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Asawa, Ruth, Artists' Files, Ankrum Gallery Records

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The Legion Show of City Art --And One Man's Signature

THE SAN FRANCISCO Art Commission has put a considerable part of its permanent collection on display at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, and the resulting show is rather better than one though in advance it might be.

The collection consists of works the commission has purchased for the city at its annual Art Festivals since 1946. As Harold Zellerbach puts it in his catalogue notes, "The City recognizes the contribution of the artist to the cultural life of the community and stimulates his activity by official patronage, and it has a body of work from which offices and departments may borrow for the purpose of enriching their surroundings. The Board of Education, the public schools, the Recreation and Park Department, the City Planning Commission, San Francisco General Hospital, the Civic Auditorium, and the public libraries are among the many who have availed themselves of this opportunity."

Mr. Zellerbach does not tell us what departments of the municipal government have availed themselves of the jewelry and ceramics the collection contains or whose surroundings are being enhanced by its necklaces, but it is good to know that the city has found some use for the things it buys. For me, the best thing in the whole show is the Mark Adams tapestry which inaugurated the city's program of commissioning for public buildings several years ago, but perhaps I'm prejudiced in its favor, since I have advocated the idea of municipal commissions from the very beginning.

The show as a whole is pleasant, and it is considerable [---]

Hand Engraved "Pictures" by Orville J. Kuhl, master engraver in his den, 121 Elena Dr. Walnut Creek, YE 4-8453 for appointment

[---] GABOR REJTO, Cellist resumes his teaching May 6 at THE SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC for master class and individual lessons 1201 Ortega St. LO 4-8086

[---] FRANK CASTLE Formerly with NBC PRIVATE ORGAN LESSONS 1738 33rd AVE. LO 4-1801

[---] KINCAID SCHOOL EFFECTIVE SPEECH PLEASING VOICE CLEAR DICTION RADIO - DRAMA by appointment

Page 20 SAN FRANCISCO SUNDAY CHRONICLE THE WORLD, May 1, 1960

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Music and Art

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THE DANCE is captured here. One dancer, seen through one of the windows, the dancer, from the dance, will perform at the Opera House tomorrow and Tuesday, and at the Society Theatre on Wednesday.

Handwritten Mexican Sweets
1956
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LO 4-1801

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1254 Bush Street PR 5-2692

[---]

Music and Art

more than that it is department of decorative arts. Its ceramics, jewelry, textiles, and so on are outstandingly fine, but under the present program this is the sort of thing for which the city has the least use. And yet artist-craftsmen can serve the city even more efficiently than painters and sculptors.

To repeat something that has been said here a thousand times, a well designed textile at the window of a schoolroom can do more for the education of taste than

[[image]][[/image]]

a thousand feet of murals in the lobby. In other words, the very strength of the Legion show indicates the necessity for the Arts Commission to re-examine its program in the light of community needs and the way in which they can best be met.

IN THE BASEMENT galleries at the Legion is a show of oils and watercolors by Larry Welden, a Sacramento artist who has the courage to be himself. He belongs with those who employ the methods of abstraction for a new approach to nature, but he is a good deal closer to nature than most, and he dares occasionally to paint a straight-out impressionistic nocturne. The one of the flat country near Sacramento, with the city lights indicated by means of scratches through the paint to the white of the paper, is wonderfully effective and a fabulous technical trick.

Welden likes the tension and dramatic structure of log jams in the river and makes superb abstractions on this theme; then he can go to the opposite extreme and study a riverbank or a tree or train in the most relaxed and delicate of moods. Whatever the

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approach, the painting has a signature; it belongs to one man and nobody else, and it has breadth, richness, ripeness, and a sense of maturely considered accomplishment.

Welden is new hereabouts, at least to me. Two other artists who opened one-man shows last week are not new, and their shows are all the more valuable for that reason. They are Ruth Asawa, who is showing at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, and Jeremy Anderson, whose work

is to be seen at the Dilexi Gallery.

MISS ASAWA'S exhibition consists largely of the hanging sculptures, knitted out of wire, which are her specialty. The transparent forms — bulbous, elongated, flowing freely and hanging freely from the ceiling — are extraordinarily rich in design and equally rich in emotional connotation. Often these shapes incorporate other shapes, sometimes in very complicated ways; there may be as many as five tissues of knitted wire, each differing in shape and color, one enclosing another, in a single work. Sometimes Miss Asawa turns in the opposite direction; instead of enclosure, openness becomes her theme, and then the sculpture is like a glistening, monumental abstraction of foliage or flowers.

All in all, Miss Asawa possesses one of the most original, unprecedented — and unfortunately, indescribable — styles of any sculptor in America. To take over a magic word from her colleague, Richard Stankiewicz, her sculpture has presence. Her paintings, which, if I am not mistaken, she is exhibiting for the first time, have much less presence, although they are amusingly decorative in effect. These paintings are often achieved in a purely negative way. Everything is painted except the subject, which stands out on the bare panel or paper in prim silhouette. Miss Asawa, the painter, is especially fascinated by chairs and trees, but the forms she invents in her sculptures are far more important than the forms she imitates in her pictures.

ANDERSON'S CAREER as a sculptor has involved a remarkably single-hearted devotion to wood as a plastic material and as a vegetable, and his show at the Dilexi continues that devotion, but in slightly different ways

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[[image]][[/image]]

ON TIPTOE in unpadded boots, Gizo Beradzé goes through one of the numbers the Georgian State Dance Company will present at the Opera House tomorrow and Tuesday, and at the Berkeley Theater on Wednesday.

from those one is used to. For a long time Anderson's pieces were like enigmatic machines, as if the shapes, the personalities, and the contraptoriality (if there is such a word) of the wooden devices made by old-time craftsmen were for him the

[[image]][[/image]]

most entertaining and at the same time the most profoundly expressive things in the world. The new pieces are also beautifully wooden, with the rich feeling for the medium that has always distinguished Anderson's work, but there are few machines. The emphasis is, rather, on an organic analogy when there is any analogy at all; there is also less entertainment and a deeper expressiveness in the carved and spiny and

spiraling shapes.
—A.F.
[---]

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