

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1940.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART OPENS EXHIBITION
OF BRAZILIAN PAINTER'S WORKS

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, opens to the public today (Wednesday, October 9) its exhibition, Portinari of Brazil. A private reception and preview was held at the Museum Tuesday evening from eight-thirty to eleven-thirty for the artist and Brazilian government officials and notables and for members of the Museum. The exhibition will be on view through Sunday, November 17, from 10 to 6 daily except on Wednesdays when it is open from 10 in the morning until 10 at night; and from Noon until 6 on Sundays.

In connection with the Portinari exhibition the Museum and Dr. Armando Vidal, Brazilian Commissioner-General to the New York World's Fair, are sponsoring a Festival of Brazilian music in the auditorium of the Museum from October 16 through October 20. The programs will be under the direction of the Brazilian composer and director, Burle Marx, assisted by Hugh Ross, director of the Schola Cantorum.

Candido Portinari, whose home is in Rio de Janeiro, is Brazil's leading modern artist. Known for a number of years as a distinguished portrait painter, he has recently become noted for his frescos in the Ministry of Education in Rio, for his murals in the Brazilian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair, and for his paintings of Brazilian life, one of which was awarded Second Honorable Mention in the Carnegie International in 1935.

Portinari was born on a coffee plantation in the interior of Brazil in 1903. His parents, immigrants from Italy, were coffee workers on the plantation. As Candido was one of twelve children his parents were able to help him in his desire for art instruction only by giving him a second-class ticket to Rio when he was fifteen years old. From then on Portinari himself earned his own meager living and enough for tuition at the School of Fine Arts. After a few

years of study he began to receive medals and prizes and, in 1928, won a Prix de Voyage which enabled him to spend three years in Europe where he visited galleries and absorbed a cultural background although he did little actual painting there.

Upon his return to Brazil in 1931 he painted portraits for a living but his real work was a self assignment to paint Brazilian life as he saw it. In 1936 he joined the faculty of the University of the Federal District in Rio and continued there until the spring of 1939, when the university was closed. Also in 1936 the Brazilian Government commissioned him to paint the frescos for the new and modern building of the Ministry of Education in Rio. He was also commissioned to paint three panels for the Brazilian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. In 1939 the Ministry of Education held a comprehensive exhibition of Portinari's work, consisting of two hundred sixty-nine items including many details for the frescos.

In the catalog which the Museum of Modern Art is publishing concurrently with the exhibition Dr. Robert C. Smith of the Library of Congress writes: "Portinari's art, serenely sure on the surface, is remarkably varied in technique, in style and in theme. He first won a reputation as a portrait painter. Over a number of years he has produced a distinguished series of clear-cut, solid portraits of his family and his friends, the Brazilian intellectuals. They have a Renaissance straightforwardness and force of simple modeling and linear clarity which remind one that his father was a Florentine. In the presence of his negro and mulatto sitters these qualities are given a monumental dignity whether in the sensitive portraits of kneeling children or the masterful nude studies for his most recent frescos that recall the negro sketches by Rubens and Van Dyck.

"From these solid portraits and figure studies of negroes he built a group of key pictures representing with a certain realism the life on the fazendas of the coffee country of Sao Paulo, or the crowded morros of the city--gathering coffee, transporting it in sacks, splitting wood, celebrating with fires and balloons the night of Sao Joao....

"Concurrently Portinari had developed a looser technique of flowing surfaces and wiry outlines for use in his gouache paintings of genre subjects. This style we have seen in the New York Fair

161

murals with their greater sense of atmosphere--the wind blowing through the sails of the fishing raft, the Pernambucan jangada and the hair of the toiling fishermen.... Finally, Portinari has entered the realm of fantasy in a series of recent pictures. They are strangely beautiful scenes in which tiny clowns play leapfrog and miniature Baian women dance the Carnival against the limitless blue of the South Atlantic....

"From these various paintings it is obvious to me that Candido Portinari is one of the most gifted of living artists. They demonstrate the exceptional quality and variety of his technique, the originality of his vision and conception, the diversity of his style. He has proved that Brazilian painting, in spite of its exotic past and constant borrowings from foreign sources, can be monumental and original. He is the foremost interpreter of that great force which is daily growing more articulate--the negro of the Americas. Unlike Rivera and the Mexicans he has no didactic social message to expound. But what he has observed he states with sympathy and dignity, untouched by propaganda. Upon such a firm basis Brazilian painting should continue to grow in importance and to play an increasingly significant role in the future art of Pan-America."

Lenders to the exhibition include the State Department of the United States and the Brazilian Representation at the New York World's Fair as well as Mario de Andrade, Joao Candido, Mrs. Walter Hochschild, Florence Horn, Josias Leao, Mrs. Josias Leao, Elin O'Shaughnessy, Olga Portinari, Artur Rubinstein, Mme. Helena Rubinstein, Maria Sermolino and Paul Lester Wiener.

After the exhibition closes at the Museum of Modern Art it will be shown in several other cities in the United States, among them Chicago, Pittsburgh and St. Louis.