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T H E F U N C T I O N S O F A R T

F I R S T M E E T I N G

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Art and Daily Life

When art crops up in a conversation it very frequently happens that somebody says straight off 'Well, as a matter of fact, I know nothing at all about art'; and, indeed, for very many people, art is the exclusive concern of the artist, the critic or the wealthy amateur: a tiny fraction of society. To conclude from such premises that problems relating to art have ordinarily no bearing upon the business of daily life is but a small step. And yet, in each of us there exists, more or less obscurely and very frequently unadmitted, a hankering after the delight that only art can give. In order to define more closely the relationship between art and daily life, let us first of all try to find out what the term 'art' really means.

Rather than a learned definition, a number of characteristic examples will show us what we are after. Let us for a start consider athletics. A boxer or a runner is said to have a certain 'style': thanks to prolonged effort, he has succeeded in eliminating from his movements everything superfluous, retaining only whatever contributes to maximum efficiency. His aim is practical. From the point of view of the spectator, merely to watch fine leg work or a good stride provides pleasure. It will be seen that well-developed movements following a definite purpose are capable in themselves of procuring satisfaction.

Let us go a little further. In museums, decorated tools can be seen, very old and finely wrought keys, in short, objects that certainly had a practical value. The ornamental value added nothing to their efficiency. We thus have a 'stylization of the object', the sole purpose of which is to give pleasure.

An even more telling example is provided by one of the oldest arts - dancing, which is stylized walking or jumping. If it is a question of getting there first, the dancer will of course be beaten by the runner - but for the dancer the steps or jumps do not serve a practical purpose, their only function being to express the emotion of a man in movement. We are thus entering the domain of art each time that in relation to an object or movement we experience a pleasure not derived from immediate utility; art comes into being when an object has been fashioned or a movement executed for the purpose of giving rise to this pleasure.

A comparison between a still life of Cézanne's depicting apples and the label on a pot of apple jelly puts the problem in a nutshell. It will be seen that art makes no specific attempt to isolate itself from daily life. How then does it come about that art now seems to turn its back on everyday concerns? The answer is to be found in the lengthy evolution of society by which the preoccupation with art has gradually been restricted to a small group of specialists.

The evolution of the idea of art

Let us consider the very earliest forms of artistic expression. Among prehistoric man and in ancient civilizations, we find art closely linked with forms of social life, in particular with magic and religion. Similarly, during the middle ages, painters, sculptors, and the authors and actors of mystery plays in no way considered themselves as a race apart; studying the history of the guilds, we find expressed in the concept 'masterpiece' the evident desire to combine the practical value of an object with the beauty of its form. Little by little, however, economic factors changed and became more complex. By degrees, the craftsman was superseded by the manufacturer. Production was what mattered, production in ever-growing quantities and at the lowest possible cost - serial production, aiming solely at efficiency and gradually eliminating artistic pleasure. It is difficult to imagine an engine being chiseled and decorated nowadays with all the delicacy and inspiration that a potter or carpenter of old put into his work. Mass production made the work of art a luxury article reserved for the few, and by inevitable degrees the artist came to work for a limited public of wealthy patrons. If he severed connexions with this public, which owing to its conservative outlook frequently hampered his inspiration, he was reduced to creating only for himself, as has frequently happened since the 19th century. Such a state of affairs is evidently absurd if a new society is to be built. Art should no longer be regarded as the privilege of the few: it should serve the people as a whole, for they have a right to beauty as they have a right to all that goes to make up culture. Thus we come to the problem of how art is again to be made part of daily life.

The problem as it stands today

There are two aspects to this problem. An economic aspect: under present conditions works of art are expensive; the enjoyment of art and the distribution of reproductions, etc. present a large number of economic difficulties, which, however, we shall not discuss here.

The second aspect is cultural. It might be divided under two headings: 1. How can a large public, of which the majority has gradually lost touch with art, be enabled, through art, to rediscover its need for beauty and find a way to understand contemporary developments in art? 2. How can those who so desire be enabled to express themselves through art, not necessarily with a view to becoming professionals, but in order to find in this expression personal enrichment and delight? These are questions that we shall endeavour to answer at forthcoming meetings. It must be stressed that the problem is one of considerable importance in view of the universal scope and immense cultural value of art.

Art is a message

It is known that painting originated in picture-writing. This writing is symbolic and is found in the oldest civilizations as well as in certain

contemporary circles closed to the outsider. The earliest Egyptians and the Incas wrote in pictures, as do the tramps of today who in this way tell their brothers of the road which doors may be worth knocking at and which had better be avoided. Picture-writing condenses a thought into a stylized, simplified sign - a stylization closely akin to that of art. It is very probable that our prehistoric ancestors who drew such admirable bisons on the walls of their caves were not 'exhibiting in an art gallery' but wanted to contribute to the success of the tribe's hunting expeditions by the magic signs they added to their so remarkably stylized drawings. And as art develops, it continues to be the expression of the artist's thought while bearing witness to a civilization. Whether advocating or stigmatizing its epoch, art thus always carries a message.

National and international aspects

If art is a message, then its significance is in no way hemmed in by national languages or geographical frontiers - it also remains unaffected by the passage of time, for today we can experience as deep an emotion before a piece of Negro sculpture as before a statue by MAILLOU, a Romanesque fresco or a picture by EL GRECO or PICASSO. It has been pointed out that the great schools arose and attained their loftiest heights of inspiration owing to these infinite possibilities of communication through mind and sense. As was noted above, an artist undoubtedly bears the stamp of the civilization, the culture, in which he grew up and the people to which he belongs. Taking PICASSO again as an example, how can we avoid associating him first and foremost with the Spanish temperament and the theme of bullfighting? The fact remains, however, that artists from lands far apart and with great differences of background and character have succeeded together in creating the realm of international art. As an example the Paris school springs to mind - it owes as much to the work of Japanese such as FOUJITA, Russians such as CHAGALL, Italians such as MODIGLIANI, Spaniards such as JUAN GRIS, as it does to Frenchmen such as FERNAND LEGER and ANDRE LHOE. Despite the fact that these men were of profoundly different character, they reached a notable unity and brought about one of the most important developments in the history of painting, a development which has had repercussions throughout the world - for though art seems to be international it is capable of inciting the countries it touches to fresh creation. As proof of this we need only consider the different aspects of the Renaissance in Italy, France and England, or, to give a modern example, the original solution adopted by Brazilian artists to the problems of abstract painting with which painters in Europe had long been occupied. In view of all this give and take, how can it be doubted that art is a very important element in the cultural reconstruction of our modern world?

One day, in a Paris street, a child was playing all alone sitting on the pavement. With a piece of chalk he had enclosed himself in a large rectangle and was drawing circles inside it, murmuring the while to himself 'That's a field full of flowers'. Such, indeed, is the function of a work of art: to grow flowers on the pavements in the towns, to bring the joy of being alive into the business of day-to-day existence. The following pages will try to explain under what conditions such a work of art fulfilling such a purpose becomes a possibility and what immense benefit man may derive from it.

Q U E S T I O N S

FIRST MEETING

Is art related to the preoccupations of your daily life?

Is not the 'pleasure of the eye' provided for in a sportsman's style, the decoration of everyday objects, etc.?

What separates immediate usefulness from 'gratuitous' pleasure?

Why is art no longer the concern of the general public?

Is this separation due to economic causes? to social causes?

What problems arise from this separation?

Has painting been at any time a generally comprehensible language?

Must we distinguish national from international inspiration?

Does art play an important part in human culture?

SECOND MEETING

INITIATION IN ART

Can a work of art be explained ?

Before discussing the problems of initiation in art, a point on which misunderstanding is frequent must first be cleared up. The general public is often puzzled by modern works of art and expects those who know about art to explain matters. Many a time, before a work of say PICASSO, all eyes are turned towards the lecturer, asking him in bewilderment for an explanation - 'Why has this woman got two noses and a vertical eye ?' Such a question recalls the pupil who wants his mathematics teacher to demonstrate some difficult theorem. Between science and art, however, there is a world of difference, for the former requires, in both artist and spectator, a sensibility that cannot be replaced by any form of demonstration. We can even go further and say that one of the essentials of art and the aesthetic emotion is surprise, a relationship of a poetic order that cannot be justified by reason.

Yet experience shows that a picture or a statue may be just as unintelligible as a football match is to somebody who does not know the rules of the game. When the rules have been explained, interest may awaken. The same applies in art: if the 'rules of the game' are known, the spectator's sensibility may establish a link with the artist's intention.

