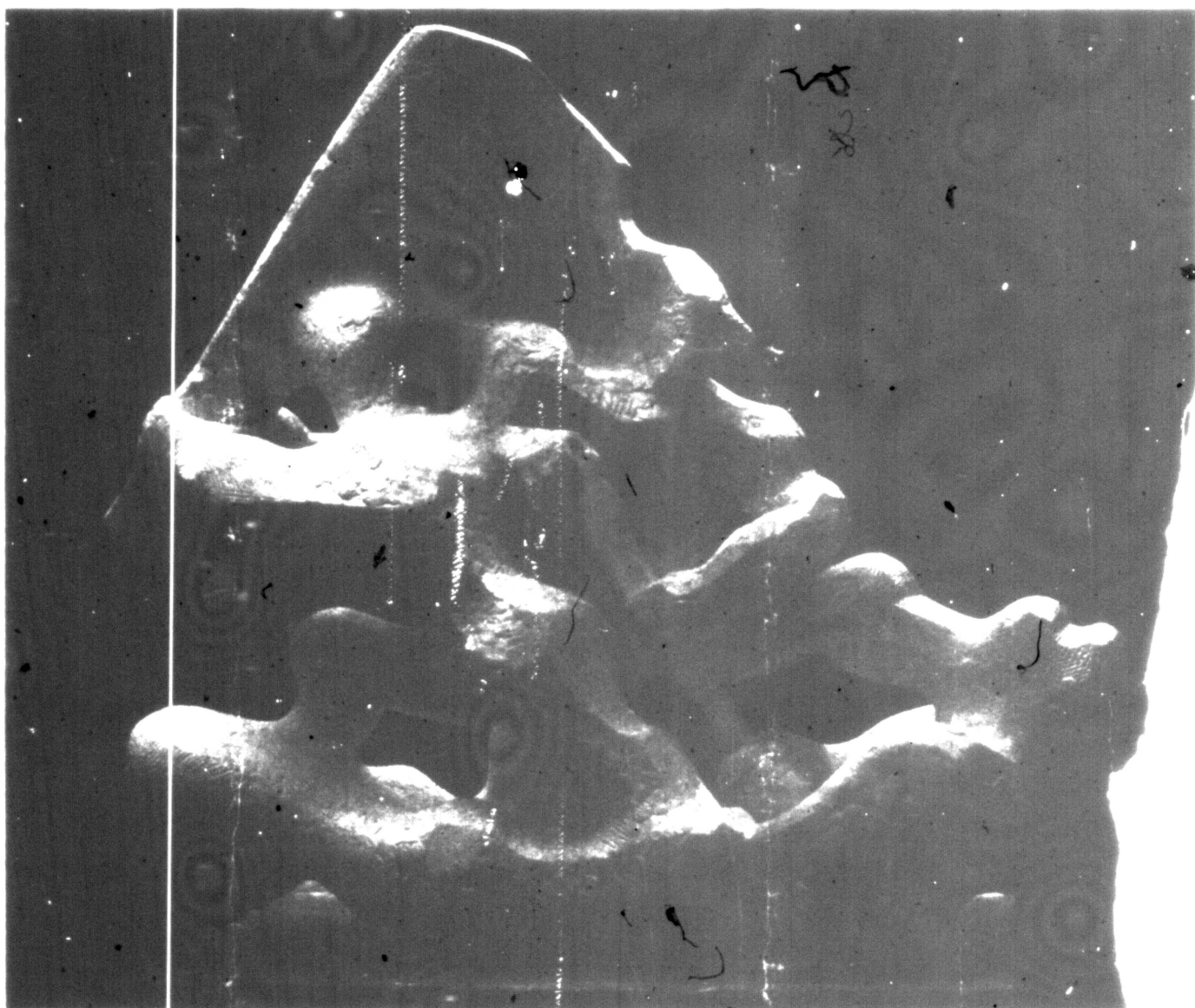


ART

JANUARY

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FRONT



Toward a New World

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NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

To meet the general call for information about the New York Artists' Union, the ART FRONT has established this department as a permanent feature of the magazine. It will be under the auspices of the National Correspondence Committee of the New York Artists' Union. It will contain information given in answer to the numerous questions asked about the organizational problems of organizing artists' groups on an economic basis, the artistic standards of the new organizations and particular local problems of each group. It will also feature articles and correspondence from artists, artists' organizations and affiliated groups throughout the country.

BECAUSE of delay in the assignment of W.P.A. projects, many Chicago artists find themselves in desperate circumstances. Individual requests of unemployed artists for jobs have resulted in vague promises for work at a future date in some cases; and in other cases in statements that, because particular artists do not fit in with the project as written, they would definitely not be employed. Still other artists have been told that, if they were on relief, jobs for them would be easy of attainment. Stringent relief qualifications, however, render it impossible for most unemployed artists to be placed on relief rolls.

Acting under the assumption that the welfare of Chicago artists was under consideration when the W.P.A. art projects were created, the artists have come to believe that only by a concerted effort of all the elements of Chicago art life can they achieve the benefits so widely publicized as theirs under the art project. To this end has been formed the "Chicago Artists' Committee for W.P.A. Jobs," a non-political, non-sectarian group to actively represent all the artists of Chicago in this matter. The members of this committee have been duly elected by a large body of artists comprising all schools of plastic expression.

With a view to clarifying the position of the Chicago artists in relation to the procurement of W.P.A. employment, we, the artists of Chicago, make the following recommendations:

1. That available funds be released immediately for setting into full operation the W.P.A. Art Project. Since the liquidation of the P.W.A.P. and the I.E.R.C., the W.P.A. is the one existing agency to which the Chicago artist may look for the employment necessary to his continued existence.

2. That the existing 90 per cent relief and 10 per cent non-relief ratio on W.P.A. Art Projects be changed, because this ratio does not represent a true relationship between the unemployed non-relief artist and the artist on relief in Chicago; a fact proven by the presence of but few competent artists on the present relief rolls; the total number of these artists on relief, plus an additional 10 per cent of non-relief artists, falls far short of the real number of unemployed artists in need of work.

3. That Art Projects be of permanent value, socially useful to the community, that they utilize the best creative abilities of the artists, and that artists be selected from the standpoint both of artistic qualification and of need.

4. That, by elimination of the pauper's oath, relief qualification be adjusted to expedite the opening of relief rolls to a greater number of unemployed artists; that these artists then and all artists on relief be placed on W.P.A. projects immediately.

5. That unemployed artists formerly working on the P.W.A.P. and the I.E.R.C. projects be given automatic transfer to the Art Projects of the W.P.A.

6. That the technical scope of W.P.A. Art Projects be broadened to include not only commercial art signs, and the painting of murals by groups of artists, who execute the ideas of the mural designer, but also individual and independent mural, easel, graphic, sculpture, and art teaching projects, making it possible for the artist to express his ideas in that field of work for which his talent, training and temperament have specifically fitted him.

