

# Modern Cuban painters

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MODERN

# CUBAN

PAINTERS



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## Modern Cuban Painters

There are things about Cuba which surprise you. You suppose that it is a big island, maybe the size of Long Island, when in fact it is longer from one tip to the other than the distance from New York to Chicago. Even if you've been to Havana, you think of it as a flat country with palm trees though actually it is as mountainous as New Hampshire, with the peak of Turquino towering 2000 feet higher than our Mt. Washington. And the American tourist, though he sees the ancient Morro Castle and the Cathedral of Havana, is rarely prepared for the fact that a whole century before the Pilgrims landed in Massachusetts expeditions were already setting sail from Cuba to explore Florida and conquer Mexico.

But there is more than size and height and age to surprise you in Cuba. Modern Cuban painting, for instance — though we need not feel so embarrassed by our ignorance in this field since the modern movement in Havana is very young, in fact has taken on a consistent and recognizable character only within the past four or five years. It has something of the brashness, but even more the virtues of youth — courage, freshness, vitality, and a healthy disrespect for its elders in a country which is very old in tradition and very new in independence.

### 2

Four centuries of Spanish rule weighed heavily on the culture of the youngest of the American republics. To quote the Cuban critic José Gómez Sicre: "The Academy of San Alejandro, the only important art school in the country was founded in 1818 as a colonial echo of a

Spanish echo of the moribund Academy of Rome. Spanish cultural obscurantism continued to dominate Cuba through the 19th century, and even after Cuban political independence was achieved in 1902, the teachers of art remained unprogressive, to put it mildly. Ridden by politics, the San Alejandro lived on in so musty an atmosphere that even polemics were difficult."

Possibly the San Alejandro of twenty years ago was no more conservative than some of our own art schools of the same period. But because it stood alone it seemed a very bastille of academic reaction from which young rebels escaped, formed battalions and then returned to the assault of their *alma* (but retarded) *mater*. The revolt began in the early twenties under the leadership of Víctor Manuel who had for years been a star pupil at the San Alejandro. In 1927, just back from Paris, he and his friend Antonio Gattorno (now living in New York) held one man shows of their new work painted under the influence of Gauguin and certain Italian primitives. Though the canvases seem mild today they caused a sensation at the time. The writers of the new *Revista de Avance*, especially Jorge Mañach and Juan Marinello, came valiantly to the support of the young painters. In the same year Carlos Enríquez, who had violently disagreed with his teachers at the Pennsylvania Academy a few years before, held his first Havana one man show; and Amelia Peláez, perhaps moved by these events, turned her back on her academic successes at the San Alejandro to begin her seven years study abroad. The new movement was under way.

Cover: Amelia Peláez. *Balcony*. 1942. Watercolor. 29½ x 39½".

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### 3

Of the painters who are not yet fifty years old, but who represent the older generation of modern Cubans, three are shown at some length in the present exhibition: Ponce de León, Amelia Peláez and Carlos Enríquez.

Ponce is famous for his hobohebian eccentricities, his elaborate irresponsibility toward his friends and himself, his mysterious disappearances from Havana for years at a time, no one knows where. At his best he is Cuba's foremost painter, cloaking his disquieting figures in veils of pallid tan, white and green.

Ponce has never left Cuba. Years ago he knew Cézanne and van Gogh through reproduction, but his intuitive expressionism is highly personal. Amelia Peláez, however, traveled widely in Europe and studied for years in Paris where she passed from Modigliani's mannerism and Soutine's rich pigment into a prolonged cubist discipline. Returning to Havana in 1934 she applied her well assimilated learning to Cuban subject matter, especially still life,

simply at first and then with increasing intricacy and brilliance of color. Modest and reserved, she lives in retirement and has even refused official honors because she felt they came too late.

There is little reserve and no still life in the volatile art of Carlos Enríquez. He suggests the legendary violence and sensuality of his country by fusing desperados, galloping horses, figures of women, and the windy, rolling Cuban landscape into tornados of iridescent color.

### 4

These three highly individual painters are older by at least ten years than the young artists whose work forms the bulk of the exhibition. Mariano, Portocarrero, Carreño, Felipe Orlando, Bermúdez and the draughtsman Martínez Pedro are all in their early thirties. By contrast with their elders they studied only casually, if at all, at the San Alejandro Academy which while they were still children had been repudiated by Ponce and Víctor Manuel.

Ponce. *St. Ignatius Loyola*. 1940. Oil. 35 x 35". Though neither devout nor religious in a conventional sense, Ponce is attracted by religious subjects. This ironic interpretation of the famous Spanish religious hero was inspired by an image in a poem of García Lorca's which declares that the lips of a rabbit stabbed by St. Ignatius still cry today from the bell towers of the churches.





Differing from the older generation, only one of the six has ever been to Europe, partly because they came of age in the disturbed period of 1930 and partly because Mexico has for the past fifteen years rivaled Paris and surpassed New York in its influence upon Cuban painting. The young Cubans however have not looked so much to Rivera and Orozco as to Rodríguez Lozano and Guerrero Galván who passed on to several of them something of the grand line and classic figure style of the greatest hispanic master, Picasso.

Within the past year, Siqueiros spent a few turbulent months in Havana briefly rallying artists to his project of painting collective murals in duco. Although Siqueiros' art exerted some influence, his dogmas concerning art and society were not in the end accepted by the younger Cubans. They are not, however, unaware of social or political problems. Several of them had indeed already done public murals; others had made political caricatures during the 1930 trouble; one of them taught in a prison school; another was himself imprisoned in Spain for antifascist activities. But the fact is that the Cuban painters are too much concerned with painting as a personal art of form and color to surrender their individuality to a collective enterprise with political implications. For better or worse they are essentially easel painters though this is a more precarious profession in Cuba than it is here, due in part to the artists' lack of interest in their own common welfare.

Paris and Mexico, the Italian Renaissance and Baroque masters have all contributed to modern Cuban painting but these foreign influences have been fused to a remarkable extent with native Cuban elements. Unlike Mexico, Cuba had no strong pre-Colombian culture. The Indians were efficiently exterminated by the Spaniards almost four hundred years ago. They left few traces. But the Ne-

groes imported as slaves have maintained a vigorous culture, mixed it is true, but far purer and stronger than in the United States. Side by side with Afro-Cuban dancing and magic ceremonies is the even stronger Spanish tradition with its Catholic and Latin European past and its colonial baroque architecture and decoration. These two traditions have merged at various levels. For instance, from Spanish Cuba and Afro-Cuba together have sprung some of the best Cuban concert music as well as the conga and the rumba which are now such formidable rivals to the Afro-American swing music of our United States.