By explaining the rules, the public's receptivity will be increased. A middle course must be steered between two equally erroneous beliefs: that it is sufficient to have normally constituted eyes in order to understand and assess a picture, and that it is impossible to appreciate a picture without first having learned methodically about the rules of composition, colour, etc. It would be nearer the truth to say that knowledge of the rules makes it easier to understand a work of art, but that such knowledge is no substitute for the secret link that must be established between artist and spectator.

'The rules of the game'

A work of art is not a spontaneous growth. Like every form of life, it represents the outcome of a certain number of influences and embodies certain laws. To explain these influences, to ascertain these laws, such are the first tasks of art initiation.

(a) Study of the artist's environment

It is essential as a start to study the artist's environment from every point of view, geographic and historical; for the artist is not an isolated person, but belongs to a civilization and to a climate. Even if he seems to be a revolutionary and apparently repudiates his environment, his work will bear the double imprint of his culture and his background. Numerous examples can be adduced in support. When studying the Dutch or the Venetian painters, or the Impressionists who worked in the Ile de France and on Channel coast, one realizes immediately that an all-important element in their vision is accounted for by the fact that they worked in regions where the light is diffused in an atmosphere

with a high rate of evaporation. Similarly, when MAILLOL proclaims that a statue must be hewn in the open air, we are forcibly reminded that his work breathes the translucent atmosphere of the south. The historical setting is also of importance - how can DAUMIER be separated from the political events of his time? how can a reredos be understood if it is not associated with the architectural setting provided by a Gothic church? Weighty archaeological erudition is obviously not required, but sufficient insight into the artist's surroundings for the work under consideration to reassume all its human significance, even if it is placed in a museum, where the elements of time and place may to some extent appear to have been abstracted from it.

(b) Study of conditions governing the visual arts

To the study of the environment should be added the study of the general conditions governing any work of art no matter where or when it was created. First of all the function of the work must be taken into account: an easel picture does not obey the same laws as a mural decoration; even though a fresco and a piece of tapestry have mural qualities, they are yet fundamentally different, for tapestry is intended to 'dress' the wall. To appreciate a work of art, the solution it supplies to the functional problem must be taken into account. Going further, we must try to understand what a modern master, ANDRE LHOTE, has called the 'plastic invariants', i.e. 'those considerations that enable us to arrive at an opinion without having recourse to specialized theories and without indulging in the controversies of the critics', in other words, the elements that make for good painting. He suggests four essential elements: the ornament or expressive sign that precedes all colour and modelling; colour, or the contrast between warm and cold tones; values, or the modulation in the light-and-shade scale of a dominant colour; and, finally, the interplay of these three elements, the relationship that assigns to each its proper rôle and justifies every portion of the picture. The study of these elements, though admittedly rather technical, is of great importance and will be of considerable practical help to the professional in the cultural sphere as well as to the amateur. A method of study will be set forth below.

Means of initiating others in art and making art more widely known

It is to be clearly understood that acquaintance with these summarily enumerated 'rules of the game' cannot be obtained merely through books. Every means of promoting the spread of artistic production must therefore be made use of, so that the general public will gradually become sufficiently well acquainted with it and in this way be brought closer to the artist. Such means are numerous and can frequently be combined.

(a) Lectures, accompanied whenever possible by slides or films. The latter are to be preferred. Several films have already been produced on the work of contemporary masters and provide opportunity for seeing the works not only in their final form but also at successive stages of development and enable us to penetrate into the environment of the artist. To give a typical example, the film on JEAN LURCAT shows how a piece of tapestry is made and fully explains the part played by the artist's inventiveness and the collective work of the craftsmen who assist in the production. Lectures may very well be replaced by discussions on a given subject - artists of different tendencies should take part and the public be given opportunity to intervene, ask questions and express its views.

(b) Visits to museums are also a very important means of art education. Frequently the public is quite ignorant of the cultural significance of museums at its disposal. This is in part due to a lack of guides. In recent times, however, museography has progressed and in many cases (e.g. Le Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris) large explanatory diagrams are provided indicating the significance of the works exhibited; elsewhere these are showcases containing informative documents relating to the artists. Notwithstanding such improvements, the services of guide-lecturers are of great value.

A large part of the public does not visit museums. Can a man or woman who has worked all through the week really be expected to let drop an occasion for playing games, for camping, or simply for coming together with members of their family, in order to go to a museum on Sunday? The best way to go about initiating people in art is to bring art to their place of work: travelling exhibitions can be installed in the factory and the sanatorium, and will enable the provinces to enjoy advantages usually restricted to the capital.

(c) It will not in all cases be found so easy to have recourse to the last method to be suggested, but its usefulness is beyond question: visits to art galleries where the developments of contemporary art can be followed. In this context we must not forget visits to studios of representative painters and sculptors. Such visits may be extremely stimulating if the leader of the group succeeds in getting the artist to profess his esthetic creed and to tell reminiscences and anecdotes which may conjure up an atmosphere of imaginative creation. It is to be added that such direct contact with the artist's immediate surroundings greatly facilitates a deeper understanding of his work.

The training of cultural workers

To enumerate these means of spreading art presupposes the existence of responsible people who are qualified to introduce others to the visual arts. Such qualification can be acquired only by studying esthetic problems from the point of view of popular culture.

A priori it would no doubt appear that an artist specialized in this or that branch should be able to make a very valuable contribution to the initiation of the general public. Let us not, however, forget that the artist, who is probably more conscious than anybody else of the conditions underlying his work, may be quite incapable of initiating others. If he adopts the device of MATISSE that 'a painter should cut out his tongue', the mystery enshrouding his work is apt to appear more impenetrable owing to the fact that his personality becomes more enigmatic. The cultural worker must have the gifts of the teacher. His teaching must, however, be lively - he must eschew the excessively academic approach or his explanations may be far above the level of comprehension of his audience. Cultural workers of the kind intended here might well be recruited from among art teachers and students, provided they realize the importance of the social mission to be added to their purely artistic activities. The teachers would have the advantage of possessing a fully tested method. Intuition and an adaptive mind will, however, also be required, for it is impossible to show others the way to art if one has not experienced oneself the startling effect it produces. In their contact with the general public, art students will find a wholesome change from the somewhat rarefied atmosphere of the art school or academy, and they will benefit, as regards their creative work, from having rubbed shoulders with their fellow men.

Q U E S T I O N S

SECOND MEETING

- What is the difference between science and art ?
- Can a work of art be explained ?
- What is initiation in art ?
- Why study the artist's environment ?
- What is meant by the function of a work of art ?
- What are the 'plastic invariants' ?
- What may be expected of an introductory lecture ?
- What other means of initiation are there ?
- What is the part to be played by cultural workers ?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ARTArt yesterday and today

An initiation into the world of the visual arts necessarily includes a study of the aims pursued by contemporary artists. At all stages in the history of art, temporary disagreements have no doubt arisen between the general public, accustomed to means of expression which had become traditional, and pioneer schools that endeavoured to strike out new paths. It is certain, for example, that the introduction of perspective during the Renaissance baffled those accustomed to painting in the flat, just as much as the adherents of impressionist technique were baffled by the first attempts at cubist or at non-figurative painting. Since the 19th century such disagreement has evidently become stronger. Before being acclaimed every school was reviled. If such a state of affairs is permitted to endure, it is difficult to see how the visual arts will again become part of popular culture. Why is a young man who accepts jazz quite naturally completely put out by a canvas of PICASSO? no, this is partly due to the fact that dance music finds its place in daily life more naturally than does painting, but also to the fact that painting today is the outcome of a clear-cut and lengthy historical development, about which the public is generally ill informed. It is our intention in this meeting to give an outline of the general trends that go to explain the position reached by modern painting. There can be no question of giving a history of art, for such a project would go far beyond our limits; all we can hope to do is to point out successive influences and to classify the principal present-day tendencies.

The legacy of the 19th century to contemporary art

Since the Renaissance, art had turned more and more towards realism. From the Italian school all European painters had derived a mastery, to be consolidated still further, in the representation of objects and the analysis of the human body. In the 18th century this facility reached its height, and painting was devoted more and more to the agreeable, as can be seen, for example, in the paintings of BOUCHER. But during the French Revolution, DAVID launched a vigorous reaction and demanded the return to a certain austerity of means as well as of subject. In the 19th century, the development initiated by DAVID was continued by INGRES, who was the first to master a means of expression of which modern art has availed itself: the arabesque. The master who wrote over the door of his studio 'School of Drawing' was to reveal the eloquence that can inhere in a simple line and the forcible expression of a work in which colour is subdued in order to give full play to the poetry of sinuous contour. Then came DELACROIX. Though he was opposed in temperament to INGRES, the painter of 'Liberty on the Barricades' also brought new developments that contributed to the formation of modern art. INGRES had given predominance to line and the ornamental aspect, whereas DELACROIX preoccupied himself with colour and the study of reflections, and in this way prepared the way for the school that at the end of the century was to reach out to pure colour - the Impressionists.

