

The ART *of* TODAY

A MAGAZINE DEALING WITH VITAL AND LIVING ART



AQUA VITA by John Steuart Curry

He sees for himself.

Courtesy of the Ferargil Galleries

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The Artist and the Growing Interest of Amateurs in Art

*"I believe creative work should be for the many; that, as we create
we come closer to a God-like nature."*

RUBY WARNER

DESPITE the enlightening educational work carried on by men like John Dewey, George Santayana and Havelock Ellis, who teach that all living may become a creative art for everyone, there is still a prevalent belief that the creative arts are only for the chosen few. There are certain professional artists it is true who dislike to see amateurs experimenting with the creative arts. They feel that prerogative belongs exclusively to them and they like to be considered unique and removed from the common herd. They like to feel that they have been blessed with a special power that is different and separate from the ability of the ordinary man.

But this attitude of mind towards amateurs is not held by any really thinking artists, because they know that a growing interest in the creative arts leads to a wider and more fundamental appreciation of their own work. Each person who tries to express himself in some art, at once sees that art in another light. Not only does he study it more closely but he naturally wants to acquire fine examples of it for himself.

Whenever, in the past, any considerable number of great artists have appeared in any one country it has always been at a period when the general cultural level in that community was high. In other words, the great artist springs from a group of amateur artists and appreciators.

The main thing that has stimulated an interest in the creative arts on the part of the lay-public today is the new leisure which, in many cases, is forced by the economic conditions. People are turning to all kinds of hobbies as an outlet for their reserve energies. In experimenting with the creative arts they find a great new adventure in self-expression. Every person has within himself the dominant ability to appreciate rhythm, harmony and balance. So, also, with practice can they learn to design, draw, paint, model or express themselves in some craft.

It is interesting to note how the taste of the people has developed in the last few years. Ford and other automobile manufacturers at one time could sell any type of car, providing it ran well, but today the first thing the people want in a car is a distinguished appearance. Manufacturers of all kinds of goods are finding it very profitable to redesign the containers for their products. Taste in dress and interior furnishing has advanced rapidly. At the Institute of Graphic Arts exhibition this year it was surprising to see the high standard of illustrations that are being used for this purpose. The Illustrators' Show was also alive with work that showed that these artists were going to the life of today and to the best creative artists for their inspiration. Radio audiences are continually demanding better musical programs; the movies are undergoing changes for the better and the surprisingly large reading public is reading and buying the best books that the publishers can furnish.

We are living in a time pregnant with great possibilities for every individual.

The ART of TODAY

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THE NAVAJO RIDER
by Mahonri Young

*The composition
is important*

Courtesy of the
Kraushaar Galleries



Have We an AMERICAN ART? *by Edward Alden Jewell*

Excerpts from a talk given by Mr. Jewell at the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo.

I'LL go so far at the outset as to say that we have had an American art—if only of sorts—from the half mythical days when Wilderness taught us to build for shelter in a way at least suggestively anticipating the twentieth century Functionalists and the so-called “International Style.”

Until rather recently, it is perhaps true, we have had an American art only of sorts. There have been—there may still be—some pretty dark hours to live through. But at no time has it been altogether hopeless. And at length, it seems to me, the prospect brightens quite encouragingly. It wouldn't, I think, be an excess of optimism to say that at no previous time has our art been so—well, at any rate so comprehensively—American as it is today. Nor is there any reason to doubt that as time goes on it will appear progressively native, in its “look,” its “feel.”

However, we mustn't take *too* much for granted. Although the question, “Have We an American Art?” has been answered at once with an affirmative answer, that isn't enough. It isn't enough, confronted by a question such as this, merely to say “Yes.” We must be prepared to offer proof. And in certain respects—especially, shall we fear, in certain quarters—the simple “Yes” may call for considerable proving.

For there *are* skeptics—fewer I trust today than in the not so distant past—who don't seem even yet to be convinced that we have an art worth talking about. You may still hear it maintained that when drawn into comparison with modern French art, anything we produce over here is bound to be lame and inconsequential—even when it is produced by those of our Paris-enamored artists who are most painstakingly and

abjectly derivative. The Big Bad Wolves say to us: You've always painted like Europe, you still paint like Europe, and you probably always will. America is good only at science, good only at building up colossal fortunes—and it hasn't been so hot even as a money-maker since the depression set in. And then they huff and puff and try to blow our house down altogether with the insidious query: How can a nation so far from being aboriginal hope to have any genuinely native art?

Now we may as well face the fact bravely at once. We are not aborigines. If we were, how the whole business would be simplified! If only we might refer back, not to the Mayflower, not to Plymouth Rock, but to the wigwam of Nokomis and the wampum of Hiawatha, when asked embarrassing questions about our racial heritage. Still, it mightn't help so much, at that, for the skeptics, nimbly transforming themselves from wolves into anthropologists, would be sure to kick up a fuss with the theory that not even the aboriginal Indians of this continent were American to the core; that they were instead Mongolians, who got in by crossing over on the ice into Alaska. So there you are. We can only make the best of things and try to see where we stand.

