

Eva Pressen, January 21, 1936

MODERN EXOTIC SCULPTURE

The seven sculptures by the American Negro sculptor John W. Rhoden (b. 1918), which are on display through next Tuesday in the quarters of the Finnish-American Society at Satakatu 2, show a blend of exotic and modern international elements in a fascinating way.

The few works reveal a fine feeling for material, and the spectator sees how they organically grow out of the material.

The primitive power of expression, which one is inclined to associate with Negro sculpture, meets the viewer most powerfully in the single wooden statue, Pecunify Fetish. It has been carved from hard African violet wood and preserves the reservedness of the original form in all its rounded volumes. The work is a typical offshoot of the primitive sculpture which at the beginning of the century gave such powerful stimulus to modern Western art.

In contrast with the wood carving, the metal sculptures consist of slender forms stretched ribbon-like, and of thin, banded sheets which circumscribe space in a most vivid and imaginative manner. The artist starts with some rounds of metal wire, of which he forms the "skeleton" of a bronze sculpture. On this he fastens clay according to his purposes, after which he welds the whole piece.

The semi-abstract result - e.g. the "Angel of Tight Rope", "Scrooer", the various animal figures - leaves the motif easily recognizable, at the same time leaving room for light and space, as well as plenty of playground for the spectators' fancy. These modern space constructions come close to the line that was first experimented with by the Spanish Julio Gonzalez, the one who wanted to "draw in the air".

The lecture which the American sculptor will give on Monday in the exhibit quarters should, together with his works, give our sculptors - who had come in great numbers to the opening - a refreshing reminder of the fact that sculpture need not consist exclusively of portrait busts, massive monuments and tomb statues, but that also a graceful play in space is permitted.

E.P.