The ART of TODAY

A MAGAZINE DEALING WITH VITAL AND LIVING ART

DORIS LEE by Arnold Blanch — *The inner life creates the outward form* — Courtesy of the Frank K. M. Rehn Gallery

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WHAT IS ALL THIS HULLABALOO ABOUT THE AMERICAN SCENE?

ROBERT HENRI said that any American who developed himself and his art by the right study would produce American Art quite naturally. So far as art is concerned, America is not a political unit but a geographic and a spiritual environment. The artist brought up in that environment will show its influence in his work in spite of himself, without having to try, no matter how much he learns from foreign schools.

A story is told of how Thomas Craven visited an exhibition of Georgia O'Keeffe's work. After viewing the exhibition he said, "The trouble with your work is that you don't know America." Miss O'Keeffe answered that she had spent her whole life travelling and living in America, and that a large part of her early life was spent on a farm. She said that everything about the house and the barns was kept immaculately clean. The stables, the fences and the house were always in good repair and they always shone with bright coats of paint. In other words, she had been conditioned by an atmosphere of cleanliness. Did this make her any the less an American or her knowledge of America any less profound?

The trouble with Craven, as with Sinclair Lewis, is that he thinks of America in narrow terms. From his little guard-house tower, above the common herd, he sees only the few things that he has eyes to see.

The American scene is not one thing – it is a thousand things and it is a different thing to each artist according to his ability to perceive.

Painting the American scene is not a new manifestation. The American primitives were alive to the beauties about them. Currier and Ives, the artists of the Hudson River, Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins and Robert Henri found inspiration for their work in the immense variety of material that presented itself to them on every hand.

The important consideration is not whether artists paint things that are dirty or clean, grotesque or pretty, abstract or realistic, whether they paint country landscapes or street scenes, people or machinery. The only thing that is important is that they produce works of art that are "vital and living."

The ART *of* TODAY

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NU EN BERCEAU
By Maillol
Beauty Effortlessly Achieved
Courtesy of the Weyhe Gallery

JOHN SLOAN *and the Native Scene*

by Martha Candler

JOHN SLOAN fathered the American Scene as an art tradition. Now, sitting in his penthouse studio, with evidences of his forty years of painting around him, he intimates that he loathes his offspring; at least, he deplores "all this hullabaloo," and is pained over the now widely current notion that pictures have to have Kansas barns in them, corn shellers, and cow lots, kitchen stoves, and American hicks. He pioneered in the first struggle for a national art in this country. As he reminisces about it all now, the effect of that pioneering on present-day modernism becomes apparent; its relationship to the new clamorings of the "American Scene" school appears negligible.

He had the consummate effrontery, that vigorous voung John Sloan who came to New York around the turn of the century, to look at the teeming life around him, and set down what he saw, in all its aliveness. He had learned to draw at a night school, and had gained skill in significant seeing and recording through ten years on a Philadelphia newspaper. With all the ability and enthusiasm he brought to his new undertaking, it is small wonder they cried him down for heresy. Swooning female delicacy, elegant portraiture, and landscapes awash in liquid color pervaded the official art atmosphere, and for all this raw and unrefined realism, there was only shock, horror, and revolt. To hear the calm man talk now is to conclude that the whole hue and cry was lost on him. From the start, he had two preoccupations: freeing a way through which his own inner idea could emerge as creation, and fighting for an equal liberty for all artists.

He was one of the small insurgent group who exhibited as The Eight — some newspaper man's term for those young men of widely different styles and intentions bound together by a common necessity to free themselves of the outworn and academic restraints at home which had started the exodus to Europe full flow. His little company loomed large, and grew, as the twilight of the gods began closing in around pseudo-classicism, at last. Glackens, Lawson, Henri, Luks, Prendergast, Shinn, were among them; later Walter Pach with Walt Kuhn and Davies came. He was of the nucleus group out of which the Armory Show came, miraculously even for them. He was in the first Independents' show in 1917. The following year, he became the leader of the Independents, and has remained their leader through eighteen difficult, discouraging, greatly rewarding years.

Meantime, his painted scene has been replete with American life. To quote Albert Gallatin, "The slices of sordidness of middle Western railroad junction towns which Charles Burchfield has recorded are not more so." Rooftops of New York, onto which stifling slum bedrooms have disgorged their half-clad humanity on nights of unbearable heat; Washington Square aswarm with tenement children; common people about their little businesses in the shadows of the "L". These are among things John Sloan painted with such living quality that he made a legend and created an atmosphere which pervaded Greenwich Village and its purlieus for a generation. Bohemia was not after all in Paris. Its geography was in the country of artist imagination, and heaven only knows the unnumbered Missionary Society ladies from Iowa who have made themselves mortally ill smoking their first cigarettes at Romany Marie's and such places as a result.

His typical style asserts itself most strongly in human figures significantly moving against a distinctive, characteristically New York background. Canvases of this order are now in numerous important museums including the Metropolitan, the Brooklyn Museum, the Philips Memorial Gallery, the Detroit Art Museum; and only lately the Boston Museum of Art has bought his *Pigeons on the Roof*, one of the most essentially New York scenes of them all. All his work of this *genre* is prized as recording the human history and social life of a changing city. The Haymarket; the old Brevoort; the Lafayette; McSor-

ley's saloon; Sweeney's; Madame Petitpas' in the grand old days when J. B. Yeates dominated a circle in the name of liberal culture.

He admits now that his public which clamored for his city scenes, for the local color and humor, satire and bitter irony he knew how to inject into them, may have missed the significance of his art entirely. For all this time he was also painting landscapes, at Gloucester and elsewhere. He painted Santa Fe and the Southwestern mountains. Throughout, his dominant impulse was the same. A one-line biography might read that he had spent a lifetime to perfecting a technique for painting his inner vision of life around him, animate and inanimate.