Certainly for America the going has not been easy. But then, is it ever? A people's art doesn't spring up, all nicely painted and framed, with the effortless celerity of toadstools on the grass. A people's art can't be ordered and paid for like the portrait of a bogus ancestor invented by a nouveau riche nobody with social pretensions to hang above the bogus armorial shield on a fake Tudor or Queen Anne fireplace. No, the process is ever so much more devious and tedious than that.

It will get us nowhere to pretend that every talented American artist is painting pictures that can enrich the tradition. Just choosing sky-scrapers, for instance, or the American countryside, or native “types” as subject

matter, will not bring an artist into his patrimony. What I have been driving at is something that goes much deeper than subject.

We have been hearing a good deal of heated talk lately about "the American scene," which looks at the moment as if it might indeed become—as was true awhile back of the Ecole de Paris—a kind of fetish; an idol set up amid rising incense in the temple of still another baleful "academy." It is true, the often misunderstood and shallowly envisioned "American scene" has become, in that sense, a menace, through no fault of its own—though I doubt whether it is a menace acute enough quite to justify those of our more belligerent critics who, pro and con, deafen our ears with diatribes rivalling the sultry give-and-take of political combatants like Senator Huey P. Long, Father Coughlin, and General Johnson. For no one, in all these centuries, has discovered a way to keep a genuine movement in art from becoming a cult, or to prevent the thousands of little unimaginative, purloining, fashion-worshipping hangers-on from organizing, around the achievement of a few bonafide leaders, a profitable academy of surface tricks and cosmetic spell-binders.

Well, I don't think we need grow panic-stricken over



WOODSMAN by Walt Kuhn
Like an Egyptian portrait
Courtesy of the artist

all this. It is just history repeating itself. What is worthy will survive; the detritus will be carried out to sea and will disappear. All we need do is try to keep a level head, remembering that if the "American scene" represents a danger, it does so because, in the minds of so many of our artists, it means merely the brittle topcrust of a national culture instead of the mighty spirit itself of America, considered as a social entity, with roots sinking deeper and deeper every day into the soil of a people's destiny.

Out in Chicago two or three years ago Thomas Benton did some very straight talking before the annual convention of the American Federation of Arts. Mr. Benton said:

"No American art can come from those who do not live an American life, who do not have an American psychology, and who cannot find in America justification for their life. Economic protection on the one hand or ideal declarations on the other have no bearing," he said, "on the problem of art. American art can be found only in the life of the American people; and there will be no background for its development until art itself comes out of its cultural enclosures and produces goods which have meaning for the American people."

Well, this, as I understand it, is another way of saying that the soil is sovereign; that the spirit of time and place determines, in the long run, "the spirit of the forms," (to borrow a phrase of Elie Faure's) if that is to have any deep and lasting validity. But the sense of true oneness with our time and place, with our environment, will not come to us as a result of busy little skirmishes upon the surface of life and of art. It won't be nudged or coddled or coerced into being.

In America today the case for American art needs less impassioned argument than seemed called for a few years ago. No longer do so many of our artists feel they must prostrate themselves before European leadership, especially before that of the School of Paris. It looks as if the fanatical following of successive European cultural fashions had about reached an end over here. For American art that is honestly and unpretentiously native has come to be respected. It isn't considered "provincial" nowadays to be oneself.

However, although much in the right direction has been accomplished, * * * another danger confronts us. There is now the danger that this wave of honest self-confidence may have an undertow of jingoism and cheap or even sensational chauvinistic hurrah.

Those who preach an aesthetic doctrine of flag-waving, those who work themselves up into a mood of hyperconfidence by making the eagle scream, are headed, you may be sure, for a worse form of provincialism than any we have experienced before in this country.

It isn't by excluding foreign art; it *isn't* by building discriminatory tariff walls, or by blatantly proclaiming

(Continued on page 14)



SCHOOL ROOM by Doris Rosenthal *Mexico opened her eyes* Courtesy of the Midtown Galleries

THE YANKEE AS ARTIST

by Donald Carlisle Greason

MY shower-song this morning, as a natural sequence to "Oh How I Hate To Get Up In The Morning," was "Over There" and, being one of those unfortunates whose thinking for the day is done at toilette-time, when I reached the refrain, "The Yanks are coming," I had to ask myself: Are they *really*, really coming,—and whence,—and how,—and whither bound? The first query was answered even as the the suds got in my eyes. The Yankees, (I was thinking of course of the Yankee artists, the natives, not the outlanders who summer in Chilmark, Provincetown, Gloucester, and Ogunquit), come from Sargent and the other purveyors of a pretty and facile naturalism, and they are going, so far as I can see, goallessly around and around that same broad, flat, easy track. Is there any chance of their turning aside into the rockier, more difficult, the dangerous path that leads to the heights? *Can* they "go places," or are they too snug in their smugness? I fear that is the case.

