

A Slab of White Mahogany

Roerich Museum's International Art Center to Exhibit Mexican Polychrome Wood-Carvings by Roberto de la Selva

An interesting and vivid exhibition of Mexican art, accomplished by a young Nicaraguan who invaded the ancient Mexican town of Apizaco and adapted its native handicraft to his medium, will open at the



Festival scene in polychrome wood-carving

International Art Center of Roerich Museum on December 15 and continue to January 5. For centuries the native wood-carvers of Apizaco have been famous, mainly for their brilliantly colored walking-sticks, and to them went Roberto de la Selva, with a notion to bring sophistication to the native crafts.

Simple Native Scenes

His bas-relief sculptures are carved on slabs of white mahogany, the subjects being simple native scenes. There has been little or no striving for stylization, definitely no reaching for symbolism. His compositions are astonishingly original. In the coloring of his carvings he uses the native pigments, dug out of the soil, the same pigments used for years by the native carvers for tinting their objects.

From the beginning, when he placed himself humbly in the hands of the indigenous carvers, he had no intention of trying to fuse sculpture and painting. He recognized that such a course would have been ruinous to his aims, and, in the end, would have destroyed the value of his work. His first experiments with the new form were not happy. It took some time for him to evolve the present typically Mexican balance between line and color.

The common scenes about him, reduced to carving and color on wooden tablets, have a fine native strength. Particularly impressive and interesting are his carvings of field-labor. The sweep of the wheat-shocks, the startling greens of the plants, and the mellow blending of yellow and green on the banana-stalks, combine to make tablets of rich interest.

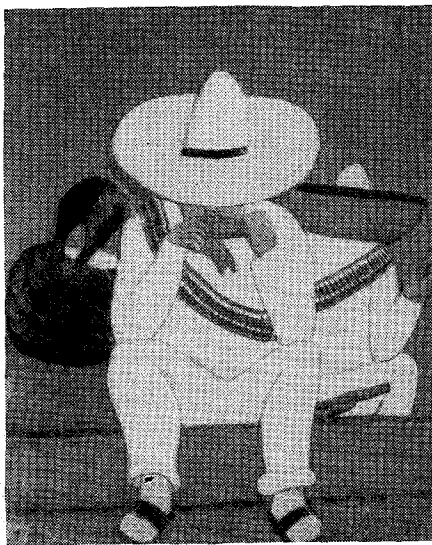
His Mexican types are bluntly faithful, whether he looks upon bathers in a river, women crowding through a market-place, or indolent sleepers in the sun. In several of the carvings there is a curious relationship to old Aztec technique, particularly in the shaping of the eyes and noses and the primitive carving of the hands.

The young sculptor also has accomplished several interesting bronzes, notably a head of General Sandino, in which the modeling brings forward the grim strength of the soldier.

These modeled pieces, of course, are to be matched in almost any worth while exhibition, and they are neither better nor worse than the work of a dozen other young sculptors. However, it would be difficult to find comparable technique and power in wood-carvings. His mastery of this deceptive work is remarkable, and the exhibition should attract wide attention.

Indeed, it is not wholly unreasonable to suggest that his three-week show will start a vogue for his carvings, and encourage talented young Americans to put upon wood the scenes around them. Except for some scattered and sadly unsupported craftsmen in New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California, and some of the more able carvers in New England, native workmen have neglected this interesting art. The best of the young craftsmen are so intent in working in metals, cork, linoleum, glass, and even rubber, that they have forsaken the interesting medium of wood.

There is currently a nation-wide passion for teaching the young to accomplish with the hands, these lighter manual arts ranging from schools for the fashioning of model aircraft and ships to the making of lead soldiers and sculpturing in soap and balsa wood. It would be a distinct service to the genuinely talented among these children to direct their skill toward panel-carvings such as these.



Native soldiers idling

"Negro Folk Symphony"

Is Performed Amid Cheers

William L. Dawson, thirty-five-year-old Negro instructor in music at Tuskegee Institute, fulfilled four years of hard work and ten years of constant dreaming when the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski, played his first major work, "Negro Folk Symphony." Never before had the symphony of an American Negro been played by a first rank orchestra. When, at the end, Dawson was called out and congratulated by Stokowski, his dream reached a climax beyond his fondest hopes.