His unfinished study of a woman sitting there on an easel, and his work back of it all the way to his earliest grey landscape over in a corner, tell the story. He has studied the great art of the ages. He has worked by intention and intuitively, always, to strengthen his plastic means. That early picture is a thing of broadly blocked form, using an *abstraction* when the term was still not included in the American artist's vocabulary. For five years now, he has been working on glowing, rosy nudes. They gleam out of dim corners, posed against rich arabesques of ancient Navajo rugs, emerging in new and bolder form because of what John Sloan describes as a "thrilling culmination" of color, an aftertouch. Consciously, he is doing what Renoir did in his *red* pictures – but in a way original to himself.

As he discusses these things, the man and his philosophy appear inseparable. The creative worker alone is free in the modern world, and his independence is of the spirit. Economic independence for the country's artists is impossible, perhaps unsafe, but in a machine age that has gone on to right the early abuses it is guilty of, artists ought to be able to spend three or four hours a day at other work and so justify their freedom to create for the remaining time. Then, perhaps, there will be great figures again. Already, there are 300 trained artists where there was one when he began, and with the proportionate increase in competence, this means great things. Even the imitators and men without brains, and all the crazy 'isms, he holds, help because they broaden in the public mind the understanding that there is modernism in art. We are just emerging from the most terrible disease in the history of art, he says; the disease of eyesight, which caused painting to be guided by skilled sight, by science.

John Sloan worked on a PWA project last year. As the progenitor of the American Scene in art, he must have been thrilled to see his Uncle Sam hiring men and women all over the country to paint the significant things of their own experience. He was thrilled. "For the first time in my life," he says, "somebody else wanted me to paint whatever I pleased, however I pleased." He did, to the end that of all the 15,000 paintings accruing to the government through the PWA, one of his alone has been selected by the Metropolitan Museum. It is a John Sloan city scene, as are the others already in the museum's permanent collections – New Yorkers scuttling along in front of old Tammany Hall.

They liken his work to Rowlandson caricatures, or those of Hogarth, and mention Forain, Daumier, Goya. The reasons are apparent enough. As cartoonist, illustrator, moral commentarian, satirist, like these, he was also the creative artist, looking to principles of picture building which many artists who have grown up into prominence since he made his name, do not yet see. The vision and the formal technique are his essentials. "It is not the bananas and the factory chimneys that make Rivera's art," he said about propaganda painting. "It is the life in it plus these things – or without them."

He broke the way for modernism and an America-conscious generation of painters. His place in modern art is not yet apparent any more than the place of modernism, as it will go on to join the art of the ages, is apparent.

CONEY ISLAND BEACH by Reginald Marsh *Wild complexity emotionally unified* Courtesy of the Frank K. M. Rehn Gallery

WILLIAM ZORACH'S
Ideas on
AMERICAN SCULPTURE

HAND OF A PIANIST
by Gaston Lachaise
Like an oriental sage
Courtesy of the
Museum of Modern Art

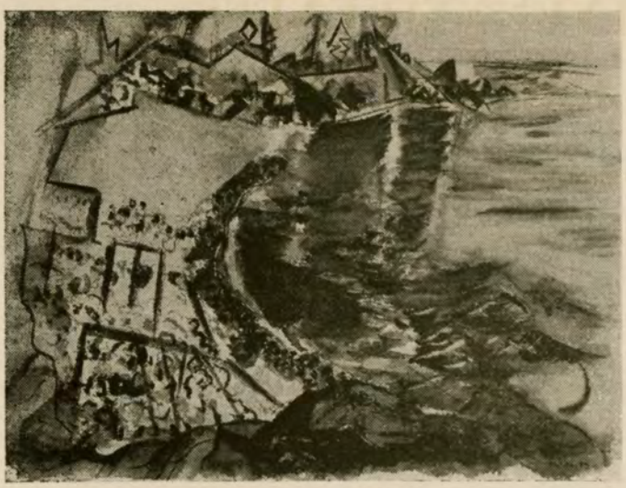
WHEN we discuss periods in history such as the Greek and Egyptian, we must realize that at these periods of human development, art meant much more than it means to us today. It was a great wonder and achievement; it captured the imagination of whole peoples; it was the chronicle of their history and the expression of their beliefs and aspirations. At different periods, different ideas have fired the imagination of peoples. When art is a living thing in a human society, there is a great devlopment of talents and abilities. Development of great talent in the past was always by an inherited and popular appreciation and an inherited pride in the work. What appreciation there is today is mostly in the making of collections or in speculation as to a future value. The great flow of creative energy of this age is absorbed in mechanical and scientific research. Sculpture is an art that is concerned primarily with the solid and eternal qualities, putting into permanent form our highest realization of life and deepest feelings. Our modern age of temporary structures, impatience and speed, is not conducive to producing a great American sculpture. It is only a very hardy individual who can place himself in opposition to the world about him and feel that no time and no effort are too great for the perfecting of his conception. Yet it is only with such an attitude that real sculpture can be produced. If great sculpture is developed in this age, it will come through individual sculptors and not in a popular movement.

America is always excused as being a young nation with no tradition. It is not that we have no inheritance; we have the inheritance of the whole world to draw upon. We are not descended from any one nation but from all nations. America is also rich in her native background of primitive and ancient cultures. There is a distinct quality in the art of the Eskimo tribes and of the Indians which has all the direct power and decorative form basis characteristic of primitive tribes. And there are the Mayan and Aztec cultures paralleling early Assyrian and Egyptian art in a less developed form but with a distinct flavor and character of their own. As yet this native background of art has scarcely touched us. All our art inheritance comes, like ourselves, from Europe.

