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John Skolle

(Marge Solenberger photo)

John Skolle Paintings Reflect Beauty of the African Continent

BY FLO WILKS

John Skolle, writer, artist and world traveler, has returned to make his home in Albuquerque, and is occupying the Frank Stuart home, 1204 Ridgecrest SE, while the Stuarts, his long friends, are in Florida. Stuart is teaching at Miami University.

Skolle lived in Southern France for many years, and was fascinated by the great continent lying across the Mediterranean. He lived for two years in Algiers once, forming friendships most valuable to him several years later when he traveled the Sahara Desert with an Arab Caravan.

Skolle wrote of these travels in his book "Azalai," illustrated with photographs by the author. It is published in New York by Harper's; in London, and in a Japanese translation in Tokyo. Among Skolle's other published works are "The Outline of Imagination," for the Southwest Review; "The Blue Men," for the Hudson Review, giving an account of his life among Taureg Tribesmen of the Sahara; "Oases and Desert," Landscape Magazine; "The Lady of the Casa," "The Tale of Helen Wurlitzer of Taos; "Aden and the Cisterns of Taweela, South Arabia"; Adobe in Africa," Landscape Magazine; and "Herr Bauer, A Short Story," in New Mexico Quarterly, February 1963.

Silver Medal Award

Skolle, in addition to being a writer, has had one-man art exhibitions at the Denver Art Museum, Benestell Gallery of New York, Dallas Art Museum, Santa Barbara Museum, Seattle Art Museum, University of New Mexico, and received the silver medal and a Swamp Woman of Central Africa, continue to probe the mysterious beauty that is uniquely Africa.

A Masai couple of Kenya seems almost luminous as their costumes drape over muscular, graceful bodies. Nigerian Tribesmen and a Bedouin Woman continue the exquisite portraits of people with whom Skolle lived and worked. The jungle in its beauty and mystery are in his painting "Fly Country," where the tsetse fly lives and breeds, and even the natives scarcely penetrate.

European Background

Skolle studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and at the University of Leipzig. He has been an American citizen since 1929. As a boy, he wanted to be an acrobat, since his father traveled with a circus in Bohemia. Later his father became a college professor. "And it was from him that I discovered art, literature and music," Skolle said.

Skolle returned from Africa to accompany his long - time friend, historian Charles Gallenkamp on a trip to Central America, and subsequently illustrated Gallenkamp's book on the Mayas.

Skolle's style of painting varies with the subject matter and his surroundings, as exemplified by his switch to the southwestern theme in murals commissioned by the Camelback Inn, Scottsdale, Ariz., where bucking broncs and scenes of the rodeo arena are realistically painted in natural colors of the area. Another of his large murals is in the John Weistrand home at Sante Fe. Others include a mural for the residence of Dr. J. B. Murphy, Long Island, N. Y.; offices of Edward L. Varney, architect, Phoenix; an anthropological wall map of Yucatan and Central America for the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe; and an 80 - foot mural for the wild life exhibit of game and fish at the 1964 New Mexico State Fair.

Skolle was in Africa during the Mau Mau uprising and was one of several guests at a dinner party fed ground glass and insects by the house boy. A lengthy illness delayed his return to the United States, where Gallenkamp was waiting at Houston to start their trip to Yucatan, Guatemala and Honduras.

"For the most part, the people of Africa were gracious and hospitable. They gave me much more than I could ever give them," Skolle continued. "Although they are most reluctant to have anyone paint or photograph them, they greatly admire anyone who can read and write, and were most cooperative in assisting me, as a writer."

As a special favor, granted after long friendship, [illegible] reg chief [illegible] his book. [illegible] graph, sitting in the [illegible] posed for a photo- [illegible] gootskins [illegible] side [illegible] Across to Timbuctoo.

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