

PAINTINGS

BY ••

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FOREWORD

A KIND lady once exclaimed, "How I love your picture of the woman kneeling." I said, "Thank you, madam, only she is not kneeling, she is standing." Unlike Greco who elongates verticals, my fancy runs to a widening of horizontals. His people are made to look like flames, mine to resemble mud pies.

In Mexico the Indian sits on the ground, not on a chair. Man gathers his knees to his chin, folds his arms over them, conceals the gathered limbs and body under a sarape too tough of texture to break into folds. Thus seated, man duplicates the sign "tepetl" the Aztec glyph for mountain. Woman kneels, feet under her eggshaped bulk, like an Aztec sculpture that retains the shape of the matrix stone.

Having absorbed the beauty of the Indian pose in its prenatal compactness, the chance is that Greek forms will seem somewhat fleshy, somewhat brittle — as they are. Shorn by the critical ire of nature of curls, fingers, and nose, a Greek fragment tends to be a hunk of marble again, approaches the esthetic of the Mexican carving.

In turn a lover of Greek art is quick to dismiss Mexican shapes as rustic, unwashed and still heavy with loam.

It is true that the plastic arts deal perforce with bodies, with what constitutes the visible world. It is

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also true that, unlike the ethics of cattle shows and leg contests, bodies are not in art the aim, but signposts that point to concepts. The tortuous contrapunto of Greco expresses man crushed by sanctity, as grapes need be trampled to become wine. The Hellenic poise flatters us into believing that the fruit eaten in paradise rendered us truly godlike. Mexico adds its own version to enrich this gigantic concordancy. It carves and paints a human body shaped by the acceptancy of daily tasks, life givers in their humbleness, cooking, washing, teaching a child to walk. Hemmed in between powerful natural forces and overpowering spiritual strains, man appears heroic enough as he stays upright, resists awhile the pull of gravity towards earth's center.

The pictures in this show are mainly of folk festivals and biblical subjects, though it is hard to find a clean cleft between them. We sing our religion, the Indian dances his. The "Flight Into Egypt" series was suggested by my trek on mule back and over mountains, with all the inhabitants of an Indian village, to what was once the place of Tezozomoc, Lord of the Caverns, where now dwells the miraculous crucifix known as Our Lord of Chalma.

— *Jean Charlot*