

Portfolios

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special To The STAR

Portfolios can be portable carriers of loose financial securities or of government documents and affairs as well as loose art works. Art portfolios worldwide are being used for all three purposes — they sell well (sometimes better than bonds), they are used as ambassadors of good will between government leaders, and they keep artists and printers busy.

Six ambassadorial portfolios of graphics are being shown at the Institute of Culture's Museum of Latin American Graphics. Another has been given ministerially to the Institute by a multinational concern, Fibras Internacionales de Puerto Rico, and is presented at the Carnegie Library.

Several other galleries, especially Coabey, show portfolios. Look them over! You don't have to use your securities to pay for them: art too is cheaper wholesale.

Modern artists including sculptors are turning to "multiples." These are art works produced in editions of a varying number of copies: so many duplicates of a cast sculpture or of a constructed and glued one, for example. The latter are a less orthodox merchandising gimmick than an edition of so many prints or even drawings — but it is done wholesale in international art markets.

The merchandising flavor is softened in the mind of artists by the idea that they are "bringing art to the masses" of this world from New York, Paris, Buenos Aires, to Chicago, Mexico or Peru, India, or Timbuctu. Since bringing art brings money, too, artists thus join capitalist with socialist ideas for art.

We Puerto Ricans do have to export our goods as well as our art and our ideas, beginning within the Caribbean; but since the Caribbean is balkanized and most times seems to have windows only to the respective colonial powers, we may have to export art and ideas beyond the Caribbean to reach the Caribbean. Portfolios and illustrated books displaying ideas and good art are a marvelous export item.

But to export, what gimmicks or carriers will we use? Where do we draw the line about "multiples" especially in sculpture? Books and prints present no moral problems except that each print medium has its own optimum edition point, beyond which each further copy loses quality.

Somehow carved sculptures as well as paintings are beyond this multiple kind of commerce, but it's been tried too. By sophisticated artists beyond the humble efforts of Haitian painters and carvers when they repeat designs. Some of our artists also repeat designs.

I have nothing against commerce; to the contrary, to be in commerce means to communicate with other countries, other peoples, as also with God, Einstein or the street corner woman. Commerce brings "civilization" and Civilization is the hybrid of many cultures which end

by producing the homogenized international culture. Notice how quite alike in many technical stylistic and even subject matter details are the works at Carnegie Library and even in the Institute Museum yet they were produced in many countries of Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Somewhat Puerto Rico comes out quite strong in the homogenized culture that graphics and other art forms have become nowadays in the world of International Festivals, travelling portfolios and art magazines in full color. Of course, it is easy to be "different" formally in a stereotyped manner if we copy ancestral designs such as our Taino pictographs or if we stick to folkloric dresses a la Areyto with their invented typicality. Julio Santiago thus copies Taino designs for his serigraphic portfolios at the Institute's Museum, an edition of 100. But he adds his strong colors, which are the simplest and strongest of all amongst these seven portfolios we are considering though not as nicely mixed with cool blues and greens as the more personally derived but Taino-inspired, really beautiful serigraphs by Echevarria now re-hung at Coabey Gallery, next to the Museo del Grabado.

Three women become our standard bearers in this international company: two at the Carnegie's portfolio and Lysette Rosado at the Museum with her "Las Soledades" a set of about 10 engravings in an edition of 50. The poem by Samuel Lugo is beautifully enhanced by these interior scenes of touchable woods and silent details "which smell of wood as all ancient things... speak the language of centuries, have the coldness of all scenes without people... bury themselves in our eyes... transmute, and come out at dusk in the flesh of bats..."

The two others, Myrna Baez and Consuelo Gotay, were commissioned by Fibras Internacionales to produce one work each for the Fibras 1977 Portfolio; Myrna produced a dryly colored but very nicely textured serigraph "Nubarrones en Barazas" which is as a positive-negative vision of Puerto Ricanness, as expressed in a symmetrically balanced landscape but with a mirage kind of inverted effect. "Are we a Puerto Rico in the clouds? Or down to earth?" this work seems to say.