7. That artists of Chicago be granted representation on administrative boards concerned with W.P.A. Art Projects and that this representation should also be extended them on any project planning

commission working on an Art Project, that these representatives be duly elected by a large body of the artists of Chicago.
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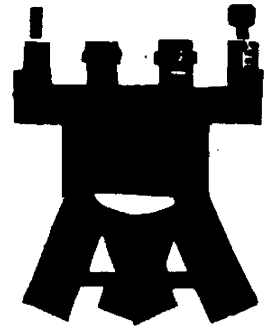
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ART FRONT

JANUARY, 1936



MADNESS IN METHOD

THE opening blurb of the multigraphed bulletin, distributed gratis at the "Exhibition of the Mural Art of the Modern State," now running wild at the Cosmopolitan Club, hits the all-time high for fantasy. "Cavemen in their caves, Egyptians in their tombs, Romans in their baths drew pictures on the wall. Each according to his fancy and the handy wherewithal. For the Christian Church and the royal palace, cardinal and king commanded painters, paid them well to celebrate the glories and grandeur of their creeds and conquests.

"Today on the hall of the city, in the lobby of those mysterious temples of transportation to the absolute elsewhere, the railroad station and the office of the post, pictures are going up by command of a new agency in art—the State.

"What creed and conquest are being celebrated in 1935 for the states of nine nations are shown in part by this Mural Show. A fragmentary record only, but such as it is, a reminder that the tongues of statesmen may lie, but the brush of an artist cannot."

No one signs the foreword, no one sponsors the exhibition, no one is responsible for the selection of the material and to no one is due the credit for its arrangement. It just happened! Added to this are some mimeographed sheets whose statistics, like maniacs, require clinical treatment.

These "compare" the administration of and appropriations for Fine Arts by the governments of France, Great Britain, Italy and the United States. We are told that for any one year France allocates \$4,327,854; Great Britain, \$4,664,591; Italy, \$9,334,444; and that the United States for the year 1935 appropriated the munificent sum of \$57,060,181—more than three times, we are led to believe, that of the other three nations combined! But of this stupendous sum \$50,000,000 are administered under the Treasury Department for Federal buildings (1 per cent, or \$500,000, for embellishment),

more than \$2,000,000 for national parks, more than \$4,000,000 for the Department of Interior's needs in the District of Columbia (including maintenance of buildings), and only \$34,275 for national museums. If compared, item for item, with the figures given for the other nations, the sum actually appropriated by the United States for Fine Arts would total (including \$2,317,125 for national parks) only \$2,851,400. A figure almost half that of the measly \$4,000,000 of France.

And should a more rigorous definition of the term "Fine Arts" be applied (excluding such artistic items as repairs to the wash basins in the Agricultural Building or the toilet bowls in the Federal Post Office) then the sum total of monies set aside in 1935 by the United States, according to the figures before us, would be exactly \$534,275. Delusions of grandeur—or April Fool?

ARTISTS' CONGRESS

THE latest developments in the organization of the Artists' Congress indicate a promise of success which the Artists' Union is most happy to observe. Since the announcement of the Congress, the Union has watched with sympathetic interest this mobilization of artists against War and Fascism and for the Defense of Culture.

It is now clearly shown that the breadth of the program of the Artists' Congress has drawn to it artists of reputation who, at the same time, have the most divergent esthetic viewpoints. The gloomy and reactionary predictions, which have been voiced in some quarters, to the effect that artists are incorrigible egotists, incapable of unified action of any kind, have been demonstrated false. A few of the names of prominent signers of the call, such as Ivan le Loraine Albright, President of the Chicago Society of Artists, Peggy Bacon, George Biddle, Henry Billings, Arnold Blanch, Peter Blume, Alexander Brook, Ernest Fiene, Harry Gottlieb, Alexander Calder, Stefan Hirsch, Joe Jones, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Doris Lee, Paul

Manship, Lewis Mumford (critic), Reginald Marsh, Boardman Robinson, Katherine Schmidt, Ralph Pearson, Ben Shahn, Niles Spencer, Harry Sternberg, Joseph Stella, Paul Strand, Ralph Steiner, Margaret Bourke-White, Walter Ufer, John Vassos, Vaclav Vytlacil, William Zorach, Yarnall Abbot, Benton Spruance, Mordecai Gorelick, Leo Katz and Rockwell Kent—give an idea of the genuine urgency of the Call, which has brought artists of such divergent interests together in common purpose.

The Artists' Union feels that the 250 (to date) prominent artists who will represent the interests of the American artists as a whole at the Congress, assure the formation of a permanent artists' organization on a national scale which will have real vitality and which will be able to deal effectively with the problems of the artists in their economic, social and cultural aspects. It is not too early to predict that the Artists' Congress is going to be a powerful and much needed stimulus to American art.

MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY

THE history of the artists' struggle for a municipal art center in New York is well known to most readers of ART FRONT. Briefly, the Artists' Committee of Action together with the Artists' Union began publicizing their demands for a real cultural center more than a year ago and fought unremittingly thereafter by means of huge demonstrations to City Hall, telegrams to the Mayor from such friendly sponsors as Dewey, Mumford, Stieglitz, Schudy and Broun, and wide publicity in ART FRONT and the daily press.

The aims for the proposed art center were:

1. Galleries for exhibition for use by all artists throughout the year.
2. Circulating department for rental of artworks to individuals and public institutions.
3. Free schools for painting, sculpture and graphic arts.

ART FRONT, Official Organ of the Artists' Union, 68 West 118th Street, New York City. Vol. 2, No. 2. Editorial Board: Stuart Davis, Editor-in-Chief; Herman Baron, I. Dineer, L. G. Field, Business Manager; Hugo Cellart, H. Gintzberg, Joseph Gower, Murray Haseman, Jacob Kainen, Ethel Okuniev, Harold Rosenberg, Joe Schwan, Max Sprink, Clarence Wechsler. 16 cents per copy. By subscription, \$1.00 per year.

4. Forum for discussion and popularization of art.

The fundamental demands of this movement can be summarized thus:

1. Only artists to hold executive offices.

2. All executives to be duly elected by the artists themselves.

Such an art gallery would establish once again a common bond between the artist and his community. It would free art from its bondage to wealthy patronage, give a vital impulse to living art, and help make art part of the daily routine of the mass of people.

Under all this pressure Mayor LaGuardia sought refuge among New York's aristocrats and appointed the very "select" Municipal Art Committee of One Hundred. There followed a series of protests against this shrewd and political move. The Mayor attempted to destroy the artists' organization's first principle—that only artists were to hold executive offices.

After a series of inconclusive meetings held by the newly appointed committee, at which no vital issues concerning the mass of artists were taken up, a temporary building was finally chosen at 62 West 53rd Street. This building is equipped with four floors of exhibition space and can house several paintings, sculptures, etc., of from forty to sixty exhibitors at one time. There are no provisions for a circulating library, lecture rooms and all the other original plans set forth by the Artists' Committee of Action and the Artists' Union.

What we wish to point out is that this is a partial victory granted us only through an immense, driving, organizational fight, a struggle that won sympathizers for us throughout the country. What we advocate is a long series of applications to this all too temporary gallery in order to expose the sheer inadequacy of space for the New York artists. And, finally, we urge artists to carry on a great drive for a true artists' representation and a genuine Municipal Art Center as a cultural landmark in America.

RENTAL POLICY

In the December issue of the *American Magazine of Art*, Duncan Phillips takes his stand with the museums against the artists on the question of the Rental Policy, as sponsored by the American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers. This policy was fully explained in the December *ART FRONT*. Mr. Phillips, director of the Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington, D. C., shows considerable indignation at what he terms "a hold-up" of the museums by the artists. In his excitement about safe-guarding his petty cash he allows himself to make a

statement which is careless as to truth, to put it politely.