The Yankee is a species of no little interest and entertainment to me, an ex-expatriate of many years abroad and a naturalized New Englander of two. A psychoanalysis of the Puritan I leave to the Behaviorists and Freudians, and their battling brethren, the Gestalt and Integrative Psychologists. My concern is with his art. But, to understand what is what in New England Art one must peep into the psyche behind it, and that psyche is Puritan.

I think it was James who said the motivating force in the Puritan, (he of New England, that is, for he differs in different sections of these States) is the Will to Perfection, whereas the Puritan of New York and the Mid-West is dominated by the Will to Power. Now "Perfection," said James Stephens' sage of his porridge, "is Finality and Finality is Death. There are lumps in it!" In our Puritanical painting porridge there are few lumps indeed. It is merely a thin gruel for and by adolescents with little for a healthy adult to chew on.

For one thing, here subject is censored; the nude, "Life in the Raw," or any robust treatment of reality is taboo. Morals, and by morals is meant a chastity obsession, are all-important; and true art is not moral, it is unmoral, and chastity makes for sterility.

So, I mused, drying my head, if I were to write a theme and entitle it: Art In New England, I should be placing myself in the position of that writer of the famous chapter "On Snakes In Ireland." He wrote the heading and then: "There are no snakes in Ireland," and *Finis* to his chapter.

The Rockbound Coast of this Land of the Pilgrims' Pride, this Land of the Free to think like everyone else, is a Chinese Wall against the invasion of ideas or of any innovation whatever. Shut up in his Ivory Tower, (I almost wrote it—Whited Sepulcher) the Yankartist passes his time in the working of quaint samplers

and the arranging of pretty bouquets. In fact, after seeing a season's showing in the Boston galleries, with the lone exception of the Goodman-Walker, which is for grown-ups, one would think that Life was just a bowl of anemones! The hardly worth doing at all is done nicely and ably—ad nauseam.

Now that a Russian of *l'Illustration* fame from Paris has succeeded the pleasant placid Slade School professors from London as instructor of American youth in the chief art school of the region we may, no doubt, look toward a hastening of the dawn of that long-awaited Renaissance and the growth of a native school of painting! Let us pray.

At present little of the accepted art of the Hub, (an apt appellation, that; Is not a hub a hard nut revolving without ever getting anywhere within its sphere?) has any place on the pages of a periodical dealing with *The Art of Today*. It is an art of yesterday—pre-war stuff but kickless.

New England once had a tradition of creative culture; it gave Emerson to American Letters, and Homer and Ryder to American Painting: in the Addison Gallery at Andover it has a museum, like the Whitney in New York, dedicated to American Art alone. Have we not a right to expect some flowering from such a soil? And what do we find? Another Ananias Club! The tragedy of the members of that society is, as Pach pointed out in his "Ananias, The False Artist," a book that should be required reading in every school and college in the land, and especially in those of this region of much education and little understanding, their tragedy is that they are unaware of their tragedy—impotence. Having eyes, they see not. One can question their sincerity no more than one can question their complacency. But, sincerity is not enough. So were their Pil-



SLEEPING GIRL by Isabel Bishop
She strives for convincing form and character
Courtesy of the Midtown Galleries



STANDING WOMAN by Gaston Lachaise
He works for the relationships of volumes
Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art

grim progenitors sincere when they roasted hapless hags, and stuck joyous youth in the stocks for singing on the Sabbath.

In my use of the general pronoun I refer not so much to the General Public, which does contain an enlightened minority that has heard of those two other fellows, Renoir and Cezanne, and of the Grand Tradition of Painting handed on to us by them, but to the practicing painters, the "professionals" so-called, and to those who cater to and for them.

Carl Gordon Cutler and Charles Hovey Pepper, the painters, William Germain Dooley, the critic, and H. Nelson Goodman, the dealer, with a few others, strive valiantly to pierce the Fogg smothering the land, but of what avail the crying of so few voices in such a wilderness?

Lacking a Joshua to lead in trumpeting down these walls only the concerted action of all those to whom art is more than the diversion of an idle moment can suffice to shake such self-satisfied indifference, and promote the production of an art worthy of the pioneer tradition.

May this not be the last pebble cast at that hothouse!

An Analysis of DESIGN, COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

by Nathaniel Pousette-Dart

This brief history is by way of introduction to an article entitled, "Plastic Counterpoint" which will appear in the next issue of this magazine. The theory of organization to be therein expressed is in no sense new except in its application to the art of the present. In the accompanying article we deal with the aesthetic principles and theories of picture-building, promulgated by our American teachers of art.