The symphony itself did not excite the critics of Philadelphia as much as it did the conductor and his musicians. Altho most of the newspaper critics considered it an exceptionally fine piece of work, a few contended that it traced plainly from Dvorak's "From the New World."

Dawson's "Negro Folk Symphony" is in three movements: "The Bond of Africa," "Hope in the Light," and "O Lem-me Shine!" The musical panorama traces the development of the race from the darkness of Africa, with its paganism, up through the agonized days of slavery, and direct to emancipation, and the beginning of a new era for the Negro.

The last movement is based on two Negro melodies. For the first theme, he uses:

"O Lem-me shine, O lem-me shine,
"O lem-me shine, shine lik' a mornin'
star."

After this is sung by the wood-winds, it is followed by related material which, in turn, is succeeded by a return of the principal theme. A short episode leads to the second theme, which is taken up by the full orchestra. This second melody is "Hallelujah, Lord, I been down into the sea," only a few measures of which are quoted.

The development begins with the principal theme of the movement in the first clarinet above a tremolo on the lower strings, and then is taken up by oboe, flute and horn. A new picture is made, bits of ideas from the codette of the third movement are made use of, then the brasses begin to give out the principal theme. This rises to a great climax, slowly descends to a recapitulation, a coda is built on the two themes of the movement, and is brought to a close as the brasses push the principal theme into bold relief.

A Dictionary of Dates

A most useful and well-done reference work is Helen Rex Keller's "The Dictionary of Dates," in two volumes (The Macmillan Co., \$15.00). It is a history of the world by dates, from the earliest times through the year 1930, arranged under particular countries. Part I, about the Old World, contains separate, convenient headings for the World War, League of Nations, etc. Part II, the New World, begins with the discovery of America, and contains its history of exploration and development.

Current Poetry

Unsolicited contributions to this department will not be returned. Unpublished poetry is not acceptable

DEEP HARVEST

BY HILDEGARDE FLANNER

The mild, the solid sound, American
Of lawnmowers roving on a grassy day
Is a mellow clatter, it is not only
A twist of blade laying the lawn away.
It is the audible summer in the States,
When hayfields wallow in the lovely grain
And bees shoot in their tongues after the honey
As clovers hum and rock under the strain.
Now all over the land the wheat is blond,
It hisses and is quiet on its roots
As wind and windless happen to a place
And heat strikes home into the twinkling
fruits,
The green blood of the leaves is duller now,
It is a foliage in her elegies;
From the great barns crawl out the loud
machines
And the deep harvest lapses under these
Yours and a native song let make, O blade,
Before the bough is blank and the cricket dead,
About my country's grass and the white crops,
How you possess them fragrant and to bed.
—The New Republic.

POEM

BY DORIS CAESAR

There's beauty
In a storm
That shakes the trees
And twists their boughs
And strips them
Of their leaves—
But there's little beauty
In the storms
Of grief and fear
That shake
The human heart—
Beauty lies then,
Not in the storm,
But in the strength
With which our weakness
Bends,
And bears the weight.

—Phantom Thoughts, Doris Caesar, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.

OLD DOG AUTUMN

BY THOMAS CALDECOTT CHUBB

Old dog Autumn is in my heart,
A lazy fellow with lop ears.
All Summer long he has dozed apart,
But now he stretches, and now he peers.

Old dog Autumn with gold-brown coat,
And nose of velvet and big paws;
With deep eyes, and with handsome throat,
And with tongue as pink as the fruit of haws.

He tells me that quail are covied close
In the sweetgum hedgerows beyond the hill.
He gets to his feet, and he lifts his nose
To catch the scent, as a good dog will.

He tells me that frost has cut the sedge.
He tells me the air is crisp and fine.
He says that the wind has a knife-keen edge
And that fields are as ruddy as ripe old wine.
—The New York Times.

MOON COMPASSES

BY ROBERT FROST

I stole forth dimly in the dripping pause
Between two downpours to see what there
was,
And a masked moon had spread down compass rays
To a cone mountain in the midnight haze,
As if the final estimate were hers,
And as it measured in her calipers,
The mountain stood exalted in its place.
So love will take between the hands a face.
—Yale Review.

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explains
DR. R. E. LEE

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