It is true that he does not call the members of the Society "Reds" and "Communists", as some of our other critics are fond of doing, but he does refer to "the committee which committed the Society to so rash a policy". This statement is untrue. No committee committed the Society to anything. The Society committed itself by the approved democratic method of individual expression by ballot. The result of this vote, which is well known, was overwhelmingly in favor of the adoption of the Rental Policy, which every member of the Society had had the advantage of criticizing and discussing. The canard employed by Mr. Phillips is one of the major weapons employed by the enemies of the artists to discredit the Rental Policy in the interest of their own pennies. Another canard, very popular with those interested, is to the effect that the Society sprang the Rental idea on the museums without notice and so eliminated all possibility of compromise. Again, the well-known fact is that the Society asked for an audience with the Association of Art Museum Directors, then in convention, and was flatly refused.

Mr. Phillips, being his own board of trustees, speaks in high esthetic tone about the duties of the museums to their "public", and shivers at what would happen if the Rental Policy were adopted by all the institutions. As director and board of trustees combined, Mr. Phillips doubtless knows whereof he speaks, and he says quite simply that, with the Rental Policy in effect, the trustees would weigh each work exhibited with the idea of saving as many pennies as possible. *ART FRONT* feels sure that such would be their desire and intention, but the fact remains that the museums must show contemporary art, whether they want to or not; otherwise they revert to mausoleums of art of the past, and we feel sure that most trustees and other fourth vice-presidents of culture are very greedy for the prestige to be had in posing as connoisseurs of contemporary art. On sober consideration they would not willingly abandon this rôle.

Mr. Phillips' detachment is so great on matters of art that he allows himself the following expression—"Let the artists be warned that, if their demands are granted, the standard of the street will prevail". It is interesting to speculate what sort of standards the idealistic Mr. Phillips employs in his buying and selling of paintings which involve hundreds of thousands of dollars, mostly in the work of dead artists. Possibly the standards of Wall Street.

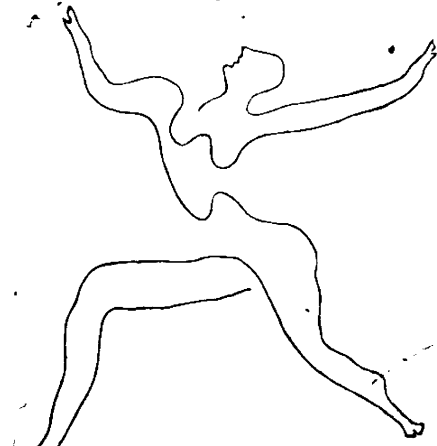
The arguments of the museums, to

which Mr. Phillips subscribes, are, briefly, that the artists owe the museums a debt of gratitude because of the huge sums they spend on art (the fact that the huge sums are spent on non-contemporary art does not prevent them from advancing this argument); and that they have no money to pay rentals because they are poor (this second argument would seem to be contradictory to the first, but, having no good arguments, they use silly ones). The simple fact is that the museums are institutions used by their backers for profit and prestige, to hold up the inflated values of their collections and to cloak themselves with a cultural aura. The exceptions prove the rule.

The Rental Policy is not an academic question with the artists. It is an initial step born of necessity, in the realization by the artists that they are about as badly exploited a class as it would be possible to name, and they are doing something about it. Thus Mr. Phillips' final insult, "—the artists need the museums far more than the museums need the artists", has little meaning except as it throws light on his ignorance of the situation.

25% NON - RELIEF

ARTISTS, actors, playwrights and others on the theatre and arts projects have scored a distinct victory against the use of the pauper's oath as a necessary requisite for employment of needy and unemployed people. The quota of 10 per cent has been increased to 25 per cent for employment of people not on relief rolls. This news will be welcomed by many artists and artists' organizations who have found that the stringent relief requirements have barred many capable and needy persons from employment because of administrative technicalities. This increase must be brought up to 100 per cent. We must abolish the "Pauper's Oath." Workers on relief and those who need relief should maintain all efforts to reinstate the provision of the C.W.A., which permitted all persons unemployed and willing to work a job at their own craft.



Picasso

PEASANTS AND PURE ART

by Harold Rosenberg



VAN GOGH is both overrated and undervalued—that is to say, his reputation has by no means been placed upon a stable level. The difficulty is that his paintings affect people in an anti-critical way. Like D. H. Lawrence, he is supported by a cadre of enthusiasts whose responses to his work contain more of religious sentiment than of art-appreciation. And out of this revivalist atmosphere, and as an antithesis to it, atheist and agnostic orders of enemies have been generated—those to whom the very name of van Gogh is the signal for gestures of repulsion or for a bellicose indifference.

The first comprehensive exhibition of van Gogh's paintings in America, at the Museum of Modern Art, should do a great deal toward dissolving the emotional steam that rises about the figure of the passionate Dutch colorist. For example, it is for many of us a first introduction to the "sober" paintings and drawings of his Dutch period. These scenes of peasant life and drawings of workingmen, far from falling into the interesting but mere insignificant category of "student work", are in themselves sufficient to justify new perspectives with regard to van Gogh's development and to imply a need to reinterpret the direction of his art in relation to his letters and his social situation.

The major portion of the exhibition, devoted to the more familiar products of his later periods — a profusion of the great lights of Arles, St. Remy, and

Auvers—multiply and deepen these impacts upon the sensibilities which we have been accustomed to associate with van Gogh. Upon these decorations the fame of van Gogh rests. If the mysticism of color ("I have tried to express the terrible passions of humanity by means of red and green"*) and the indiscriminate violence of the manner do operate at the expense of everything in the art of painting which does not pertain to a language of personal temperament, yet these works define the artist, and it is in their qualities that the key to his position is to be found.

The structural defects of van Gogh's masterpieces, the inconsequentiality of the composition and the lack of plastic differentiation, are, when not overlooked entirely, attributed customarily to a temperamental necessity without which his genius would be inconceivable. It is argued that the painter must be accepted whole, that his successes and failures are part of one indivisible entity—the "seer" van Gogh. The fits of madness from which van Gogh suffered in the midst of his most productive years are taken to substantiate this view.

While it is impossible in a review to examine the conditions, both social and psychological, which determined van Gogh's work, it seems to me that the Dutch paintings clearly establish that van Gogh was by no means orientated in some primitive, natural, or instinctive manner toward the dynamism and color-occultism by which he is distinguished. Rather were

these qualities and these attitudes evoked from the realm of the possible and expanded to all-inclusive proportions by the pressure of external forces among which the dominant rôle was played by certain configurations of social events. In other words, van Gogh became the burning "expressionist" van Gogh, the van Gogh of purely inner struggles with the problems of natural magic, only after a great number of equally "characteristic" efforts had been utterly defeated!

Among these defeated efforts, which included careers as picture salesman, theology student and lay preacher, are to be reckoned the humanitarian paintings of the Dutch period, "The Weaver", "Ox Cart", "Potato Diggers", "Potato Eaters", etc. The Dutch paintings achieve distinction, but their tendency to go counter to the main current of late 19th century taste is obvious. Like van Gogh himself, these social paintings could have found no place in the society of his day—except in that area where no careers exist, in the homes of peasants and workingmen. This van Gogh divined—"as it is useful and necessary that Dutch drawings are made, printed, and spread, destined for the houses of workmen"—yet there always remained the problem of making a living: "I am always between two currents of thought, first the material difficulties, turning round and round to make a living; and second, study of color."