Between DELACROIX and the Impressionists must be placed another movement that from the modern point of view is no less important - the realistic movement, under which term COURBET as well as the Barbizon School may be included. What matters to us is not so much the technique of these painters as their spirit.

The man who said to one of his young pupils 'If you want me to do you a couple of Venuses let me have a look at 'em first' gave a striking illustration of the tendency that turned the attention of painters, who till then were accustomed to mythological subjects and grand historical compositions, to subjects taken from ordinary everyday life. The Impressionists remained faithful to this spirit; MONET, for example, painted a view of Saint Lazare station in Paris.

Thus at the end of the 19th century, painting disposed of a series of important new achievements, a wealth of expressive means, as is illustrated by the violent colouring adopted by GAUGUIN or the sensitive arabesques that constitute the essential element in works by TOULOUSE-LAUTREC or DEGAS, to which must be added the fact that painters had learned to seek beauty everywhere and to find legitimate inspiration in scenes of modern life and not only in legends of the past. Yet, despite all these developments, there was no final break with the tradition prevailing in Europe since the 16th century that art reproduces nature. It seems, however, that the limits of expression in this direction had been reached and that new paths would have to be found.

The 20th century revolution

An immense change took place in the beginning of the 20th century. For such a change to occur it was of course necessary to overthrow the meaning of the expressive elements: the alphabet, so to speak, had to be changed. It is this change of the alphabet that has so greatly confused the public. Generally speaking, education in art is rather vague and the public has always been led to believe that the best painter is the one who gives the best reproduction of a person or object. Yet on reflection such a view is untenable: the poetry of painting consists in the surprise effected by a change of habitual values; furthermore, the documentary use to which the visual arts could legitimately be put before the invention of photography has now been superseded. CLOUET sent Marie de Medicis portraits of her children when she was on her travels - nowadays a number of snapshots would do just as well. The greatest service that photography has rendered painting is to have given it back its full freedom, thereby enabling it to reassume its true function (a privilege which, in reference to its own materials, music has long enjoyed) of expressing a sentiment by the sole relationship of colour and line, the harmony of the relationship being the only valid criterion. The great masters of the past, even the most faithful realists, had no doubt attained to this artistic purity by virtue of instinct. As Renoir said: 'If only one could paint like BOUGUEREAU and paint well. 'But the problem had never arisen in such unequivocal terms as in the 20th century. In what does this 'change of alphabet' consist which enables the artist today to satisfy in his own way this need for purity ?

'Nature must be invested with inner vision'

Techniques may differ greatly from school to school, from theorist to theorist; yet they pursue a common aim. From the Renaissance to the Impressionists, the painter endeavoured above all to see nature; but from the beginning of the 20th century he has been trying to invest nature with his own vision. Such a change implies an upheaval in the appreciation of values. Nevertheless, no matter how revolutionary the 20th century may be, it still remains subject to pre-existing conditions and modern historical influences. To study modern painting is a lengthy task: we shall merely try to define a number of periods and the principal movements within those periods.

1900-1914: Fauvism and Cubism

The dates of our first period are approximate; the outbreak of the first world war provides an arbitrary though convenient date to mark a turning point in the history of art. During this period, the artists who wished to invest nature with their vision were grouped in two schools, the first being the Fauves or 'Wild Beasts'. They were given their name by the critics of the time who regarded them with something the same condescension as 19th century critics had extended to the Impressionists. The Fauves were the spiritual descendants of GAUGUIN who advised: 'If the shadow appears blue to you, paint it the finest blue you have on your palette.' They indulged in a frenzy of colour and expressed a lyrical rapture in their landscapes, still-lives and human figures. In other words, they were devoted to the emotional aspect of art, one is almost tempted to say its romanticism, if under this term its proper meaning of passionate expression can be understood. The Fauves include the School of Chatou near Paris with such men as DERRAIN and VLAMINCK. ROUAULT may also be said to belong to them. His art takes its inspiration from Romanesque paintings just as much as from DAUMIER's caricatures, and he is one of the most representative painters of the Fauve movement owing to his magnificent expressiveness and brilliant colour.

Contrary to the Fauves, the Cubist movement is characterized by the preponderance of intellect over sensibility, by its tendency to construct rather than satisfy emotional needs. It is difficult to condense the history of Cubism into a few lines: let it suffice to say that this school, which had assimilated in part the great lesson to be derived from CEZANNE who worked in the Impressionist period, has played a part of quite exceptional importance in the development of modern art.

Cubism was the great source of inspiration to which all the artists turned, though they did not necessarily remain faithful to its principles all their life. The significance of the cubist revolution is twofold. In the first place it was a reaction against the Impressionists who had been so preoccupied with light effects, with the surface of the object, that they neglected its inner structure. The Cubists set out to create a geometry, two dimensional or three dimensional, and the fecundity of this approach is amply illustrated by the diverse production of such men as FERNAND LEGER, JUAN GRIS, MARCOUSSIS and ANDRE LHOTE. The second innovation, perhaps the more important, was the discovery of the 'signe plastique': in the cubist analysis of the object, the plane and the line are significant not only in relation to the object but also in relation to the surface of the picture as a whole, with the result that the Cubist reconstruction is far more than a return to realism - a new pictorial world had been created and full play was given to the intellect. Originating with CEZANNE, Cubism must be regarded as closely related to the realistic impulse derived from the Renaissance, but the 20th century added the new element of plasticity and in Cubism the artist of today still finds food for thought. It is this second aspect of Cubism that accounts for the fact that Negro art, rediscovered by BRAQUE and PICASSO, was integrated in European painting before 1914 - the Negro artists were also inspired by purely plastic considerations.

Surrealism

After the 1914-18 war, a new trend appears in painting: the surrealist movement, which was strongly influenced by the experimental poetry of ANDRE BRETON and TRISTAN TZARA, and by FREUD's theories on the interpretation of dreams.

Painters directed their attention to an inner world, which they expressed either by resorting to a detailed, almost photographic realism of uncanny effect - as is the case with DALI - or by strange shapes and colours which make the picture a sort of graphological projection of the soul; this is the case with MIRO and, in quite a different style, YVES TANGUY.

Such a development was however rather dangerous for painting, for the literary element tended to predominate. The most satisfactory application of surrealism is perhaps to be found in the tapestries of LURCAT. His medium seems well adapted to this no-man's-land between painting and literature.

Non-figurative painting

Concurrently, a new branch was developing: non-figurative painting. It refuses all direct reference to reality and relies on the interplay of line, tone and colour for its effect. Though it would appear that this form of art is only now being recognized, it should be remembered that the first experiments along these lines were undertaken as early as 1909 and 1910, and that SCHNEIDER, DEYROLLES and DEWASNE all owe a considerable debt to PICASSO.

Towards a new realism

It must not, however, be forgotten that the influence of the expressionists and the Fauves still persists despite the great importance of the more abstract Cubist painting. This influence manifests itself today in a kind of new realism that retains some element of the object and uses its expressive value as a pretext to build up the picture. The neo-realistic school is perhaps best represented by PIGNON and it together with the non-figurative school constitute the most remarkable aspects of contemporary art.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to grasp the full meaning of these styles of painting if the man who has been able to manipulate every modern style with the greatest brilliance is left out of account: PICASSO. In his work he has succeeded in conciliating colour and line, a problem that had been subjected to uninterrupted study ever since INGRES and DELACROIX. No doubt the same might be said of MATISSE, whose influence on modern art was also of the greatest importance; but his development followed a well-defined line, whereas PICASSO has tackled every problem that has arisen in painting since 1900 and for each of them put forward a highly original solution.

Painting outside France

This rapid review of modern art has concentrated on the Paris School. An analysis of painting in other countries shows that, differences of national temperament and tradition being taken into account, the same problems as those studied by the Paris painters were encountered the world over. In the first place, many foreigners came to work in Paris and studied the varied achievements of masters such as PICASSO, FERNAND LEGER or LHOTE. It is therefore not surprising that, for example, in an exhibition of Polish painting held in Warsaw in 1947, all post-impressionist tendencies in French art should be represented: there was the work by the Kapist school and by SYBIS, by surrealists such as WLODABSKI and

abstract painters such as STESZEWSKY. Similarly, in the Winter exhibition at Cracow, THADDECANTOR's work showed the influence of PIGNON. The Paris exhibition in 1948 of recent English painting illustrated the purely abstract movement that has developed in England. In Brazil, the Sao Paulo expressionist school is endeavouring to rediscover the spirit of VAN GOGH and ROUAULT. In Holland, MELE has achieved a curious combination of the BOSCH and BREUGHEL tradition with innovations due to modern surrealism. Art in the United States has many points in common with that of France owing to the number of French painters who have worked in America and the number of Americans who have studied in Paris. A typical example is RUBINGTON who strongly derives from PICASSO and BRAQUE. In Russia, a recent reaction against the conventional academic style and photographic realism shows that the same problems are being dealt with there too.

