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A Surrealistic Painter

By Our Arts Critic

NEW DELHI, Dec. 12.—Richard Maitland's paintings and mobile sculptures are expressions of a very supple and sensitive mind. His exhibition of paintings at his residence at 24 F, Nizamuddin West, New Delhi, presents the well-known dancer as a man interested in the quiet, peace and haunting beauty of mystery.

Richard Maitland is essentially a surrealist painter. His people are positive intuitions converted into symbols of the sensations. The landscape too is part of a larger canvas, of the mind measuring in terms of natural environment the feeling of man's loneliness and essential isolation. Thus Richard Maitland makes even common objects contain the chronology of the myth. In 'Crab Shell', for instance, a purple strip of water, and two distant figures provide the relief to the organic sculpture that is the shell of the crab. Yet this simple composition, which raises the shell of the crab to the condition of a monument, and diminishes the human to the function of discarded flotsam, almost manages to create a new perspective. It reminds us of the sea around us, and of Poet John Donne's famous image: No man is an island.

Sometimes the surrealism is consciously contrived, even if pretty and nostalgic, as in 'Homesick Dream'.

I like Maitland when he is spontaneous and searching. And this aspect of him reveals itself in a steady body of paintings. In 'Puri Beach', 'Cape Comorin', and in 'Victoria Puri' we find the true surrealist. The last is like a primitive painting; yet the four orange balls on the table and the decor-like exaggeration of the ensemble speak of strangeness of the addition of strangeness to beauty that is romanticism. In this vein, 'Kerala Church' is a little masterpiece of suggestion. The three white figures in the foreground are as mysterious as the clouds you can't see in the horizon 'Pot Shop Jaipur', with its delicate tones and fantasy, is a measure of Richard Maitland's ability to transmute life.

The exhibition is open till December 18 between 10.30 a.m. and 7.30 p.m.