

80 NAIVE PAINTERS Latin American artists from
Colombia, Chile, Honduras,
Nicaragua and Venezuela.

80A "Boat on the Magdalena River", by Noe Leon

✓ 80B "Tiger in the Jungle", by Noe Leon

During one of his visits to Colombia in 1960, Mr. Jose Gomez-Sicre, Chief of Visual Arts at the OAS, came upon NOE LEON selling little paintings to people passing through the streets of Barranquilla, the city in which he still resides. Leon was born in the town of Ocana in 1907; from 1924 to 1931 he was a policeman; and that thereafter he had devoted himself entirely to painting, taking for models landscapes and romantic scenes which he found in magazines or on postcards, and translating them into his own highly personal idiom.

Gomez-Sicre suggested that he paint directly from nature, rather than copy reproductions. The suggestion was accepted, and the result has been a progressive improvement in the quality of Leon's work, which now reveals an impressive feeling for composition and great imagination with regard to subject. The colors are rich, varied, and bold, and the approach to detail is delightful. It is a significant guarantee of Leon's highly developed plastic sense that a majority of the collectors of his works are professional painters or art critics in Colombia.

The OAS has been instrumental in obtaining the inclusion of compositions by Leon in group exhibitions of primitive art held at the Museum of Art of La Jolla (California), at Duke University (Durham, North Carolina) and in Baden-Baden (Germany). In addition, there have been two one-man shows of his

work in Bogota at the Galeria El Callejon, in 1964 and 1965 and one in Barranquilla, all of which were highly successful. Noe Leon's first individual presentation outside of Colombia was in 1965 at the Headquarters of the Organization of American States.

80C "Paratroopers", by Herrera Guevara

80D "Automobile in the Street", by Herrera Guevara

Born in Santiago in 1891, HERRERA GUEVARA studied law at the insistence of his father and in 1920 began to practice professionally. But his natural instinct for drawing and painting and his feverish dedication to his art finally led him to put aside his law career and convert his office into a studio. His style and technique are genuinely naive, with two-dimensional perspective and attention to minute detail, and, as is characteristic of all primitive painting, his work has an innocent charm and delightful shortcomings. Several of his compositions with intentional splashes of thick pigment are reminiscent of Matisse, whose work he had seen in reproductions. Certainly, however, the greater part of his work links him with the masters of naive painting.

Herrera Guevara first exhibited his paintings in 1930 in the Open Salon of Valparaiso. He held only three one-man shows during his lifetime --two in Santiago and another in 1943 in New York's Durlacher Brothers Gallery. The New York show attracted the attention of art critics of major magazines and newspapers such as Time, Art News, and The New York Times. Henry McBride, then critic for the New York Sun, noted that Herrera Guevara was recognized as a Chilean Rousseau in his own country, though lacking the touches of "Romantic yearning that made the original Rousseau." McBride found a hearty feeling, a "devil-may-care, something of the earthquake rhythm" in the artist's style

and commented that he could not imagine that he had ever heard the word "defeatism".

Two Guevara paintings are in the collection of New York's Museum of Modern Art. Another of the few collections with a painting by Herrera Guevara is the Rhode Island Museum of Art's Nancy Sayles Collection of Latin American Art.

His exhibition in 1969 at the OAS was the first since Herrera Guevara's death in 1945 and was made possible with the loan of the collection of Chilean painter Alvaro de Silva.

80E "Musicians", by Jose Antonio Velasquez

80F "Scene of San Antonio", by Jose Antonio Velasquez

JOSE ANTONIO VELASQUEZ was born in the village of Caridad in 1906. He has practiced a number of trades: was a telegraph operator for years, the barber of the Pan American Agricultural School near Tegucigalpa, and, the Mayor. Paintings that he took there with him attracted the attention of different visitors, who purchased them and started to spread the fame of Velasquez in the United States and other countries.

