

Bold Artist

Paintings By Collins Bring Offer

By MARY E. JOHNSTON

The American Federation of Arts has invited 21 of this nation's artists to exhibit their works in a show which will tour the nation. Lowell Collins, 23, of Houston is one of the 21.

LOWELL COLLINS is not easily defined. Gay and defiant, he is apparently drawn in curiosity and superstition toward religion.

Sensitive to and pleased by beauty and the luxury of living by and with the arts, he is a bold protestant against the inequalities of life which provide some with too much of the luxury, others with too little of it.

Mr. Collins lives with his parents at 3852 Chevy Chase in River Oaks. His studio is upstairs in the modernistic house in which he lives. His studio is air conditioned and well equipped to fill an artist's needs. Obtaining the money to buy paint, brushes and canvas is not one of his vexing problems and never has been.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES of his life call attention to the contrast of his work, sometimes weird in its protest, sometimes ugly in its emphasis.

For example, there is a haunting oil painting of a beggar man of India. Collins never saw such a man, at least not in India. He was told that some human beings in India have their eyes and tongues cut out so that they will be better able to beg. The painting is not quickly erased from the viewer's eyes.

There is a grotesque crucifixion in oil. "Why do you paint like that?" the artist was asked. He seemed to mistake the question for "Why don't you paint pretty pictures?" For he answered, "The last thing I wanted to do was paint something pretty. Christ's life was not pretty. I think he had a hell of a hard time."

AT A RECENT SHOW in the Museum of Fine Arts, where Mr. Collins is a teacher, his painting "Claustrophobia" was exhibited. The victim of claustrophobia pushes to get out of the canvas with a desperation the viewer shares. One of the artist's acquaintances, who is afflicted by the phobia, vouches for its accuracy. The viewer free of the phobia can believe the illustration is accurate.

Now for further contrast, take a look at Mr. Collins' self-portrait in the living room of his home. The painting is decorative, gay, sophisticated. Somehow, he has managed to emphasize the sophistication of his nature to the exclusion of his immaturity. The result is that Mr. Collins in the portrait is older than the Mr. Collins one sees in person. He may grow to look like the portrait (as a translation of his features the portrait is literal) as his convictions and beliefs and ideas, now unfelled, take positive form.

A SECOND SELF-PORTRAIT, made shortly after he returned from the war, is a literal and excellent translation of his face.

Lowell Collins calls himself an experimental painter. He says he



LOWELL COLLINS sits before an easel in his comfortable studio in which he paints once grotesquely, once non-objectively, once academically, once fiercely, once gaily.
—Staff Photo by Maurice Miller.

likes to experiment with people because he likes people better than any other thing in life.

Among his portraits is a sensitive one of Maurice Miller, staff photographer of The Houston Post. The picture is literal, but Mr. Collins has managed to capture more of the photographer's character than is revealed by a glance at his face.

The interesting point about the portraits the artist paints is their diversity. His patterns vary as much in the portraits as his subject matter and approach vary in all his paintings. There is another portrait of a girl, her arms and

hands large in obvious exaggeration, perhaps to accentuate her strength or her beauty. Mr. Collins happens to be in love with her.

HE ALSO PAINTS non-objective works because he is interested in design. He paints in many mediums. All of his efforts are directed toward single end, difficult to accomplish: he wants to be a good painter.

Mr. Collins and his friend, Robert Preusser, Houston's non-objective painter, are art editors of the Texas Cancer Bulletin, which is distributed to all the doctors of the state by the M. D. Anderson Cancer hospital here.