MODERN artists through their adventurous experimentations have been instrumental in bringing about a revaluation of the principles of creating works of art. These artists have broken the bondage of previously held conventions and a new freedom of expression has resulted. The word that expressed this new manifestation is organization. This word in its modern connotation differs materially in its meaning from either design or composition. Design in its generally accepted meaning deals with works that have two dimensional spatial pattern. Composition is a term that includes design and has been applied to works of art that have a third dimensional quality. Organization, used in the modern sense, includes both design and composition but it goes much further than composition in laying stress on deep space relationships as well as to the synchronization of all the aesthetic elements such as line, form, color, light, texture, planes, volumes and structure.

Sometime in the early nineties, Professor Fennolosa returned to the United States after having made a comprehensive study of Chinese and Japanese art and delivered many lectures on the subject of design and Notan as exemplified in the work of these oriental people. His main contribution to our early culture was in pointing out that art was not produced merely by faithfully copying nature. Tone and design, he maintained, should be the basis of all creative effort. The refined taste and the lovely pattern of the Japanese artists' work captivated and appealed to him more than the profound unity and deep-space composition of Chinese painting. He was seemingly unconscious of the fact that the subtle beauties of the silk paintings of these mountain artists were largely due to their comprehension of a third dimensional form relationship as well as to their mastery of tone and design.

Professor Dow, a disciple of Fennolosa, enlarged upon the imported theories of his master to the extent that he translated his ideas of Notan and design into a simple conception of composition. Although the difference

in the methods of these two scholars was slight it was nevertheless significant. Dow placed a little emphasis on form-relationship in a three-dimensional way. By superimposing one object over another and by giving objects some roundness he unconsciously led the students to a sensing of a very rudimentary inner picture relationship.

Henry R. Poore, in his learned manner, claims to have made composition simple through the use of his elemental line motifs. A triangular form in a picture gives a sense of stability; the circle is the emblem of eternity; the cross gives mechanical resistance; radii express attraction or diffusion; the "S" form grace and movement, and the "L" form equalizes force.

Professor John Dewey explodes the theory that specific lines carry a certain emotional feeling. He says, "The assumption that certain definite lines stand for a given emotion is a convention that does not arise from observation: It stands in the way of acute sensitivity of response." Art, after all, is not a simple matter. Even a small sea-scape by Albert Ryder is a complex association of subtle elements. Ryder, in creating his canvases, did not start out with a preconceived line key and then construct his picture around it. Rather, he was "set on fire by a thought" which inspired the design structure.

It is not surprising to find Mr. Poore singing the praises of Jay Hambidge in the first chapters of his book entitled: "Art Principles in Practice," because these two men have much in common. Both of them are primarily interested in mechanics.

When Jay Hambidge first rediscovered dynamic symmetry, showing the force of the diagonal, the part commensurable to the whole, the relation of the growth of plant life to human life, the magic spiral, the relation between the static and the dynamic, and the fact that all art is basically mathematical: he startled the art world. His enthusiastic followers were sure that he had solved the riddles of creative composition. The aftermath of this titanic discovery does not exhibit any startling results. George Bellows swallowed this theory with enthusiasm. Since he failed to digest it, however, it merely gave his work a more theatrical and "wheels-going-around" look. Robert Henri claimed that in the latter years of his life he was painting according to dynamic symmetry principles, but if he did it had no appreciable effect upon his work. The work of Howard Giles and Emil Bistram, two ardent followers of Jay Hambidge, shows the results of frozen intellectualism.

It is true that art may be mechanical, fundamentally, but no really great art has ever been created through the use of mathematics. Adherents to this special system teach students to intellectually concoct art from an abstract point of view. This procedure is decidedly false, because real art has never been created except when the artist with love in his heart approaches nature emotionally and inspirationally. If this latter course is followed the process of forming formal relationships is original and alive. The subdivision of areas or spaces is a basic part of any work of art, but subdividing areas mechanically into pleasing and balanced shapes does not produce aesthetic form or volume. Form is not realized by drawing outlines around shapes or superimposing commensurable areas one upon the other. True form has significant reality only when it expresses the inner profundities of the thing visioned.

Adolph Best-Maugard, the Mexican educator, stresses the simple theory of the seven line motifs in his book on Creative design. This book has unquestionably born good results not because of his intellectually conceived rudimentary line units, but because of his innate sincerity and honesty.

Best-Maugard shows in the last chapters of his book that he, like many followers of Jay Hambidge, is strongly drawn toward occultism. Religion as we have witnessed in the past may be a powerful driving force towards producing great art. But Giotto, El Greco and Rubens were artists first. In the work of the amazingly dextrous Nicholas Roerich we have a case where religion and philosophy dominate and art is secondary.

We see, in the case of Rivera, how propaganda and political allegiance, when it becomes too dominant, destroys the finest aesthetic qualities of an artist's work. Rivera's Mexican decorations are much finer than the political paintings he made in this country. This is because the early decorations were emotionally painted through his strong racial feeling for justice, while his American wall decorations are political cartoons produced by his erroneous intelligence. A real artist must always remain a rebel and a free-lance artistically. When he seeks to express things that are not the product of his innermost emotional self, he cannot produce art.