America is rich in another primitive art, the folk art of early America. In all ages and communities, individuals emerge from the main body of workers. Among the latter, there were, some 50 or 100 years ago, a number of marvelous woodcarvers of ships' figure heads and cigar store Indians, makers of weather vanes and occasionally carvers of exceedingly fine and interesting figures and animals, done without any utilitarian motive. A good deal of this was native folk art created by unsophisticated or primitive minded individuals, living within a civilized community. Although outside of the regular art status, some of these men were among the master carvers of American sculpture. There are a number of private collections of such work, the Drexel; Sewall; Eli Nadelman, the sculptor, and the Peabody Museum. Historical interest or the connection with boats and the sea, rather than art appreciation, inspire most of these collections; but people and museums are beginning to realize their real importance.

Our early American statesmen had busts done by Houdon, who was the finest sculptor of his time. This may or may not have been a sign of a cultivated and intelligent art sense in a certain class of people of that period. At least it is something that has never happened since. There has been absolutely no criterion of taste or even ability in official sculpture since the Revolution; no one was too bad for the jobs, and it was mere chance if a good man got a commission. Perhaps the Revolution cut us off from the flow of European sculpture. Perhaps it was merely the beginning of a period of false standards and bad sculpture. Certainly the situation in Europe was quite as hopeless as it was in America. From 1800 until the Civil War, American sculpture went through a period of provincial classicism, of amusing and often ridiculous imitations of the individual pieces of Greek sculpture and friezes. But these pieces were sincerely and conscientiously done, and although banal and void of sculptural quality, they were not as objectionable as the period of overornate and elaborate form that followed.

Meanwhile there was growing up a movement away from the classic towards a homely realism. American art became permeated with a passion for the realistic portrayal of the world about us. It was the rise of the school of American illustration and was reflected in every form of our art work including sculpture. Everything told a story, the wrinkles in the clothes, the holes in the buttons, the details of shoe-laces, gave the sculptor as great joy as the perfect human body gave the Greeks. He could no longer see the whole, in his enthusiasm over every detail. He must be real in everything; but the real to him meant the wrinkles in the trousers, not the balance of mass against mass or the aspiration of the human soul. At its worst, it was a period of Roger groups and similar atrocities, and lasted from the Civil War until 1900. Some of it is still with us, we are still setting up doughboys and pioneer women. At its best, this period was a revolt against the sweet and prettified, and an appreciation of the genuine merit and sober qualities of everyday people



HEADLAND, CAPE SPLIT, MAINE, 1933 by John Marin
Realistic abstraction
Courtesy of An American Place

expressed with an intense interest in the realistic study of surfaces. This form of art reached its highest expression in AUGUSTUS SAINT-GAUDENS.

When the illustrative idea ceased to fire the imagination and became the commonplace, classicism began to creep back again into art, sometimes in combination with illustration, sometimes as in the work of GEORGE GREY BARNARD, with a more intelligent understanding in interpretation of the classic. A still different development was that of PAUL MANSHIP, which added an appreciation of the qualities of Oriental art, a regard for balance and form relation that did not exist in American art before, a development of the decorative and of the silhouette.

Just before the World War, there was born a new consciousness of art and art forms, this thing people call Modern Art, but which will some day be simply Art.

WORKMEN BUILDING A DAM by Joseph De Martini
Planes rhythmically juxtaposed
Courtesy of the Eighth Street Gallery

There was a new and intense interest in the grand qualities of sculpture which had been forgotten. There was a tendency towards the elimination of the superficial, arriving at a robust and vital approach, a simplification that was almost primitive at times and purely abstract at others. Pure form was stressed, the correlation of form and volume, the interplay of rhythm and design. Such is the character of certain sculptors working in America today, such as Archipenko, Brown, Diederich, Decreeft, Faggi, Flannagan, Gross, Hague, Harkevey, Lachaise, Laurent, Nadelman, Noguchi, Nakian, Storrs, Schmuel, Sterne, Scaravaglione, Warneke, Wheelock, Zorach and others. Of their ultimate value in sculpture, future generations will be the judge. At least we know that they are the serious and creative workers of today.

In Europe there have been two distinct developments, the simplified and the abstract. In America the simplified prevails. American business with its enthusiasm for novelty and change, has completely adopted the abstract for commercial purposes, until the genuine among the young sculptors have felt that perhaps after all it really belonged in the realm of pure decoration.

SWINGING IN THE PARK by Arthur Dove
Abstract form rhythmic with life
Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art

While isolated sculptors are working out a fundamental and personal art, our foundries are busy turning out the same old official atrocities, colossal equestrian statues, Liberties, Lincolns, the inevitable doughboy and war memorials, cupids and frogs, to clutter up the public squares and gardens of America, and crystallize the undeveloped art taste of the nation. Every little town and every period has its great gods whom they call artists and who pass into oblivion with the next generation. America has its share; but in seriously writing of sculpture it is best to ignore them, for in the end they have no meaning. Official atrocities flourish in all European countries, but that has not prevented the development of a Lembruch, a Brancusi, a Maillol, an Epstein. And in America there are a few sculptors of real value by whose work this age will be remembered when all the rest have been forgotten.

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INTELLECTUAL INVENTIVENESS *and* EMOTIONAL CREATIVENESS

by Nathaniel Pousette-Dart

"To create new beauty and to supply new material, is the obvious affair of art of any kind today." WYNDHAM LEWIS

MANY of the artists and would-be artists, in their hectic effort "to create new beauty and supply new material" have confused invention with creation.

An artist's work is either significant art or a superficial travesty on it, depending altogether on how and when he makes use of the two above-mentioned activities.

Invention, as defined in the dictionary, is the process of making something to fill a new need. Creation, on the other hand, is the act of producing something that has never before existed. In other words, in creation, the imagination and emotion give birth to a thing that is complete within itself, while invention through intelligence merely makes something different in extension or re-application.

