

American Art in New York

1950

By Dorothy Adlow

New York

There is no point in trying to find a common denominator in the works of American artists exhibiting in New York. There prevails at present a free excursiveness in the realms of technique and fanciful enterprise. Surrealists from Texas or from upstate New York may be showing their esoteric compositions, while painters from Greenwich Village can seem boastfully matter-of-fact. Each artist operates within self-imposed boundaries. One ignores factors cherished by another.

Harold Weston seems to carry on consistently in a manner of presentation which he cultivated many years ago. He was able to apply this technique even in the magnified dimensions of a mural which he produced in Washington during the Federal Art Projects of the 1930's. Of more recent date are oils and water colors (Babcock Galleries), including portraits, landscapes, and genre.

Details Defined

Mr. Weston does a good deal of drawing with the paintbrush as he outlines contours, delineates facial features, or meticulously defines architectural details. He is omnivorously observant and tirelessly painstaking, be it a question of a building scene, of "UN in the Making" or of a clump of unfurling ferns to carry the title "Spring Ballet." He discloses a fascination for intricacies of detail and an enchantment for patterns of organic or inorganic design; with meshes, interlacings, and overlappings. He is the sort of artist that may be tempted to paint a relaxed domestic scene, or a cityscape, or a shaded patch of vegetation. In any case, the picture is wrought in a well-enunciated pattern which has a textile feeling. Pictures by Weston reflect a quality of temperament which we associate with Scandinavian artists.

Norman Daly's pictures (Bertha Schaefer Galleries) reveal changes that have come about in his style since he exhibited in New York a few years ago. Then, Mr. Daly showed the influence of the American Indian manner of expression. He has worked himself free of that, as he yields to a broader framework of presentation, and to a more personal treatment of abstract design. The subjects—cattle and birds—are freely contrived from nature. The distinction lies in a subtle modulation of color, and in delicate textural differentiation. Mr. Daly's pictures

may recall Magdalenian cave paintings, or the naive animal portraits of the early German expressionists. They reflect imagination and fine perception.

Point of Departure

John Von Wicht's encounter with abstraction (Passedoit Gallery) is something else. Topics like "Big City" and "Below Brooklyn Bridge" provide his point of departure into the reaches of abstraction. Themes are converted into motifs, lines and solids, curves and straight lines, which are worked into a cohesive and mobile pattern. The artist creates a symbol of a thought or a mood with sincerity and sensitiveness.

Ada V. Gabriel sets down her observations of daily life, pastimes, and modes of entertainment in the vicinity of Brewster, N.Y. She has an efficient manner of painting and a primitive naturalism which suits her modest purpose agreeably. There are pictures of the circus, of the general store, and of local buildings. These are witty illustrations of a manner of American life familiar to many of us. Her lithographs carry further her descriptive chronicle. While at work in the stone medium, Mrs. Gabriel has done a series of subjects relating to Haiti.