In both the Spanish and Afro-Cuban cultural traditions Cuban painters are taking an increasing interest, as well as in Cuban subject matter. But there is almost no painting of the Cuban scene comparable to our often literal or sentimental painting of the American Scene; and there is little obvious regional and nationalistic feeling. Cuban color, Cuban light, Cuban forms, and Cuban motifs are plastically and imaginatively assimilated rather than realistically represented. Expressionism is the dominant style, whether applied to fighting cocks, sugar cane cutters, guanábanas, barber shops, bandits, nudes, angels, or hurricanes. But, almost without exception this expressionist handling of the Cuban scene is based on a thorough discipline in drawing and a sustained interest in classic composition.

To return to the younger Cuban painters. The restless, talented René Portocarrero who hesitated for years between mysticism and humor now seems to have found security for the time being in his compositions of ornate colonial interiors reminiscent of his childhood in the old Cerro district of Havana. Mario Carreño is the most versatile, learned, and courageous of the new generation. Unlike his friends he has traveled widely in Europe and America. For a time he based his style on Raphael whom



most painters of his age throughout the world naively despised. More recently Siqueiros' visit to Havana has inspired him to a series of large panels in duco of which the *Afro-Cuban Dance* and heroic *Sugar Cane Cutters* are among the most ambitious and powerful compositions in Cuban painting. Felipe Orlando's gentler art depends on color applied with the ingenuous drawing of the children he teaches.

Mariano and Cundo Bermúdez are alike in their love of figure composition, the former achieving a baroque facility in drawing and composition, particularly in his watercolors. Bermúdez' style, well shown in *The Barber Shop*, is sometimes humorously archaistic, but strong and original in its metallic color harmonies.

## 5

In fact, except for the unique Ponce, all these painters whether young or in their middle years seem in their recent work to be a little drunk with color. Tropical sun and tropical fruits, Afro-Cuban costumes, baroque gold and polychrome ornaments, colonial stained glass fan windows, even cigar box heraldry seem all to have contributed to this intoxication. It is untrammelled, joyful color which most sharply distinguishes them as a school from the Mexican painters who are so often preoccupied with death, sombre Indians, and the class struggle, and from our own artists' matter-of-factness or sober romanticism. Here is painting in which the specific, the subtle and the tragic play small roles. But we may be grateful for that reckless exuberance, gayety, candor and love of life which the Cuban painters show perhaps more than the artists of any other school.

Besides the professional painters who may be said to form a "school" there are in most countries a few talented individuals variously called naive or self taught or painters of the

people. They form an international fraternity of which the president, now in heaven, is Henri Rousseau. In Cuba, Rafael Moreno is perhaps the best of them. Now in middle age, he began to paint popular café murals about ten years ago but has recently concentrated his talent in easel paintings of which the *Farm and Garden of Eden* are really remarkable. Moreno's panorama of paradise is balanced by Acevedo's painting of hell closely based on Dante's account of Charon, the infernal ferryman.

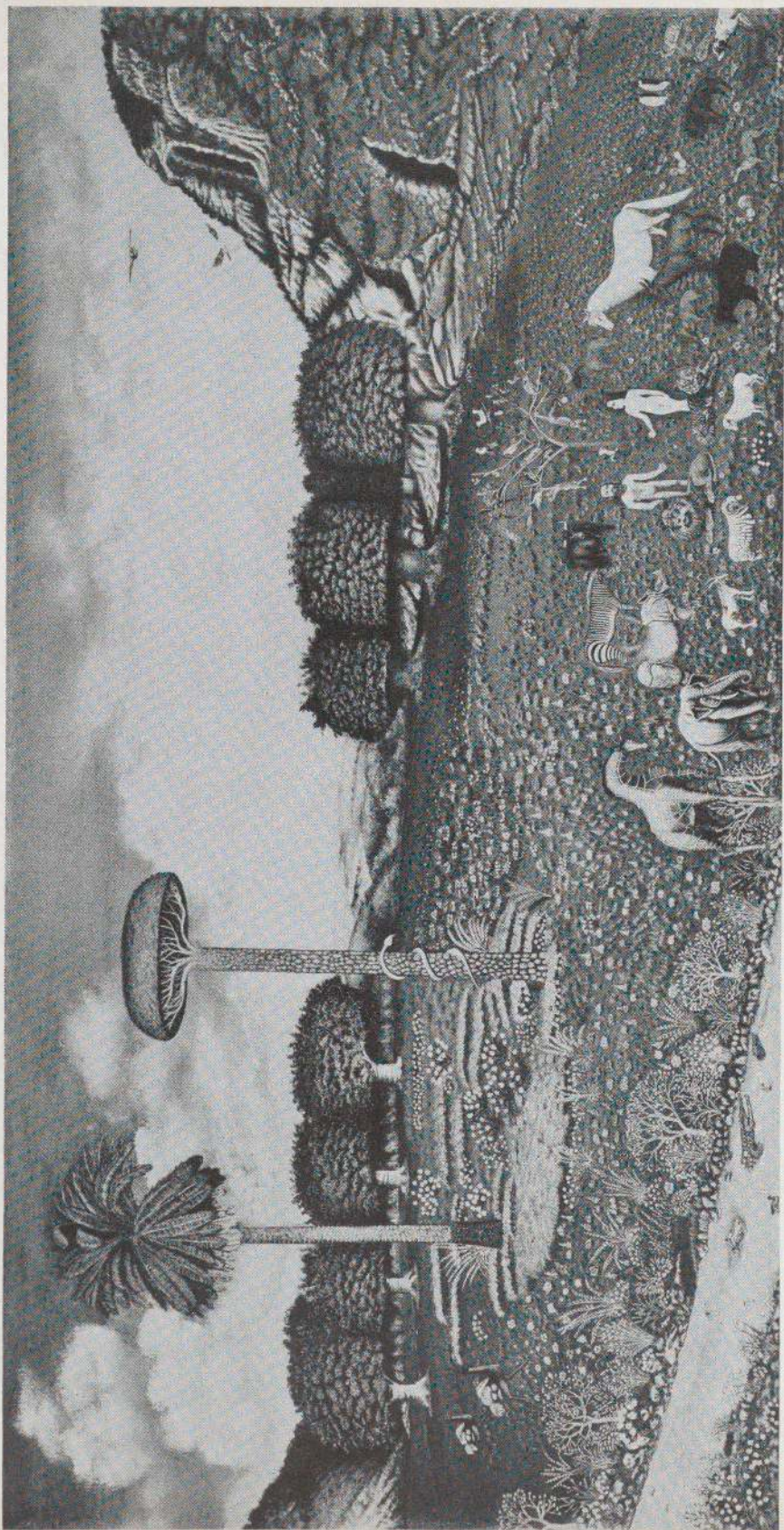
## 6

Nine years ago, in explaining why his friend Gattorno was leaving Cuba, Ernest Hemingway complained bitterly that it was "because a painter cannot make his living there . . . no



Portocarrero. *Interior*. 1943. 21 7/8 x 14".