So we see confirmed what was said in our first meeting: art is essentially an exchange of influences, a mingling of currents, an interpenetration of characteristics. The present state of painting recalls to a certain extent the Renaissance, when French, Flemish, Spanish and German masters were learning the lesson of the great Italians and devoted themselves to the same problems without for all that renouncing any of their original character, national temperament or culture. It is certain that the 'United States of Painting' favour constant progress, and that the routine of schools is for ever being shaken up by inspiration and emotion from abroad. It is equally certain that this unity of conception in art, by no means limited to the visual arts, contributes to a growing realization of the universal significance of man and civilization, without regard to differences of climate and race.

Q U E S T I O N S

THIRD MEETING

To what extent is the general public concerned with contemporary painting ?

Can lack of opportunity for viewing it account for the comparative isolation of contemporary painting ?

Is it necessary to be acquainted with the history of painting immediately preceding the present period ?

Which elements in modern painting derive from 19th-century preoccupations ?

Do they constitute a break with the naturalistic tradition dominating the art since the Renaissance ?

What was the transformation that took place in the 20th century ?

Why is the public put out by modern art ?

What is the painter's attitude towards the problems of contemporary art ?

What are the broad divisions in time and the principal trends of 20th-century painting ?

Why is Cubism important ?

What is the present position of non-figurative painting ?

What is PICASSO's place in contemporary art ?

What influence did developments in France have on painting in other countries ?

What conclusions may be derived from these developments as a whole ?

FOURTH MEETING

THE ARTISTIC EDUCATION OF THE AMATEUR

Theoretical and practical knowledge

In the preceding meetings we dealt with the problems which must be understood by all those who interest themselves in visual art.

Will this knowledge be sufficient if the amateur assiduously consults reviews specializing in present artistic trends, as well as works dealing with the history and technique of the arts and the publications of artists themselves, and if he attends lectures and debates?

Even if such knowledge gives him a fairly wide introduction to the subject, does it really put into practice the theoretical data previously studied? If he is not going to be fully versed in those methods which are acquired only by practical study, does not the amateur run the risk of yielding to a certain eclecticism, and of accepting too willingly whatever suggestion is made to him? The more so since such suggestions always correspond to certain affinities - although, of course, amateurs can always read for themselves.

Will not the amateur who devotes himself to the practical study of the elements of that aspect of human expression which is known as visual art find that the contemplation of ancient or modern works of art more easily confirms him in his feelings and opinions?

Since he will have had an opportunity of realizing for himself in the course of his studies the steady effectiveness of the primary constituents, such as design, relative values, colour, volume, etc., will not the amateur be more likely to recognize in the changing forms of art those very elements which ensure its continuity and justify those changes?

The amateur's needs and resources

Whether he has a natural aptitude for painting and feels himself to be driven by an imperious need to create in order to hold fast an emotion and communicate it to others, or whether, owing to genuine incapability or simply to modesty, he dare not attempt creative work, the amateur will find in the study of the resources of plastic imagery, either the means to revitalize and enrich his own expression, or a revelation of potentialities of his own which an arid artistic education had stifled. This applies to many amateurs influenced by periods of art whose products have a learned and complex look about them. Yet others, who know the value of sincerely expressing their own sensibility, and who would be satisfied with the most elementary resources for so doing - but they are very rare - represent, like the Douanier Rousseau, the height of popular genius.

They are sustained only by a very lively taste for the interplay of form and colour, but their vision is diffuse and limited, their expression disordered, and their very first successes lead to a dead end; development

becomes impossible because they are incapable of judging and of correcting their own work, or of finding principles which will enable them to use their own personal gifts to the best purpose. The reason is that they are trying to use a language of whose very rudiments they are ignorant. They use it mechanically, like a man who speaks without being able to read, and who is consequently deprived of an important opportunity for enriching his memory and imagination.

Thus it is easy to understand that if genius alone is capable of compensating such a lack, mere talent must use all available technical resources if it is to achieve a better expression.

The means of such expression are well known: lines, relative values, volume, colour, and so on; their use in the history of form is elementary or complex according to the existing circumstances of life and civilization. From pre-history to Roman times, from the Renaissance to the present day, no period has made any progress over its predecessors, despite the possibilities for perfecting technical resources, and despite the expansion of learning which surprises and disconcerts many amateurs.

Thus they must be shown that the value of all works of art, whatever their technical accomplishment, lies only in the extent to which they bear evidence of being the direct emanation of a sensibility which can be expressed by elementary means.

It is evident however that, because of the heavy burden of our spiritual legacy, we hesitate between different means of expression, and between one influence and another.

It is therefore indispensable that aesthetic activity should be conditioned both by knowledge of past and recent works of art - in which the permanence of the signs used by the artist's idiom will be demonstrated by analysis - and by judgment which will enable the amateur, in executing his proposed works, to employ those signs for his own ends and judiciously to subordinate them to others in accordance with his subject matter.

METHODS AND MEANS

In addition to other experiments carried out in the field of education, the Association Travail et Culture and the Association Peuple et Culture have opened a "Popular Academy of Visual Arts". Under the guidance of the teachers of this Academy, students will be able to exercise such knowledge and judgment in the course of practical work spread out over a term and linked to a study of the specific qualities of line, relative values, volume and colour; these studies will be continued during the following terms, but while dealing with the same problems, will approach them from different angles and go deeper. Although studied successively for reasons of convenience, these qualities are in fact indissolubly linked.

The exercises on line present the problem of graphic representation as an abstract element, which includes certain physical characteristics such as light, volume, material and even colour, but which lacks the resources of chiaroscuro or the palette. They also raise various problems relating to space,

surfaces and forms, and to their inter-relationship, which is as important from the visual point of view as the objects themselves.

The formation of judgment takes pride of place; incidentally, it is indistinguishable from the awakening of sensibility by certain exercises such as those of colour, which render it both fresher and more inventive from contact with what Matisse has called "man's age-old physical and sensual being", although it is all too often buried under routine habits of feeling, seeing and thinking.

The examination of these problems by students who attend these courses twice a week for two and a half hours makes it possible to collect extensive information in the course of a year about the efficiency of the pictorial idiom. It is obvious that the spotlighting of certain constant laws does not provide a collection of practical recipes for manufacturing master works. Nevertheless, since these laws are themselves the outcome of numerous experiments made throughout the centuries, beginners are enabled by this method to avoid losing precious time in rediscovering them by lengthy and unsure paths.

That is the only difference between the formation of the amateur and that of the artist. The latter, who has all his time at his disposal, will assimilate these rules far more positively if he discovers them for himself; for, having forged his own tools, he will use them better. For those who devote to their only art their scant leisure time, it is clearly preferable that their initiation should be made fairly rapidly by means of something akin to information. In any event, is it not the aim of this form of education to make the workers understand the internal and spiritual mechanism which informs these works, rather than to put them in a position to produce such themselves?

OTHER AIMS OF THE ACADEMY

The Academy also proposes:

- to establish a history of art based on the study of resources employed and of experimental analysis of works of art;
- to train leaders for groups of amateurs;
- to organize travelling exhibitions illustrating these methods and their results;
- to institute correspondence courses for isolated persons;
- to create a centre of documentation: plates, photographs, bibliographies;
- to undertake a study of group needs; posters, wall decorations, etc.;
- to organize training and information seminars;
- to create an experimental centre of art education which will interest students of every age.

The Work of Art and the Public

Is it too much to hope that a method based on innumerable and convincing experiments will soon be in general use to prepare the child, the adolescent and the adult to receive one of the freest and most important messages of our time, even though this message is, alas, only too frequently not understood? Yet this divorce between art and the people is in reality due only to the State educational

machinery's dislike of a form of visual expression which has been revitalised in accordance with the needs and aspirations of our time.

Is it reasonable to blame the public for having a vision limited to the graphic symbols which were in use from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century?

Such experiments as have been attempted prove that the most evolutionary forms of art may, after a preliminary initiation, become accessible to all those who, whatever their origin or their training, are animated by a genuine will to enquire and to understand.

It is the everyday reading of the signs of pictorial idiom in its non-static form which may put an end to the isolation of the artist. Hence it should be the aim of all art teaching to render visual signs intelligible.

