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## ★ Ballet Dancer Can Paint, Too

**I**F we have come to admire a person for his proficiency in a certain field of activity, our response to him is often comparatively lukewarm when he appears in a different guise. The general tendency is to type a person.

That is probably what happened to the versatile young American, Richard Maitland.

The patrons of Taj Mahal Hotel have for some time now enjoyed seeing Richard perform ballet dances at the Xanadu. Last week, Richard wanted the Taj patrons and others to know what he could do with brush and paint.

But, if the response to his exhibition of paintings held in the Harbour Lounge was not as enthusiastic as the show warranted, it was perhaps because he was unfortunately first known here as a dancer. All those who had known him had obviously jumped to the conclusion that, being a professional dancer, Richard was necessarily an amateur painter.

But the general impression of those who saw it was that Richard's paintings unmistakably indicated that he was a sensitive artist and was trained in the mechanics of that art.

The truth is that painting was his first love. He, obviously, could not escape it because his mother was a proficient painter; so brushes and pots of paint were among his early toys. At the California School of Fine Arts from where he graduated and at the New School in New York, Richard learned painting, interior decoration, sculpture and also lapidary and modern jewellery design.

## World Tour

Richard, however, soon realised that not even in dollar-happy America was it easy to live by the brush alone.

That is how he became a professional dancer. He danced with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, appeared in several Broadway shows and finally became one of the principal artistes in the original Li'l Abner show. During the six years he was with that show, he collected all the pennies he could and embarked on a world tour.

For a year, Richard toured South America, Australia, Indonesia, Thailand and arrived in India via Nepal.

At the instance of some of New Delhi diplomats, Richard started a ballet school. But, if he has stayed on for four years in India, it is not because of the school, but because he wants to study and paint India.

Richard's main interest, as is evident in his paintings, lies in our past. He is fascinated by our ancient temples and tombs. His "social conscience," however, sometimes gets the better of his predilections as in the painting depicting election posters in Kerala. Under the posters are seen lean, emaciated bodies, people crushed by hunger and misery and, consequently, unconcerned about the election hullabaloo.

In Kerala, for instance, he realised that all that the average man wanted was a few chapatis and some rice.

Some of those who have seen Richard's paintings have been intrigued by his near obsession with clothes lines. He told me that he saw a certain wistful beauty in our colourful clothes hanging from balconies and from lines thrown across the streets. But he certainly shows a certain impishness in paintings depicting what he describes as "elegant Moghul tombs draped with laundry."