Rafael Moreno. *Paradise*, 1943. Oil, 39 x 77 1/2". Moreno, the most gifted of the Cuban "primitives," is Spanish-born. The unforgettable memory of a royal palm which he had seen in his youth in the public gardens of Seville was the original incentive for this picture. But as the landscape developed he converted the palm into the biblical Tree of Life, adding the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve and the animals.



one would . . . buy enough of his paintings for him to be able to eat." That was in 1935 during the depression when painters along with most other people were having a bad time of it. But even now one still has the impression in Cuba that some of her best artists are not adequately appreciated or supported by their own countrymen. Collectors seem confined for the most part to the professional classes with limited means. The wealthy, who frequently in other countries feel a certain *noblesse oblige* toward their most talented living artists, seem in Cuba comparatively indifferent. Nor is official support much more active. There have been several large and inclusive public exhibitions but purchase prizes have rarely gone to artists outside the official circle except when intensive pressure was brought to bear—such for instance as the guerrilla raids on the National Salons of 1935 and 1938 when the truculent Ponce and the fiery Carlos Enríquez were rumored to have intimidated the jury by threats of violence. Some of the best modern paintings so far bought by the state have been left to languish in the store rooms of the Ministry of Education.

Fortunately several private or semi-private societies have exhibited modern work, notably the Lyceum, a woman's club, which has given one man shows to many of the artists in this exhibition. Modern painting has also been championed by enthusiastic critics and exhibition organizers such as Domingo Ravenet, Guy Pérez Cisneros, Rafael Suárez Solís and José Gómez Sicre. There have been articles and exhibition catalogs but otherwise very little serious publication. For instance the careful stylistic analysis of Cuban painting by Professor Luis de Soto y Sagarra has not yet found a publisher.

The only book on modern Cuban painting, *Pintura Cubana de Hoy — Cuban Painting of Today* by José Gómez Sicre, is therefore

doubly welcome with its many color plates and halftones and its text in English as well as Spanish. All the painters in the exhibition are discussed and illustrated in this volume which the Museum will have on sale during the show. Only the catalog of the exhibition, brief biographies and a few reproductions are published in this bulletin.

*Cuban Painting of Today* has been published by María Luisa Gómez Mena, the wife of the painter Carreño. By organizing the non-profit-making Galería del Prado, by subsidizing publications and by her personal enthusiasm and generosity, Señora Gómez Mena has recently done more for the advancement of modern Cuban painting than anyone in Havana.

## 7

The exhibition MODERN CUBAN PAINTERS is limited in size and scope and is entirely unofficial in character. No attempt has been made to present a comprehensive survey of contemporary Cuban painting or a history of its development. In fact only a dozen artists have been included and almost all the paintings were completed during the past four or five years. Only painters living in Cuba are represented. Many of the paintings are for sale at prices posted in the galleries. After the closing of the exhibition in New York it will travel to other museums throughout the country.

The Museum wishes to thank Señora María Luisa Gómez Mena for her assistance in making the exhibition possible; Señor José Gómez Sicre, who organized the exhibition in Havana; and Señor Jorge Losada, editor of *Norte*, for his advice. The selection has been the joint responsibility of Señor Gómez Sicre and the Museum. Miss Margaret Miller of the Museum Staff has been in charge of preparation and installation.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.



# CHECK LIST

In dimensions height precedes width. All measurements for watercolors, gouaches and drawings are sheet size. Titles marked (\*) are illustrated in *Cuban Painting of Today* by José Gómez Sicre which will be on sale at the Museum during the exhibition. All works are lent by the artists unless otherwise credited.

## ACEVEDO

Felisindo Iglesias Acevedo. Born Orense, Spain 1889. Studied for eleven years in a religious school in France. Has lived in Cuba for the last twenty-five years. Sings in the choir of Havana Cathedral. Self-taught. Began painting in 1939 though he continues his business as a wine importer. Has exhibited in group shows in Havana.

\*MEMORIES OF MY NATIVE LAND. 1941. Oil on canvas, 30 x 41 $\frac{1}{8}$ ".

\*SCENE FROM DANTE'S INFERNO. 1943. Oil on canvas, 40 x 52".

## CUNDO BERMUDEZ

Cundo Bermúdez. Born Havana 1914. Studied painting briefly at San Alejandro Academy, Havana; took his degree in diplomatic and consular law at the National University in 1940. To Mexico 1938. One man shows: Havana 1942 and 1943 (with Felipe Orlando). Has exhibited frequently in Cuba since 1937; also in Mexico, Guatemala, Dominican Republic and New York. Paintings in private collections in Cuba, New York and Pittsburgh. Two paintings in the Museum of Modern Art: *The Balcony* and *Girl in Pink Robe*.

MAN SEATED. 1942. Oil on canvas, 29 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 23".

\*BARBER SHOP. 1942. Oil on canvas, 25 x 21 $\frac{1}{8}$ ".

RED CHAIR. 1942. Oil on composition board, 23 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ ".

\*ROMEO AND JULIET. 1943. Oil on burlap, 26 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

The three paintings above lent by Galería del Prado, Havana.

\*MUSICIANS. 1943. Oil on canvas, 31 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 41 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Lent by Miss Blanche Grady, New York.

THE BLUE PIANO. 1943. Gouache, 24 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 19".

\*PORTRAIT OF MARIA LUISA GOMEZ MENA. 1943. Oil on burlap, 29 x 23 $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Lent by Mrs. María Luisa Gómez Mena, Havana.

THE YELLOW ROCKING CHAIR. 1944. Gouache, 31 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 23 $\frac{1}{8}$ ".

HEAD OF A WOMAN. 1944. Gouache, 25 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ ".

## CARREÑO

Mario Carreño. Born Havana 1913. Entered San Alejandro Academy, Havana 1925 but left a few months after. Began to work in the engraving department of the Havana newspaper *Diario de la Marina*. To Spain 1932-1935, where he worked as a commercial artist; to Mexico 1936; Paris 1937; Italy 1939; then New York. Influenced by Picasso and Mexican painters and many Italian Renaissance masters. Back to Cuba 1941. One-man shows: Havana 1930, 1932, 1935, 1942, 1943; Paris 1939; New York 1941, 1944; Boston 1943. Also exhibited in Madrid and Mexico City. Paintings in Ministry of Education, Havana; Jeu de Paume Museum, Paris; and private collections in Havana, Paris and New York. One painting in the Museum of Modern Art: *The Tornado*. Designs for the theatre, book and magazine illustrations, commercial art.

BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN NATIONS. 1940. Gouache, 19 x 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

COMPOSITION WITH NEGRESSES. 1940. Pen and ink, 14 x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

CUBAN COLONIAL PATIO. 1942. Oil, 41 x 31".

\*SUGAR-CANE CUTTERS. 1943. Duco on wood, 65 x 48".

Study for the SUGAR-CANE CUTTERS. 1943. Pen and ink wash, 30 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 22 $\frac{1}{8}$ ".

\*AFRO-CUBAN DANCE. 1943. Duco on wood, 65 x 48".

NEGRESS WITH AVOCADO. 1943. Gouache, 30 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (sight).

VASE OF FLOWERS. 1943. Duco, 41 x 31".

\*STILL LIFE. 1943. Gouache, 23 x 29".

Two ink drawings. 1943. Each 14 x 11".

All of the above Carreños lent by the Perls Galleries, Inc., New York.

## DIAGO

Roberto Diago. Born Havana 1920. Studied at San Alejandro Academy 1934-1941. One-man show, Havana 1944.

WOMAN WITH SUNFLOWERS. 1943. Gouache, 29 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".



Mario Carreño, *Sugar-Cane Cutters*, 1943. Pen and ink wash,  $30\frac{3}{8} \times 22\frac{1}{8}$ ". Cuban cane cutters work under the relentless pressure of a brief harvesting season though they starve in idleness the rest of the year. Their hard precarious lives have inspired the heroic energy and grandiose composition of one of Carreño's large duco panels for which this drawing is the study.



#### CARLOS ENRIQUEZ

Carlos Enríquez. Born 1900 Santa Clara, Cuba. Following his family's advice, went to U.S.A. 1920 to study engineering. In 1924 left his studies and entered the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts but only for a few months. Returning to Cuba, he continued to paint; exhibited in the Cuban salons. To Europe 1930. Studied in Spain the works of Greco, Zurbarán, Velázquez and Goya. Visited England and Italy. In Paris was influenced by the surrealist movement. Again to Cuba, 1943. One-man shows Havana 1930, 1934, 1943. Oviedo and Madrid, Spain 1931, 1933. Exhibited Mexico City 1938; New

York 1939, 1943; and San Francisco 1942. Paintings in the Ministry of Education, Havana; San Francisco Museum of Art and private collections in Spain and Cuba. One painting in the Museum of Modern Art: **Landscape with Wild Horses**. Frescoes in Jose M. Gómez School Havana; Santa Clara Normal School; and private houses, Havana. Book and magazine illustrations. Also the author of many articles on art, short stories and a novel.

\*THE RAPE OF THE MULATTAS. 1938. Oil on canvas, 65 x 45". Lent by the Ministry of Education, Havana.

\*NUDE. 1940. Oil on canvas, 35 x 48½".

\*CUBAN OUTLAW. 1943. Oil on canvas, 47½ x 34¾".

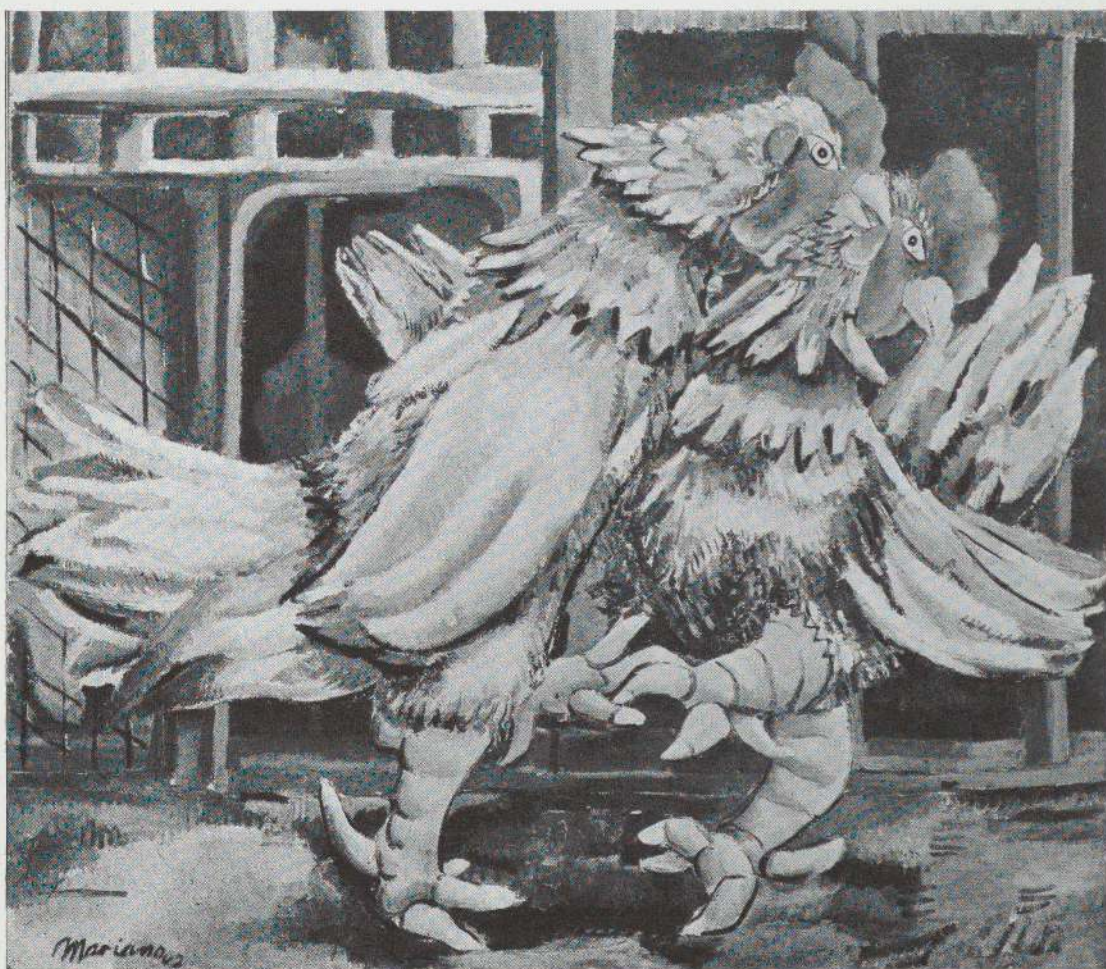




Cundo Bermúdez. *Barber Shop*. 1942. Oil. 25 x 21 1/8". In his droll, archaic figures, Bermúdez has interpreted certain unpretentious fellow-citizens described in his own words as "the man who does his job or plays his viola or the woman who walks absentmindedly and sits down on a bench . . ." Here are two of them surrounded by the strong color and fanciful polychromy still found in the old-fashioned barber shops in the outskirts of Havana.