FIFTH MEETING

THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF ART

What should be the relationship between art and society?

This question implies both the influence of society on art and the reciprocal action of art on society.

Certain theoreticians, like Kant, consider that artistic activity is entirely autonomous while others, such as Taine, consider that art is entirely determined by environment (natural and social).

There are those who think that, even if society affects artistic creation, the latter for its part has no appreciable effect on social life; others again believe that art is a means by which men affect other men, a means of transforming society, and that it has indeed a "social function".

This is an important question inevitably leading to problems concerning the responsibility and freedom of the artist, and which is easily understood.

If we are to form an opinion, to judge an artist or group of artists, or a school of art, and to understand the real meaning of their endeavours, we must examine certain facts and endeavour to reply to the two following questions:

1. How and to what extent does society affect artistic creation?
2. How and to what extent does art affect society?

For the purposes of this enquiry we will borrow examples from different periods of art. Clearly, this is not a final choice; these are merely instances among many others. It is desirable that the seminars should in their turn try to study other examples chosen for the purpose.

1. THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIETY ON ARTISTIC CREATION

(a) The relationship of art to the economic structure

From the material point of view, a work of art is a product of human activity. As such, its production is subject to all kinds of external and internal factors, as is human production in general. It is obvious that natural environment and geographical factors impose certain conditions, such as, for example, the presence or absence of certain materials. But within that natural environment - both as a function of it and also in the course of its transformation - man has made his own history; he has created "societies", which are built up on a definite economic structure.

One can see that in nomadic societies, such as those which formerly peopled Asia Minor and Central Asia, the perpetually moving tribes of shepherds seeking new pasture land did not produce the same art as the sedentary farming communities, whose people were already bound to the soil, or of artisan societies groups in towns. Among the nomads, visual art developed in a very special

form - that of easily transportable objects of small size and precious material, which frequently constituted the tribal treasure: mostly they were jewels. On the other hand, it is easy to understand that architecture could not develop in such societies, any more than could the arts directly or indirectly linked to architecture such as painting and monumental sculpture. Among cave-dwellers, compensation for the absence of architecture permitted the development of mural paintings. Great architecture implies not only a sedentary life, but even a very advanced stage of sedentary life, in fact a veritable social organization.

(b) The relationship of art to the social forms of labour, to the methods of ownership, etc.

The influence of the social organization shows itself in a hundred different ways, often confusing because they are closely inter-related and superimposed on one another. To return to our previous examples, we may note that, among other things, the various forms of art also imply varying forms in the organization of labour. Another and very characteristic example was given in the introduction to this monograph, where we said that the transition from the handicrafts to manufacture, and from manufacturing to large-scale industry, brought about such changes in artistic production that our present-day ideas on art no longer correspond to the mediaeval concept of the "masterpiece". We then realize that this concept was largely linked to the mediaeval notion of labour and of production in the corporative society of the Middle Ages in the West. (It would also be possible to analyse the relative decadence of craftsmanship as the outcome of present-day modifications in working methods.

The influence of the various forms of ownership (collective or private), especially at the level of acquisition and enjoyment of works of art, must also be considered as one of the important factors in artistic evolution. These forms have varied greatly in the course of history: there was collective acquisition and enjoyment in primitive societies with tribal or clan form; class or individual patronage in more developed societies; and the present form of a "market" for works of art, hence the birth in the new democracies of a new collecting public. It is clear that neither the conception of beauty nor taste was identical in every case, so that very varied and greatly differing forms of art were the outcome of all these changes.

(c) The relationship of art to the general level of civilization

What we have said so far about the special conditions required by architecture would lead us to conclude that certain arts demand not only a definite economic situation and definite social needs, but also a certain stage of technical evolution, indeed, the development of human technique as a whole, that is to say, a certain level of civilization. Neither the Colosseum nor the Palace of Versailles are conceivable without the social conditions of which they were the outcome.

In the same way, scientific knowledge and industrial development are relevant to the evolution of the arts. One need only think of the changes in statuary resulting from the practice of casting metals; the plastic potentialities of bronze are entirely different from those of stone or marble. Similarly, one need only think of the positive revolution wrought in the field of painting by

the use of oil, which began to compete in the fifteenth century with fresco and tempera painting, and which enabled the individualistic outlook of modern sensibility to develop a special mode of expression - the easel painting. (And we should note in passing that this form is in itself tied to the modern method of individual acquisition and patronage). In the nineteenth century, the work of the physicists on the decomposition of light, together with the expansion of the chemical dye industry, were to play a decisive rôle in the development of Impressionism (but here there were, of course, other determining factors as well).

In short, a scientific discovery or a new stage in industrial progress may give birth to a new art if the latter corresponds to a real need, as was proved by the recent appearance and rapid growth of the cinema.

(d) The relationship of art to political forms

These few examples show clearly that the more closely art is tied to the economy of a society, the more strongly it is influenced by the dominating forces of that economy - which are in the most sense of the term its "customers", since they support it financially - and by the political forces acting as their representatives. In ancient Egypt, in the Empires of Assyria, of Chaldea and of Persia, art was entirely at the service of the autocratic State with imposed definite forms on it by means of strict "canons". In Greek society, art was at the service of a much more liberal State, and its forms were consequently softened and humanized.

Works of art were acquired in different ways, and the type of customer, who was not always the State, also varied. The Church at the beginning of the Middle Ages, the burghers at the period of the communes and corporations, later on individual patrons, whether of the bourgeoisie or the aristocracy, successively and in different fashions influenced artistic creation. It is particularly interesting to study the evolution of the forms of art and of their spiritual content together with the styles that correspond to them - Norman, Gothic, Renaissance, etc. Such a study shows how inspiration, at first essentially religious, was gradually humanized, rationalized and individualized; and how, at the same time, the forms grew softer, more animated, while a new feeling for nature and man gradually developed.

(e) The relationship of art to the movement of ideas

This leads us to consider art from a new angle, which it is on the one hand a product of human activity, it is also a means of expression. Whatever form it adopts, it always has a spiritual content; it expresses the thought of its creator, and he, in his turn, shares in the thought of his time and environment. This fact incidentally also expresses itself in varying ways, according to whether the creator is in harmony or in disharmony with his time or environment, and according to whether or not he is aware of that fact.

It is probable that, more often than not, art expresses the dominating outlook of its time, or else the outlook of the dominating group.

At the most distant periods, and even today among the least developed peoples, the work of art has a magic significance. (We saw in Chapter I the part played, in societies which hunted bison and reindeer, by the magic representation of these animals.).

Gradually, magic thought gave way to religious thought in the true sense of the word. In ancient Greece and in the Middle Ages art themes were religious. But in both these periods they ended by gradually losing that aspect. In the Middle Ages in particular, from the moment when, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the bourgeoisie of the towns began to gain ground, new themes began to appear: themes of nature and of the common human. At the same periods, even religious themes were humanized, such as the Nativity; a background of real flowers was substituted for geometrical or stylized patterns; the rules were relaxed; real persons and animals appeared in religious representations; the daily "tasks" of the artisan and the peasant were celebrated in small and realistic paintings in Notre Dame in Paris, at Amiens and elsewhere, alongside the great sacred themes.

We have also seen that art may at certain times (and often at the same time) represent a certain political concept: autocracy, aristocracy, democracy, etc. etc. But political ideas and concepts are not always simple to represent in reality. Where the arts of Egypt, Assyria or Byzantium expressed unambiguously the domination of absolute power, we have just pointed out that the art of the Middle Ages allowed the presence of an underlying social force to show itself: that of the bourgeoisie. This explains not only the general evolution which we have rapidly sketched, but also certain contradictory aspects of it: while preserving its religious designation, the cathedral in itself already expressed a new concept of the world and of man - the first stammering of a rational way of thinking which was soon to come into conflict with the beliefs and dogmas that the building itself nevertheless continued to symbolise.

These contradictory aspects of art were to become even more marked with the growing complexity of society. Hence the presence, at one and the same period, of geniuses as different as, for instance, Le Nain, Poussin, Le Brun, or, in the following century, of Chardin, Boucher and Greuze; or again, of Delacroix, Ingres and Daumier. Hence also the multiplicity of contemporary tendencies. These contradictory aspects may even appear in the work of the same artist, such as Goya, for instance. But more often they correspond to a social disequilibrium or to the indecision of the artist (qua artist) within that social disequilibrium.

Thus there are forms of artistic expression which seem to be mainly in opposition to the dominating ideology of their time, such as, for example, the Christian art of the catacombs, and later, certain individual expressions of protest like the engravings of Daumier.

