

# Art: Painter From a Chicago School

## George Cohen Figures in 'Monsterism'

By DORE ASHTON

THERE has been a lot of talk about Chicago "monsterism" in painting—a school that takes a rather jaundiced view of the human image—and 40-year-old George Cohen is supposed to be one of the school's leading figures.

But in his exhibition at the Alan Gallery, 766 Madison Avenue, at Sixty-sixth Street, Mr. Cohen shows a hedonist zest that doesn't seem to fit the monsterism attributes. On the contrary, he indicates that the derisive fun of Dada never dies.

Mr. Cohen's show rambles from a rollicking "Red Maenad" to somber allegory in "Nocturnalis," a nearly classical nude in deep chiaroscuro, accompanied by Mr. Cohen's omnipresent mirror. But in this painting, the mirror is painted—not a real mirror affixed to the canvas as in some of his other paintings. His mirror, indeed, serves many moods. In a small tondo, it becomes a humorous addition to a couple of legs, a floating head and a half moon. In a construction, it is a composition element, equal in importance to a miniature set of false teeth and assorted limbs from a celluloid doll.

Whatever Mr. Cohen is saying about the human image with this half-moons, dissociated legs, arms, and heads, he is certainly not saying it in a doomsday

voice. In a certain mood, he can be grave and nostalgic, but he never quite downs the chuckle that threatens to disrupt his most serious moments.

Sari Dienes, who recently returned from a two-year visit to Japan, is showing large "wall-surface paintings" and ceramics at Betty Parsons', 15 East Fifty-seventh Street. Miss Dienes has been deeply impressed by Oriental philosophy, which, as she says, "opened my eyes to seeing in the commonest objects a whole world revealed."

The world Miss Dienes reveals, however, is a limited world of amorphous textures. Many of her "paintings" are merely agreeably suggestive textures that appear to have been rubbed onto unsized cottons. Her complete faith in random effects appears in the largest of these works where there is absolutely no form delineation but only yards of melting areas interrupted occasionally by a mark or line. Although Miss Dienes' inspiration may have come from the East, her techniques more nearly resemble aggrandized "frottages" as used once upon a time by Max Ernst.

The paintings of John Noble (1874-1934) in the Hammer exhibition, 51 East Fifty-seventh Street, are not dated, but they tell Mr. Noble's tortuous story nonetheless. A restless, Kansas-born artist who wore a ten-gallon hat and a six-shooter,

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Mr. Noble seems to have begun as a symbolist, taking his vision from Albert Pinkham Ryder, but softening it. Paintings of white horses, pink sailing vessels and moonlit landscapes typify his early period, and are among the best paintings exhibited.

Somewhere along the line Mr. Noble became acquainted with German Expressionism and French Fauvism, and tarried with them for a few years. His small Fauvist landscapes show him as a skilled adapter. But Mr. Noble left that all behind to become a rather confused realist-romantic painter whose representations of Provincetown harbor scenes and ocean-going steamships were invariably marred with sentimental details. The steely quality of his colors clash badly with the metling sunsets he could never resist.

Robert Mullen, a Professor of Art at the University of Michigan, offers his second one-man show at the Artists Gallery, 851 Lexington Avenue, near Sixty-fourth Street. His paintings are abstractions based on landscape motifs, stressing numerous small elements and their intimate relationships. He uses a palette knife, scumbling and some linear brushing to give a textured surface that suggests the sage, forests and bouquets he prefers as subjects.

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