

BRIEFING □ Rosalinda G. Roxas

A short tour of Metro Manila exhibits

THE current festival of visual arts in Metropolitan Manila started last September 27. Under the patronage of the First Lady and Governor of Metropolitan Manila, Mrs. Imelda Romualdez Marcos, the festival's start was held to coincide with the International Monetary Fund-World Bank meetings. During most of last October, residents and visitors of Metro Manila were regaled with top-flight music, dance and drama. International stars like the Bolshoi Ballet, the Australian Ballet, Margot Fonteyn, Montserrat Caballe, Ivan Rebroff and Van Cliburn were affectionately received by the Manila audience. Not to be outdone, exhibition halls glowed with art objects from Europe, the United States, China and Egypt. Visitors had a good glimpse of Philippine traditions through such exhibits as the Kulay Anyo ng Lahi (public art paintings of established artists in seven strategic spots of Metro Manila, a project of the People's Artists of the Philippines for the beautification program of Metro Manila); Contemporary Art of the Philippines (at the Museong Pansing ng Maynila); Likhang Bata (some 1,000 paintings by children three to twelve years old); Philippine Costumes and Dolls (exhibit of Philippine dolls, tribal costumes, the evolution of the Filipina dress and barong Pilipino and Philippine embroidery); the Ilocano Museum and Philippine shells, butterflies and fishes at Nayong Pilipino; Philippine Pre-History and Ethnology at the National Museum; the Philatelic collection and the Animal Museum at the Sinig Kayumanggi.

Many of these exhibits are still open. They provide a rare opportunity to witness "the ritual delight of our culture—of the world. Below, The Republic presents a mini-tour of the Manila exhibits.

Portraits by Filipino Artists

FIVE hundred paintings by Filipinos coming from private collections as well as contributions of the artists themselves are on exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art (Museong Pansing ng Pilipinas). Formerly the Elks Club Building, the two-story edifice has been rebuilt to house the works of Filipino painters with the hope of preparing them for international grounds. It answers the long-standing need for a commodious gallery for their art.

The five galleries of the museum are: a) Backgrounds and Departures, b) Ambiguous Figuration; c) Contemporary Representation; d) New Abstraction and e) Visual Propositions. The participating painters include: Hernando Ocampo, Tabuena, Ang Klukok, Ray Albano, Arturo Luz, Federico Aguilar Alcuaz, Benedicto Cabrera, Victorio Edades, Roberto Chabel, Lee Aguinardo, Jose Joya, Cesar Legaspi, Anila Magsaysay-Ho and Vicente Manansala.

Ray Albano, director of the Museum, said that the place is most ideal for showcasing the works of local artists. "It's the first time we have a place like that which really fits," he explained. "White walls, high ceiling. It is intimate for a gallery, not at all cold or business looking."

How many people come to the gallery every day? "Around 2,000 to 3,000 a week, paying or nonpaying," he answered. "That is a possibility that this will become a permanent site for our art shows."

"The museum gives artists a new attitude," he further said. "It makes him think bigger, literally, it makes him think of scale. It makes him think sensitively because of the beautiful space, the ambience of the gallery."

Egyptian Art through the Ages

THE exhibition of Egyptian art at the old Legislative Building started last September 27 and will last up to March

31, 1977. It consists of cultural treasures from the dawn of Egyptian civilization some 5,000 years ago to the products of Islamic civilization. Sponsored by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization in Cairo, Egypt, the art treasures—100 pieces covering 5,000 years, from prehistoric 4,000 BC to the 18th century—were brought to the Philippines through the encouragement of the First Lady, Mrs. Marcos was impressed by the collection during her visit to Egypt last year.

The exhibit covers the Pharaonic or traditional art which rose from the ritual and funerary needs as conditioned by the natural habitat of the people; the Graeco-Roman which is influenced by Greece and Rome; the coptic or Christian art; and the Islamic or Egyptian-Islamic art.

Among its major attractions are the canopic urns which were used to hold the ashes of the dead (one of them the coffin of Prince Ramses), centuries-old icons, representations of the Pharaohs, life-like facsimile of Alexander the Great and various antiques. One is intrigued by the prominence of several artistic motifs, the bird and the boat motifs, for instance. In Egypt, the boat is the vehicle of the sun-god as he sails across the ocean-like sky. Furthermore, Egypt grew out of a civilization watered by the lower reaches of the Nile River. Travel and feasting were held on a boat and the ancient kings had special royal barges which popular imagination has closely associated with Cleopatra seated majestically on a magnificent barge leisurely moving on the Nile River. Examples of the bird motifs are the horus, falcon, ibis, geese, peewit, flamingo and vulture. For the Egyptian, the horus and the ibis symbolize occult powers.