Looked at closely, both the art of the Catacombs and the new religion it expressed sprang from the Old World as a result of an economic crisis of the Roman Empire; similarly, the art of Daumier pertains to the political struggles of the early nineteenth century, themselves the outcome of an extraordinary leap in economic progress. Hence these aesthetic forms of expression were themselves bound to reality and corresponded to social movements and upheavals which were perhaps not yet manifest in the forefront of the social and political setting, but which were preparing to play their part in it. In a word, art can be revolutionary.

(f) The interaction of these various factors

A study of these examples shows that the progress of art always corresponds to more profound movements at the economic, social or political level. Art expresses a general movement which, at its highest level, is the movement of ideas, but in art it further manifests itself in a transformation of forms and of taste, even of the idea of beauty, in short, in different styles.

But - as several of our examples have shown - we must not lose sight of the fact that none of these external influences acts in isolation; while examining any one of them, we must never forget that there are others at other levels, which sometimes act in divergent directions, and further, that it is not always the same influence which is decisive. We must always remember that art is in reality the outcome of all these influences, which is precisely what gives it such inexhaustible variety. That is why any social happening does not always have the same effect on art, because other factors also come into play. We must therefore beware of generalizations, and always minutely examine the facts.

It should also be added that, as between different societies and across time and space, artistic exchanges take place whose causes differ: trade relations, war, conquest, colonisation, etc. The immense variety in the forms assumed by early Roman art was mainly due, on the one hand to the craftsmanship in gold and silver of the nomadic peoples of Central Asia, imported into the West by barbarian invasions, and on the other, to the Assyrian and Coptic (Egyptian Christian) tapestries, introduced through Mediterranean trade. These decorative themes were carried over by the Romanesque artists into their monumental sculpture (capitals, tympana of the churches of Saintonge and Auvergne in France, etc.) and provided a starting point for the development that was to reach its highest expression when the mediaeval world had acquired a realism and humanism of its own. But it must not be forgotten that this development derives from a historical event and was influenced by all the other factors of which we have spoken. At the end of this development mediaeval art had returned to Greek classicism which up to then it had ignored and which the men of the Renaissance were able to assimilate directly. At this point another historical event, the invasion of Italy by armies from several European countries, stimulated the taste for classical antiquities and enabled the society of the modern epoch having itself reached a humanist conception of the world, to develop original artistic expression on the foundations of humanism. A new stage in the development of art had begun.

But certain forms of thought and feeling can be seen to persist after the conditions that gave rise to them have disappeared. Religious themes may be used long after they have lost their original meaning; they may have retained only a decorative value or have acquired fresh meaning. (This applies to classical mythological themes, which revive periodically and renew their content.) Then there are the technical traditions, the craftsman's habits, which ensure a certain continuity, at least in a formal sense. But it must also be pointed out that survival of form frequently entails partial survival of content, which, moreover, explains the fact that art frequently lags behind the general trend of ideas.

Finally, there is a factor of overriding importance, viz.

(g) The rôle of personality

Although we have pointed out that all sorts of social factors intervene

in the genesis of a work of art, it must not be thought, as Taine's theories invite us to do, that the work of art is mechanically and imperatively determined outside its creator. Society may condition the work of art, but it does not create it. A man creates it. He determines himself and determines his work within the limits imposed by the given conditions. One conscious mind absorbs the many interferences and pursues its tremendous activity with intricate variations of tempo. Art is frequently the outcome of a struggle against imposed constraints, of an effort to break the fetters of circumstance; the victory of a conscious mind that seeks itself within and in the face of these conditions. The mediaeval work of art to draw once more upon that inexhaustible source of example, corresponds in a certain measure to the specifically mediaeval notion of the 'master-piece'; but as work of art it stands above the masterpiece (the latter term to be taken in its transient and social sense), perhaps for the very reason that the work of art expressed the aspiration of the individual who wanted to transcend the bounds in which the term 'masterpiece' seemed to enclose him. Here lies the difference between the artist and the craftsman.

In other words, art cannot be more closely determined than man himself; man is a social being at once the product of society and the active element in society; certain it is that it is he who makes history.

This brings us to our second question.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF ART ON SOCIETY

(a) Art enriches

Man makes history, and art is one of the means with which he makes it. From a very general point of view, art is one of the factors that determine culture; it is a means of perfecting sensibility and knowledge. It thus contributes to human progress, and to the awakening and development of consciousness. It expresses immediately the whole of reality, which scientific thought can only grasp in an abstract fashion. Art follows the progress of scientific knowledge and philosophic thought and makes them a part of social consciousness. It makes man conscious of his own destiny.

(b) Art is an active element of history

From the very earliest ages the artist has worked with the intention of participating actively in the life of the society around him. Frequently, and even in quite recent times, this was his essential motive. The aesthetic preoccupation and the search for beauty were altogether absent or at least not overtly admitted. We have already pointed out the magic function of art in primitive societies. Through this magic element the artist influenced the world of man. When magic thought was superseded by religious thought, art (in general) no longer claimed to influence nature, but this did not mean that it had lost its influence on man.

It has been said many times that the Gothic cathedral played the part of a great book in which the people could read the great episodes of the Christian religion. The beauty of the figures decorating the tympana of Chartres or Paris certainly affected the imagination and faith of those who contemplated them. But in the course of the evolution of which we have spoken this great book of stone

provided quite different teaching: it had become a condensation of the knowledge of the age and thus showed the way to criticism and rational thought. Medieval art, born in the fervour of faith and remaining an admirable propagator of faith during many long years, eventually contributed to precipitate the religious crisis by which it was itself transformed when the Renaissance supervened. It was gradually transformed by man and man was transformed by it.

When Giotto, in Italy, dared to infuse life into the rigid forms of Byzantine art, he was more in accord with the trend of history than the painters of his time who perpetuated the traditional forms. His work was better fitted to open the eyes of his contemporaries to their own destiny and to help them in their forward march. It contributed to a fuller development of medieval man. Later, the artists of the Renaissance, although they were determined by the great transformation of society, brought this transformation home to the minds of their contemporaries. Later again, DAVID gave immediate, palpable expression to the revolutionary idea, and DAUMIER by his engravings helped to foment the popular movement of his time.

Relations between artist and public

Certain it is that the wider his public, the closer the relations between artist and society. We know that the economic conditions, which determine his customers, do not always enable him to reach a large public. Let it however be said that these conditions are not necessarily the same for all forms of art at any given moment: painting, for example, may be limited to a small public whilst engraving, which in this respect may be compared to printing, can reach vast numbers of people and different strata of society; and there can be no doubt that engraving with JACQUES CALLOT, GOYA, DAUMIER, etc., played a very important part in history. Its social content is generally more pronounced and the artists devoted to engraving certainly had a desire to reach a very large public and communicate their ideas.

The historical significance of human progress can only be grasped and understood by taking the largest public into account and adopting its viewpoint. If an interpretation of history is attempted in disregard of that viewpoint, the perspective is diminished and distorted, the profound significance of reality escapes and becomes obscure. This is what happens if for one reason or another the artists public is limited to a minority whose interests and tastes do not coincide with the general trend of society. The artist who serves a class that has come to a standstill finds himself more or less isolated from society as a whole and loses touch with the most valuable social aspirations, the sense of human progress (unless, like GOYA, he has recourse to another means of expression).

Little by little he loses sight of his social function. He allows himself to drift (frequently unconsciously) into creating for leisure, delight and the exclusive tastes of his customers as did BOUCHER and the fashionable painters of the eighteenth century. Finally he considers his art as an end in itself and so we get the theories of pure art, art for art's sake, etc., which run counter to the social function of art.

Today in the era of "art business", economic circumstances have brought about a dangerous limitation of clientèle and public. The isolation of artists begins to appear in Romanticism and the Romantic conception of the genius - a man predestined but misunderstood. The isolation takes on more and more tragic

proportions in the course of the nineteenth century and gives birth to the myth of the "accursed artist" of which BAUDELAIRE, RIMBAUD, GAUGUIN, and VAN GOGH are characteristic examples.

The artist believes himself to be rejected by society whereas the separation is due to material conditions. But the myth also expresses to a certain extent his protest against this rupture: the tragic involution of a mind that aspires to fulfil its human function and is prevented from doing so by circumstance. It was this unresolved struggle that drove VAN GOGH to suicide.

At a certain stage the myth of art for art's sake, despite all its proud assertions, reflects the final submission to market conditions (restricted public) and the renunciation of social function. It thus actually has social content, but this content is negative.

Consequences of the artist's isolation

These are serious.

(a) The artist thrown back on himself no longer finds inspiration at the sources of human knowledge and sensibility which are inseparable from reality. Moreover, reality has a precise social significance, it contains social reality, and disagreement with this social reality entails an abandonment or distortion of the data of reality in the interests of the more or less arbitrary data of subjectivity (abstract or non-figurative art).