The main difference between these two activities, then, is that in invention the intellect is the most important factor, while in creation the emotional drive is paramount. It is taken for granted that in invention there may be emotion, and that in creation there may be intellect, but the important fact is that, in the case of invention, emotion is a secondary element, and in creation, the intellectual activities must always be subservient to the emotional forces.

It may be rather disconcerting to those people who are great enthusiasts about this highly scientific age, to be reminded that science does not produce art and that some of the greatest art has been produced by primitive people at a period when science was practically non-existent.

When the savage created his masks, idols and other ceremonial objects, he did not seek to intellectually invent new patterns, rhythms and forms. What he did do was to try, when inspired, to capture those magnificent forms, patterns and relationships that he found on every side of him in nature. He did not seek to impose intellectual concepts of design on the things he saw, as, for instance, Thomas Benton has done in much of his earlier work. Benton, in much of his later work, is beginning to free himself from his intellectual formulas. The savage did not hold any intellectual ideas about how a thing should be created as do the enthusiasts who think that Dynamic Symmetry is both the beginning and the end of art. He created through inspiration and emotion, and the power of his expression sprang from an unconscious absorption of this traditional race knowledge.

Many modern artists seek for the uniqueness, the naivete, the originality of design achieved by the primitives. They fail to get the qualities they admire in most cases because they try to superimpose an intellectual concept of the master's pattern on a subject that they only superficially understand. Here is an illustration of this sort of thing. John Carroll is an artist with much talent, but he has let his cleverness run away with him. He has borrowed the technics and tricks of certain foreign artists and by combining these in new ways he tries to impress people with his originality and creativeness. Because his work is intellectually invented it is sterile and cleverly superficial.

Leopold Seyffert also is an extremely clever painter. He has an eye as accurate and instantaneous as the lens of a kodak. Mr. Seyffert is also a clever acrobat. Whatever he puts his hand to he does skillfully. If art were only a matter of skill Seyffert would be a great artist, but skill and technique mean something only when they have something to express. So far this artist has only intellectually and cleverly imitated the work of second-rate artists.

When a second-rate or even a third-rate artist like Marie Laurencin "dips her bucket into her subconscious," she doesn't bring up very much of consequent because there is very little there. Her work is emotionally creative but it is so attenuated and lacking in significance that her pictures are only decorative patches. What pretends to be imagination in her work is merely a weak form of fantasy.

Both Picasso and Braque are intelligent artists but very seldom do they indulge in anything that might be styled intellectual invention. Picasso is an extensive borrower, but what he takes he always makes his own. If, for instance, he takes something from Greek sculpture, he never expresses what he feels until it has been integrated with the material of his unconscious self. An artist like Earl Horter, on the other hand, who is presumably sincere and who is an ardent admirer of Picasso, but who is, nevertheless, an intellectual inventor, is unable either to give the things he takes any real life or to make them his own. When one looks at a Picasso one thinks first of him, second of the influences evident in his work. In the case of Horter, one's mind says "Where did he get it?" or "Isn't that cleverly done!"

In saying that the real artist paints emotionally, I do not mean either that he does not possess great intellect or that he does not use it. Leonardo Da Vinci and Michael Angelo both had powerful intellects, both were analysts in their pursuit of knowledge; but when they created their masterpieces, the emotional drive of the inspiration was uppermost. If Da Vinci had painted in an intellectually inventive way it would not have taken him three years to put the *Mona Lisa* on canvas, and even then feel that the work was incomplete. Did Leonardo know how he had painted the picture? No, it was not an invention with its logical steps of procedure leading to the solution of a problem.

Cezanne was also an intellectual man who analyzed carefully the results he had achieved to find out whether or not the outward form was the expression of the "deeper reality." Many of the artists that followed closely

necessarily be intellectual. This concept has lead to the painting of hundreds of bad pictures which are not worth the canvas on which they are painted. Exponents of this intellectual invention have appeared principally in England where artists are interested primarily in construction and technique.

Gaudier Breszka was an emotionally creative artist, but most of his imitators were inventors of the first water.

Gregorieff, the Russian artist, is a striking example of intellectual invention. His work is all clever space-divisions and foxy modelings that have no meaning nor depth. Such work startles, at first. Afterwards, it goes into the limbo of forgotten things. The same thing is true of the sculpture of Ivan Mestrovic. His gigantic and supposedly imposing monuments at first bowl one over with their impressiveness, but one soon finds that they are decorative shells with no inner meaning. These are inventions that deal only with superficial, decorative qualities.

Yes, it is true that even design must be emotionally created in order to be fine. The designs of the Egyptians, the Negroes and the Indians are wonderful because they have been emotionally created from nature's forms. The design that has no nature content in it is dead.

Henri Matisse is the type of artist who is not bothered by his intellect, not because he hasn't a good one – but because he is a "natural" artist. He has said, "While working, I never try to think, only to feel." When Matisse makes his borrowings from Persian, Negro or Chinese art, they are quickly absorbed into the texture of his own creativeness. Van Dongen, a second-rate modern artist has commercialized Matisse's method into a stylized trick.

When stylization starts to appear in an artist's work it is the beginning of the end, because stylization means intellectualization. The formulation of set ways of doing things may produce things like much of our vapid modern architectural sculpture and second-rate mural art.

Grant Wood, in emotionally combining and unifying the European primitive feeling with the American primitive feeling, has done work that has splendid merit. The main trouble with his work is that it has already started to freeze into stylized design. Although Giotto worked in a decorative manner, one never feels that his paintings are cast in a set pattern and technique. John Steuart Curry, who is essentially a painter and not a decorator, will never have this trouble to face because he always allows the subject to dictate the design, the structure and the technique.