To develop an art for the poor was not a task that could be accomplished by

* Vincent van Gogh, Edited by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *The Museum of Modern Art*.

Peasant Woman Binding Sheaf
Vincent van Gogh



PEASANTS AND PURE ART

by Harold Rosenberg

any one man. Having left the society of peasants and artisans, the problem of achieving a successful career presented itself once more. Helpless in the face of this problem, van Gogh devoted his art to the satisfaction and relief of his own ego. This so-called "escape" cast him directly in the path of Parisian modernism which, in that epoch, was engaged in the discovery and exploitation of new realms of sensation.

Van Gogh was incapable of reconciling his humanitarian devotions with the contemporaneous salon styles. No pleasant, "perfumed" paintings of manual labor. By no chance could his workmen have inherited the popularity with the upper classes which the pensive field-creatures of Breton enjoy. It was a question of painting either for peasants or painting for himself—and the latter, in his case, meant, painting for Art.

Van Gogh's inability to compromise in

this connection is associated with the most significant and enduring feature of his talents: his power of direct statement. It is this quality which ties his Dutch paintings to the main body of his work, and which brings the whole forward into our own day as an influence which, under careful control, may yet produce valuable results in art. Both in the days when his concern with social subject-matter caused him to use color as a term in an objective, accurate depiction of the quality of a human condition, and later when, from an opposite point of view, color became itself the direct voice of his own suffering, the paintings of van Gogh are characterized by a declarative persuasiveness which is made possible only through the release of the imagination by means of a determined vision. His peasant-paintings could not have been popular in the salons because they said too many simple and unmistakable things about the lives of the people—and his flowers, portraits, and

skies did become popular even outside the salons because they said so many new and unequivocal things about the sun, people's faces, trees. It was under the auspices of history that this directness and appearance-altering simplicity came to be applied to landscape, sunflowers and the works of other artists; in our own day, van Gogh might not have found his original efforts to speak to the working people in whose society he lived so inconsistent with the movement of art.

In sum, though van Gogh converted his did so not through temperamental but art into a language of temperament, he through social causes. Temperamentally, he was moved to make painting into an instrument of solace and self-knowledge for the masses. Since this could not be achieved unaided, his painting became the means for discovering a transfiguring element in the physical appearance of a world which his experience had found intolerable.

CHIRICO — FATHER OF SURREALISM

by Joe Solman

THERE are now on view at the Pierre Matisse Gallery twenty-six strange canvases by the mystical poet-painter Giorgio de Chirico, relating his psychic adventures during the years 1909-1918, long before the black paint of Surrealism had become popular make-up. It was a time when the young Chirico, living in Paris, was trying to relieve his bitter nostalgia by recreating on canvas the deep-rooted memories of his native Italy. And memory, with its insistence upon singular details, pieced together such anomalous fragments on the picture surface as antique statuary, locomotives, arcades, manikins, forbidden interiors, charts and draughtsman's tools, almost, in fact, the entire inventory of the Surrealist school. These symbols emerging, silent, immobile, from some cavernous space take on a new and disquieting life. Whether it be a series of vaulted enclosures, through whose one scarcely opened sector we glimpse a timeless shadow, or startlingly juxtaposed, a black glove hovering over a stark white eggshell and yellow book, or, now serene, an automaton lying a graph with the first pale traces of chalk, Chirico resurrects for us a host of archaic talismans, wedded now in some mysterious rite to modern instruments of science.

His use of perspective to build lofty, moving designs, his ability to integrate odd shapes on the picture surface, and his unique paint qualities, coupled with a fertile imagination, endow his mysticism with undeniable power.

Sometimes, however, his literary symbols outweigh his plastic structure. In such instances, the occult force in his work suddenly vanishes and we are witnessing a sleight-of-hand deception. It is this very weakness, together with the seed of decay he had nurtured so carefully in his archeological dreams, that grew to corrupt his subsequent work; and the cold green that pervades his early painting remains, like the fatal pallor of a young poet, the prophecy of a premature pictorial death. The automaton he had created so hauntingly in his first loneliness began to walk and gesticulate while Chirico could hardly conceal the puppet-strings. Furthermore, he restored to their normal state those ancients whom he had once reincarnated with symbols, and they assumed at once the classic poses so prevalent in Pompeian frescoes. There followed a series of gladiators, rooms teeming with shrubbery and mythical horses, all of which he handled with

an unusual variety of technical means—a bit too summarily perhaps and with a certain loss of conviction. Now and then he might release some such image as a white bed post, closet, and armchair grimly stationed beneath a loft of sun-clouds. But the array of spectres he had first smuggled in with the aid of night now appeared—under the blue glare of daylight—a dishonest transaction.

Thus the meridian of Chirico's shadow had been reached, without first casting its pall over many outstanding painters of the day. The great Picasso, after having annihilated subject-matter with his heavy cubist barrage, succumbed to his friend's hypnosis and owes much of his neo-classic period to the aloof Italian. The latter also exerted some influence over another cubist painter, Roger de la Fresnaye. A metaphysical cult in painting was born in his native Italy, of which group the talented Carlo Carrà stands out. Under Chirico's astral guidance Lurçat set sail for new dream worlds. Pierre Roy carries on that part of the surrealist's art—the mixture of incongruous objects on one surface—and sterilizes it with a Flemish needle. Salvador Dali reduces Surrealism to the art of the side-show and his pictures look like old



Sixth Avenue

Stuart Davis

Courtesy of A.C.A. Gallery, from the American Artists' Congress

color-charts from some treatise on venereal disease. The Surrealism of Ernst, Masson, Earp and Miro tends toward a more abstract goal. As for the neo-romantics, Chirico's mantle shrouded them completely. Even moonlight is turned off in their pictures. They wander about, oppressed with melancholy, long robes and garlands, or lie slumbering under the slugs of their greyish pigment. Berman, the Hamlet of the movement, overacts most of the time, with a good performance thrown in here and there. Tchelitchev clogs his paint to the extent that his work suggests a chemical as well as an aesthetic suicide. Theirs is the unhappy romance in Surrealism's life. Chirico remains the hierarch in the realm he created. Those first striking images, some of the most compelling since Ucello, and Bosch—images that made man peer once again into the more terrifying aspects of his soul—are now assembled to testify to the glory that once was Chirico's.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The cover of the December issue, by Jansen, was published through the courtesy of J. B. Neumann of the New Art Circle.

CRITIQUE FROM THE LEFT

by Margaret Duroc

NOBODY can doubt that the artists of the John Reed Club are allied with the revolutionary movement. Nobody can doubt the sincerity of their intentions. And yet, the show cannot possibly be called a revolutionary show. Who could gather strength for the revolution from Guglielmi's "Portrait and Background"? The picture is probably inspired by the notion of Opposites, much used at one time by the Soviet artists and now happily discarded, in which the New and the Old were contrasted. It is an adaptation of the Surrealist technique—a photograph of Lenin leaning on an industrial tower is contrasted with a pile of debris (a skinned arm, Tydol can, bricks, etc.). The picture does not clarify capitalism, nor arouse in the spectator the swift response, "We are the proud builders." As a matter of fact, "We" are not there. The painting is an abstraction, not a chunk of life.