Consuelo produced a very very and rhythmic black and white woodcut on "Pietra Rentas" showing Pietra walking forth as she carries her child or doll. Balustrades are left behind her along with potted plants. She has printed flowers on her black dress. There's no nonsense about the brisk way Consuelo cuts into wood and plays white with black areas or lines with areas. Myrna is misty and introverted compared to Consuelo. But both represent us well, one is our questioning hesitancy and the other is our pragmatic lively self.

A portfolio is always a conveyed sale, sometimes of various independent art works, other times of various



Myrna Baez's "Nubarrones en Barazas," serigraph.

works on a central theme or idea, or else consecutive illustrations for a famous loved book. We have seen the many portfolios Martorell loves to produce, also some by Lorenzo Homar, Hernandez Cruz, Jose Alicea and others: they can sell in international art markets. We need more, even though it takes more resources to produce a portfolio than various single works.

Art works in a portfolio could be framed independently for display on the wall: each work comes out cheaper then. But it is also nice to keep the works within the tidy covers which are often lovingly decorated by the artist or his printers and binders, as in Wilfredo Chiesa's requiem on "Paisaje Asesinado," complete with musical cassettes. Some explanation or biographical text usually accompanies the works as an added come-on for "consumers."

To complete these general comments, I must re-emphasize the ethical question of how many duplicate copies an art work can have and still be respected as an "original" to be signed by the artist. The best guide is each medium's limitations: for example, drypoints must have very limited editions compared to etchings, since the metal burr lifted by a drypoint which produces very particular effects

is soon flattened in the process of printing. A similar thing happens with tusche and glue serigraphy: the glue breaks earlier than lacquer or photo emulsions and these stencils break earlier than hand-cut lacquer films, etc.

Beyond the above optimum-quality point for each medium, any edition is too large, and becomes a mere process of commercial reproduction. Notice that the Fibras Internacionales portfolio is fixed at a discreet edition of 150 copies, too many if for ticklish drypoints and tusche-glue serigraphy but quite reasonable for etchings, photo-serigraphy and woodcuts, the principal mediums used.

Of the six portfolios at the Institute's Museo del Grabado, the two Puerto Rican ones are very ethically limited: editions of 50 for Lysette Rosado's etchings, 100 for the serigraphs with etching details by Julio Santiago. Ernesto Deira's etchings were also limited to an edition of 75. But Antonio Berni's edition of 800 for serigraphy, Eduardo McEntyre's serigraphic edition of 450, and Rebecca Gutelzon's edition of 500 for zincography begin to be quite hoggish.

But they could claim they are bringing art to the masses, limited editions are as all property rights, a capitalist invention since Neolithic times.

of Graphics

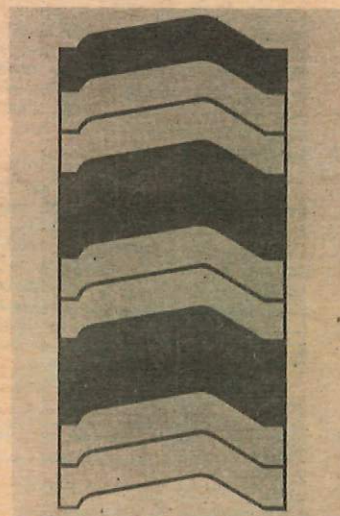
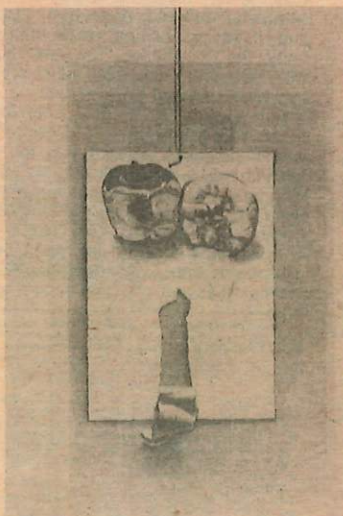
Part 1



Consuelo Gattay's "Pietra Rentas."