Katharine Dreier, in a short but thought-provoking article, expressed her theory of the hidden line. She believes that the great painters created their masterpieces on hidden compositional structures: that these structural lines are felt but not seen. This principle of Miss Dreier's bears no relation to that sweet line composition that, in the past, has been derived from the gracious outlines of Botticelli's forms. Miss Dreier is thinking of balanced volumes that are living in relation to one another.

Thomas Benton without doubt learned a great deal about deep space composition from such masters of it

as Rubens and El Greco. Also it is taken for granted that much of his earlier inspiration sprang from an awareness of the work of those naive early-American print makers and painters which, in turn, helped to build up his concept of interlocking forms. Because of Benton's conscientious experimentations there has come about a much more profound understanding of correlated forms in three-dimensional organization. Benton has also developed a powerful color orchestration in his work which is not yet widely comprehended, but which is having a decided effect on some of our younger talented artists.

Huntington Wright, in his book on Modern Art, made a decided contribution to the subject of aesthetic creation when he pointed out that Daumier and Renoir were two of the world's greatest modern artists because they had been able to combine successfully and harmoniously, line, color and form in such a way that the work functioned as a unified whole.

Albert C. Barnes and Dr. Thomas Munro with their method of Pictorial Analysis have gone further than any of the previous writers or teachers in thoroughly investigating the aesthetic structure of works of art.

Simple souls and those lacking backbone object to the strenuous concentration required to analyze a painting by means of this method. I heard one young man say, after attending a class of Mr. Barnes', in which he analyzed Cezanne's Card Players, that this experience had destroyed the beauty of the painting for him. Such a remark could mean one of two things: either he was superficial and said it to be clever, or else, he did not understand what Mr. Barnes was trying to do. There is a very decided difference between analyzing pictures in an academic way and analyzing them in a creative manner. Real appreciation can advance only through analysis. Nobody can fully appreciate a picture by giving it one glance. If the painting has been painted by a great artist, then it is complex, because of the artist's life experience. It is for this reason that a few words written by a man in his handwriting can be the basis of a profound character analysis by a graphologist. Dr. Barnes and Dr. Munro leave no stone unturned in their attempt to understand the profundities or the superficialities that lie at the basis of a work of art. They analyze the structure, the form, the line, the texture, the chiaroscuro, the light, the design, the deep space composition, the decorative qualities, the subject, the quality of the imagination, the special type of distortion practiced, whether the painting is academic or romantic, etc., etc. Nobody can hope to arrive at the real appreciation of anything merely through their emotions. The intellect plays an important part in analysis.

Dr. Thomas Munro has written a book entitled, "Scientific Method in Aesthetics." Philip N. Youtz says, in

(Continued on page 11)

THE ELM by John Kane

*He learned organization
through carpentry*

Courtesy of
the Valentine Gallery



The PLACE of the CLICHE by Flora Louise Pousette-Dart

DURING the past ten years, I have frequently felt moved to protest against the growing fear and distaste with which the cliché, in what has come to be considered its modern sense, is regarded by poets and critics of poetry.

It is not so much that they react with horror to the cliché itself but that they have enlarged and distorted its original meaning, and extended its definition to include the use of individual words, and even of subjects.

My own temperature reached the boiling-point when I happened upon an article (I have forgotten where, or by whom) wherein Robert Frost was quoted as having said that, in his opinion, no poet since Keats was rightfully entitled to use the word "alien."

Now I yield to no one in my love and admiration for the "Ode to a Nightingale;" and Keat's word-picture of Ruth

"when, sick for home

She stood in tears amid the alien corn"

is more deeply engraved upon my memory than any descriptive phrase in the Book of Ruth itself. But to retire a word from the language because it has been superbly and unforgettably used, seems to me a somewhat stupid, if not a slightly ridiculous procedure. Had such a practice been adhered to, for any considerable length of time, the working vocabulary of our modern writers would be reduced, by this time, to alarmingly

small proportions. The King James' Version itself would have put an awe-inspiring number of words and phrases out of Shakespeare's reach; and post-Elizabethan poetry would have been hard put to it for adjectives.

Not only is cliché-fear based on a philosophy that is essentially false, but its emphasis is wrongly placed. If a writer thinks and feels originally and creatively, he will make an original and creative use of words. If his thought be weakly imitative, second-rate intellectually, or second-hand emotionally, his use of worn counters with which to express it will hardly matter. On the other hand, every word in the language ought to be available to a writer, just as every color ought to be, and is, available to a painter. The cool blue, so characteristically and successfully used by Piero della Francesca in his canvases, was not considered his exclusive property merely because he had made effective use of it.

Several unimportant and disconnected incidents set me to meditating intensively on the varying aspects of this controversial subject.

Two or three years ago, I heard Mr. Joseph Auslander, in criticizing a student's work, object to his use of the adjective "utter" in a poem. He likewise discouraged his comparison of some sound or other to the murmur in a shell. His objection, in both cases, was on the ground of triteness.