Burchfield, Hopper, Mattson and Marsh are also artists who refuse to let their work become frozen into stereotyped patterns and technics.

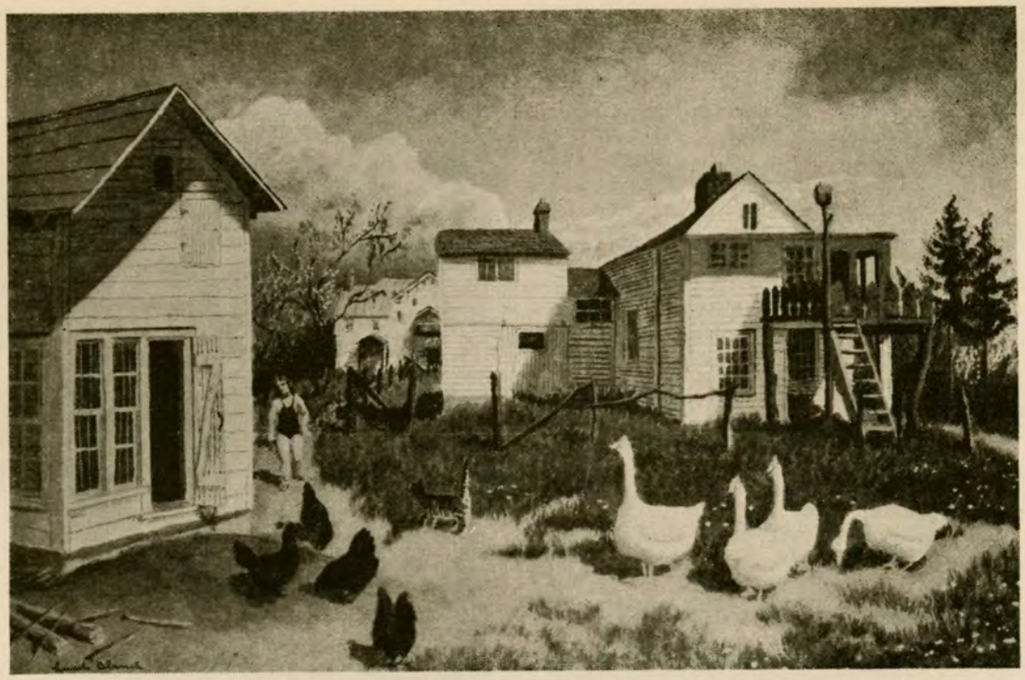
Today, we have Japanese artists like Kuniyoshi, who are creatively and emotionally combining the occidental and the oriental viewpoints and are successfully producing a new beauty. The art of these American-Japanese painters has more profundity and more power than the tasteful work of the Japanese wood-block printers who copied the surface qualities of Chinese artists. Kuniyoshi's work has a surprizing amount of invention in it, but it is always subservient to a highly sensitized and developed creative sense.

Van Gogh also experimented with fusing the technics of two artists whose work was worlds apart. He was successful in emotionally and creatively amalgamating the styles of Hokusai and Millet in his own temperament and produced works that were fiery and dynamic with a strange new expressionism.

Gauguin's work is filled with intellectual invention transformed by emotion into decoration. He forced himself intellectually to see things as a savage. He was only partially successful in so doing, because the naivete that he acquired was always colored by his early sophisticated life. Gauguin's outlook differed from that of the savages because he had an intellectual appreciation of the end toward which he was working, while the savage was only emotionally conscious of the means of expression.

This consciousness of ends on the part of the civilized artist does not tend toward the production of better art. We, in the age of inventive and scientific knowledge, over-value the progress we have made. Because we have made tremendous advance in methods of communication, manufacture and transportation we think we have solved the riddle of the universe. The intellect reigns supreme in the province of science – but in the field of art it must always remain secondary to creative emotion. When invention takes its proper place in relation to creation it can then help to "supply new material and to create new beauty."

CAME'S HOUSE by George Ault
Sensitiveness, fringes and design
Courtesy of the Downtown Gallery



WILSON FARM by Lucile Blanch *Tenderly conceived and painted* Courtesy of the Milch Galleries

ABSTRACT PAINTING IN AMERICA

by Stuart Davis

I BEGIN very, very broadly by saying that the American artist became conscious of abstract art by the impact of the Armory Show in 1913. Previous to this important event in the art education in the United States, there were several American artists working in Europe who were incorporating the abstract viewpoint in their canvases. But it was the Armory Show of 1913 with its huge panorama of the scene of art for the foregoing seventy-five years which brought to the American artist as a whole the realization of the existence of abstract art, along with its immediate artistic historical background. The abstract portion of the exhibition which consisted of works by European artists, with few exceptions, created a real sensation. Argumentation and dispute were constantly carried on in front of these canvases by laymen as well as artists. Friendships were broken and new friends made in the heat induced by these daily congresses of opinion. There was no American artist who saw this show but was forced to revalue his artistic concepts. The final charge was touched off in the foundations of the Autocracy of the Academy in a blast which destroyed its strangle hold on critical art values for ever. Henceforth the American artist realized his right to free expression and exercised that right. This was made very clear in the annual exhibitions of the Society of Independent Artists where all artists could show their works without submission to jury. Henceforth a more acute angularity was imparted to the divergence of approach of the different artist groups.

Among these groups the artists who followed the abstract attitude completely or in appreciable part were relatively small. Why this was so I do not know, I simply state it as a matter of fact for the record. But the function of this small group of abstract painters and sculptors continued to make more clear the special character of the aesthetic divergence, among American painters as a whole. They were the leaven implanted in the mass body of the American artists which continued the revolution of aesthetic opinion instigated in February, 1913 by the abstract section of the International Exhibition of Modern Art commonly called the Armory Show.