Gina Pellon's litho, "Jeune Fille."



Also at the Carnegie Library exhibit, from left: litho by Jose de Monte; Teodoro Maoz serigraph; Javier Restrepo's "Acerca del Cigarrillo," and Mateo Manaure's polychrome column.

July 16, 1978

Sunday San Juan Star Magazine • July 16, 1978

Portfolios of Graphics Part II

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to the STAR

Possibly the most important portfolio in the Museo del Grabado show, open until the middle of July, is Er-

nesto Deira's set of 6 etchings to illustrate the Peruvian novel by Mario Vargas Llosa "Pantaleon y las Visitadoras". The satiric novel about the military mentality is handsomely suggested in the etchings by the Argen-

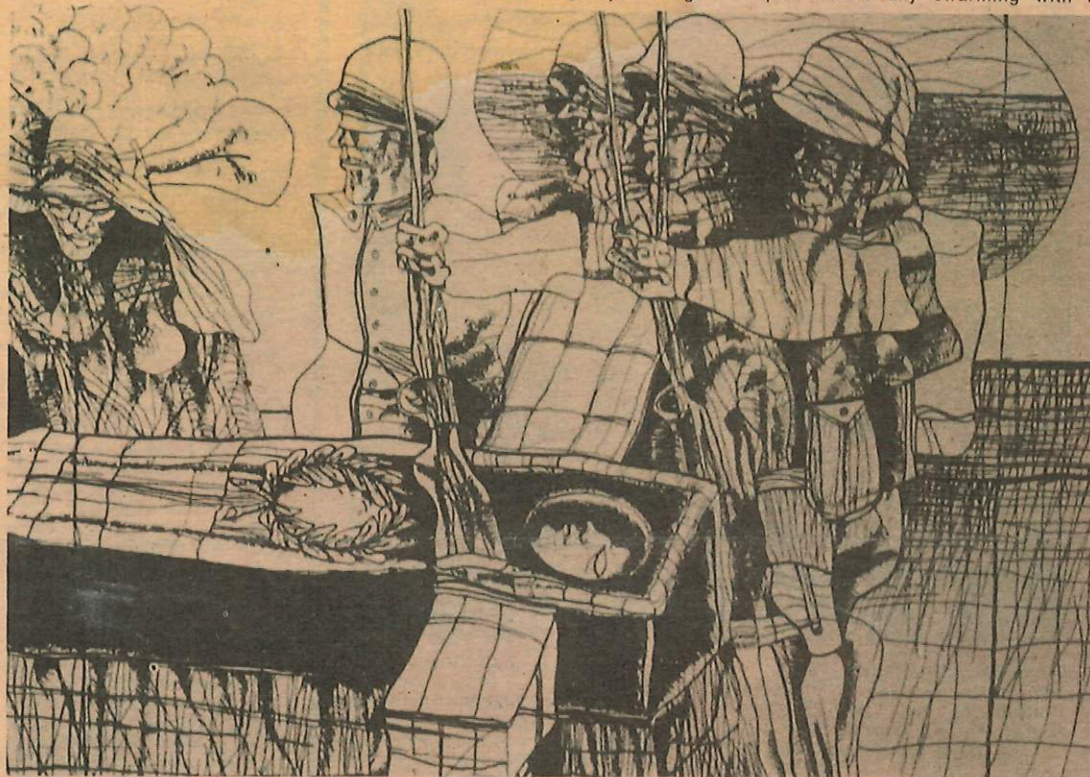
tine artist. Vargas Llosa himself calls them "The excessive Etchings by Deira" — (and they are excessively charged with semi-surrealist details in mysterious situations) — but they are quite masterfully swarming with a

humanoid insect life. Proper semi-geometric or semi-military bands and rectangles within each etching keep the organic swarms in proper plastic (or military) array, no matter how tropical and loose they are. Eroticism enters everywhere — from the military escort crying over the dead body of Olga Arellano Rosaura, "The unhappy martyr of duty and victim of society", to the old battleship now used by the "Visitadoras Service", which becomes a sexy sphinx with big breasts and buttocks, or the old airplane which has to be camouflaged and turns into an erotic image with insect wings.