Guglielmi is not alone in the use of Surrealism. Three other artists (four

out of twenty-eight) are dependent upon it. Quirt is represented by "Nightmare of Capitalism." Here, the application of Surrealism seems a possibly happy one, for Surrealism is certainly the technique of nightmares. But Quirt is actually painting as a Surrealist. How else explain the distortion of the skulls of mangled soldiers into sexual symbols? Or the leering eyes which are not related to any specific feature of capitalism, but possess only the nightmare quality? Surrealism is a false medium for the revolutionary artist. It uses an occult language which needlessly separates the artist from his audience. And the sexual interpretation of the disorders of the present system is certainly to be rejected.

Haupt's painting alone, of this group, was appealing. It does not have the sleek quality of Surrealism, nor does it use the distorted sexual symbols. Two fat sleek men easily identified as Law and Business, methodically eat the flesh of their latest victims. Bones are scattered around

the beach. The Walrus and the Carpenter and the fate of their Oysters are immediately suggested. The painting is economical.

Joe Jones is represented in this show by a most charming little piece entitled "Dispossessed." It is another sample of a style which is inappropriate for the revolutionary artist. High Renaissance, which in this case is "humanized" by a little of the *Saturday Evening Post*. A much deeper interpretation of the sorrows, despairs, love, hope, and perhaps growing militancy of a dispossessed mother is necessary than was expressed in the calm and triumphing art of the Italian Renaissance. As Jones has interpreted the subject, it really doesn't seem to be so bad to be dispossessed.

Of all the painters Ishigaki alone has indicated that the workers are ready to fight. (This is not altogether fair. "Strike," by Grunbaum, might have such an intention. But his figures are so lack-

ing in vitality that the effect is completely negativistic.) It is a rhythmical and dynamic composition of the white worker fighting a Ku-Kluxer in order to free a magnificent Negro. But both composition and meaning are impaired by representing the Negro with his head bowed passively. As composition it places too great an accent on the bowed head, to the detriment of the dynamic intention of the painting, and, as meaning, it falsely suggests that the Negro relies upon the white worker alone for his freedom.

In the sculpture, Wolff's study of Lenin deserves commendation, because, so far as I know, this is the first attempt to express the union of animal magnetism and tremendous intellect to be found in Lenin. Most artists forget that Lenin could hate as well as love.

The bourgeois critics who scorned "propaganda" in art, have been forced to admire the vitality of the revolutionary

art movement in the theatre, literature, music and dancing. But the John Reed show is dismissed as "sociology."

In order to succeed, the John Reed Club artists will have to realize for whom they are painting, and what they wish to achieve. At present they only seem to wish to indicate that they are allied with the working class. They exhibit their works as tokens of sympathy. But they should become leaders in the fight. The Mexican artists have been more successful than the American. Perhaps because of the prevailing illiteracy in Mexico, the artist appreciated the communicative possibility of painting better. It has even been suggested that great painting is only possible in a more or less illiterate society. That is obviously false. But art, in order to be powerful, must be communicative. It must be filled with rich ideas. The revolutionary movement needs better imagery than antiquated parades of fascists.

D I F F E R E N C E S O V E R L E G E R

THE FUNCTION OF LEGER

by Balcomb Greene

THE work of Fernand Leger, approached only by description and analysis, cannot be experienced. Analysis may supply courage. Basic to courage is our knowledge that all man does and feels is implied in the biological structure of himself and his universe. All comprehension, expression, and action are part of an equation in the other half of which science tolerates no mysteries. The expression of Leger is worth little so long as it contains no meaning for others. Expression understood without effort is fit only for sale to Hollywood.

Under the present system of production, technical progress has required men to be specialists. The system may be justified in origin, but the people it has produced are not organically sound. The speed of life, unpleasantness of labor, tyranny of artificially stimulated human requirements, and constant fear even for outward security, have obliterated the healthy and complete man, producing generations of neurotics whose sensations function ineptly and defensively.

For the responsible man revolt is the only answer. He must unite with others. Today an economic crisis offers the immediate motive for an uprising, but the de-

termining factors are less simple. The revolutionist must remember the class struggle is not only about capital and the means of production, but about man, his need for a normal life, and satisfactory work which can release his natural powers. Revolution must be complete; partial ones are only symptomatic; the complete man has to be a revolutionist. Politically, culturally, and socially he must revolt.

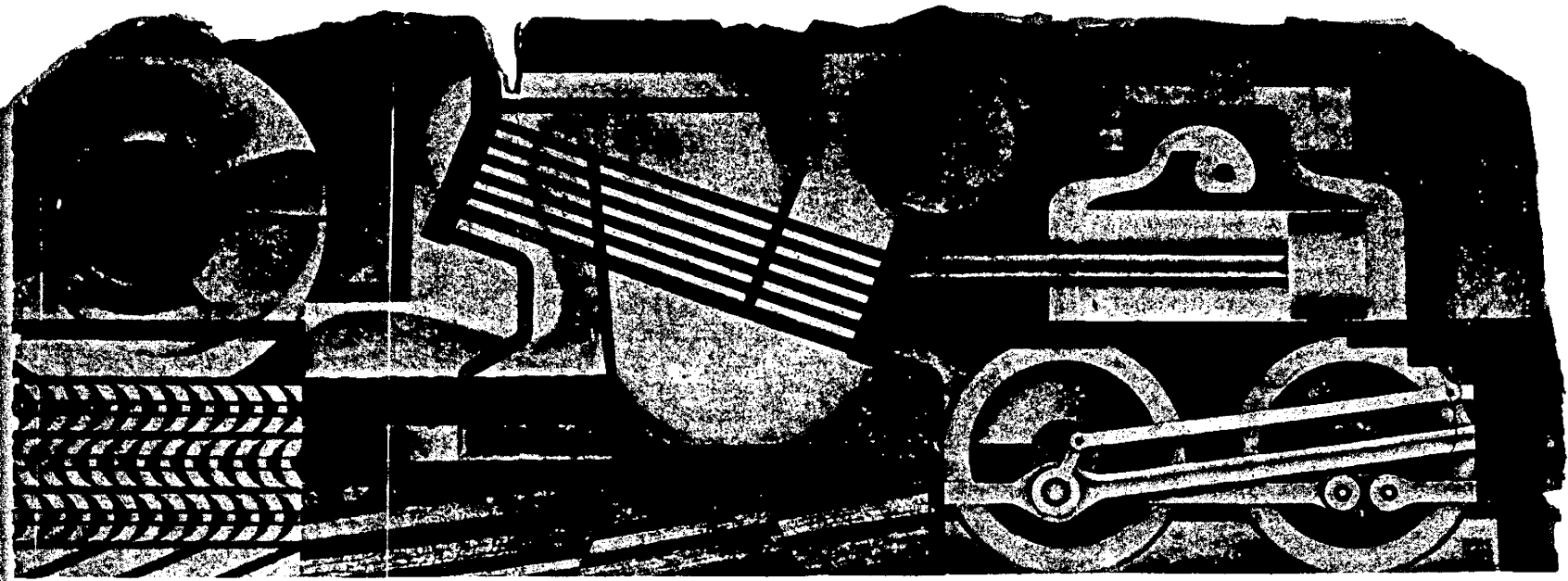
Our political revolutionism we call scientific. In applied effort—either technical construction or creative work—we refer today to rational procedure as functionally correct. Each object must be built from the parts essential to its function. But, inseparable from this, we rule that the rationalizing of man's activities will not permit isolated advances. Scientific, artistic, political and educational progressions must all be related. That is the nature of societal growth.