Mariano. *Cock-Fight*. 1942. Oil. 25 x 29". The cock has inspired a whole series of paintings by Mariano. Brash, brilliant in color, they are among his most confidently painted works.





## FELIPE ORLANDO

Felipe Orlando. Born Quemados de Güines, Cuba 1911. Worked as a post office employee in various parts of the island, then in Havana, where he became interested in commercial art. Studied with Víctor Manuel, Havana, 1930. After the Cuban revolution enlisted in the Cuban Navy but left it to devote himself to painting. Organized art classes for young people in Havana. Influenced by Marc Chagall, popular Cuban painting, and the art of children whom he taught. One-man shows: Havana 1935, 1939, 1942 and 1943 (with Cundo Bermúdez). Also exhibited New York 1943; San Francisco 1942 and Brooklyn 1943. Paintings in private collections Havana.

CIRCUS. 1941. Oil on canvas, 12 x 12". Lent by Mrs. María Luisa Gómez Mena.

PUPPETS. 1942. Gouache, 5 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Lent by the Galería del Prado, Havana.

\*THE HOUSE OF THE CAROLINA TREES. 1943. Oil on canvas, 19 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 23 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Lent by the Galería del Prado.

THE MIRROR. 1943. Gouache, 30 x 20".

WOMAN WASHING. 1943. Gouache, 15 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

DOUBLE PORTRAIT. 1943. Oil on canvas, 49 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 29 $\frac{7}{8}$ ".

COURTYARD. 1943. Gouache, 17 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ ".



Felipe Orlando. *Circus*. 1941. Oil. 12 x 12".

## MARIANO

Mariano Rodríguez. Born Havana 1912. Began to paint about 1936. Went to Mexico 1937 and studied with the painter, Rodríguez Lozano. Back to Cuba, worked as assistant in the Free Studio of Painting and Sculpture, Havana. One-man show Havana 1943. Has exhibited frequently in Cuba. Also exhibited in New York 1939, 1943; Brooklyn and San Francisco 1943. Paintings in Ministry of Education, Havana; and private collections in Havana and New York. Fresco in Santa Clara Normal School 1937. One painting, *The Cock*, and one watercolor, *Figures in a Landscape*, in the Museum of Modern Art. Book illustrations.

WOMEN FIGHTING. 1940. Pencil, 19 x 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

INTERIOR. 1943. Watercolor, 28 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 22 $\frac{7}{8}$ ".

COCK-FIGHT. 1942. Oil on canvas, 25 x 29". Lent by Galería del Prado, Havana.

PATIO IN THE CERRO. 1942. Watercolor, 23 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 28 $\frac{7}{8}$ ".

FISH BOWL. 1942. Oil on canvas, 28 x 35". Lent by Galería del Prado, Havana.

BOY WITH A COCK. 1943. Oil on canvas, 24 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 20". Lent by Galería del Prado.

COURTYARD WITH GOATS. 1943. Oil on paper, 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

\*ACROBATS. 1943. Ink, 17 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 12".

WOMEN. 1943. Oil on canvas, 31 x 41".

## MARTINEZ PEDRO

Luis Martínez Pedro. Born Havana, 1910. Studied at San Alejandro Academy and with Víctor Manuel. Also studied architecture at the University of Havana. Lived in New Orleans and Florida, 1931-1933. Primarily a pencil draftsman. First one-man show Havana 1943. Other exhibitions in Havana and New York 1943. Drawings in private collections in Havana, Boston and Manila. One drawing, *The Fisherman*, in the Museum of Modern Art.

ALLEGORY OF THE EARTH. 1941. Pencil, 11 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ ".

MEMENTO MORI. 1941. Pencil, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

WOMAN. 1942. Ink, 23 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 22".

\*TAUROMACHY; THE STRUGGLE OF THE SEXES. 1943. Pencil, 30 x 22". Lent by the Galería del Prado, Havana.

THE FOUNTAIN. 1943. Pencil, 30 x 22".

\*NEW VERSION OF ANDROMEDA. 1943. Pencil, 24 x 23". Lent by the Galería del Prado.



Carlos Enríquez. *Cuban Outlaw*. 1943. Oil, 47 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 34 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". The subject of this picture is related to the artist's picaresque novel, *Tilin García*, based on the life of a famous Cuban outlaw. The double image of the woman in the horse is an obsession of the novel's hero.



#### MORENO

Rafael Moreno. Born Huelva, Spain 1887 and came to Cuba about twenty-five years ago. Worked as a bricklayer, farmer, bull-fighter; and proprietor of a grocery, a fruit store and a shooting gallery. Self-taught. In 1930 began to paint murals for bars and cabarets of La Playa, a small popular district on the outskirts of Havana. Exhibited in a group show, Havana. Paintings in private Havana collections.

\*THE GARDEN. 1943. Oil on canvas, 30 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

\*THE FARM. 1943. Oil on canvas, 39 x 78".

PARADISE. 1943. Oil on canvas, 39 x 77 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

The three works above lent by Pierre Loeb, Havana.

#### AMELIA PELAEZ

Amelia Peláez del Casal. Born 1897 Yaguajay, Santa Clara province. Entered San Alejandro Academy, Havana studying under Romañach, 1916. New York 1924, Art Students League. Europe 1927-1934, studying under Alexandra Exter in Paris 1931-33; also art history at the Ecole du Louvre. Influenced by Modigliani and Soutine, later by cubism. One-man shows in Havana 1924, 1935, 1943; Paris 1933; New York 1941. Also exhibited in Guatemala, Mexico, Dominican Republic, and various cities in the U.S.A. and Canada. Paintings in the Museum of Remedios; Ministry of Education, Havana; and private collections in Paris, Havana and New York. Frescoes in José M. Gómez School, Havana and the Santa Clara



Normal School. One painting, *Still Life in Red*, and one drawing, *The Card Game*, are in the Museum of Modern Art. Book and magazine illustrations.

FLOWERS. 1930. Oil on burlap, 37 x 29 $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Lent by the Galería del Prado, Havana.

THE HAND. 1935. Pencil, 29 x 37".

THE LOVERS. 1935. Pencil, 29 x 37".

MARPACIFICO. 1936. Oil on canvas, 29 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 38 $\frac{1}{8}$ ".

THE SEWING MACHINE. 1936. Pencil, 29 x 37". Lent by the Galería del Prado.

PINEAPPLE. 1939. Oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 31 $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

BALCONY. 1942. Watercolor, 29 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

\*THE SISTERS. 1943. Gouache, 37 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Lent by the Galería del Prado.