The painter began to practice his art at an early age, producing drawings and compositions on paper. It was not until 1933 that he started to work in oil, later in commercial enamel, constantly depicting the different aspects of his beloved town of San Antonio de Oriente. His art appears there in processional banners and altar decorations and in simple commercial lettering. His expression, rather than being childish or imaginatively amorphous, takes the form of a minute detailing of reality. He uses the smallest of brush strokes to obtain nuances, shades and a bizarre richness of green.

In spite of the fact that his paintings are represented in several collections in the U.S., thanks to the efforts of Dr. Wilson Popenoe, Director of the Agricultural School, who for years encouraged the artist and helped him to sell his work to many North American collectors, Velasquez' first one-man show in the United States wasn't until 1954 at the Headquarters of the Organization of American States. He has presented his work in Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital, and in 1949 one of his paintings represented his country in the Inter-American show which was circulated in this hemisphere by the OAS. The artist exhibited in the first Hispano-American Biennial in Madrid in 1951, and he obtained a prize in the Hallmark contest for Christmas cards.

80G "Pan American Union", by Asilia Guillen

ASILIA GUILLEN was born in 1887 in Granada, Nicaragua and died in 1964. Like all girls of her class in that city, still strongly colonial in its atmosphere, she took courses in painting, music, and embroidery to improve her chances for marriage. It was the last mentioned of these arts which she adopted as her own and which she practiced all but exclusively until 1950. At that time the poet Enrique Fernandez Morales suggested that she paint the extraordinary compositions that she had been creating with needle and thread. Asilia Guillen took up the challenge. Her first painting was shown to Rodrigo Peñalba, the Director of the National School of Fine Arts in Managua, who at once invited her to come to that institution and engage in serious study. As a mature woman, Doña Asilia was reluctant to sit in classes with adolescents. She decided there fore to work at home and to check her progress periodically with Peñalba. Soon she began to win recognition throughout her country, and in 1951 she was one of the

artists included in a Nicaraguan group show at the Pan American Union Building.

Asilia Guillen participated in the Mexican Inter-American Biennial, and examples of her work were included in exhibitions of primitive paintings in 1961 in Knokke, Belgium, and in Baden-Baden and other German cities. Her pictures have been acquired by numerous private individuals and figure in important collections both in Latin America and in the United States. In addition, her compositions have been reproduced in European books and magazines. She is considered one of the outstanding primitive painters of Latin America by reason of the imagination she displays and of the highly personal character of her brush work, which to some degree recalls the stitches of her embroidery. Her show at the OAS in 1962 was her first individual exhibition anywhere.

80H "Sonatina", by Adela Vargas de Icaza

Born in 1911 in Granada, Nicaragua, ADELA VARGAS DE ICAZA started painting as a hobby more than five years ago, when her son Alberto gave her oils, brushes, and a canvas. There is a captivating freshness and spontaneity in her expression. With an intricate, baroque sense of space, she fills every inch of the canvas with doves, daisies, lions, and fairies - all familiar references in the verses of the well-known Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario.

Her paintings have been exhibited at the Sao Paulo Biennial (1967), the 11 Lima Biennial (1968), and the OAS in 1971. The painting that was shown at the Ruben Dario Festival is now in the collection of the First Lady of Nicaragua, Mrs. Hope Somoza.

80I "Women", by Carmen Millan

MARIA DEL CARMEN ARANGUREN DE MILLAN was born

in Clarines, State of Anzoategui, in 1920. Since 1950 she has been noted as one of the most prominent naive painters of Venezuela. In 1962 she exhibited in the Pinakotek of Caracas, in 1963 a one-man show at the Galeria del Sur, also in Caracas. Her first appearance in the United States was at an exhibition of her works at the OAS in 1972.

80J "Parade", by Victor Millan

VICTOR MILLAN was born in Punta de Araya, State of Sucre, Venezuela, in 1919. A self taught artist, his first exhibition was at the "Free Art Work Shop of Caracas". In 1957 he exhibited with Carmen Millan in the Pinakotek in Caracas with enormous success. Practically every art book on naive painters from Venezuela mentions his work. In 1967 the film maker Luis Roche, made a documentary on his work and his life. His works were exhibited for the first time in the United States at the OAS in 1972.