

# ART

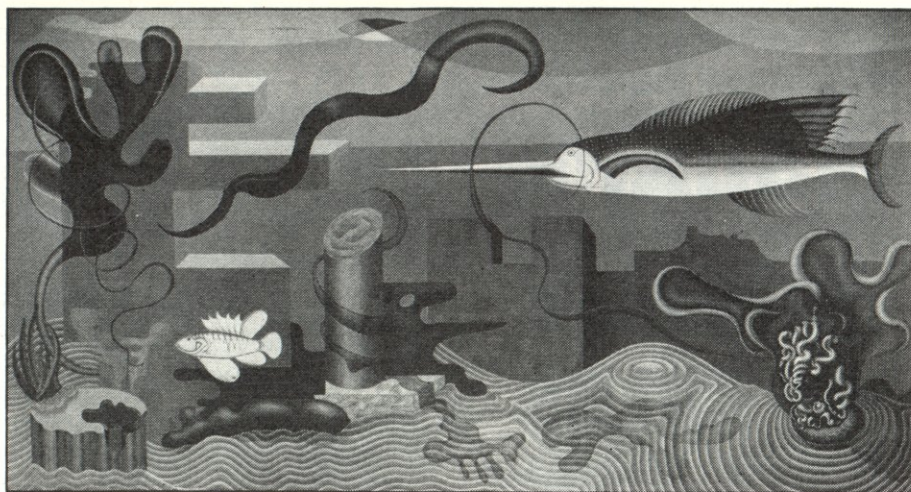
## Party

In a skylit little courtyard gallery on West 13th Street, Manhattan, gathered last week more artistic large fry than you could shake a palette-knife at. Her greying hair done high and sculptural, Hostess Edith Gregor Halpert of the Downtown Gallery swept busily from guest to guest: gentle Alfred Barr Jr., director of the Museum of Modern Art; frosty-headed "Grouch" Goodyear, the museum's president; Mrs. Juliana Force, redoubtable director of the Whitney Museum; sunny Holger Cahill, director of the Federal Art Project; big, Indian-looking Artist Eugene Speicher, burly, blue-eyed Reginald Marsh, bright-eyed, skimpy-chinned Peggy Bacon, melancholy Morris Kantor, spindly Charles Sheeler.

The well-attended festivities celebrated—and almost obscured—an exhibition of eleven new paintings by one of the pets of the Manhattan-Woodstock crowd. The pet, bespectacled, Japanese-born Artist Yasuo Kuniyoshi, arrived late, grinning and amiable.

Yasuo Kuniyoshi likes black & white touches so much that rare is the Kuniyoshi composition without a magazine, a corner of newspaper, a wrought-iron figure, a brunette *en chemise*. Another thing he likes is playing with webby threads of paint as a pastry cook plays with icing, to catch the light and give his canvases lustre. His great-eyed, meanderingly drawn figures often seem to exist in a mussy halo of phosphorescence, with vast spaces of mere paint around them. This highly mannered style does not satisfy Kuniyoshi, but it is the first one he has made fully and expressively his own in about 20 years of unhurried painting.

His greatest beauty to date was *Summer*



Horace Bristol

### AQUATIC PARK MURAL

*Mu, Atlantis, automatic showers, towels of warm air.*

*Storm* (see cut), a fragile swirl of trees, a tethered and terrified stallion and grey space of storm cloud. At 45, accounted one of the dozen most accomplished U. S. painters, Kuniyoshi has begun to make money after years in which he "did everything but commercial art" to keep alive. One thing annoys him: having been born in Japan he cannot become a U. S. citizen.

### Sea Murals

If San Francisco should presently become as distinguished for its arts as for its setting, San Franciscans would owe many thanks to WPA. Already hopeful of this, San Francisco WPA officials were pleased as Punch last week at the dedication of one of the most sophisticated WPA building jobs in the U. S.—a new, \$1,500,000 Aquatic Park overlooking the Golden Gate.

No park at all, Aquatic Park is essentially a glorified bathing place on a more modest scale than Long Island's colossal Jones Beach. Its main pavilion is designed on the lines of a neat white ocean

liner—an idea carried out with more zip if less simplicity than in a yacht club at San Sebastian, Spain, where it was tried by Architects Labayen & Aizpurua in 1929. Architect William Mooser Jr. can thank his architect father for Aquatic Park's excessively ugly background: a chocolate factory designed in 1916.

Curious modern improvements await swimmers when they come in from the Park's 1,000-foot strand: automatic showers set off by photoelectric eyes; towel-less drying in warm air currents. A more immediate pleasure on opening day was afforded by about 5,000 square feet of interior murals done by WPA artists under the direction of many-minded Hilaire Hiler (pronounced Hill-air Hyler), one of the wonder boys of modern decoration. A onetime saxophone player who drifted from the University of Pennsylvania to Berlin, from Berlin to Paris, Hiler fell to painting in the '20s and became good so fast that Parisian night clubs like the Jungle, the Grand Duke, the Jockey and the Manitou would have nothing but Hiler decorations.

A writer in his spare time (*From Nudity to Raiment*), Hiler was also a great café sitter with Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, Man Ray. He knew the Left Bank like the bottom of his glass. In 1934, when the dollar fell so low that a whiskey neat cost 72¢ in Paris, Hiler announced, "The position is untenable," and started home.