The purpose for all activity, we must remember, is man. The measures for remaking his world are not antagonistic to the measures which transform himself. In a period of revolt every alignment against tradition must be examined for contributions to man's new society.

No revolt against tradition has been

more incisive than the "abstract movement." All conscious self-direction we can find, with Leger, the cubists, the constructivists in Russia, the Bauhaus and Werkbund in Germany, indicates that competent artists, approaching abstraction, have constituted a workshop for determining new methods for stimulating man's sensory self. That very conception of functionalism, which was to revolutionize all modern architecture and industrial production, was detailed originally by men like Walter Gropius at the Bauhaus. It has remained for the artist, as specialist, to make paintings whose function is to integrate individuals, by clarity and courage transforming them from defensive human beings. Such an artist is Fernand Leger.

The paintings lately on view at the Modern Museum trace his development from an uncertain experiment stage where his work lay close to the cubists and close to Cezanne. From this date on his method is clear. Instinct or reason has held Leger close to the twin aspects of all life—biological structure and functioning mechanism. His executions, since 1919, definitely represent alternate progressions in analysis and breaking down, first of natural objects, secondly of mechanical elements—then an integration of the two, resulting not seldom in a complexity which has, in turn, to be simplified. This complexity reaches excess in "The City," which is crowded with minor contrasts and lacks a dominant. In "Com-



W. P. A. Art for Public Buildings Project. Section of mural panel in the Samuel Gompers High School. Location Main Library. Title—Power. Medium—Casein on Gesso. Supervising Artist—Eric Mose. Photo—Metropolitan Engraving Co.

position in Blue" a similar complexity is resolved in a fashion too smooth and subtle to long content the artist. The years 1923-27 culminate in a rejection of compromise and facility for an intensive analysis of objects, as best illustrated by the water-colors and drawings.

There is evidence that Leger has had difficulty reconciling his biological and mechanistic elements. Sometimes (*e.g.*, "Mechanical Element") a painting functions well but is cold, sometimes (*e.g.*, "Breakfast"), mechanistic elements are forced upon natural objects, largely distorting them. Probably the artist's method of close reliance upon the literal object accentuates this difficulty. At any rate the object, not illustrated, not given symbolically, arrives, in 1935, with strength and simplicity we can only call monumental. "Good form, good taste and style," as popularly understood, have no place. Whether the recognizable object will disappear altogether in Leger, ruling out temptation for trite analogies, we can not predict.

To many critics Leger appears virtually a monster, making paintings which are tools more than simple objects, impersonal and sharp, carving out a conception of a universe, cruel, disdainful and terrible in its logical functions. This view has been overdone. We are a timid people, afraid of precision and afraid of truth. More significant in the artist is his development of rhythm past its simple stage to an acute sensitivity as to the tension of contrasts among rhythms. Because this accomplishment is of such a high order and so unique, we may describe it as his personal contribution.

Such performance we might expect only from a complete man, one whose activity embraces both cultural and political revolutionism. Certainly Leger lives in no ivory tower, but is a man of the

people, enjoying simple amusements, exhibiting a vast curiosity about all man's activities, enthusiastically an ally of the workers of the world. Sergei Eisenstein has said that, of the French, no man understands the cinema more clearly than Leger. The factor in his creative success is not, however, a dissipated interest. His work is the acme of professional skill, but also professional integrity. As a specialist, his work must often fall beyond the comprehension of most people. But to the degree his paintings avoid the vapidly known as "personal taste," which is really second-hand taste, and are anchored on biological structure—to that degree he is a leader.

It is characteristic in present society that new intellectual advances be appropriated, exploited and degraded by the class in power. Against such treachery are only the artist's integrity and his support from a fearless intelligentsia. Also it is unfortunate that the principle implicit in our technical age of emphasizing not the single piece of work, nor the individual highest attainment, but the commonly usable type, impedes the pioneer who would extend the principle of func-

tional building. With revolutionary educators lies the solution of these difficulties.

The revolutionist who is consistently active against the present order on all fronts welcomes progressive education as developing individuals with courage and clearness enough to reject an illogical society. The complete revolutionist, assuming as such he is healthy and capable of requisite sensory comprehension, will also welcome a new art which has, because of its functional purpose, rejected literal representation. And he will find a stimulating experience, not dissuading action, but integrating his intellectual and emotional habits toward clarity, conciseness, and precision.

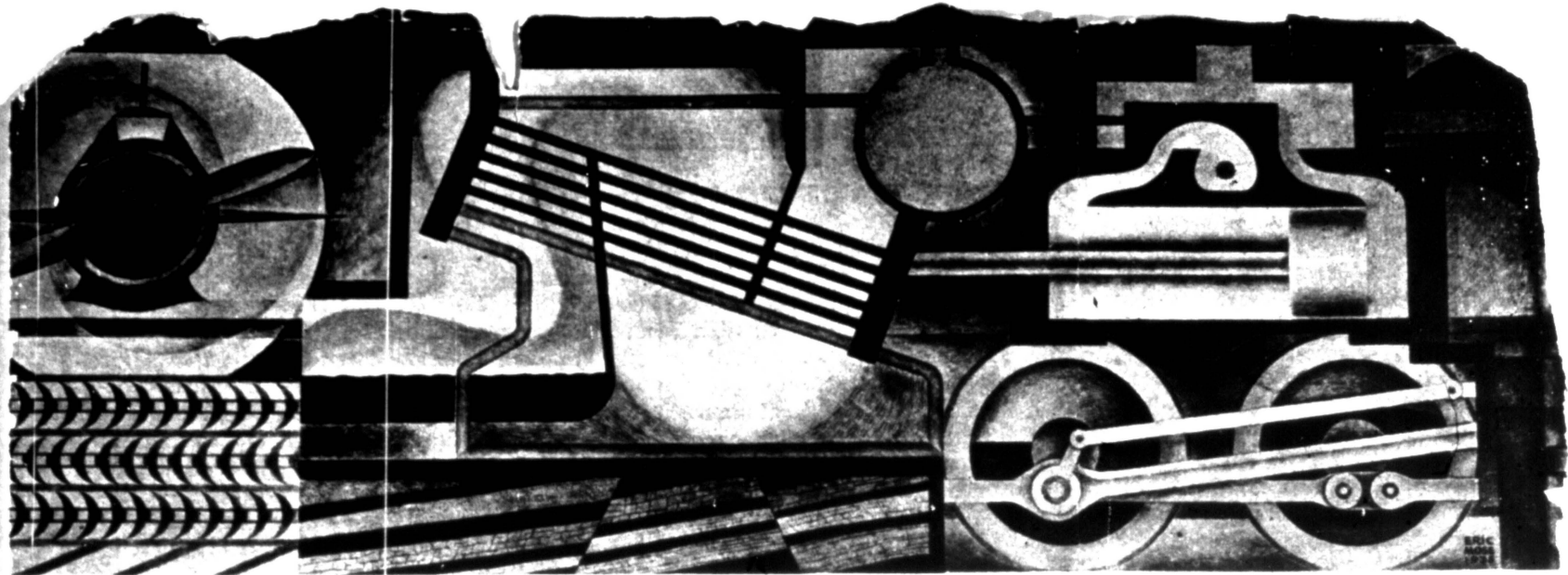
The objection of some revolutionaries, only "political" and therefore incompletely mature, that all creative activity must be specific agitation, is becoming less insistent. The people in revolt are being integrated. But the waste of power involved in such a disregard for natural consistency might yet lead to catastrophe—a revolt precipitated at a tangent to the real purpose—partly against a system, but partly against man.