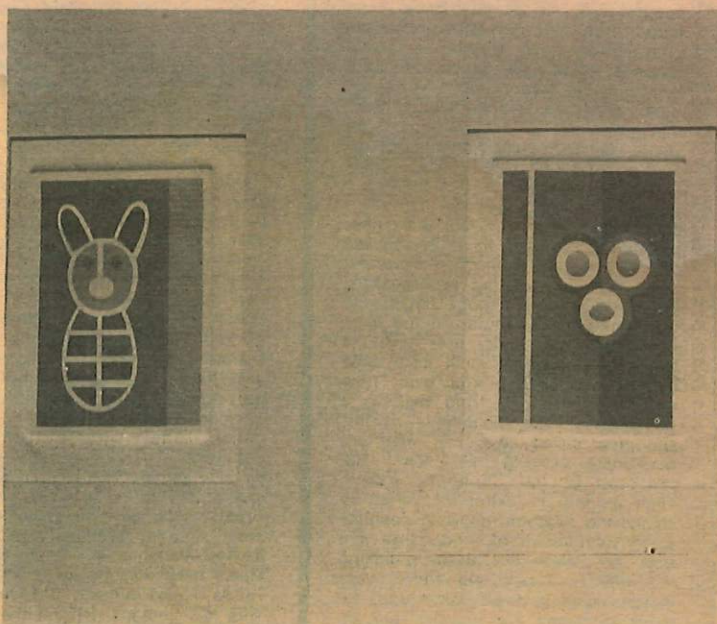
Lizette Rosado's etchings, which we already mentioned, seem quite capable and poetic next to Deira's, though they are not as licentious. Overpopulated Puerto Rico prefers proper chastity in artistic techniques and treatment of sex. How did we get to be overpopulated? Julio Santiago's already mentioned set of serigraphed taino designs may suggest some Indian malediction on progeny.

The "Erotica" set of 5 zincographs by Argentina's Rebecca Guitelzon shows quite free and rhythmic sexual encounters as so many half-way efficient but poetic arabesques.

The "Cinco Serigrafías" by Antonio Berni are an anecdotic nostalgia-series on a freckled-faced boy with straw hat and girlfriend. "Cinco Medallones Florentinos" by Eduardo McEntyre are orthodox McEntyre exercises as with the toy spectograph gadget, though one of them has a nice red circular movement around a vertical fulcrum. How they can illustrate Rafael Squirru poems on such Florentine personalities as Cellini or Maquiavelo is quite an intellectual exercise.



Detail from one of Ernesto Deira's set of six etchings.



From Julio Santiago's set of serigraphed Taino designs.



From Antonio Berni's series: "Cinco Serigrafías"

July 23, 1978
ART

Portfolios of Graphics Part III

By FELIX BONILLA NORAT
Special to the STAR

Fibras Internacionales de Puerto Rico collects used paper for recycling along with similar supplies from their branches in various countries. As a fitting institutional public relations gift they have prepared portfolios of art works by artists from many countries. The present one is their seventh. Several years ago their Mexican branch sent us a magnificently colorful portfolio of Mexican "Mixtography" or collotypes printed from copper plates.

The present portfolio at the Carnegie Library is by 37 artists from 13 countries and consists of 12 lithographs, 7 etchings, 13 serigraphs plus one more combined with wood-cut details, 4 woodcuts and one paper collage. The 150 limit for the edition is quite discreet for those mediums: the technical quality is quite remarkable as is the predominance of serigraphy amongst the mediums, especially of photo-serigraphy which permits the impression of quite legible newsprinted texts as backgrounds or details in many serigraphs here. Also remarkable is the expanded use of serigraph single printings with more than one color, which permits very fine and painterly transitions between the colors.

