

1978. 3. 12

## The Week in Art

By BARBARA THOREN

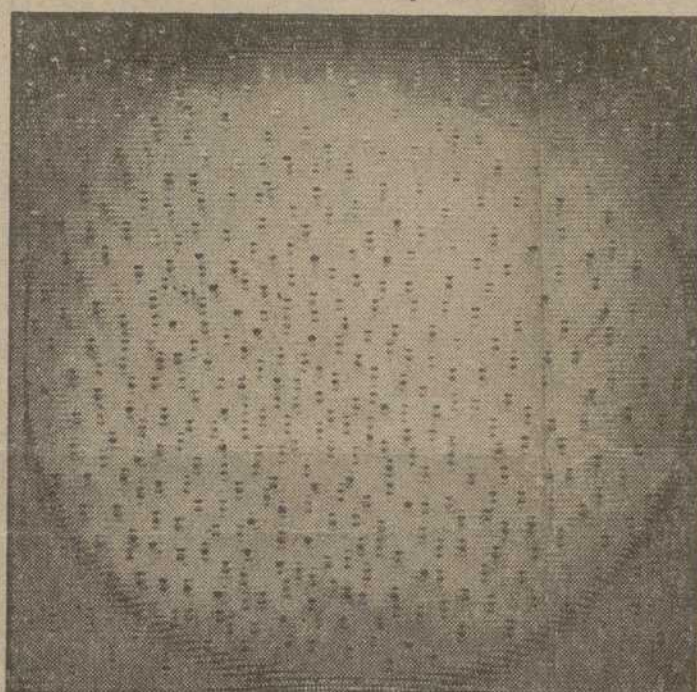
**BIENNALE DE PARIS '59-**  
'73, Seibu Art Museum, 12th  
Fl., Seibu Department Store  
(Ikebukuro Stn.), Tel. 981-0111.  
Till March 29 (Closed Thu.)

Once one comes around to accepting the fact that art is more than an attractive picture on the wall, and that it can be anything independent of utilitarian strictures of visual or sensory value which may be presented, a wide world of the offerings of individual minds opens.

What is meant, though, by "utilitarian strictures?" If it means "bent to an intended purpose," then all the religious and political art of the past would belong to fields other than art history. Perhaps we should say, instead, that art is any object or void calculated to affect the emotional/intellectual perceptions.

The presentations may prod a sense of the sublime, piquant wonder, insult, shock or merely apathy. Whatever the end results or processes do or are, free of charge or to be seen for only a nominal charge, they embody one of the last bargains of the entertainment world. The more one observes, the more aware one becomes. The sensibilities are fertilized and increasingly susceptible to discriminating growth.

It is difficult and sometimes hard on the pride for anyone to crack his intellectual shell and standards for acceptance. To leave home ground is to invite confusion or loss of standards. The museum and gallery crawler's first reaction is usually: "Could I live with that? Would I put it in my house? Would I pay solid money for it? Or would I kill it?" Certainly the most interesting art provides a continuing interaction with the human beings in its environment. This is one



Heinz Mack — "White Rotor With Mirror Dots" (1967-69), wood, motor oil, glass.

of the strange powers of art, and one of the reasons much of it is destined for public viewing rather than home influence. The viewing public, with solid common sense, is fully aware of this. Surely no one but a sadistic monster would hang Munch's "The Cry" in his child's bedroom. Yet one can appreciate its wonderfully expressive effect on a museum wall, at a safe psychological distance.

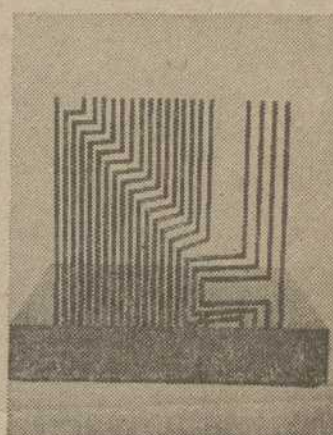
Of many of the works in the Seibu Biennale exhibit, one could say "I could do that," or "a child could do that" — and yet when we come right down to it, we don't "do it," nor do our children. Those who do are the artists. The very simplicity of some of the works understates complex intellectual calculation and fine craftsmanship.

One might choke back (or vociferate upon) amazement or outrage at the sight of cer-

fashioned" abstract expressionism. Yet only a few years ago the world was dismayed and disgusted at unstructured daubs of paint being called "art." Now abstract expressionism has become a standard and accustomed part of art's vocabulary, complete with pedigree, here to stay. Surely this is a prime example of how art shapes the man as man shapes the art. Domoto is having a large retrospective exhibition of his work in Paris next autumn.

As can be seen by the angulation of "Maalot," it is a sculpture to be walked around, viewed from different vantage points. It is contrived to present a different combination of effects at each step, in its vertical purity reminiscent of pipe organs and Bach.

Other works, such as the row of tin cans containing a progression of objects which suggest insect egg development instead of its title, or the female on hands and knees supporting a table-top, might make a superintendent viewer question his own gullibility or the sanity of the jurors. Nevertheless, this is an important and entertaining exhibit — important because it shows what is being done in other parts of the world (it's so easy to be parochial), and entertaining in its vitality and variety. It is made up of about 56 works selected from the Paris Biennales of 1959 through 1973. Only one of the artists repre-



Yaacov Agam — "Maalot" (1970), brass.

sented was able to come to Tokyo. She is Beatrice Casadesus. Her video work was not in operation on opening day due to mechanical difficulties. She will be present from 8 p.m. March 13 at the Maki Gallery, 4-9 Honcho, Nihonbashi (Tel. 241-1310) for her one-night exhibit there.

Georges Boudaille, present director of the Paris Biennale, tentatively agreed that everything that can be done in art may have been done by now. When people come to such agreement, almost invariably something again new is bound to appear on the scene.

Two things at the exhibit seem to sum up the situation: Jean Tinguely's "Meta-Matic," an amusing contraption which, activated by a slug-coin and pushbutton, draws on a card until switched off — erratic but self-contained; and a marvelous photograph in the last room of Andre Malraux, former French Minister of Culture, and other Biennale pillars at an exhibit. The expressions on their faces alone are worth the price of admission.

Next at the Seibu Art Museum: Paintings, Yasui Prize, April 1-25.



Hisao Domoto — "1960-Z" (1960), oil on canvas.