What is Abstract art? The question will be answered differently by each artist to whom the question is put. This is so because the generative idea of abstract art is alive. It changes, moves and grows like any other living organism. However, from the various individual answers some basic concordance could doubtless be abstracted. This basic concordance of opinion would be very elementary and would probably run something like this. Art is not and never was a mirror reflection of nature. All efforts at imitation of nature are fore-doomed to failure. Art is an understanding and interpretation of nature in various media. Therefore in our efforts to express our understanding of nature we will always bear in mind the limitations of our medium of expression. Our pictures will be expressions which are parallel to nature and parallel lines never meet. We will never try to copy the uncopiable but will seek to establish a mate-

rial tangibility in our medium which will be a permanent record of an idea or emotion inspired by nature. This being so, we will never again ask the question of a painting, "Is it a good likeness, does it look like the thing it is supposed to represent?" Instead we will ask the question, "Does this painting which is a defined two dimensional surface convey to me a direct emotional or ideological stimulus?" Since we forego all efforts to reflect optical illusions and concentrate on the reality of our canvas, we will now study the material reality of our medium, paint on canvas or whatever it may be. The approach has become scientifically experimental. A painting for example is a two dimensional plane surface and the process of making a painting is the act of defining two dimensional space on that surface. Any analogy which is drawn from our two dimensional expression to three dimensional nature will only be forceful in the degree to which our painting has achieved a two dimensional clarity and logic.

The above is my idea of the basic implications in the abstract concept and I think it is implicit in all the various explanations and viewpoints which have been advanced about abstract art. The American artists who from various angles have orientated themselves about the abstract idea have not in all cases been as wholeheartedly scientific as the above considerations would seem to call for. However, I believe that even in those cases where the artistic approach has been almost entirely emotional, the concept of the autonomous existence of the canvas as a reality which is parallel to nature has been recognized. It should also be noted that the ideas suggested above automatically explain the geometric character of many abstract works of art.

The period of greatest activity in abstract art in America was probably from about 1915 to 1927. This in no sense implies that abstract work was not done before and after the above dates nor does it even suggest that the best work in abstract form was done between those two dates. It merely indicates a rough calculation on my part to the effect that between those dates a greater number of American artists were in whole or in part following an abstract point of view in their work.

Abstract art in America as shown in this exhibition, although actively participated in by relatively few artists, has been a vital factor in the sharpening of issues. Its objective and real contributions will not be lost.

ICE GLARE by Charles Burchfield

Sun created design

Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art

Reprinted from the Abstract Painting in America catalogue, by permision of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

WASHINGTON FLOWER MARKET
by Olin Dows

His humor is organic

Courtesy of the Ferargil Galleries

FOURTH DIMENSION

by Flora Louise Pousette-Dart

Once, for a breathless moment,
speeding North,
I saw
Time
Open . . .
The peaceful landscape,
motionless before,
Like a frieze in low-relief,
or a stage back-drop,
Suddenly came alive!
The trees began to turn,
to wheel, to spin,
To pour forth from the
cornucopia
Of earth and sky, like eddying
flakes of snow.

. . . . . .

On either side, from road's edge
to horizon,
The changing landscape
dizzily swung past
In convex curves, — in swift
parabolas.
Lakes, with their mirrored clouds,
and hills and trees;
Bridges and boats, and
solitary steeples,
Tethered to stakes at the
horizon's rim,
Swung rhythmically inward
In sequences of strange
significance . . .
Like contrapuntal music:
Gothic fugues
Poured into the visible world!

. . . . . .

I saw
Time
Open . . .

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BLACK JUG AND PERSIMMONS by Henri Burkhard
Creative design and color dominate
Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON

A page devoted to the work of

WHAT may be called "the height of the season" is now upon us and galleries and painters alike are bending every effort to engage the attention of the public.

The Whitney Museum of American Art has rendered great service in the present exhibition of American Abstractions. Three exhibitors sponsored by Contemporary Arts, Earl C. Kerkam, George Lohr and Edith Branson are represented there, and it is hoped that the way of painters of abstractions and of the galleries daring to present them will be made easier through this important exhibition. Contemporary Arts was also responsible for the inclusion of fifteen artists in the Eighth Biennial Exhibition of the Brooklyn Museum. One of them, John C. Pellew, figured in the catalogue with the reproduction of his *Boys Diving*.

Tekla Hoffman's first one-man exhibition, sponsored by the officers and trustees of Contemporary Arts has proved most interesting. Her work is strong and vital, showing sound craftsmanship and a rich paint quality. Her portrait of George Luks is one of her best canvases.

Frederic Dorr Steele, the well-known illustrator of Conan Doyle, Kipling, Hergesheimer and many other writers, was a guest-exhibitor in February, showing a charming series of *Sketches of Italy* and a group of portrait drawings. Royal Cortissoz and other critics wrote most favorably and many people famous in the literary and dramatic world came, saw, and bought.

Another guest-exhibitor, Mary Drake Coles gained an enthusiastic reception both from the press and the public for her *Watercolors — Mostly Mallorca*. There is remarkable vigor as well as beautiful color in this work.

The exhibition current at the time of publication of this issue will be the Mid-season Retrospective Group Exhibition of the work of painters sponsored by the officers and trustees since incorporation in 1931. The members of Contemporary Arts look forward to this yearly event with great interest. The steady gain in almost all of those represented is easily recognizable to those who follow the work of the gallery. This exhibition will run until March 30th. Concurrently, until March 23rd there will be, as a guest exhibition, the work of the American students of Louis Marcoussis, the well-known French etcher. Our other exhibitions will be found listed in the column on page fourteen "Where to See the Art of Today."