The other day I heard one of our younger poets say to a confrère, in all seriousness, "You can't bring ROSES into a modern poem!"

Not long ago I stopped on Madison Avenue, to look in the window of a fashionable antique shop. It was a shop specializing in objects of early American origin. There was not in evidence a single piece with any claim to aesthetic merit. All were genuine, however, and valuable solely because of their authenticity.

In another window, not far from the first, were shown modern reproductions of really beautiful antiques. Even these, however, were subtly but unmistakably *less* beautiful than the worn originals from which they were copied.

From these two window displays, it was apparent that age alone—the quality conferred by use, by wear—cannot *create* aesthetic value, but that it *can* enhance and heighten it. In this way many word combinations used in the Bible, and in the prayers and litanies of the established church, have acquired through repetition a kind of beauty difficult to describe or explain. Individual words which have taken on a beauty of this sort, through use and association, seem trite only when perfunctorily and uncreatively used. Freshly and imaginatively used, they are a part of every author's rightful inheritance.

Vocabularies change their content, from age to age, as new ideas become current and new objects are invented or discovered; and in the same way the content of individual words undergoes change. Words become obsolete, and drop into oblivion, from time to time; but those in current use can no more become trite, *per se*, than the objects, ideas and emotions which they identify. They are the common property of all who use them, and are subject to the same uses and abuses as are the raw materials accessible to painters, sculptors, musicians and architects.

If Johann Sebastian Bach had staked out a claim every time he made use of a new and arrestingly beautiful interval or progression, many of our best-loved later compositions—classic, romantic and modern—would never have been written. Echoes of Bach—unconscious ones, no doubt—abound in the work of later composers. Thematic material is frequently taken over, sometimes with disastrous, sometimes with magnificent results. If the composer be second-rate, the music will sound derived and imitative; if, on the other hand, he be an original genius, it will not matter in the least where he found his material.

This morning I tuned in, too late for the opening announcement, on a violin and piano sonata recital. The sonata was one I had never before heard, and I amused myself while it was being played by trying to guess the name of the composer. The melodic and harmonic content, the rhythmic character and richness of



WAITING by Harry Hering
He created an old man
Courtesy of the Frank K. M. Rehn Gallery

texture strongly suggested Brahms; but I had thought myself familiar with all the Brahms sonatas and I failed to recognize this one. What did impress me, however, was the original and creative character of the music itself. If the composer had borrowed from Brahms, consciously or unconsciously, his borrowings had been thoroughly assimilated and re-organized, and the result was an unmistakable work of genius. It proved to have been written by a living composer, Daniel Gregory Mason, to whom, in consequence, I am deeply grateful.

Conscious avoidance of material that has been effectively used by others is essentially negative, and therefore sterile, both in criticism and in creation. All the "thou shalt not"s ever uttered have been swept away by the first creative artist to follow in the wake of each successive critical pronouncement.

Since there are only five primary colors, only twelve notes in the tonal scale, painters and musicians cannot afford to indulge in cliché-phobia. Poets and novelists, on the other hand, revel in such riches as seem inexhaustible. Because there are so many words in existence, each writer feels at liberty to acquire a hand-picked vocabulary for his private and individual use. However, if he steadfastly refuses to venture in any direc-

tion over trails that other men have blazed, he may find himself, eventually, occupying a curiously circumscribed and barren bit of ground, cut off alike from adventure and escape.

One cannot cut one's way timorously into the jungle. One must courageously make use of whatever tool or weapon comes to hand. If this weapon happens to be a cliché, one must use it unhesitatingly and without cavil. For to explore and chart his own section of jungle is of first importance to the adventurer in any field of art, and he must do it how he can.



WINTER LANDSCAPE
by Judson Smith

Beyond the actual

Courtesy of
the Whitney Museum of
American Art

TIRED
by Thomas Benton
*Principles of organiza-
tion are uppermost*

Courtesy of the
Ferargil Galleries



A Correction

In the April issue in which Mr. Pousette-Dart's article "Intellectual Inventiveness and Emotional Creativeness" appeared, the typographer made a mistake, in carrying over two lines from page seven to page eight, he placed them at the bottom of the first column instead of at the head of it.

(Continued from page 8)

the introduction, "The great interest of Dr. Munro's book lies in the fact that it describes an embryo science of aesthetics which has hardly yet been born. Here we can watch the scientific mind impartially approaching a new material and making its first tentative experiments. No exact methods have yet been developed for analyzing art, though certain ones hold out considerable promise. One enters the art laboratory to witness the birth of a new science which will be contemporary with our life time, not an aged and learned discipline inherited from the past, nor can anyone say whether this child will live. The problems before it are in many respects more elusive than any that have yet been undertaken. For, in studying art, man is seeking to know himself through the mirror of his own mind."