GIRLS. 1943. Watercolor, 29 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

GIRL. 1943. Oil on canvas, 44 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 34 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

FISHES. 1943. Oil on canvas, 45 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 35 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

## PONCE

Fidelio Ponce de León. Born Camagüey, Cuba c.1895. Entered San Alejandro Academy 1913, studying under Romañach. About 1918 to 1920 he left Havana, his whereabouts unknown even to his friends. On his return to the city he worked as art teacher in a suburban school from 1923 to 1925, when again he disappeared until after 1930. One-man shows: Havana 1934; New York 1938; Boston 1942. Has exhibited frequently in Cuba and also in Mexico and Dominican Republic. Paintings in the Ministry of Education, Havana and private collections in Havana, Guatemala, and New York. Mural in José M. Gómez School, Havana. One painting in the Museum of Modern Art: *Two Women*.

\*CHILDREN. 1938. Oil on canvas, 37 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 48 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Lent by the Ministry of Education, Havana.

\*ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA. 1940. Oil on canvas, 35 x 35".

WOMAN. 1940. Pencil, 12 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11".

SEATED FIGURE. 1940. Pencil, 11 x 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

The three works above lent by José Gómez Sicre, Havana.

FIVE WOMEN. 1941. Oil on canvas, 33 x 41". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Eduardo Rodríguez Correa, Havana.

SELF-PORTRAIT. 1941. (Inscribed date 1930). Pencil, 9 x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Lent by José Gómez Sicre.

THREE GIRLS. 1943. Pencil, 10 x 11". Lent by José Gómez Sicre.

## PORTOCARRERO

René Portocarrero. Born Cerro, Havana 1912. Self-taught. At the age of eleven exhibited in a group show in Havana. Appointed art teacher at the Havana prison 1940. His early work influenced by surrealism, later by the Spanish-Cuban baroque. Has never been outside of Cuba. One-man shows: Havana, 1936 (painted phonograph records), 1942, 1944. Exhibited Mexico City 1938; New York 1939, 1943; Brooklyn 1943; San Francisco 1943. Paintings in private collections in Havana. Frescoes in the Santa Clara Normal School. A sketchbook of twenty-five watercolor and ink drawings in the Museum of Modern Art. Illustrations and stage designs.

\*SPRINGTIME. 1940. Pencil, 23 x 27 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Lent by Mrs. María Luisa Gómez Mena, Havana.

THE MORNING. 1940. Pencil, 22 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

THE SUPPER. 1942. Oil on paper, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 16".

CRUCIFIXION WITH ANGELS AND BUTTERFLIES. 1943. Gouache, 22 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 30 $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

The two works above lent by the Galería del Prado, Havana.

\*INTERIOR. 1943. Gouache, 21 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 14".

Lent by Miss Blanche Grady, New York.

HEAD. 1943. Gouache, 13 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 10 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Francisco V. Portela, New York.

DANCERS. 1943. Pencil, 13 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 10 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Francisco V. Portela, New York.

## VICTOR MANUEL

Victor Manuel García. Born Havana 1897. Son of the caretaker of San Alejandro Academy. Entered the academy 1913, studying under Romañach. To Europe 1924. Worked in Paris 1924-1926; influenced by post-impressionists, especially Gauguin. His exhibition at the Association of Painters and Sculptors, Havana 1927 and his courageous enthusiasm helped launch the modern art movement in Cuba. Again to Europe 1929-1930. One-man shows: Havana 1924, 1927, 1930, 1935. Paintings in the Ministry of Education, Havana and private collections in Cuba and Guatemala.

LANDSCAPE. 1939. Oil on canvas, 30 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 23 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Lent by José Gómez Sicre, Havana.



## Chinese Children's War Pictures

by Mai-mai Sze

It is perhaps true that "The greatness of a mountain and the smallness of an eyeball are incommensurable," as a Chinese painter once remarked. The landscape of our world in ferment occasionally looms too close to be adequately translated at the moment on to canvas or paper. A painter today can mostly report, as many are doing on the battlefronts, or make a tentative comment from his fragment of the common experience. From time to time, we turn to look at drawings by children and often find in them a clearer, surer statement of the relationship between the individual and a situation, the one and the many.

These drawings and paintings by Chinese children, exhibited by the Museum of Modern Art, were done in some of the experimental schools in Chengtu, an old city west of Chungking, famous for its unusually wide streets; center of a cluster of temples and ancient tombs, and capital of the province of Szechwan. It is today the refuge of several colleges and the home of many of the new educational methods in Free China.

The ages of these Chinese children range from seven to thirteen. Their pictures are small



in size but big in feeling. The few paintings among them lean to tinting rather than bright hues—by choice, one would guess, as much as for lack of materials. While it is possible to detect the teacher-touch in one or two of the pictures, nothing, however, seems to have altered the children's direct response to the circumstances which have so violently uprooted them and the atmosphere of war which has been the only air that they have breathed.

Some of the children have chosen traditional Chinese subjects to illustrate their points, using the old formulas for brushwork. A few wild geese at the edge of a pond, drawn with dry nervous strokes, manage to convey the tenseness of "Alert for Emergency" with surprising concentration in the moment.

Others have not hesitated to caricature savagely in western style Hitler, Japanese soldiers, and, in fact, the whole adult world. The head of Hitler leans wearily on a hand. The firm outline is filled in with a flat wash of odious green and bears the title, "Hitler Says—I Have a Bitter Headache." Inadvertently, this drawing seems to have fulfilled the first requirement of Chinese portraiture as expressed in the char-



# 上前 殺敵



Going to Battle.

acters for "portrait painting"—"Hsien Chen"—meaning literally "To write truth." It also shows the sharp impression made by posters which in turn, have been influenced by Russian work.

Chinese cartoonists also have left their imprint on some of these pictures. The drawing of the tortoise nailed down at its neck and feet, labelled at each point with the names of the five battlefronts in Asia, and with the Japanese flag waving on the end of a helpless tail—this is typical of the political satirists whose drawings are widely admired in China. Even the title fits the pattern.

Any child in Russia, Europe, or England, might do the counterpart of the exultant drawing, "Fujiyama Next Year," with Allied planes filling the skies and the enemy landscape trembling in apprehension. A war child of the West would also know, as instinctively as the Chinese child, that a black line drawn along the hollow of the cheek is enough to describe hunger, and that people with empty stomachs seldom stand.



Mu Lan Goes to the Army.