For the last two years, large, free-speaking Hilaire Hiler has been in San Francisco, working mostly on the Aquatic Park murals. Those in the central lounge he designed and mainly executed himself. Their subject is the submerged continents of Mu and Atlantis in the green depths of the sea. Swimming and floating everywhere are large, brilliantly colored fish, mythical sea creatures, and tremendously enlarged microorganisms symbolizing the oceanic origin of life. Shafts of sunlight falling through the water work sea changes of color.

Unquestionably Hiler's masterpiece, this mural embodies a refinement of intelligent detail and one of the most thoroughly studied color systems now at the command of an artist. He has evolved his own color



Soichi Sunami

KUNIYOSHI'S "SUMMER STORM"  
*One thing annoys the artist.*



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chart, with 24 hues based not on the spectrum, obtained by the mechanical refraction of white light, but on pigments found in nature and the observed human reactions to them. He is far prouder of the Aquatic Park's "color chart room"—in which these hues and their tints, shades and tones are painted on a 60-foot ceiling—than of the undersea murals.

## Grim Disney

Last week the dignified old matriarch of U. S. museums, Manhattan's Metropolitan, bestowed a grandmotherly kiss on the forehead of art's guttersnipe youngster, Walter Elias Disney. Everyone was pleased that the Metropolitan should accept a picture by Walt Disney's studio, and call him "a great historical figure in the development of American art." But many who saw the picture were surprised at the Metropolitan's choice.

Not Mickey Mouse, not the foolish pigs, not Donald Duck in a snit, not the awkward Goof nor Horace the hopeless horse, not Dopey, no wide-eyed, tender creature of the field or wood was chosen. The choice: a scene from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* wherein two cadaverous vultures—



Metropolitan Museum of Art  
DISNEY'S VULTURES

Everyone was pleased but surprised.

black, grey, just a tip of vermillion on their cruel beaks—watch for the witch's death through sleet and gloom. Taken from their delicate context, the ominous birds seemed to be looking down on Europe.

## Whitney Annual

Last year Manhattan critics noticed a slight droop in the annual sculpture show of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Last week the 1939 show opened, and by the time the critics had written their reviews, the droop became a full-fledged wither. No matter how faded, however, Whitney bouquets always have some spectacular posies:

Most exotic: Isamu Noguchi's *Radio Nurse*, a grilled bakelite face—prettier as a radio than as a nurse. Most graceful: a brightly colored terra cotta mother and child by Waylande Gregory. Most arresting: José de Creeft's familiar strong and peaceful *Head* in Belgian granite. Most horrendous: a life-size, lifeless woman by Alexander Archipenko. Her name: *Mã*.

## THEATRE

### World's Worst

In the heart of Baltimore's tenderloin is a flashy basement honkytonk called the Oasis. Passers-by are invited to "walk down one flight and save nothing," enter "the worst night club in America," witness "the lousiest shows in the world."

The shows, which drag along "until exhausted," feature 16 girls, some of them "too late for Social Security," others introduced as "from the House of the Good Shepherd," Baltimore's home for delinquent females. For ensemble acts, the chorines, seated around the room, suddenly pull off their evening gowns and, with very little on, flounce into their routines. After each specialty act, the audience is warned that the next one will be worse. Two husky bruisers, "Machine Gun Butch" Gardina and "Little" Jack Horner, 6 ft. 6, preserve order.

Last week the Oasis celebrated its 14th birthday. Proprietor Max Cohen had done well enough with "the worst night club in America" to buy up all the real estate for a block around.

### G & S

On at least one other thing besides the British Empire the sun never sets: the operas of Gilbert & Sullivan. In Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, Canada, the U. S., they are many a tot's first taste of theatre, many an oldster's last object of devotion. They draw dramaphobes out of retirement, lure suburbanites to the city. They foster cultists as rabid as Wagnerians—cultists who, unlike Wagnerians, squeal, snort, gurgle, hum and nudge their neighbors.

The greatest money-makers in the history of the theatre, the Gilbert & Sullivan operas today are finding new ways of striking gold. In Chicago an all-Negro Federal Theatre *Mikado*, set to swing, has the town by the ears. Last month Britain's G. & S. Films, Ltd. released *The Mikado* in Technicolor—the first full-length cinema version of a Gilbert & Sullivan opera in history.

But for U. S. connoisseurs, the big current news is the latest U. S. visit of England's famed D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. The late Richard D'Oyly Carte produced most of Gilbert & Sullivan originally. His son Rupert has preserved intact, to the last gesture and grace note, the traditions of his father's productions. On three previous American tours, Rupert D'Oyly Carte gave fastidious Gilbert & Sullivan fans a glimpse of Heaven. On his fourth visit he does not let them down.

By last week the D'Oyly Carters had given, at least once, every opera in their current repertory. Each production (*The Pirates of Penzance*, *Trial by Jury*, *The Mikado*, *Iolanthe*, *H. M. S. Pinafore*, *Cox and Box*, *The Gondoliers*, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, *Patience*) was velvety and letter-perfect as ever. To the irreverent, there might be something a trifle ritualistic about the performances, as though the matter in

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