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON

A page devoted to the work of

CONTEMPORARY ARTS

AN ORGANIZATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF ARTISTS IN ALL FIELDS, INCORPORATED IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK, 1931

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THE end of the New York Art Season is in sight! In another six weeks the summer colonies will be humming with life, and the city galleries remaining open will settle down to shorter hours and to the somewhat hopeless task of enticing the visiting public within their doors. Contemporary Arts' plans go no further than the May activities, but these are quite enough to keep us from ennui.

Our Mid-season 1931-35 Retrospective exhibition, "Twenty-two painters presented since incorporation," proved most stimulating and encouraging. Margaret Breuning, *New York Evening Post*, said "It is a tribute to the gallery that so many painters in the group are now well-known, and frequent exhibitors in various group exhibitions—an excellent showing that must be seen to realize the variety and real quality of this large exhibition." Melville Upton, *New York Sun*, "The Retrospective display at Contemporary Arts presents that enterprising organization in a particularly favorable light. Notable among the exhibits is *Sanctuary* by Elliot Orr, a peculiarly appealing canvas in its grave harmonies and rich pigmentation." We feel that this canvas marks a distinct step in the very steady progress that Elliot Orr will always make.

The exhibition of etchings by the American students of Louis Marcoussis was most successful. The bullfight series by Henrietta Hoopes is still on view at the gallery. The first one-man exhibition of Dorothy Kreymborg was marked by a freshness and sincerity that, apart from her husband's fame in the literary and dramatic world, accounted for the unusual number of distinguished people who visited the gallery during these three weeks.

As associate-exhibitors, Anne Steele Marsh and Paul Lucker showed water colors and sculpture jointly in the Rear Gallery. Mrs. Marsh's water colors are imbued with joyousness—showing an awareness of the living quality in things. Mr. Lucker showed four pieces of sculpture, powerfully conceived and of great solidity and dignity. He has a good running start and we wish him all the courage that great sculpture calls for.

The March Reception of Contemporary Arts Painting-of-the-Month Club took place at the Park Lane on



HARRISVILLE by Dorothy Kreymborg

the tenth. The paintings selected by the jury (A. S. Baylinson and Miss Gheen) were by Elliot Orr, Edith Branson, Bernadine Custer and I. Rice-Pereira. A delightful program of French and American songs was given by Kate Rodina (Edward Steichen's daughter). Alexander Brook and Peggy Bacon, as guests of honor, presented Mrs. John Hanna of 25 Claremont Avenue, New York, (whose membership stub they drew) with Miss Branson's *Abstraction* which was her choice of the four paintings.

The schedule of May exhibitions will be found listed on page fourteen. We do however want to point out that our painters not only want to exhibit but also to sell. Important sales are few and far between, but our black and white and small paintings department (\$5.00 to \$25.00) is very active and well worthy of attention.

Guests of honor scheduled for the Monday evening receptions are: May 6th, Ford Maddox Ford, author; May 13th, W. T. Benda, Painter and Imitator; May 20, Preview, Gerard Hordyk; May 27, Oliver M. Saylor, author and of the theatre. Any inquiries about the work of Contemporary Arts or the privileges of membership should be directed to the secretary.

SHORT REVIEWS

by Clayton Spicer

A. F. Levinson

THE DEVELOPMENT which expands in an artist's work over a period of years as he grows toward the fullest expression of himself is a heartening thing to watch. The crutches he picked up in his groping youth to help himself to his feet are discarded or made less use of and he discovers that his own eyes are clear and competent and that they need no Parisian spectacles. At last he becomes a man of art capable of penetrating and expressing the depth of his understanding. However limited his emotional scope may be if it is fully explored and related it deserves and commands respect.

The Eighth Street Gallery this winter has shown the work of two men who have discovered themselves in paint. One of these was Joseph De Martini and the other is A. F. Levinson. Levinson admires and loves soft, tender, clinging greys and so do we when we see them in such paintings as *Green Pears* and *Dog Town Common*. In these he is an original genius of the grey palette.

Art Front

THE ARTISTS' UNION is pushing forward its skirmishers and the crack of the snipers' rifles in the pages of the *Art Front*, the Union's official publication, is sharp and insistent as the battle lines form and the enemy is engaged.

War was declared, we understand, to make economics safe for artists. The land of Bohemia no longer houses artists in a romantic way and more satisfying dwellings are needed. We will gladly shoulder arms in this cause if we can pass the required intelligence test. There are, however, other battles to fight it seems. Who wants to blast away at abstract art? Art must be made to see the light and join banners with the communistic academy.

In the April issue, General Jacob Burch dons his red plumed hat, places his hand inside his coat over his heart, commands his heavy artillery into line, the muzzles of which are loaded with intellectual lead; there is a flash of communistic powder and when the smoke clears away, Thomas H. Benton ought to be dead or perhaps he has only departed for Missouri.

On a quieter page John Boling has a splendid article on John Kane in which he gives Manfred Schwartz proper credit for encouraging Kane in the days of his tribulations.

