

the art of

elias friedensohn

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Art: Human Suffering

Friedensohn's Melancholy Allusions on View—Blunt Work by Kaldis

By DORE ASHTON

ELIAS FRIEDENSOHN has always been interested in the symbols of human suffering. In his recent paintings at the Isaacson Gallery, 32 East Sixty-sixth Street, Friedensohn has furthered his search for expressive symbols by condensing his imagery. His paintings are free of minor detail, and, when necessary, are couched in abstract terms that enforce his melancholy vision.

Some of Friedensohn's symbolic allusions are direct and easily read. His portrait of Lazarus, with an eerie patterning of winding-sheet, and a small, shadowy painting of the flight of Icarus are examples of the artist's explicit imagery. But there are other compositions—always kept in strange, lunar tonalities—in which figures merge with the funereal atmosphere or even disappear entirely.

Friedensohn's technique of applying mildew greens and luminous mauves demonstrates considerable knowledge of the medium and an understanding of its particular properties for his purposes. His antique colors produce the dim, troubled environment within which his dramas invariably unfold.

A visit to Italy last year inspired several drawings and a painting of the Palatine Hill. These stressed and heavily patterned drawings have something of the driving pas-

sion of the seventeenth century landscapist Hercules Seghers.

Aristodimos Melandinos Kaldis is better known in New York for his improvisations in art philosophy than for his paintings. But now the Stewart-Marean Gallery, 135 East Sixty-second Street, has mounted a large exhibition of Kaldis' paintings, showing the consistency of his personality. His paintings are as improvisatory, as blunt and as beguiling as his freewheeling discourses.

Included in the show are many small landscape impressions of his native Greece, artlessly described. There are also several large allegories with allusions to icons and Greek myths painted in bright colors and diffuse patterns which suggest early Kandinsky. Some of Kaldis' allegorical landscapes have a rude vigor that is quite enchanting. Others falter on the verge of contrived primitivism.

The Mi-Chou Gallery, 36 West Fifty-sixth Street, is presenting a small exhibition of paintings by four seventeenth-century Chinese monks. Within the limited scope of the exhibition, the styles of the century are well represented, ranging from the soft gray-to-warm-black manner of Tao-Chi to the stern, nearly geometric linear manner of Hung Jen.