



ARTISTIC CENTERPIECE: Section of sculptured wall, designed by Masayuki Nagare, surrounding Japanese Pavilion at World's Fair. The stone abstraction combines the elements of ancient and contemporary art standards.

Art All Over the Fair

Sculptured Wall for the Japanese Pavilion Appears Finest Single Work

By JOHN CANADAY

ART is all over the place at the fair, in such quantities as to negate the outcry that went up when an art pavilion was vetoed. Pending a comprehensive survey (much of the art is not yet in place), a safe guess is that the finest single work of art created for the fair is Masayuki Nagare's sculptured exterior for the Japanese Pavilion.

The most audacious decorations are the paintings and sculptures by Pop artists and other contemporary Americans commissioned by Philip Johnson, the architect, for the theater of the New York State Pavilion, again on the exterior wall.

And the most lamentable monster, making Walt Disney look like Leonardo da Vinci, is Donald de Lue's "The Rocket Thrower," a bronze muscle man rising 45 ridiculous feet into the air on the main axis.

Since "The Rocket Thrower" is an absurdity that might be a satire of the kind of sculpture already discredited at the time of the 1939 fair, we might get it out of the way first by describing it as warmed-over pseudo-Carl Milles and left-over semi-Lee Lawri. But to get it out of the way physically is going to be impossible, since it was commissioned as a permanent disfigurement to Flushing Meadow Park, one of the fair's residual contributions to culture.

If the jealous heavens do not level "The Rocket Thrower" with a bolt of lightning, a solution would be for some public-spirited citizen to pay for melting it down and putting it back in place. Whatever the shape of the resultant lump, it would be better than the shape the thing is in now.

There seems to be a possibility that the New York

State Pavilion, planned as a temporary structure, may be kept as a permanent one. In this case, a less buoyant light may be cast on the odd paintings and concoctions that hang on the theater walls. But a big fair is a festive occasion, part shindig and part social document, and a fair building of the year 1964 needs precisely such inventions as these, divided between high estheticism and pure horseplay, and typical of the moment no matter how transient the values of that moment may prove to be.

A big fair is the one enterprise where experimental excess in the arts may most legitimately be offered for testing, and the best test is not in an art exhibition but in actual use. The majority of the people who see the decorations on Mr. Johnson's pavilion will be unaware that the men who did them are currently the kings of the galleries and the international art shows, and hence will respond in ways impossible when they look at art enshrined as Art. Time will take care of all this — perhaps, in view of the weather and the vulnerable materials of the decorations, before the fair is over.

But no such considerations need affect a judgment of Nagare's superb abstract sculpture serving as a wall on the Japanese Pavilion. This is high art by standards tested over centuries, and it is contemporary art by the strictest contemporary standards, even though these joined blocks may hold connotations equally of Inca stone work and ancient oriental ceremonial objects. Fortunately the blocks may be taken down and reassembled when the building is demolished. Any one of them could be treasured