American Genre

WE LIKED THE American Genre show at the Whitney Museum of American Art last month because the old-timers had their day in the sun again. We believe that no painters work of whatever school or condition deserves consignment to the flames or complete disregard. History seems to believe this also for she holds on, as securely as the vicissitudes of time allow her, to everything man has done which is connected with the Fine Arts. Then one fine day, on the periphery of the proper cycle, she pops the selected school up again to delight the student.

Because of the exhibition of African Negro Art at the Museum of Modern Art, we were particularly interested in how our painters of earlier days looked on Negro subjects. Winslow Homer's *Sunday Morning in Virginia*, Eastman Johnson's, *The Old Kentucky Home*, and William Sidney Mount's, *The Power of Music* smelled, to us, very much of Uncle Tom's Cabin. The Negroes here shown are picturesque, poverty stricken and likeable. They are patronized with kindly pigments. African sculpture was of course unknown then and we had no painter, as we have Maurice Becker now, who painted a Negro as man to man.



OLD TAMMANY by John Sloan
Emotionally honest
Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum

WHERE TO SEE THE ART OF TODAY

A. C. A. GALLERY, 52 West 8th Street—*May 4-14*: Paintings by Emptage. *May 14-31*: Group Exhibition.

AN AMERICAN PLACE, 509 Madison Avenue—*Through May*: New paintings, 1934-35 by Arthur G. Dove.

ARDEN GALLERY, 460 Park Avenue—*Through May*: Garden sculpture and garden furniture.

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

LEONARD CLAYTON GALLERY, 108 East 57th Street—*Through May*: Water colors and etchings by Grant Reynard.

CONTEMPORARY ARTS, 41 West 54th Street—*April 29 to May 18*: Paintings by Gerard Hordyk. *May 20 to June 1*: Contemporary Arts Group and Guests. *Until May 11*: "Paintings of Painters' Children." *May 31 to June 1*: Exhibition of Painting-of-the-Month Club presentations, November 1933 to May 1935.

DOWNTOWN GALLERY, 113 West 13th Street—*May 1-21*: Portrait heads of officials of the present Administration by Reuben Nakian.

ERICH-NEWHOUSE GALLERY, 578 Madison Avenue—*Until May 11*: Flower paintings by Mrs. Jesse Lasky. American landscapes by George Laszlo. Small portraits in gouaches by Marion Jochinson.

EIGHTH STREET GALLERY, 61 West 8th Street *Until May 25*: 3rd Anniversary Group Show.

EIGHTH STREET PLAYHOUSE GALLERY, 52 West 8th Street—*Until May 8*: Paintings by Ethel Swantees.

GALLERY SECESSION, 49 West 12th Street—*Until May 13*: Paintings by Louis Schanker and Group Exhibition. *May 14-June 11*: Paintings by Nahum Tschacbasov.

MACBETH GALLERY, 13 East 57th Street—*Until May 13*: Exhibition of still life by Emil Carlsen.

MACY GALLERIES, 34th Street and Sixth Avenue—*May 6-11*: Reproductions of French moderns. *May 15-31*: Portraits of flowers by G. L. Noyes.

PIERRE MATISSE GALLERY, 51 East 57th Street—*April 29 to May 27*: Paintings by André Masson.

MILCH GALLERIES, 108 West 57th Street—*Until May 11*: Figure and landscape studies by Leon Kroll.

MORTON GALLERY, 130 West 57th Street—*Until May 13*: Paintings by Gregory Ivy. Water colors by Rosalie Carey. *May 13-27*: Group Show.

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 May 15*: 18th Century portraits.

FRANK K. M. REHN GALLERY, 683 Fifth Avenue—*Through May*: "Spring 1935."

SIXTIETH STREET GALLERY, 138 East 60th Street—*Through May*: "50 American Painters."

MARIE STERNER GALLERY, 9 East 57th Street—*May 1-15*: Water colors by Eskridge. *Through May*: American and Foreign paintings and water colors.

VALENTINE GALLERY, 69 East 57th Street—*Through May*: Group Show.



MEXICAN INTERIOR by Howard Cook
Sincerity of intent strongly manifested
Courtesy of the Weyhe Gallery

(Continued from page 4)

that American artists are by divine right the best artists on earth, that progress can be made.

Give our artists a decent break? Give them a fighting chance to prove their worth? Oh *yes*—even though now and then it mean passing up some ever so fashionable foreign celebrity when it comes to handing out commissions. "America first?" By all means. But—let it be a genuine art we laud and encourage; an art so real, so good, so original and unhampered by the devitalizing fumes of academism, so fed by the sources of our unique life as a people, that it requires no noisy fanfare and need fear no honorable tests that may challenge it along the highway, or at the frontiers of an enlightened world.

And it will do no harm to be humble in our dawn of promise; to keep before us Walt Whitman's reminder that "the strongest and sweetest songs remain to be sung."

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