FREEDOM IN PAINTING

by Clarence Weinstock

IT might be thought that in a painter so little eclectic as Leger, few elements of comparison would appear relating him to the ideas and methods of other artists. Admirable design without decorative wildness, just, never excessive color, a feeling for objects relieved of trappings and associations, whether ancient or "modern," mark all periods of his work. His

pretensions are confined to his art. They extend neither to psychology, metaphysics, symbolism, nor to the movements of society. Yet he, too, has not avoided certain corollaries that seem to accompany every insight into contemporary forms and structures. If I suggest that his paintings have now a conventional appearance, it is not to decry but to ex-



W. P. A. Art for Public Buildings Project. Section of mural panel in the Samuel Gompers High School. Location Main Library. Title—Power. Medium—Casein on Gesso. Supervising Artist—Eric Mose. Photo—Metropolitan Engraving Co.

plain them. There are minor and major conventions. The former are inheritances transmitted by the Academy, failures grown remunerative by repetition. The latter are signs of—and payments for—victories won in art, struggles carried to a higher plane. Leger is on such a level. No one can rise above it without studying him and his contemporaries.

The work of Leger, like that of all abstract artists, bears a semi-idealistic relation to the visible world. Though rising out of nature, it claims a superiority, not because it represents or transforms nature into an appearance more beautiful than nature, but because it creates, object for object, something perhaps more real than the trees and tables which depend on the illusions of sight. This theoretical wish is hardly carried out in practise, however, for we soon recognize a whole series of objects which have undergone no more than dissection and superposition. They are the studio paraphernalia of modern art, the equivalents of a map, a bust, a box of gems—ropes, winches, turbines, egg-beaters and guitars. What is called the "magic of art" has worked upon them—but are they ever unrecognizable? Are Leger's somethings ever completely themselves? Does an engine standing before us become on his canvas a new machine whose name we do not know, which merely throbs at our eyes, and is in no way connected with that metal frame which was a press or a concrete mixer? No sensitive spectator could affirm that.

Leger's art continues an estrangement established between the artist and society at a certain point of industrial progress, a breach responsible first for the sadness and then for the revolt of modern art. It arose out of the alienation of the art patron, the capitalist, from all non-profit making activity. Use-value was identified with commodity value; what didn't bring in the dollars was not worth anything. It was the profiteer, not Faraday or Darwin, who demanded, "What use has it?" of the artist, and who asked him if he could show something comparable to a dynamo or a grapefruit. The abuse of power on the part of capital extended from human needs to the highest forms of culture. Under it literature became introspective, philosophy romantic, and art personal. Finally, irked into arrogance, the intellectual established his own closed circles, each of which contained mysteries and fetishes, Joyce presiding over his words, Whitehead over his "extensive abstraction," Picasso over his monstrous beauties. In its own intricate way the intellect went in for sublimated self-portraiture. It was through competing in usefulness with refrigerators. But to Leger belongs the honor of not being quite able to forget. He is still in love with his rivals.

Thus his paintings bear scars. His color is often like a coat on metal to keep it from rusting; it serves more to fix a shape than to inhabit it. As no natural object, when it reappears as an aesthetic mechanism, is necessarily different in quality from any other object, his

textures are very Spartan. A composition is made of the same stuff as the root of a pear tree. His structures are uniform and sober beyond what is architecturally essential. They are animated mostly by rhythm. The machine is lively, even contains a little dancer, but in return the mechanic becomes one of the wheels he was polishing. Leger has built upon two images whose imaginative, if not plastic possibilities, can soon be exhausted, namely, living nature and man, seen as mechanism, and the machine come to life in the world of art. The individuality of objects known and understood, the enormous variety of meanings in nature and society, are reduced to one structural conception arrived at by an aesthetic approach to the materials of science.

It would be absurd to discuss Leger's limitations, compared say to Picasso, as though they were due to lack of craftsmanship, insensibility to texture or poor fantasy. His limits are self-imposed, the products of a disciplined intention. But would it be true to say that he has freed art from subject matter, from the deceptions inherent in humanity? Painting can accomplish that only when the subject matter is itself free, that is, when objects need no longer be seen in relationships that in turn enslave the artist and us, when they are so bountiful to all working humanity that everyone can look at them for pure pleasure, in and for themselves. Leger knows what might have freed us. Perhaps he is asking: "What will?"

JACQUES LIPCHITZ

by Martin Craig

THERE is an exhibition running now at the Brummer Gallery—a one-man show by a European sculptor, Lipchitz. It ought to be seen. It ought to be seen by everyone who still has the old-fashioned idea that art can be realistic in the sense of bearing an obvious resemblance to nature, and yet be alive, and vital, and thrilling today. These people should go to see this show and try to be honest with themselves for fifteen minutes. And if this is not enough of an experience to make them a bit doubtful of their views, let them try stepping directly into another gallery, one which is showing the average run-of-gallery stuff that we see these days. And if they are still satisfied with a smug little Eighteenth Century hang-over, they're practically hopeless.

Getting back to Lipchitz, however, one feels the terrific impact of his powerful forms immediately on entering the gallery. The forms are strange—really like nothing else on earth. They seem to be in the process of a tremendous expansion, swelling up the space of the room and crowding one. Most of his things seem at first unaccountably weird and inhuman. But all are deeply moving.

Historically, Lipchitz started out in the purest cubist tradition. His early works are examples of the same forms and the same general method in the arrangement of planes and flattened forms that we find in the paintings of Picasso, Braque and the rest, except that they were done in three dimensions. Yet the result is more than a cubist painting in three

dimensions. His consciousness of the relation of forms in space is apparent even here.

In some of his other things of the same period there is a distinctly different attitude at work. Here the aim is a pure architecture, almost Gothic in inspiration. At least two of his pieces, called "Sculpture," are perfect examples of a sculpture completely divorced from life and natural forms.

So far his approach has been toward the creation of a static and abstract art. Now, however, he turns to the human figure for a starting point. The work of this period still does not contain the intensely human quality that is found later on, but it does give a definite indication of his future direction. Here he simply

Sheep Skinners (from Stockyard Series)

Elizabeth Olds

Courtesy of A.C.A. Gallery,

from the

American Artists' Congress



applies the cubist formula to a natural form, and the result is an abstract and architectural reconstruction of the human figure. His large "Bathers," done in 1924, is typical.