(b) Deprived of its social function and cut off from reality art loses its "necessity", it becomes diffuse and is frittered away in gratuitous experiments (discontinuity and instability of development, profusion of tendencies, anarchic imitation of earlier models, etc.). It loses its capacity for renewal and progress.

(c) Art loses the living unity of form and content (a theoretical opposition belonging to all creation and which can only be resolved practically in the struggle with reality). It is thus finally and inevitably thrown back on research of form (mannerism, hermetism, decorative abstraction, etc.). Contact with the masses, which brings about a common language is lost.

Some of these symptoms can easily be detected in the broad trends of modern art as dealt with in Chapter III. It will be seen that these symptoms can only be understood as a result of the de facto isolation imposed upon the artist by present market conditions. We must also insist on the fact that at the end of the 19th century works of art were treated as "goods". They became the occasion for speculation and commercial operations and were not expected to remain in any one person's possession, but to change hands continually for money. Their market value tends to take precedence over their artistic value, their human content, which can scarcely be evaluated in terms of money.

Future prospects

Most artists consider this rupture as the principal obstacle in the path of their social mission, which amounts to saying that they try to fight

against it. But they first have to fight against market conditions. At the end of this essay we shall deal with efforts undertaken in this direction. We shall also give a summary of the results so far achieved in solving the problem of the education of the public (see Chapter IV).

Yet the artist has also to fight on the plane of art itself and of the search for means of expression. What has been said above in no way implies that the artist should renounce the support of present day culture and perfected technique. The example of GIOTTO, however, shows that a great artist is not afraid to react openly against the established art forms of his day. In order to introduce new content into painting he was constrained to overthrow the forms. This is one of the most important aspects of the development of art and its crises, i.e. the necessity for art to advance by abandoning traditional forms. One of the tragic features of contemporary art is the fact that on the one hand it is attracted by research of pure form and on the other by new values that express the destiny of society.

Great sacrifices will be needed if art is to overcome this contradiction and to recapture its unity of form and content. In many places today there is a will to return to the world of living reality and to break with hermetism. This current cannot fail to develop in days to come.

Q U E S T I O N S

FIFTH MEETING

What difference do you perceive between the sculpture of a Romanesque church (Moissac ou Vézelay), an 11th and 12th century Gothic church (Chartres) and a 13th and 14th century Gothic church (Rheims, Amiens).

- (a) from the point of view of subject matter,
- (b) from the point of view of rendering of the human figure,
- (c) from the point of view of the ideas expressed,
- (d) from the point of view of the execution?

Try in the same way to make an analysis of the development of Greek art or of any other period with which you are familiar.

How would you differentiate between the circumstances of a 15th century maecenas (aristocrat or commoner) and an amateur today?

How does such difference affect the behaviour of the artist?

How can the taste of certain modern painters for primitive art be explained (Negro art, children's drawings, etc.)?

Do you know of any works of art that have exerted an influence on society?

Do you think that engravings (etchings, lithographs) have played a definite rôle in history? Give examples. Compare this rôle with that of printing.

What social categories do you think the following artists represent respectively: Titian, Clouet, Le Nain, Le Brun, Teniers, Watteau, Chardin, Ingres, Daumier, Manet?

FIFTH MEETING

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

At the end of these studies on the theoretical and practical problems arising in the visual arts today, a certain number of conclusions may be reached.

First of all, what essential ideas can be derived from each of the meetings?

The work of art must be reintegrated in society

We saw how art was slowly isolated from the normal circumstances of daily life. In particular, since the nineteenth century, the artist has been forced to work for himself and was opposed, or at least neglected, by the general public. It is therefore necessary to reintegrate the work of art in society and with this end in view to reestablish the contact between society and contemporary art. In this connection a double obstacle must inevitably be investigated and overcome: on the one hand, the problem of initiation in art and the problem of making art known; on the other hand, the problem of reaching a better understanding of the work of art by studying the preoccupations imposed on contemporary artists (First Meeting).

As concerns the first problem, we saw that a technique has already been developed to enable the uninitiated public to get to know modern art and understand its aims: Visits to museums with lectures, exhibitions held in factories, offices, etc., films showing the stages of development of a work of art. As for the second problem, a study of the history of modern art may suggest a solution. Indeed, anybody who follows the development of painting since the nineteenth century cannot but realize how line and colour were progressively invested with greater and greater significance, how inspiration was derived from the very heart of every day life, and how expressive elements were forged, which twentieth century painters have made use of in order to break with Renaissance tradition and strike out paths towards a new form of expression (cubism, Picasso, etc.). Modern art is thus struggling for freedom of its means of expression. (Second and Third Meetings).

It was inevitable that such a break with naturalism should greatly perplex the public. Lectures, exhibitions, films will not be accepted without protest. But this protest may often result in a desire to study the problem at close quarters and even inspire people to become painters. Although a vocation inspired in this way may not be as imperative as that of Gauguin who gave up his profession to "paint every day", it is none the less true that practical initiation in the problems of painting is a singularly valuable experience. Here also there are methods and institutions for those who wish to be initiated (Fourth Meeting).

Reciprocal influences, a consequence of reintegration

Thus, on the theoretical and practical levels, the general public may get to know modern art very intimately. The contact between society and the artist, which would thereby be reestablished, is of the greatest importance, for art has a social function by virtue of the influence it exerts on contemporary sensibility and thought. Reciprocally, the artist is deeply influenced by the

economic and social life of his time. Even if he pretends to cut himself off from society this very pretension bears witness to the bonds linking him to society. The Fifth Meeting dealt with this problem in its historical form, stressed its importance and suggested solutions.

Practical conclusions depend on particular circumstances

This summary though all embracing view of the many aspects of modern art must lead to conclusions. We shall not propound them here in full detail. To have effect they must first be personal, they must be the result of careful thought on the work done, they must be the outcome of the discussions to which the meetings gave rise. Then they must be circumstantial and take into account not only diversity of national culture and temperament but also local material conditions that condition works of art. If persons with the right qualifications are available, a popular academy of visual art can be established. If not, the training of such persons should be started.

Elsewhere, a museum already in existence may be made use of or traveling exhibitions may be organized, reproductions made available, etc..

Finally, in these meetings we have constantly used the term "general public" in the sense of uninitiated public. But in reality there is a public consisting of intellectuals, employees, manual workers, etc., and for each of these groups a special form of initiation should be adopted. In this matter the audience at the meetings will have to draw its own conclusions.

Two important ideas, however, seem to emerge from the studies that have been pursued and we would like to propound them rapidly.

First, the problems arising out of the forms of modern art have considerable cultural and human scope not only because the visual arts like all other forms of art enrich the mind, but also because they represent with sufficient accuracy the state of equilibrium or disequilibrium of society as a whole - they may be compared to the temperature chart above the bed of a patient. Recent history confirms this view and shows for example that the struggle between certain esthetic ideologies accompanies and sometimes even precedes a social crisis. Before crushing liberty tout court, the Nazis tried to crush certain liberties in art.

Furthermore, in a world where science and technical progress build higher and higher walls that hamper communication between men who come to resemble more and more the specialized parts of a machine - unavoidable if the universe, whose great complexity is only now being discovered, is to be dominated - art, which above all is poetry, an exchange of forms, reconstruction in the non-utilitarian realm, must be conceded greater and greater importance in the interest of the equilibrium of the human mind.

Official initiatives and private initiatives

In order to enlarge artistic culture we must aim above all at practical achievements. Here private initiative can and must compensate the insufficiencies of official initiative.

(a) Scope of official initiative

On the whole official initiative is behind hand as regards art teaching

and the education of the public, but also as regards support given to artists and efforts to make their work known.

The program and method of official teaching have not developed very far of late and are not adapted to the new demands made on taste or to the practical needs of the artist. It seems that it is merely due to the fact that the current of life has swept on that a somewhat larger place is now reserved for the practical applications of the various branches of teaching, but in all this no specific method or definite purpose can be discerned. The most striking results in this field (workshops for ceramics, stained-glass, frescoes, lithography, art prints, stone cutting, etc.) were in most cases due to the individual efforts of some teachers, most of them young, who were not always seconded by their superiors. Such teachers must however not be lost sight of and, wherever they may appear, they must be given the greatest support.