With Ambassador J.V. Cruz as overall chairman, the Egyptian exhibit is managed by Dr. Muhammed Saleh, curator of the Egyptian museum in Cairo. Saleh had managed similar exhibitions in Europe, the last one in 1973 at the University of Heidelberg. He is assisted by Mrs. Rosario B. Tantoco, curator of Museum Education at the National Museum.

According to Mrs. Tantoco, there were 100,000 people during the first day of the exhibit. She added that an average number of 5,000 people visit the exhibit each day, the bulk of whom are paying visitors.

Dr. Saleh when asked why the museum is dark countered that this is to create an atmosphere of mystery.

Among the 100 Egyptian artifacts, which are the most valuable? Saleh mentioned four: the triad of the Myt-fonous, builder of the third pyramid which is 4,600 years old; the family statue, which he said he particularly like; the statue of Tutankhamen and one of the Graeco Roman pieces. One of the main attractions, he added, is the coffins or canopic jars which are used for the ashes.

He said everyone wanted to see a mummy. And why didn't he bring one along? He explained that a mummy is fragile, easily broken and affected by the weather. He observed that museum goes sometimes do not believe that what they see are genuine. "Many think it's an imitation," he averred.

What are his plans after the exhibit closes in March? "Maybe, we'll send this to Indonesia, Australia or China," he answered.

Archaeological Finds of China

ALSO exhibited at the Old Legislative Building from October 1 through December 31 from 9:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. daily are artifacts representing 6,000 years of Chinese civilization, from the pottery of the Neolithic age to the porcelain of the Mongols in the 14th century. They form only a fraction of the antiquities unearthed since 1949. Most came from discoveries during

China's cultural revolution. They result from surveys and preservation work carried out at many important sites and ancient tombs. The artifacts present a bold outline of the development of history and culture in ancient China.

There are magnificent stone and bronze vessels and images dating from a thousand or fifteen hundred years before Christ showing a highly developed culture that was already existing at that time. The Ming and Ching Dynasties porcelain are considered superior to any other ceramics known around the world. Intricate flower designs and landscape scenes characterize the porcelain of the late Ming and Ching Dynasties. Paintings from the Sung Dynasty (900-1200 AD) are the richest in the art of painting. Chinese painting is essentially a linear art, composed of lines—horizontal, thrusting, winding, swirling, scaling. This is calligraphic art, a direct off-shoot of the traditional Chinese art of character writing.

Philippine Costumes and Dolls

THE New Mercury Building at T.M. Kalaw St. in front of the Rizal Park houses an exhibit of Philippine dolls, tribal costumes, the Filipina dress and barong Pilipino, and Philippine embroidery. Inaugurated last October 1, it is a permanent display.

The viewer grows acquainted with the rich cultural heritage of the Philippines through the miniature world of

dolls, depicting the history, games, folklore and folk dances of the Philippines including the evolution of national costumes. The doll collection, first started in 1953 at the Alto Doll Museum by Dr. Aleli Guzman Quirino, was donated to the Museum of Philippine Costumes.

Bicentennial Exhibit

THE newly-constructed Metropolitan Museum of Manila located at the Central Bank Complex opened October 2 with the Bicentennial Exhibit of early American paintings and Western European paintings on loan from American collections. The museum is vast and stately, with imposing ceiling and spacious floors which can readily accommodate murals and large-scale sculptures.

Consisting of about 100 paintings, a few drawings and prints, and six sculptures, the Bicentennial show follows the popular notion of art—that it must be sensuously pleasing, charming as well as relaxing.

In some ways, the art exhibits fill up the cultural vacuum in the lifeways and thoughtways of the masses, giving them a taste of artistic standards. It would be quite a change from the superstar spectacles, the basketball craze and the trivialities of fashion, fads and festivities. It is to be assumed that by extending the products of artistic traditions within the reach of the Filipino people, the democratization of culture would inevitably be hastened. □



The miniature world of dolls.