

Young Art: Hawaii



An event of considerable and far reaching importance was the recent opening of YOUNG ART: HAWAII at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. This exhibition of children's art, conceived as a showcase for art education in the 50th State, contained 65 pieces of work which reflected life in Hawaii as observed and recorded by young artists from 6 through 19 years of age. From the more than 400 entries submitted by public, private and parochial schools, works were selected by a jury of prominent local art educators.

Sponsored by Foremost Dairies Hawaii, Ltd., YOUNG ART: HAWAII will be circulated in many parts of the U.S. through August 1966. The mainland debut will be at one of the nation's leading Junior Museums, the William Rockhill Nelson Galleries in Kansas City, Missouri, in September. New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art hosts the collection for six weeks through November with ensuing month-long showings at Cleveland Museum of Art, Ft. Worth Children's Museum, Louisiana Art Commission Galleries in Baton Rouge, Tallahassee Junior Museum, Chicago Art Institute, Milwaukee Art Center, Detroit Institute of Arts, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco and the Seattle Art Museum.

YOUNG ART: HAWAII was designed and executed by Alex L. Pickens, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Hawaii.

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"Now everybody has it. Wonderful! You may begin."

We do this because it works. It helps give the children a respect for that source of creative power that lies within them. When there is a feeling of respect for what will happen, fine things *will* happen.

Then quick as a flash, and this is an important part, we the teachers, must look for some child who has at least done something. We will hold his paper aloft and exclaim:

"Beautiful, Ray!"

"He is letting his picture flow out to fill the whole space beautifully. Letting it flow like a . . ."

She waits for the children to say,

"River."

We are working to take it out of the child's head and get it into his feeling zone.

"Nobody waiting. Nobody worrying."

Here I call upon the power of suggestion.

"Nobody squeezing it up inside until it's all dry and dead and ought to be buried."

"Just letting it come as easy as breathing."

I continue chanting,

"Painting right next to each other, but oh how different! Different from everyone else in the whole . . ."

"World." (And sometimes now they say "Universe.")

"Different as we ourselves are different."

We could have a good lesson with just these few sentences. We can say them with punch and power. We can breathe them with awe and wonder. It is awesome and it is wonderful that from within each child can come something different.

Language is a wonderful thing. It has taken thousands of years to build. Let's use it, at least until our children are over the hump and confident within. These sentences are absorbed unconsciously to become part of the whole child. Things won't get all tied in knots in his head.

The child makes no attempt at camera likeness. He skips the obvious in favor of something far more difficult. The child is a past master of *Unconscious Distortion*. To him size and proportion are a *feeling* thing.

An arm holding a baby can be

twice as long as the other because it has a job to do. One leg can be twice the width of the other because the weight of the body is on it. One eye is twice the size of the other because, as an optometrist tells me, it does most of the seeing. The thick stodgy parts that are space consuming and say little are unconsciously minimized or curtailed. The parts of interest are enhanced and dramatized.

This quality of Unconscious Distortion is greatly prized by contemporary artists. Such qualities as the children have are hard to come by through the *head*. We can tell the children that adults can go all through the Art Academies and only hope to have what children are born into the world with.

It's hard to create from your very "innards". As the painting time draws to an end we say,

"They're beautiful, children! And next time they'll come faster and even more beautiful as they've had time to grow inside us while we eat and while we sleep."

We shoo the children out to recess, keeping a few to clean up the mess. Whew! Now we can rest and catch our breath. We need it. Any good painting lesson is wearing. *Thrilling* but *wearing*. We shouldn't worry if for all our warmth and efforts nothing much has happened the first time. It takes time to dig deep to the children's own fine expression. It may take the next time or the next before we'll feel it begin to take hold. Each time we will be more comfortable and secure within and the children will reflect these feelings.

It's hard for children to believe that their own child's way is of real merit and interest. That's why we remember to chant every once in a while,

"Children's Art Exhibits all over the country — all over the *world*! Grown artists shaking their heads in wonder at what children do!"