In certain countries, such as Poland, the State takes an active interest in the development of handicrafts. A veritable renaissance has resulted: fresh inspiration was found but traditional techniques were preserved. Similar examples are provided by Russia where in Turkmenistan, for instance, the old icon-painting technique and the art of carpet making have seen new development. In France, the efforts of Jean Lurçat have for the time being resolved an economic crisis in tapestry making and have enabled one of our noblest handicrafts to survive. But it is obvious that the problem of handicrafts, which are so important because they are concerned with truly popular sources of inspiration, is bound up with economic conditions which cannot be overcome everywhere and necessitates in most cases the intervention of the public authorities.

The progress of museography

The State is also in charge of museums and large collections. Here efforts are generally more highly developed as concerns exhibiting the works, demonstrating their significance by didactic means and providing the public with opportunity for viewing them. The Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries and Russia are in advance in this respect. Highly satisfactory results have been obtained in France where the administration of museums, the classification of works, etc., are undergoing complete reorganization. The public must respond to these efforts by visiting the museums. We shall see what has been done and what remains to be done in this direction.

Reconstruction and architectural decoration

There is yet another field in which official action must be stimulated. Public buildings offer natural and enormous opportunities for decoration whether in painting or in sculpture a form of art expression which would be more accessible to the public than easel paintings of necessity secluded in galleries. In the war-devastated countries, reconstruction programmes raised the hope that attention would be paid to their form of art, but unfortunately, owing to economic difficulties, these programmes have not everywhere been fulfilled. Nevertheless, in several countries there is legislation which aims at providing adequate scope for decoration in new buildings. In France measures of this kind had been taken before the war with a view to relieving unemployment among artists. But in practice such arrangements were not applied in all cases - and we should see to it that they are. In any town where a new building is being put up, a school,

a hospital, a town hall, or a library, the artists and the population generally should combine to make representations to the public authorities. It must be pointed out that results obtained in France by the organization "Chantiers d'Art" are highly praiseworthy. The organization approached the more enlightened town councils and in this way groups of buildings of high decorative value have been built.

There is no reason however for such efforts to be restricted to new buildings. Not only town councils but anybody who is in charge of a public building of any kind should neglect no occasion of introducing works of art. Such an undertaking does not necessarily entail large expenditure - there is no need to undertake vast monumental projects.

(b) Private initiative

The special field of action for private initiative is education. If art education in the schools is insufficient despite the efforts already pointed out, what is one to say of education in the history of art? The latter is only beginning to appear in curricula and, being in most cases limited to the past, is not concerned with the problems of today.

In many places cultural associations have been formed which aim at bridging the gap. In Chapter IV we considered the work done in France by the association "Travail et Culture" with its Académie, lecture courses and museum visits, and by the association "Peuple et Culture" the "Union des Arts Plastiques", etc.. In England the Arts Council of Great Britain pursues similar aims and can already boast encouraging results. Such movements should be supported wherever they exist and be created wherever they do not. Their methods may be revised and extended. One of the most interesting ventures is that of the "Union des Arts Plastiques" which organizes debates whereby contact is established between artist and public.

It is important to fight against the centralization that results from the way in which works of art are marketed and tends to concentrate production in a restricted number of privileged towns. Such concentration is useful in a sense for it contributed to the formation of valuable art centers such as Paris, but it should not be overdone. The ideas to which it has given birth must be spread as widely as possible and helped to penetrate into diverse strata of society where they will be modified and elaborated.

Denmark launched an excellent venture by having travelling exhibitions visit all the schools of the country. The pupils are methodically introduced to the works on show, which moreover may be visited by any member of the population. In France, the "Union des Arts Plastiques" has organized local exhibitions (frequently complemented by reproductions) and exhibitions that enabled workers to get in touch with even the most advanced forms of art.

The first step towards the organizing of such exhibitions has frequently been taken by the managements or by the trade union. This is something quite new and of great importance. In central European countries, the problem has been resolved automatically, due to the special economic and social conditions obtaining there, and exhibitions are held in the place of work in the normal course of events. But this cannot be the case everywhere and it is then that private initiative must intervene. In the factory, in the village, anywhere,

he who loves art must devote himself to propagate the love for art by organizing exhibitions, even though means at his disposal be very restricted. Colour reproductions, which nowadays are easily obtainable, will enable him to enlarge his exhibition if necessary. The associations of artists may help him - indeed, he should induce them to participate.

Another way of overcoming the obstacles of the art market was tried out in the United States and applied in France: societies of amateurs who cannot afford to buy individually, buy collectively and the works acquired are passed in rotation from one member to another following an arrangement which may be varied according to circumstances.

Let us insist once again upon another means of propagation, the cinema. The cinema may perform as great a service to the visual arts as the radio does to music. Very fine films have been made either on a particular artist or on a work, e.g. the Italian films on Giotto, Michael Angelo, Bosch, etc.; the Belgian film on Rubens (a very fine production) by Paul Haesaerts, various films on Cezanne, Matisse, Maillol, etc.. It cannot be too highly recommended that film societies give these productions a showing - the films are generally rather short and are of the greatest value as an aid to understanding art.

Nor must we neglect art libraries and study-circles where books dealing with art can be read and commented upon, and reproductions discussed. There are thousands of other suggestions to be made. All we want to do here is to start things moving and to awaken ideas: the groups themselves, following these summary indications should decide on and develop forms of activity which must of course vary with environmental conditions.

Whatever may be the outcome of their activity, it is obvious that the visual arts should find their place in organizations of all kinds which are being established all over the world: camping associations, youth hostels, cultural centres, etc. We have witnessed the preoccupation of such organizations with certain forms of art: amateur theatricals, puppet shows, choral singing, poetry handed down by oral tradition, etc. The same should and must apply to the visual arts. Everything depends on stating the problems well and awakening a taste for art and training cultural workers who will succeed here as they have succeeded elsewhere. This little book is directed towards these ends.

Q U E S T I O N S

SIXTH MEETING

Should art be reintegrated in society? How is this to be accomplished?

Do the artist and the public influence one another reciprocally?

How can the practical conclusions drawn from these meetings be made to serve the cause of art?

What part may be played by official ventures?

What part may be played by private ventures?

GLOSSARY

- Abstract painting:** In the broad sense, any painting is abstract since it renders an object by a choice of characteristic features. In the narrow sense (sometimes used) abstract means non-figurative.
- Arabesque:** A continuous line expressed or suggested in a picture by a single object or a group of objects.
- Archaic:** Is applied to the primitive period of an art usually characterized by simple, monumental forms.
- The Barbizon School:** A group of painters including Corot and Théodore Rousseau who worked in the village of Barbizon, near Fontainebleau, in the 19th century and devoted themselves particularly to landscape painting.
- Canon:** A rule observed in the creation of a work of art.
- Cubism:** A theory of painting that aims to reduce objects to their essential geometric lines: cube, sphere, etc.
- Development of painting:** Successive changes in means of pictorial expression and sources of inspiration.
- Esthetic:** Relating to the knowledge of art from the point of view of creation and appreciation.
- Figurative:** Is said of works of art that recall the object, even if only part of its visual elements are rendered.
- Fresco:** A mural painting characterized by the use of fresh plaster in order to fix the colours.
- Impressionism:** A movement of painting started in France about 1870 and directed towards expressing modern life by decomposing light into small juxtaposed patches of colour.
- Maecenas:** A Roman patron of the arts; name now applied to any such patron.
- Masterpiece:** In reference to the time of the guilds, a very carefully executed piece of work by which the craftsman gained the rank of 'master'.
- Mystery:** Dramatic performances in the middle ages of scenes from the Bible or the lives of saints: numerous people took part and settings were complex.

- Non-figurative:** Is said of a work in which the expressive elements of the visual arts are used without reference to an object.
- Ornament:** Expressive element which opposes to an empty surface a surface covered with varied drawing.
- Painting in the flat:** From the Renaissance onwards painting tends to suggest depth, in opposition to the painting of the Romanesque period and of certain modern schools which remains or tries to remain within the two dimensions.
- Picture-writing:** A writing that uses very simplified drawings to express ideas.
- Reflection:** 'Everything in nature is reflection' wrote Delacroix, that is to say that every object possessing its own colour (local colour) is modified by the light coming from neighbouring objects.
- Romanesque:** An architectural style characterized by the use of the barrel vault and by decorative and expressive mural paintings; prevailed from the 10th to the 12th century.
- School of Chatou:** On a small island in the Seine just outside Paris, the painters Vlaminck and Derain in the beginning of the 20th century launched the Fauve movement characterized by violent excesses of colour.
- Signe plastique:** Means of expression pertaining to a visual art and not related to the subject treated, e.g. a contour of a piece of sculpture.
- Still-life:** A study of inanimate objects. Their form and relationship demand of the painter a more highly developed structural composition.
- Stylization:** The rendering of an object by its essential features.
- Value:** Gradation of light and shade in one colour.