

the art of

elias friedensohn

articles & reviews

New York Times, 1967

By JOHN CANADAY

THE week brought two thematic exhibitions of merit and an exceptional one-man show along with the typical spate of good, bad and indifferent exhibitions along the art route. The theme at the Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, 41 East 57th Street, is the student-teacher continuum in New York painting. At the Forum Gallery, 1018 Madison Avenue at 79th Street, it is the Negro as portrayed in American painting. At the Dintenfass Gallery, 18 East 67th Street, Elias Friedensohn is concerned with the assassination of President McKinley and the trial of Leon Csolgosz, the assassin. It will cost you a dollar, or 50 cents if you are a student, to get into Marlborough-Gerson, and another dollar, or 50 cents if you are a member of a group of students, to get into the Forum Gallery. The money goes, respectively, to the New York University Art Collection or the United Negro College Fund.

"The New York Painter" charts the student-teacher family tree as it sprouted from New York University, beginning with Samuel P. B. Morse as teacher and William Sidney Mount as student, and ending with Reginald Marsh as teacher and Isabel Bishop as student. Since Max Weber is also in there with Mark Rothko as student, you get a stretch from the earliest genre and Hudson River painters up into the abstraction of the nineteen-fifties.

Without its explanatory chart and its display of memorabilia ferreted from the university's files by Ruth Gurin, curator of the N.Y.U. art collection, and by her students, this would seem a curious show indeed, an American survey lacking some of the best painters and including some oddish ones. But with Miss Gurin's keys and her general organization and selection, this is an extremely engaging survey. It begins, appropriately, with an allegorical landscape painted by Morse in 1836, which shows N.Y.U.'s proud new Gothic hall standing confidently along with other allegorical representatives of the arts, sciences, and high ideals that universities foster.

### Marlborough Showing 'New York Painter'

which is to show that in spite of the prevalence of stereotyped interpretations of the Negro, there have always been American painters "striving to depict him with honesty as a human being." In spite of all, however, this remains a very good show.

As for Elias Friedensohn's production at the Dintenfass Gallery, a brief memorandum will be enough just so long as it manages to say that this is a major and largely successful effort to interpret pictorially, but not in the illustrator's manner, a historical event as a psychological complex. Mr. Friedensohn is concerned less with the assassination than with the trial, not with political or historical repercussions but with the hysteria that engendered the act on the part of the assassin and the hysteria that the act in turn engendered.

The trial, the reaction of the press, the medical history of the treatment of McKinley's wound, the exhibits given in evidence at the trial, and the assassin's days in prison before trial and execution, are some of the subdivisions listed in the gallery's outline. But nothing is depicted as an event or a fact; everything is warped into morbid fantasy. There are more than 50 paintings, sculptures and hybrids in the show and although they are listed as individual items they create an environment more truly than most of the schemes that so label themselves.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1967