穆蘭女英雄  
穆蘭女英雄  
穆蘭女英雄  
穆蘭女英雄  
穆蘭女英雄



The most striking differences between these drawings by Chinese children and those by children in other parts of the world, are apparent in brushwork, in color, and in the use of space. Whether by some kind of instinct, or under the influence of pictures and paintings which they have seen at home or on the billboard, these Chinese children utilize the variations between the dry brush and the brush saturated with ink, between the kind of line which models and the one specifically for outlines. All colors are toned down to a soft key, their purpose being more to suggest than to display. The palette is in fact so sophisticated that one almost prays for a splash of vermillion.

Most outstanding trait of all in these pictures, is the marvelous sense of the shape and weight of spaces. The single figure in "Going to Battle," done in traditional decorative style with the modern touch included by adding a rifle on the shoulder of the volunteer swathed in flowing robe, has been unerringly placed on the paper. Admiration is demanded, too, by the scale in the drawings by a seven-year-old showing the movement of crowds.



Can You Move?

The only awkwardness discernible in any of these pictures is, curiously enough, in the series illustrating the popular story of Mu Lan, the Chinese Joan of Arc. Did the remoteness of this legendary figure, a favorite of generations of Chinese painters, cause this child to falter and rather self-consciously copy a familiar version? Or was this only a way of avoiding the remembrance of scenes too painful to think about?

Apart from this series, the drawings seem unintentionally to carry out with amazing ease what painters in China have been taught for centuries—the principle of "rhythmic vitality"—which states that the painter should be attuned to the rhythm of the universe and be able to express the movement of life. These children seem to be turning around to say to the old masters: "See. We have managed to do so." And one eleven-year-old, whose picture of Roosevelt handing a bundle to Stalin illustrates American aid to Russia, could point to his work and add: "See, too, I can give a title in the old style—'Giving Charcoal in Snowy Weather'—without changing what I want to put in my picture."



Giving Charcoal in Snowy Weather.



# MUSEUM NOTES

**15TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION:** For the first time since the Museum moved into the present building, all the galleries will be closed simultaneously to prepare for the opening of "Art in Progress," the 15th Anniversary Exhibition. This is necessitated by the fact that "Art in Progress" is, in reality, made up of nine complete exhibitions and its installation will occupy all of the gallery space.

The galleries will close in the following order: April 30th—third floor gallery which now contains painting and sculpture from the Museum's Collection; May 7th—"Chinese Children's War Paintings" in the Young People's Gallery and "Modern Cuban Painters" in the first floor gallery; May 10th—"Modern Drawings" and "The American Snapshot." Lunch and tea will not be served in the Members' Room after May 10th.

The film programs in the Auditorium will be discontinued on May 15th, and will be resumed May 24th with the program *Great Actresses of the Past* continuing thereafter through the special programs as announced in the film folder "45 Years of the Movies." A summer schedule will be mailed to members.

On May 23rd the Museum and the Garden will reopen with an evening preview of Art in Progress for members from 9:00 to 12:00 P.M., and the galleries will be open to the public on May 24th. Beginning on that date lunch and tea will again be served in the Garden.

## GROUP MEMBERSHIP

In recognition of an increasing interest in the visual materials prepared by the Department of Circulation Exhibitions for distribution to other institutions, the Board of Trustees has established a new *participating membership* classification. Known as GROUP MEMBERSHIP, this classification costs \$15 annually and besides all of the privileges of individual membership will afford the participating institution a 25% reduction on publications and prints, and 10% reduction on rental or purchase of exhibitions, slide-talks, film programs, and photographs.

After extensive experimental work, the Museum is able to offer a greater variety of visual materials in the field of art for rental to schools, colleges, community groups, civic and social clubs, etc. Previously, exhibitions had been confined, due to their size and expense, to museums and the larger educational insti-

tutions. Now, with a wider demand for its services—circulating exhibitions, portfolios, slides and slide-talks, publications, and prints—these materials can be produced in larger quantities and therefore at lower cost.

**LOOK AT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD** (an Exhibition on Neighborhood Planning): The first circulating exhibition to be prepared in quantity for sale has lately been released and the interest and response has exceeded all expectations. Non-technical in character, the exhibition should be useful to schools, colleges, and civic organizations for extensive circulation in their own areas. Other exhibitions on painting, photography, architecture and industrial design are in preparation.

**LOOK AT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD** will be on exhibition in the Museum's Auditorium Gallery from March 28th to May 28th.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE for the Department of Dance and Theater Design:** George Freedley, Curator of the Theater Dept. at the New York Public Library; Rosamond Gilder, Associate Editor of *Theater Arts*; Lincoln Kirstein; Arch Lauterer, Director of the Drama Dept. at Sarah Lawrence College; John Martin, Dance Editor of the *New York Times*; A. Hyatt Mayor, Associate Curator of Prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; May Seymour, Curator of the Theater and Music Collection at the Museum of the City of New York; Joseph Wood Krutch, Professor of English at Columbia.

**MUSEUMIANA:** The Library is eager to augment its collection of Reports, Studies, Papers, etc., bearing on the history and activities of the Museum, particularly in its early phases. Published or unpublished, printed or manuscript, all material of this nature is of interest. Founders, trustees, members and others possessing such documents will make a valuable contribution by forwarding them to the Library.

**INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE:** Notwithstanding growing wartime demands on the civilian public and the absence of many former members in the Armed Forces, membership in the Museum increased last year by more than 1,000 members. Attendance has climbed steadily. During February, 1944, there was an approximate gain of 10,000 visitors over the number who saw the Museum's exhibitions during the same month the year before.



*Cuban Painting of Today—Pintura Cubana de Hoy*, by José Gómez Sicre (text in English and Spanish.) A critical analysis and biographical survey of Cuba's modern artists, including a foreword on the history of Cuban painting. Published in Havana by María Luisa Gómez Mena and distributed in this country by the Museum. 200 pages; 116 plates (20 in full color); paper \$1.75.



**PICASSO REPRODUCTION:** Three hundred copies of Picasso's *Green Still Life* reproduced by a special silk-screen process are now available at \$10 each to members only. They will not be on public sale until a much later date after a re-run has been made. Size 17 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 23 $\frac{7}{8}$ ", unframed.

**MUSEUM'S POPULARITY WITH THE ARMED FORCES:** Men and women in the Armed Forces and in the Merchant Marine of the Allied Nations are admitted to the Museum without charge. Their enjoyment of this privilege is evidenced by a report of the New York Defense Recreation Center, which has given information about New York to approximately six million men and women in the Armed Service, that the Museum was fourth on the list of the ten most popular sight-seeing places in New York among servicemen. Only the Statue of Liberty, the Observation Roof of the Empire State Building, and Rockefeller Center took precedence over the Museum of Modern Art.