MEXICAN SCENE by Tekla Hoffman

The February reception of the Painting-of-the-Month Club again scored a success. Chiquita Casella, accompanied by Pablo Miguel, gave some spirited Spanish dances and George Besson's excellent rendering of humorous French Ditties made the evening altogether delightful. The guest of honor, Tonio Selwart, star of *The Pursuit of Happiness* made a charming little speech and announced the name of the membership stub drawn by him to be Mrs. Robert P. Lamont of East Falls Church, Va. Her choice of the four paintings selected by the jury was Martha Simpson's *Mauve Study*.

It is with great pleasure that we announce the formation of the first *Chapter* of Contemporary Arts Painting-of-the-Month Club by the Art Section of the Upper Montclair Woman's Club. This is a direct result of the exhibition sent there during February. The first reception was held in their beautiful Club House on February 23rd. Mary Cecil Allen, author of *Painters of the Modern Mind* and *The Mirror of the Passing World* was guest of honor, and after a short talk which was most enthusiastically received by the audience, she presented Mrs. Mona Saxe of 31 Harrison Avenue, Montclair, with her choice of paintings from the exhibition, and curiously enough, her choice was Martha Simpson's *Windowledge*.

This *Chapter* has decided to hold its reception just three times a year. We feel that an excellent beginning has been made in our work of spreading Contemporary Arts Painting-of-the-Month Club through the country. It is obvious that the "desire to own" contemporary painting must greatly increase before we can hope to have a demand in any sort of proportion to the supply.

The guests of honor scheduled for the Monday evening receptions are: — March 18, Mary Cecil Allen, painter and author; March 25, Opening Preview, Dorothy Kreymborg; April 1st, Paul Rosenfeld; author and critic; April 8, Dwight Strickland, poet, author of *Islanded*.

The treasurer of Contemporary Arts reports receiving contributing memberships from Miss Ethel M. Dammrich and Miss Annette Dietz, and Associate-Exhibitor's memberships from Mrs. A. S. Katz, and Miss Mary Drake Coles. Any inquiries about the work or the privileges of membership in Contemporary Arts should be directed to the secretary.

SHORT REVIEWS

by Clayton Spicer

"One, Two, Three"

THE JURY FOR the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design, which opened on March 13th, passed on and passed out two thousand entries as Henry R. Rittenberg, the chairman, "counted 'One Two, Three,' slowly, in a deep impassive voice," timing the viewing of each work.

We grant that this short interval would be justly sufficient for the discarding of most of the entries and we have no fault to find with this, and we also have no fault to find with the art world that would eliminate the existing work of this particular jury at the count of "One."

"Begin to Commence"

ROYAL CORTISSOZ, the "old-hat" apologist, who is highly respected for the stubborness with which he hangs on to his art ideals, dismissed the Abstract Painting in America show at the Whitney Museum with these words in the *Herald Tribune,* "But the burden of proof rests upon their shoulders and they haven't yet begun to commence to prepare to prove their case."

For the uniqueness of this sentence and its simplicity and structure we have decided to encourage Mr. Cortissoz to further creative criticism by presenting him with an etching by Helleu, whom Sargent knew, if you remember. We must first begin to commence to find to buy one. Perhaps Mr. Morgan has one and will permit us to help him get his estate in order.

Henry McBride

HENRY MCBRIDE is our favorite art reviewer. His criticisms have the deft, light touch of the master who is able, after long years of life, to put a few charcoal marks on paper, touch these with a colored chalk and reveal his astonishing genius.

McBride's words have much the same charm for us as a Degas pastel has. We believe he belongs to the same cultural period. When he quits it will be just too bad for American art if our forebodings are correct. Who has the insight, the knowledge, the kindly but critical understanding to take his place?

While we are about it, we wish to register our indignation, which we regret is rather weak for we are lacking in this admirable human quality, against the desecration of his Saturday art page in *The Sun.* The editor who is responsible for the placing of the "Intimate Sketches of New York – No. 330" smack in the center of it is the type of person who would turn on the Fleischmann's Yeast program at a meeting of a learned medical society.

The American Guild of Craftsmen

THE PAINTER WHO does nothing else but paint gets into a fine stew after awhile. Outside interests and activities may or may not help his work but they do rest his mind from his painting labors.

Many artists have taken to craftsmanship of one kind or another and this should have its blessings. The best outlet for such work that we know of, which must have the highest standards, is the American Guild of Craftsmen in the Jacques Seligmann Galleries at 3 East 51st Street. Leon Loeb is the managing director and its board of directors consists of Carrol French, Peter Muller-Munk, Henry Varnum Poor, Carl Walters and Warren Wheelock.

"Art" Commentary on Lynching

THE ART COMMENTARY ON LYNCHING exhibition at the Arthur U. Newton Galleries is something everyone should see who is interested in the influence that pictorial indignation may or may not possess in correcting beastly and brutal traits which the fair human race has in such inexhaustable quantities.

ON THE BEACH by Morris Kantor
Imagination creates the scene
Courtesy of the Frank K. M. Rehn Gallery

Our first reaction was, "Where does the 'Art' come in?" We looked and couldn't find it. We discontinued this search and asked ourselves, "Doesn't this make your blood boil? Don't you feel like doing something to make the world a better place for an oppressed people?" But the horrors shown did not stir us very much. The drawing that presented the problem to us in the clearest light, though it had no dark, tortured figure "dancing on the air," was, *This Is Her First Lynching* by Reginald Marsh. "The people who do these horrible acts are the poor, stupid masses of the South," we thought, and there we left it as being too large a problem for the remote individual.

We did, however, admire Mr. Newton's courage in turning his gallery, which is devoted to quite a different type of art and one never knows how a rich patron might react, over to this exhibition after another gallery, at the last moment, hurriedly decided that it was too much for them.

