

ART TO GO ABROAD

Paintings in Two of the Newly-Opened One-Man Shows

I. B. M. Selection on View —Beckmann and Others

By EDWARD ALDEN JEWELL

ON three major counts the exhibition called "Sixty Americans Since 1800," installed at the Grand Central (Terminal) Galleries, is provocative and exigent.

It serves once more to make manifest our State Department's recognition of the good-will value that art may possess in the field of international relations.

It samples the now vast resources of the collection formed by Thomas J. Watson for the International Business Machines Corporation.

And, by no means incidentally, it is a well-balanced cross-section, effective just as a show.

After the closing date, Dec. 5, this American survey, fitted together by J. Leroy Davidson, will sail off to Egypt, where, welcomed by King Farouk, it will be seen by the citizens of Cairo. Following this engagement, and adopting the explicit title "American Industry Sponsors Art," the group of paintings will begin a European tour.

The I. B. M. Collection

Unlike the show put on recently at the Metropolitan (also tailored for foreign publics) this new assortment of paintings doesn't reveal the State Department in the role of purchaser. But as a cultural project it amounts to about the same thing.

There is a salient difference with respect to scope. Mr. Davidson, in the previous report, set out to represent almost uninterruptedly progressive or "modernist" currents. His new ensemble, besides covering nearly a century and a half in point of time, essays to touch upon all schools or types of American art. The panorama is broad, yet homogeneous enough to make for plausible continuity.

The resources within the frame of which Mr. Davidson worked have been described as vast. For about a decade now Thomas J. Watson has collected with a tirelessness matched alone by his remarkable enthusiasm. Erwin S. Barrie, director of the Grand Central, said in reply to a query that the diverse I. B. M. collection, were the whole of it to be shown at once, would "fill the Metropolitan" (or did he say "more than fill"?). And I understand that plans have already been drawn up for a museum in which the collection may find permanent housing; a museum to be built at Endicott (near Binghamton, N. Y.), where it will serve the I. B. M. community of workers—a wonderful idea.

The Present Exhibition

The American cross-section soon to set sail for Cairo begins with artists such as Samuel F. B. Morse, Chester Harding and members of the Hudson River School. On an individual count representation is sometimes disappointing. Yet broadly considered the round-up, gathering momentum as it proceeds, tells a rugged tale with persuasive pithiness. It is not a tale with which Europe is altogether unacquainted, for we have sent across other exhibitions more or less similar in span. But each retelling should help.

Earlier phases attended to, the account takes in our famous expatriates—Whistler, Sargent, Mary Cassatt—and fortifies itself with splendid paintings by Inness, Eakins, Ryder and Blakelock (the Winslow Homer "Shepherdess" is merely "charming"). American Impressionists democratically nudge in neighborliness the "ashcan" Eight. And then we come to our own time, witnessing a proper melange of purposes and cross-purposes sponsored by artists such as Marin and Speicher, Bellows and Dove, Hopper and Paul Burlin, du Bois and Grant Wood, Brackman and Stuart Davis—the contrasts can be explosive, no end.

Especially fortunate are the choices that speak for Ernest Lawson, Weber, Burchfield, John Steuart Curry, Marsh, Zerbe (whose stirring encaustic "Woman on Trapeze" we reproduce), George L. K. Morris, Gregorio Prestopino, Mitchell Siporin and Joseph Hirsch.

Twenty pieces of sculpture are included in the Grand Central showing. Mr. Watson will gladly lend them also if the State Department desires. The opportunity seems propitious.

