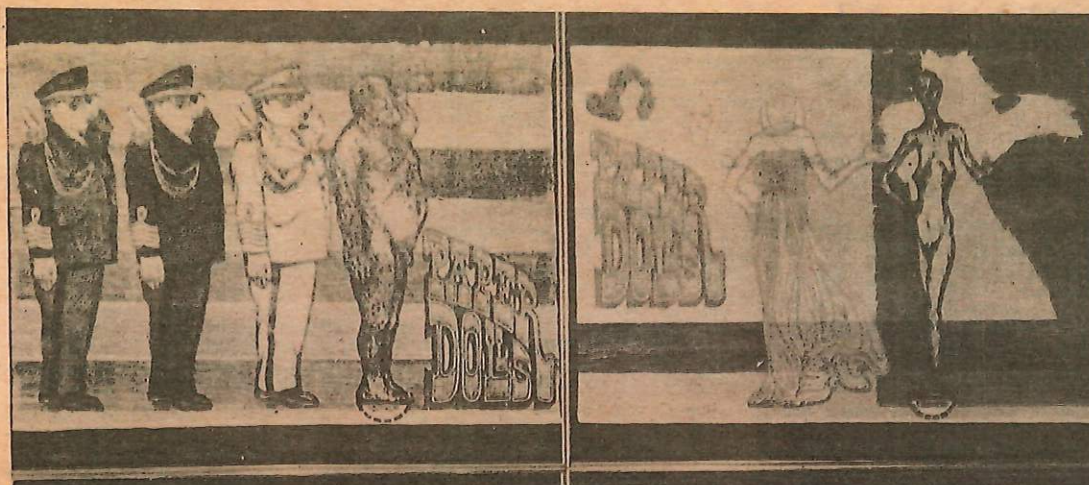


FAMILY ALBUM MARTORELL



From left, top two prints from "paper Doll" series; right end prints from "Reinas, princesas, debutantes series;" "Retrato de viaje de mi tia Con-suelo" and "Matrimonio paliarriba." (Photographed by Eddie Crespo)



By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to The STAR

Look at your own family album before you visit Antonio Martorell's exhibition, "Family Album and Other Graphics," at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture in Old San Juan.

Doesn't that forgotten photo bring back bittersweet memories? Doesn't nostalgia grab you when you touch that pressed flower? Aren't you sorry you weren't nicer to Aunt Jane?

Everybody's family album seems to be right there at the institute along with Martorell's, complete with curlicued frames, flowers and old-fashioned paper.

Martorell's proficiency in awakening our nostalgia resides not in any moralizing on his part — though his naughty bright-eyes may make you suspicious — but in his irrespressible desire to translate reality into charcoal drawings on Japanese handmade paper. It is Martorell's artistry which turns such direct motivation into drawings which function on various levels of meaning and understanding.

They do get under your skin but they function first as pure drawings and beautiful objects.

The deckle-edged papers are wheat-colored and warm and show specks and strands of fiber, golden colored against black background edges framed by cool metal frames. Black or red charcoal pencils and crayons freely and briskly model images and backgrounds without any restraining contour lines — a very painterly kind of drawing. Shading is done classically with quick moving parallel lines. Lights are dramatized by white chalk or crayon. Color enlivens passages with random wise touches.

Martorell's style is baroque and Impressionistic with Romantic touches; but as a modern artist he can also deal with empty flat spaces. He is not afraid of vacuums in his compositions and uses them to offset busy areas in many of the works in this show.

"I shall try to paint in Mexico now," Martorell says. He is leaving to stay in Mexico for a year or two. "But painting," he continues, "can be traitorous, it looks so easy and direct,

so easily attainable — but it is not. I felt disorganized by it. Work in graphics taught me both patience and organization. In graphics you work on the intermediary processes and plates or screens and they can deaden your reflexes in front of the painting situations which require immediate action."

Martorell's two well-cultivated acres and two-story house in the country would seem to be the logical place to re-discover painting, which he started in the early fifties. I have often mentioned Martorell's setup to my students, urging them to find such roots in the countryside to produce there as he does and come to the city only to deliver new works or "harvest" sales. Now at 39 Martorell is going away. Paradise is never paradise enough at that age of time and career restlessness.

"I am trying to rent Cubuy, to keep the mortgage payments up, said Martorell, "Three hundred dollars unfurnished, \$400 if furnished and with the gardener too. An artist could even use my tools and press. the place is

well equipped. But if I can't rent it, I'll board it up against hurricanes this summer and go anyway. No earthly possession will ever dictate to me about my self-appointed goals."

Assuredly he is restless. Latin America beckons. He will probably be lionized there as he has been lionized before on similar trips. His lively work and his personal opinions about art and the world always make good copy. In the catalog's "bibliography," 14 articles mostly about him have been printed in San Juan newspapers from 1969 to 1977 and 14 more in Latin American papers.

He has a knack for phrases and ideas that prod the minds of reporters and critics to bring good publicity to himself and Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico needs to export its art and ideas and in order to do it, we need good public relations abroad. We have developed few such public relations artists, the kind of people who can, as Martorell does, communicate brightly and swiftly with the media, produce catchy news gimmicks for quick entry and yet

GALLERIES

ART STUDENTS LEAGUE

Plaza San Jose, Old San Juan. Open daily, except Sundays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Tuesdays and Wednesdays to 9 p.m. Current show: drawings and graphics by Carlos Suenos Ortiz; "Prehistoria erotica"

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. Current show: Portfolio of Pan-American Prints.