**SPECIAL FILM PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN:** In a poll which the Museum recently conducted among its members to discover their opinion about the advisability of excluding children under twelve from the film showings, response was almost 100% in favor of doing so. As a consequence, a special program of films will be planned for children on Saturdays, and children twelve and under will be excluded from the regular programs.

**The SLIDE CATALOG** announced in the Library issue of the *Bulletin* has been completed. 111 pages list more than 5000 subjects for sale and rental, covering painting, sculpture, and architecture, as well as theater, dance, film and industrial arts. Institutions may apply; copies to individuals thirty-five cents.

## LECTURES

Two evening lectures on modern art will be given by Agnes Rindge (during the time the Museum is closed in preparation for the 15th Anniversary Exhibition) for Members and guests. These lectures will discuss the place of modern art in cultural history, suggesting some parallels with periods of the past.

May 10—*The Inception of Modern Art in the 19th Century*.

May 18—*Modern Art in the 20th Century*.

Miss Rindge, on leave of absence from Vassar College where she has been chairman of the Art Department, is a well-known author and lecturer on art and a member of the Museum staff.

Also planned are a series of four lectures on various aspects of City Planning with special reference to Planning in New York City. At present, one of the most active phases of contemporary design is concerned with large scale planning. Not only architects, but all citizens should participate in any effective organization of our local and national resources and, for this reason, the Museum plans to ask eminent authorities to speak on the subject. The series will include a panel discussion on post-war planning, regional large-scale planning, politics in relation to planning, and the role of government in contemporary architectural planning.

Further information will be mailed to Members after arrangements have been completed.

## PRESS COMMENT ON MODERN DRAWINGS EXHIBITION

*New York Times*, Edward Alden Jewell—" . . . the Modern Drawings Exhibition reveals significant links with the past and places in dramatic juxtaposition the many-faceted creative effort of a subsequent era.

"For this reason I feel that the simple and informal arrangement adopted by Monroe Wheeler and his associates is appropriate and advantageous.

" . . . the spectacle abounds in stimulating clashes of temperament and purpose, of method and vision.

" . . . the catalogue introduction, jointly prepared by Mr. Wheeler and John Rewald, contains a great deal of wise and pertinent comment. . . .

"But visitors to this exhibition of modern drawings, which deserves to be thronged throughout its course, will make, as they should, their own discoveries; individually compare and contrast; arrive at their own estimates."

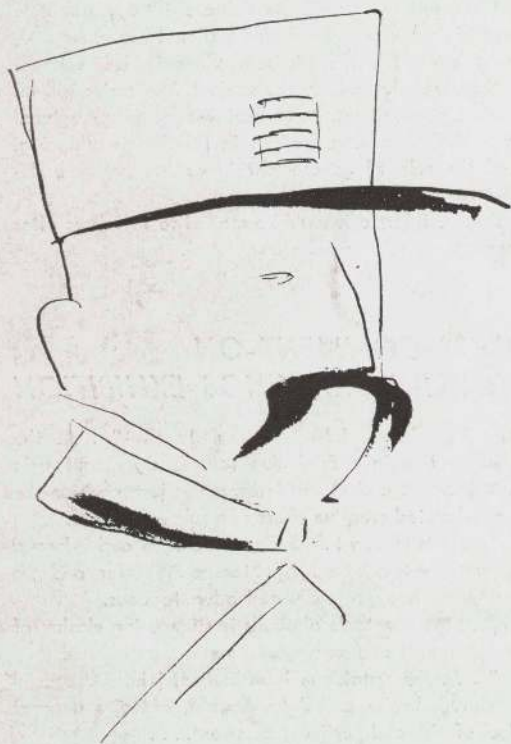


**PRESS COMMENT ON MODERN DRAWING  
EXHIBITION (Continued).**

*New York Herald Tribune*, Royal Cortissoz—"Today I congratulate the Museum of Modern Art on its exhibition, just opened, of upward of three hundred examples of modern draftsmanship.

"I have often testified to the value of the Modern Museum as a kind of laboratory, unveiling all the experimentalists, and I am glad to so testify again. Here is a surprisingly full display of characteristic nineteenth and twentieth century artists.

"In fact, there is more that is appealing than I can touch upon specifically. I can only rejoice in the diversity and interest of the exhibition as a whole. It does not challenge the supremacy of the great draughtsmen among the old masters. But it abundantly denotes the ability of the moderns."



Segonzac. *Le Commandant d'Artillerie*. Illustration for Roland Dorgelès, "La boule de gui," 1922. Pen, brush and ink. 10 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Lent to the Modern Drawings Exhibition by A. Conger Goodyear, New York.

*The Sun*, New York, Henry McBride—"There is scarcely a drawing in the collection—outside of the 10 per cent of premodern drawings such as the admirable studies by Degas which were included no doubt as 'preparation' for the modern stuff—that, if shown somewhere in a drawing room, but would clearly proclaim the word 'today,' and it is vastly more important for all of us to come to terms with 'today' rather than with the 'yesterday' whose affairs we have already settled, it behooves us to know which of these artists help us most. Also to those of us who have this yearning desire to know ourselves and the times we live in, about half of this very large collection are eminently 'desirable' drawings. That is to say that at sight one wishes to possess them. This half constitutes the elite within the elite.

"I should like to write a lengthy disquisition on Seurat's really remarkable 'Seated Woman' which is almost the first drawing you encounter—but for obvious reasons I cannot. I should like to register my delight and surprise in the Paul Klee portrait of a woman lent by the Brooklyn Museum and my still greater surprise and delight in the poetical Klee drawings lent by Edgar Wind and Henry Church. I should like to go on at length about the strange Odilon Redon drawings, about the John Marin rhapsody on the subject of the 'San Domingo Indian Dance,' . . ."

*The New York World-Telegram*, Emily Genauer—"The Museum of Modern Art this week raised the curtain on one of its big shows of the year, an exhibition of 300 modern drawings. It is a pleasure to report that this time cheers, without a catcall, and bouquets, without a thorn, are in order.

"Drawings don't reveal themselves that quickly. But Monroe Wheeler, the museum's director of exhibitions and publications, has made the 'task' as simple as possible. There are different background colors for variety. Occasionally one whole wall is treated as a shadow box. Many of the drawings aren't hung on the wall at all, but arranged, instead, on a narrow shelf, so they're slightly tilted to permit closer inspection.

"Most arresting of all, I should say, is that part of the exhibition given to preparatory drawings. Should you, in the two months time the show will be hung, hear someone say that the trouble with modern painters is that they can't draw, send him over to see the half dozen magnificent, painstaking and detailed studies Matisse made for *The White Plumes*, and the seven shown here of the scores of sketches Picasso did for his famous mural of the Spanish war."

Note: The *Modern Drawings Exhibition* has been extended to May 10th.