The works on these walls, however, though very finished in technique, are by the same token a little empty of emotional content. Gone are the shockingly simple shapes, the beautiful whites, greys and blacks of

an Orozco lithograph, and absent are the contrast and abstract colorfulness of Vassarelli's geometrical experiments.

If a future anthropologist had only this show by which to judge our present world, he would be shocked to find such few possible clan figures, or in their absence, such few geometric constructions of the world. He would declare us a tired, well-educated, but shallowly-technical people.

The human figure is an ideographic fruit-of-office supplies in "Personaje" by Roberto Alzenberg of Argentina; a chopped-up "Menhir" by Mexico's Ignacio Miranda; a pin-headed, healthy body without direction in "Marchando" by Della Cugat of Argentina; a featureless institutionalized and sitting "Respectable" by Uruguay's Pablo Obelar; a broken-down organic paper-thin totem-pole in "Remembrance" by Jorge Camacho of Cuba, wherein a minotaur and a unicorn appear as if de-vertebrated on top of each other; an ideogram of the cannibalized "Senor de Miclan" by Jesus Martinez of Mexico; a brown, academic standing nude by Haiti's Antonio Joseph; tenderly orthodox refugees in "Homenaje a un Maestro" by Argentina's Norberto Onofrio; and a rhythmic but distraught "Petra Rentas" by Consuelo Goltay of Puerto Rico.

Humans as torsos are erotically Pop in "Acerca del Cigarillo" by Javier Restrepo, and academically healthy, but tensely suffering, in "Sin

Titulo" by Jorge Mantilla Caballero, both of Colombia. Almost decapitated heads cry out in Colombia's "Sin Titulo" by Margarita Monsalve and Venezuela's "Serie Ayerim" by Saul Huerta, with its discarded mementoes and odd mixture of techniques. Belgica's Pierre Alechensky presents man as reptile or worm in "Debajo del Volcan."

Venezuela would be declared a vulture because of Luis Adrian Leon's "En Acecho". Trinidad-Tobago would be ruled by two "Fish Forms" by Nina Squires. Mexico would be two half-eaten halves of an apple against a torn blank paper and a newspaper in "Incognita Amigdala Annual Melancolica" by Teodoro Maoz.

France would be a silent film strip about an erupting volcano, a science illustration seen from "De la Fenetre" by Colette Portal. Spain is a childish set of "Cartas a Mejico" by Antonio Saura, wherein all postmarks are in French or German, not in Spanish. Haiti is "La danse de La Fleur" white against a green background, by Gestner Armond.

Orthodox landscape is seen only in Argentina's "Despues de la Tormenta" by Jose del Monte, and more meaningfully in Puerto Rico's "Nubarrones en Barrazas" by Myrna Baez.

Just as happened with the show on Spanish drawing and graphics, somehow this one leaves us with an expectant hope for better things yet. Maybe Fibras Internacionales should present an all Puerto Rican portfolio.

Photographed by Pipo Grajales

The Dying



Proprietor of Cigarros Antillas, Jose Ramon, cigar makers and a helper to produce 800 c readymade clientele.

By JACQUELINE MARTINEZ
Special to the STAR

"The art of cigar making is in its death throes," said Jose Roman, proprietor of Cigarros Antillas. "All that's lacking is the last stiffening of the leg. It's funny that now the burro is dying, so many people are interested in finding out about the demise."

Strange, too, that these should be the sentiments of the owner of a thriving handmade cigar business in Old San Juan. Yet if anyone should know what's happening, Roman is among the most likely experts on the island. A native of Arecibo, he's been making cigars for nearly 70 years.

But a visit to his shop at 325 Recinto Sur strains the credibility. Can this be a dying trade? You can see the pride and agility with which the cigar is filled, shaped, wrapped, cut, and added to the pile of perfect



"Respectable" by Pablo Obelar.



"Remembrance" by Jorge Camacho.