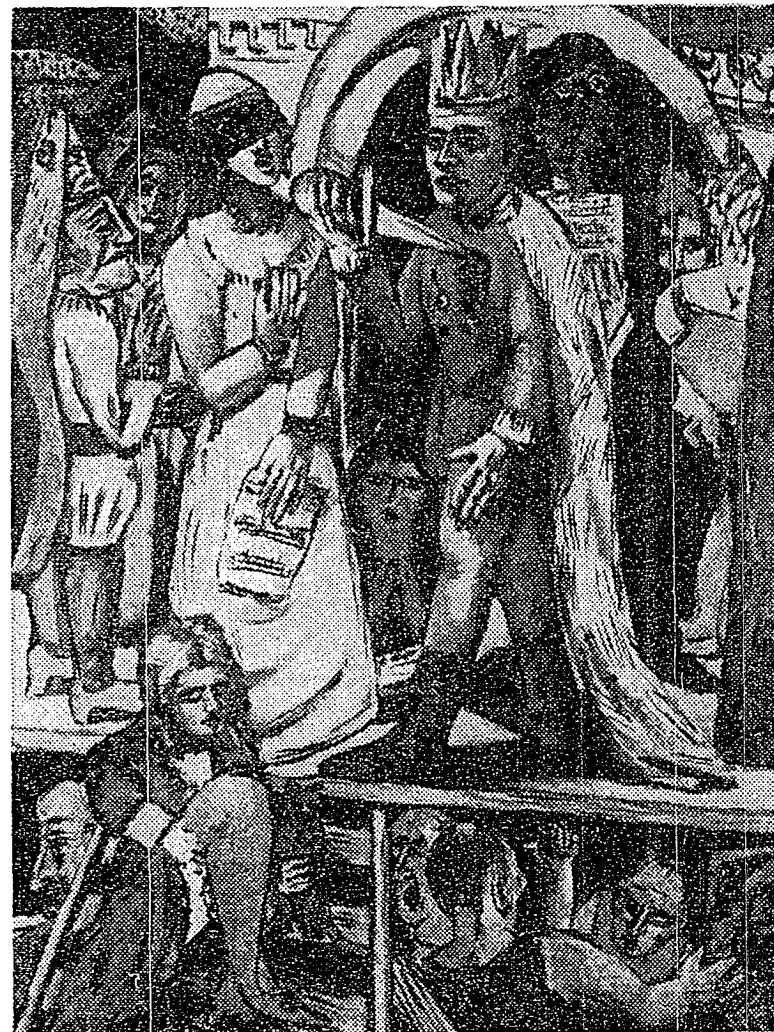
Sheaf of One-Man Shows

It was another of those thronged weeks, supplied in uncommon measure with one-man shows by artists of standing. I went to eight in all.

While each show is distinctive, no two painters seeming to fit quite into a unique category, four of them depart with particular insistence from simpler aspects of the representational. These are Max Beckmann, at the Bucholz; Camilo Egas, at the Acquavella; Revington Arthur, at the Joseph Luyber Gallery in the Brevoort, and Zoltan Sepeshy, at the Midtown.

It becomes more and more apparent that there is something inherently strange about the German expressionist Beckmann. The forms are clearly enough defined, a certain savageness irradiating the forthright vigor of his brush. His color is rich and on the somber side. He fills the available space with cogent, often powerful design. Nothing difficult so far.

But underlying it all, or yielding a persistent overtone, is motivation not to be characterized as short of cryptic. As in the past, enigma stalks through these sultry muralesque dramas. One isn't sure



"The Actors," a triptych by Max Beckmann, at the Buchholz Gallery.



"Woman on Trapeze," by Karl Zerbe, in the exhibition now current at Grand Central Galleries, selected from the collection of the International Business Machines Corporation, to be shown abroad for the State Department.

what Beckmann wishes, precisely, to convey. Somehow these scenes mean more than they reveal. It is tantalizing if fascinating.

Aside from water-colors and drawings, the present Beckmann show consists of but three works: a splendidly designed triptych called "The Actors" (which should be viewed from as far away as you can get), and two large single canvases, "Birth" and "Death."

Now Revington Arthur's is expressionism of a very different sort. While now and then he strolls off into the more rarefied realm of symbol, for the most part the criant overemphasis of his painting is just a simple matter of an artist's elected method. This is decorative painting, generally effective in design, nearly always employing color that shrieks. Arthur sets out to be garish; the choice is deliberate; so that is that.

Surrealism and Mystery

Camilo Egas has become a surrealist. There is no connection, thematically, between these canvases at the Acquavella (painted between 1939 and the present year) and the earlier Egas murals at the New School for Social Research, with flowing rhythms that recall modern Mexico.

From the outset, so far as our acquaintance with his work extends, Egas has painted with informed cunning. There is prodigious skill in the later work, which in spirit, however, allies itself with Dali and Tchelitchev and other explorers of the unconscious (go back to Brueghel if you prefer). This is not to imply that Egas is deficient in imaginative fertility. Several of his painted nightmares are as fresh as experiences remembered in the first instant of waking. Now and then (as in "Spring," "Nirvana," "Love" and "Judgment") the plastic resolution becomes abstract.

Sepeshy is a magician in paint. Yet there is no black magic about his work, for he paints like a benevolent angel. In water-color or gouache, in tempera, or in a fusion of media that bears the imprint of his own exploring enterprise, Sepeshy weaves mysteries at once solemn and scintillant. He turns the commonplace into a kind of singing miracle—take "Boat House," for instance, or "Bay," or the thematically flamboyant "Pavilion by the Sea," or the magnificent "Aft Deck."

Four More Solos

Neither Guy Pène DuBois, at Kraushaar's, nor Henry Varnum Poor, at the Rehn, jolts us with any surprises. What has been written about these two sterling artists in the past might be repeated with due appropriateness. Both have an immense amount of sheer style; style that proves durable because it is good. Of the new canvases by duBois I liked best "Two Blacks for Balance," "Girl from Michigan," "Joan" and "Suspense."

For some reason, perhaps because it is badly hung, the Poor show looks cluttered, uninviting. Yet in frequent individual performance—the "Autumn Still Life," for example; "Little Nude," "Leaves and Fruit" and the admirable portraits of Marion Hargrove and Naomi, also in drawings—the old artistry triumphs.

Joseph Hirsch, at Associated American Artists, follows out his own precept: he is contemporary, "consciously and in the fullest sense." Some of the new paintings seem to me marred by a certain cleverness, if that be the word for it. But this is a minor flaw as contrasted with Hirsch's major excellence, which comes through so strikingly, sometimes poignantly, in "Kiss," "Banquet," "Lynch Family," "Singing Men," "Fisherman's Dance," the delectable "Cape Cod"—or the portrait of Somerset Maugham in the State Department show at Grand Central. He should guard, I think, against a tendency toward muddiness, a peril that, however, does not threaten his finest brush accomplishments.

More handsomely, it seems, than any one else, Leonard Pytlac has "realized" the possibilities of the silk screen process. It is a versatile process, depending, of course, upon the inventiveness and imagination, as well as the skill, of the artist. Pytlac, an ardent pioneer in this field, strengthens his leadership from day to day. Some of the prints (at the Serigraph Gallery) are superb.