We also wondered what the effect would be if Maurice Becker's painting, *The Masses Ball* had been placed on these walls. He takes up the problem from the opposite pole. His Negro and white woman dancing together presents a quandry even to those who believe themselves free from racial prejudice. But, try as one may, there is no taint of color to be found in this painting. If the ideal of race equality is to be arrived at let this work of art be widely shown to prove that one person in the world, at least, has no prejudice in his heart.

WHERE TO SEE THE ART OF TODAY

A. C. A. GALLERY, 52 West 8th Street — *During April:* Group Show.

AN AMERICAN PLACE, 509 Madison Avenue — *Until April 14:* New water colors by George Grosz. *April 16 to May 16:* New paintings by Arthur G. Dove.

ARDEN GALLERIES, 460 Park Avenue — *During April:* Garden sculpture and garden furniture.

ARGENT GALLERIES, 42 West 57th Street — *April 1-13:* Invitation exhibition by the New York Society of Women Artists. *April 15-27:* Paintings by Professor Emil Jacques of Notre Dame University. Sculpture by Grace Mott Johnson.

THE BRONX ARTISTS' GUILD, New York Botanical Gardens Museum, Bronx Park — *April 8-27:* Thirteenth Annual Exhibition.

BRUMMER GALLERY, 53 East 57th Street — *Until May 11:* Sculpture by Mateo Hernandez.

CONTEMPORARY ARTS, 41 West 54th Street — *Until April 13:* Paintings by Dorothy Kremborg. *April 1-20:* Water colors by Anne Steele Marsh. Sculpture by Paul Lucker. *April 15-30:* Group Exhibition.

FLORENCE CANE SCHOOL OF ART, RKO Building — *Until April 6:* Mayan Murals from Chicten-Itza.

THE CLAY CLUB OF NEW YORK, 4 West 8th Street — *Until April 7:* Sculpture by Fronk Eliscu.

DURAND-RUEL GALLERY, 12 East 57th Street — *Until April 15:* Masterpieces by Renoir. *During April:* 19th and 20 Century French paintings.

EIGHTH STREET GALLERY, 52 West 8th Street — *April 1-17:* Gouaches by A. F. Levinson. *April 18 to May 2:* 3rd Anniversary show.

THE FIFTEEN GALLERY, 37 West 57th Street — *Until April 6:* Paintings by Alice Judson. *April 8-20:* Water colors by Elizabeth T. Huntington.

GALLERY SECESSION, 49 West 12th Street — *April 2-23:* Paintings by Ann Mantell and Group Exhibtion.

GRAND CENTRAL GALLERIES, 15 Vanderbilt Avenue — *April 1-13:* Sketches by D. Putnam Brinley. *April 16 to May 4:* Sculpture by George Grey Barnard.
1 East 51st Street — *April 15-27:* Portraits by John Lavalle. *April 22-May 4:* Sculpture by Stella Elkins Tyler.

MACBETH GALLERY, 13 East 57th Street — *Until April 16:* New pictures by Frieseke. *Until April 9:* Lithographs by Raphael Soyer. *April 23 to May 7:* Lithographs by Theo. White.

MILCH GALLERIES, 108 West 57th Street — *Until April 13:* Water colors by John Whorf.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 West 53rd Street — *Until May 19:* Exhibition of African Negro Art.

ARTHUR U. NEWTON GALLERY, 11 East 57th Street — *Until April 6:* Drawings and water colors by Canedo.

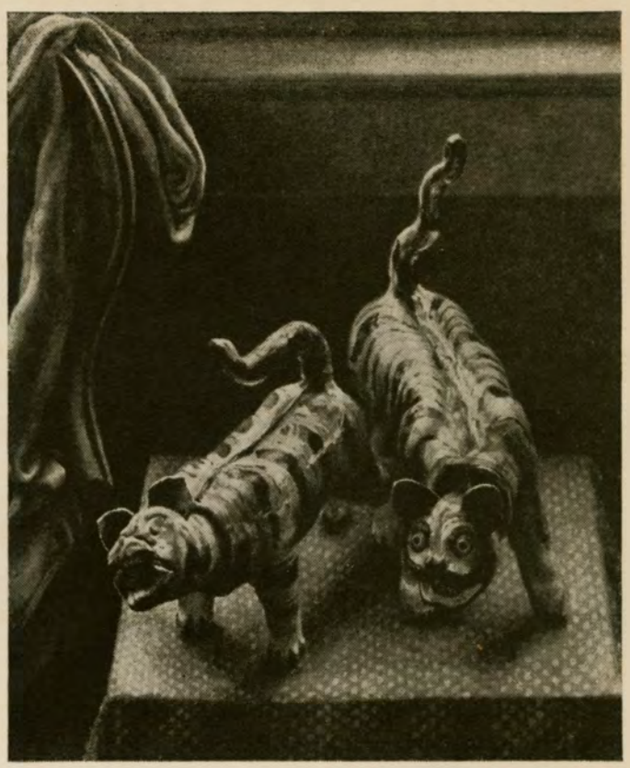
FRANK K. M. REHN GALLERY, 683 Fifth Avenue — *April 1-20:* Paintings by Fiske Boyd.

SIXTIETH STREET GALLERY, 138 East 60th Street — Modern paintings, water colors, drawings and prints — $25 and less.

MARIE STERNER GALLERY, 9 East 57th Street — *April 1-12:* Water Colors by Marion Simmons. *April 15 to May 1:* Paintings by Brabo.

VALENTINE GALLERIES, 69 East 57th Street — *April 1-13:* American Landscapes by Leonard Dyer.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, 10 West 8th Street — *Until April 29:* American Genre; The Social Scene in Paintings and Prints.



TIGER, TIGER by Katherine Schmidt
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Sheldon Cheney.

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