

Berkeley Shack Scene of Casting for Paris Exhibit

By JOSH EPPINGER III
United Press International
Berkeley, Calif.—(UPI)—At the rear of a dilapidated condemned slum house stands a small, iron-corrugated shack. The shack, too, is crumbling.

Ballrooms Lose Wide Patronage In Modern Age

By MORT J. SULLIVAN
United Press International
Chicago — (UPI) — It's been described as a "Castle in Spain," "a Palace of Dreams" and the "Alhambra of the Midwest."

From its bandstand two decades ago poured the music of Dick Jorgens, Wayne King, Guy Lombardo, The Dorsey Brothers, Russ Morgan and the late Eddy Howard — who held forth for more than 15 years.

Today it is an ingeniously ornate, fireproof, air-conditioned relic doing regular business only on Thursday, Friday and Saturday — and waiting for a buyer.

The "Palace" on the block for \$750,000 is the Aragon Ballroom on Chicago's north side.

"We have a teen-age dance next week," said Andrew Karzas whose father, William, opened the ballroom — and its counterpart on the city's south side, the Trianon.

"We still are going along fairly well," he said. "But it's less comfortable than the old days."

"The old days" were the days when several thousand flocked to the ballroom with artificial sky and with starlight twinkle "to dance and dance."

In an age of palatial openings, the opening of the Aragon ranked with the best. Mayor William Hale (Big Bill) Thompson bought the first ticket in July, 1926, and more than 8,000 persons moved in after him that night.

The Trianon opened four years earlier. William Karzas sold it in 1954. No more can one turn on his radio and hear the announcer saying "direct from the Aragon on Chicago's north side."

"It's not a lack of business that put the ballroom up for sale. It was Dad's decision to retire and it's his decision," Karzas said.

Karzas offered some reasons for the decline of ballroom dancing since World War II. They included the present popularity of singers, the fear of many single girls to take public transportation because of the rise in crime, and movies and television.

"People just don't seem to want to go out any more," he said.

What could the Aragon become if it were sold? "It could be made into a bowling alley, or a convention center or a catering or banquet hall," Karzas said. Or maybe a radio or a television studio.

"And the new owner could continue it as a ballroom," he said hopefully.

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Flanked on one side by an auto repair shop and the other by an empty lot, the little shack is noticeable only in its obsolescence.

But inside the dusty shack, is an American art exhibit of major significance — in all sizes, forms and materials.

The incongruous setting near the Berkeley waterfront is the workshop and foundry of 12 sculptors from the University of California, who have been selected to represent the United States this fall at the third Biennale de Paris.

The exhibition will be held Sept. 28 through Nov. 4 at the Paris Museum of Modern Art and will include major works of outstanding young artists from around the world. The Paris exhibition ranks in importance with the older festivals of Venice and Sao Paulo.

The insignificant little shack has played an instrumental role in the careers of the university sculptors. They quickly found that free expression goes only so far in sculpture. No matter what

form or shape is desired in bronze, money eventually molds the final product. But sending wax models to professional foundrymen to be cast is expensive and sculptors insist foundrymen are not experienced in handling art works.

The Berkeley men were left with the choice of either sending their works abroad or learning the craft of the foundryman. Dedication to chisel and knife became directed to boiling pots, pullies, plaster models and hard, hot physical work.

The artists proved adaptable, versatile and, surprisingly enough, found that they could make fast and high quality castings at a fraction of the previous cost. But more important, the rather routine and laborious casting cycle opened to them a whole new world in the art of sculpture.

"They broke the barrier of old prejudices," explained Herchel B. Chipp, professor of art at the university, who is organizing the U. S. exhibit at Paris. "The artists ventured into

design techniques that had been previously rejected as impossible. They also found they could do things they had been told they couldn't do before."

The conventional bronze sculpture method begins with a carved wax model which is embedded in plaster, then melted out with heat. The plaster mold is then used to cast the bronze. Soon, the Berkeley artists found they didn't have to work just with wax.

furniture was put to use. The finished bronze products astonished the group's tutor, Peter Vouklos, associate professor of design.

"The fact that work of this quality is being done in an American university, and that the entire process is executed by the artists themselves, is a rather unusual achievement in the field of art," Chipp said. While the future of the sculptors rests on the acceptance of their works, the future of the shack has already been decided. It will

soon be demolished to make room for a housing development. Progress and art do not always coincide.

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