

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

EXHIBITION OF CUBAN PAINTING OPENS AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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The walls of the first floor galleries of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, will blaze with tropical color when the Museum opens its exhibition of Modern Cuban Painters Friday, March 17. A dozen of the leading artists of the great Caribbean island are represented in the eighty paintings, watercolors, gouaches and drawings which will be shown. The majority of the artists are in their early thirties and almost all the paintings were done during the past three years. The exhibition therefore presents a selection of the young and vigorous modern art of Cuba rather than a comprehensive survey.

The variety of subject matter and style and the unfamiliar scenes and customs which many of the paintings celebrate will be as refreshing to the eyes of the New York art public as the brilliant colors of the Cuban palettes: the wide fields of sugar cane and the thatched cottage of Rafael Moreno's The Farm; Carreño's duco-on-wood painting of powerful workers hacking with huge machettes through a jungle of sugar cane; the two square and solemn figures in the rococo setting of Bermudez's Barber Shop; Ponce's pale canvases peopled by haunting, elongated figures bathed in light; Enríquez's bandit riding off in a tornado of color; and the compositions of Cuban fruit and fish painted with the brilliance of Colonial stained glass by the distinguished Amelia Peláez, only woman artist in the exhibition.

The pictures for the exhibition were assembled and brought to this country by José Gómez-Sicre, noted Cuban art critic. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Advisory Director of the Museum, assisted in selecting the pictures to be shown. While he was in Cuba in the summer of 1942 Mr. Barr met many of the artists represented in the exhibition. Mr. Gómez-Sicre is author of the newly published book Cuban Painting of Today \* (Pintura Cubana de Hoy) which will be on sale at the Museum during the exhibition. The book, of two hundred pages, contains twenty reproductions in full color and ninety-six black and white illustrations. In addition to a critical analysis and biographical survey of Cuba's modern artists, Mr. Gómez-Sicre's text includes a foreword on the history of Cuban painting. Both the book and the

\*\* paper bound, priced at \$1.75.

exhibition have been made possible through the generous collaboration of Señora María Luisa Gómez Mena of Havana, the leading patron of modern Cuban painting.

Mr. Barr, in an article on the exhibition for the Museum's April Bulletin, writes in part:

"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 three hundred years ago. They left few traces. But the Negroes 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 magic, dances and ceremonies, is the even stronger Spanish tradition with its Catholic and Latin European past and its colonial baroque architecture.

"In these two cultural traditions Cuban painters are taking an increasing interest as well as in Cuban subject matter. But among the leading artists there are almost no painters of the Cuban 'scene' comparable to our painters of the American scene. There is no literalism, and little obvious regional or nationalistic sentiment. Cuban color, Cuban light, Cuban forms, and Cuban motifs are plastically assimilated rather than realistically represented. Expressionism is the dominant style, whether applied to fighting cocks, sugar cane cutters, pineapples, 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.

"Except for Ponce, all the painters in the exhibition seem a little drunk with color. The tropical sun and tropical fruits, naïve costumes, baroque gold and polychrome ornament, colonial stained glass fan windows, even cigar box heraldry seem all to have contributed to this intoxication. It is untrammelled color which most sharply distinguishes them as a school from the Mexican painters who are so often preoccupied with death, sombre Indians, or 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 exuberance, gayety and love of life which the Cubans show perhaps more than the artists of any other school."

The artists represented in the exhibition and the number of their works shown are as follows:

ACEVEDO (Felicindo Iglesias Acevedo): 2 oils  
 BERMUDEZ (Cundo Bermúdez): 6 oils; 4 gouaches  
 CARREÑO (Mario Carreño): 1 oil; 3 duco; 3 gouaches;  
 5 drawings  
 DIAGO (Roberto Diago): 1 gouache  
 ENRÍQUEZ (Carlos Enríquez): 3 oils  
 VÍCTOR MANUEL (Victor Manuel Garcia): 1 oil  
 MARIANO (Mariano Rodríguez): 5 oils; 2 watercolors;  
 2 drawings  
 MORENO (Rafael Moreno): 3 oils  
 FELIPE ORLANDO: 4 oils; 4 gouaches  
 MARTINEZ PEDRO (Luis Martínez Pedro): 6 drawings  
 AMELIA PELAEZ (Amelia Peláez del Casal): 5 oils;  
 4 drawings; 2 watercolors; 1 gouache  
 PONCE (Fidelio Ponce de León): 4 oils; 4 drawings  
 PORTOCARRERO (René Portocarrero): 3 watercolors;  
 3 drawings; 1 oil.

Margaret Miller of the Museum staff has prepared and installed the exhibition, which will remain on view at the Museum through May 7. It will then be sent by the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions to other museums and art galleries throughout the country.