CASA BLANCA MUSEO Casa Blanca. Entrance at end of Calle San Sebastian. Current show: Recent paintings by Martinez, Rodriguez, Mesley, Moyano, De Pedro and Miranda.

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."

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: Paintings and drawings by Tere Stubbe Segarra.

GALERIA BOTELLO 208 Cristo St. 723-9987 Prints, painting and sculpture, mostly by Puerto Rican Artists.

GALERIA COABEY 101 San Sebastian St., Old San Juan 723-1018.

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

GALERIA DE BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE 102 De Diego, Santurce. 725-1135, Mon-Fri 9-9 Sat & Sun 9-6 Sculpture and Graphics. Current show: Soft sculpture by Lucia Walser

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 Roberto Moya and others.

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

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

GALERIA MARIA RECHANY Magdalena 1363. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mon.



keep the serious art critics interested too because of art quality. Too many of our travelling artists take their ambassadorial duties too seriously, and end up by sounding pompous.

Since imaginative humanity along with art quality catches media attention better than pompous seriousness or "Great Artist" pretensions, ambassadors like Martorell will help open galleries abroad to other Puerto Rican artists. Intelligence on shipping channels should also be passed on to aid exportation of works by quality artists who chose to stay in Puerto Rico. Nightingales produce best in their own humble nests, and our far-flying hawks such as Martorell have a duty to perform as scouts.

As we view this show, we are struck by Martorell's gift for graphic metaphor, the most direct of all. Notice the immediacy of the signs and title of his "Matrimonio Patiarrriba," which reproduces a wedding picture torn in two, "he remains down, head up, 'she' is upside down. The literalness of the sign is quite remarkably expressive and economical.

The "Paper Dolls" series of

xylographs are a pungent commentary on human hierarchy. Its vanity is shakeable, as paper dolls are. Fancy, dress covers the flabby bodies of the vain in power.

The "Reinas, princesas y debutantes" series of serigraphs reports on another passing vanity, the feather-adorned queens who reign for one single gaudy day or night. Notice how touchably nice are the crumbling crayon touches against the artificial black backgrounds. Silk screen paints were used to advantage here, though the effect is of crayon drawings or pastels, not of painting.

Nearest to painting in this show is his flamboyant, yet tender full-color serigraph, "Retrato de viaje de me tia Consuelo." As a painting it might be too academic and decorative but as a serigraph it functions very well. It is more than a theater poster, it is also a personal document; he evidently loved his aunt.

Martorell's mind functions well with a series of works on a single subject, as we have seen in so many of his previous exhibits. Notice the "Family Album" and other series here.

This tendency could be due to his experience as illustrator for such beautiful books and portfolios as "Las Moscas," and "Eleuterio el Coqui," also present here to full effect. Notice the playful spatial graphicness of every page of "Las Moscas", the warm colors and the effective dry point lines of "Eleuterio." Certainly Martorell is more a collaborator with, than an illustrator of, Antonio Machado's and Tomas Blanco's texts.

Another serial tactic is the sequential comicstrip effect of "Apartment 11-C," in which a plain architectural rendering becomes lived in by an old lady who first cages in the place with metal grills then with creeping vines, thus imprisoning and burying herself and gradually disappearing right before our eyes.

This spatio-temporal serial effect seems to be a Martorell character trait. Unable or existentially unwilling to do a definitive work for each idea, he pursues it from many angles at once, including the angle of time. I wonder if he ever thought about film making: films can use his serial-flux kind of mind. In this connection his

series of monotypes, "Homenajes a Alfred Hitchcock," suggesting the "Birds" thriller by impressions of feathers, is a recognition by Martorell of the great film maker's mind.

Martorell's "Mandallic self-portrait" evades being a definitive self-portrait and is a series of playful printing variations of six small dry-point etchings of consecutive parts of his face, the series forms a puzzle without a definite answer, suggesting films again, a consciousness of the passing of time, and maybe also the angst of mid-life aging with its concomitant urge to hurry, hurry before it is too late.

The come-on display of some works outside the main exhibit at the institute features an illuminating quote from Prof. Arcadio Diaz Quinones, who wrote the earnestly thoughtful introduction to the show catalog. Behind the quote are hung the two large lumpen proletariat figures of today's Adam and Eve, who appear to sweat as consumers not as producers in this world. "Memorias de un Monaguillo" could be a rueful self-examination by Martorell.

to Sat. 725-4828. Paintings, and prints by Puerto Rican artists.

GALERIA MUNICIPIO

City Hall, Old San Juan. Current show: Collective show 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.

GALERIA RAQUEL

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

GALERIA W. LABIOSA

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

LA FORTALEZA

End of Fortaleza St., Old San Juan. Open only during business hours. Current show: Works by Linda Gregory and Ceramist Luis Leal

MANOS

Convention Center, Condado. Contemporary ceramics by the Caparra Studio.

MUSEO DE LA ESCUELA DE ARTES PLASTICAS

El Morro Grounds Mon. to Sat. 8 to 5. Current Show: Works by sculpture students of Tomas Balista and Rafael Lopez del Campo.

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 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 exhibits: Portfolios by E. Deira, R. Guitelson, A. Berni, E. Mc Entire, J. Santiago and L. Rosado.

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. Current show: "Album de familia y obra grafica" by Antonio Martorell

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 Sunday, 10 to 5. Current show: Works by Institute of Culture Plastic Arts School students.