The next definite stage becomes apparent about 1930. It is this period which seems to me to be most characteristic of Lipchitz' potentialities, and to be the most important single contribution to modern art views in many years. At the same time that a real social consciousness begins creeping into the subject matter, his forms begin losing their static quality in design and assuming an intense movement in space. Considering this work from a technical standpoint, the most obvious characteristic is the revolt from the manner of working in a block. The forms begin moving freely through space, encompassing a new conception of spatial design. Heretofore, the conception of sculpture, although defined as the relating of forms in space, amounted to nothing more profound than a series of well-designed views of the statue, on a purely two-dimensional basis of outlines and contours of forms, with a surface variation of light and shade. Hence there was a definite front view, the statue obviously designed to be seen that way, two subsidiary side views, if the sculptor was conscientious, and a rear view if he had a grain of a sculptural idea. Lipchitz is entirely different. There is no particular view from which to look at a work nor is there any view from which the statue becomes more important than any other. As a matter of fact, there is little design at all in this sense. His "flat" or "outline"

design is comparatively poor. (To give an illustration of what is meant here by "outline" design—take a photograph of the work from any view and trace the outlines of the forms onto tracing paper. The design of the resulting drawing would be the outline design.) It is my opinion that most sculpture is designed from this standpoint and that the general appreciation of design in sculpture does not go beyond this. In Lipchitz, design is essentially spatial, and is felt as a vigorous movement of the forms through space. Of prime importance also is the fact that the spaces between the forms become important and functional in this design, and are felt as real forms. The holes become equivalent to forms or masses, which play a positive part in functioning equally with the real forms in the design. Here, I feel, is his greatest contribution from the standpoint of sculptural technique.

Important as this is, however, I find that, from a general esthetic consideration, his achievement is even more profound and revolutionary. Essentially he has become a Surrealist, but here again he has taken a vital step forward. The Surrealist movement has been primarily a literary one. Generally the poetic content remains distinct from the plastic, and is of primary importance. Except for a few rare instances, such work is non-plastic, or at best the plastic values are subordinated and even irrelevant to the literary idea with its associations, reminiscences, nostalgias, etc. But Lipchitz' Surrealism is primarily plastic; the plastic element is not an addition to the poetic idea, but is this poetry itself.

The emotions characteristic of a Surrealist work are here directly evoked by the forms themselves, as such, and the idea and its associations become subordinate, but not irrelevant.

Considering how he has gradually changed from the sculptor working in the remote and rarefied atmosphere of cubism and architecture, to one incorporating a powerful human feeling in his work, it is significant to note the growth of a social consciousness in his material. Pieces such as the "Return of the Prodigal Son" and the "Struggle of Jacob with the Angel" are definitely of social content, though this content is quite directionless. However, in one of the latest pieces included in the exhibition (reproduced in this issue) called "Toward a New World," he seems to have arrived at a definite social direction. It seems to me quite understandable that a man of Lipchitz' obviously deep human qualities would soon realize the sterility inherent in the too "pure" aims of his early abstractions, where the function of art as a human activity becomes purified out of existence; and, realizing this, would logically pass on through the intermediate stages of interest in the human figure, then in the individual as a human being, the emotional relations between individuals, and eventually wind up with considerations of a social order.

If there is to be a vital revolutionary art in the future, then here, I feel, is the road it will take. Certainly it is the one most truly evolved from the civilization and social scheme of our own time, and one of the most effective in arousing our most profound emotions.

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SCENERY FOR THEATRICAL DANCING

by Lincoln Kirstein

THE recent New York engagement of the Monte Carlo Ballet afforded an excellent opportunity for Americans to see some of the most famous theatrical designs of European painters for the last twenty-five years. The backgrounds and dresses with which their repertory was equipped indicate many problems for a contemporary stage designer in the specific realm of theatrical dancing. The Monte Carlo Company has fallen heir to a great part of the Diaghileff programs, from 1909 to 1929, with additions made under their own name, from 1932 to 1935. Roughly speaking, the scenery and costumes can be grouped into two large, if often overlapping, categories: those designed by artists predominantly theatrical craftsmen, and those created by artists who were, or are, predominantly easel painters, but who for special occasions made sketches for the stage.

Historically speaking, the first chapter in modern ballet decoration was written by Leon Bakst. In the Monte Carlo repertory he is represented by the sets for "Shéhérazade," "Thamar" and "Aurora's Wedding." He was a Russian Jew who had been excluded from the anti-Semitic Imperial Academy for a "Pieta" based on figures from the ghetto. His tastes were basically oriental, although he exploited every period in the world's cultural history from Mycenae and Persia to the court of Louis Quatorze. Using roughly the broken-color technique of the French impressionists of the turn of the last century, he destroyed, first in his settings for the Imperial Theatres in St. Petersburg, then in his work for Diaghileff's company, the whole stagnant tradition of nineteenth century perspective stage realism, with all its carefully deceptive tricks of forced illusion and recessive vistas. He would lay his canvas drops on the floor and pour buckets of clear paint in great liquid pools, letting the fluid pigment spread over the indicated outlines squared up from his sketch.

The resultant, executed decor was fresh, vibrant, and seemed spontaneously achieved. His color was extremely brash, a welter of what is, to us, symmetrical vulgarity and synthetic archeology. His ethnic and historic sources were in the decorative details of whatever period style he chose. Instead of keeping a characteristic motif (like the Greek key, Cretan octopus or Persian tree of life) in its original small scale, Bakst would swell each up to a huge size, using the isolated familiar fragment, formerly employed in a sequent, repetitious arrangement, as a legible symbol of the entire civilization of Greece or Crete, or Persia. His costumes followed the basic nude body of the dancer, but, to us it seems, he hung on all manner of extraneous trappings, coils of pearls, fringes, tassels, etc., which had plenty of historic precedent, but which frequently confused the clean profile of the dancing figures. It is significant to remember that in the first five years of the Diaghileff ballet, an epoch on which such a company as the Monte Carlo Ballet is still trading, there was only one work with a contemporary subject (Nijinsky's "Jeux": 1913). Every epoch but the present was exhausted in a kind of lush, imaginative imperialism. Twenty-five years later, Bakst's India, his Georgian provinces, his eighteenth century Venice seem to have far more to do with Paris in 1910, 1912 or even 1918 than with Ajanta, the Caucasus or Canaletto. But Bakst had a magnificent energy, a violent, fountainous, creative talent which makes so much subsequent design seem puny, however refined or elegant or in "good taste" it may appear in contrast.

After Bakst, who had with Benois, a primarily Frenchified, pre-war Russian, practically monopolized Diaghileff's earliest dresses and decor—came Larionoff and Gontcharova. These able painters set the stage for the burst of Russian nationalism, which, starting with the Roerich - Nijinsky - Stravinsky "Rites of

Spring," 1913, was followed up with "Le Coq d'Or," 1914, "Skazki" (*Les Contes Russes*), 1918, "The Midnight Sun" (*Soleil de Nuit*), 1916; the unproduced "Liturgie," 1915; and "The Village Wedding," 1923. Gontcharova and Larionoff used motifs from Russian peasant handicrafts, from ikons, and from provincial Slavic architecture. At the time they felt they were making a positive break from Bakst. Their direction came partly from an association with the school of Russian pre-war futurists. But their bright, confusing color, their lavishly ornamented back-drops and clothes were pretty much in Bakst's line. In the Nijinsky-Stravinsky "Village Wedding" (*Les Noces*), 1923, there was a distinct difference: the whole scene was conceived in flat planes of cool blue, gray and white. Four black grand pianos demanded by the score were the single glistening accents. Everything accentuated the choreographic pattern. The scenery was seen, as rarely before, entirely as plastic frame, not as decorative embellishment, for the dancing.

Diaghileff's first scenic collaborators were primarily theatrical designers, even though they may have begun by being easel painters. Modigliani, *Le Douanier* Rousseau were working in Paris from 1910 to 1914, but Diaghileff made no attempt to use them at this time. The cubists entered the Russian ballet in 1917 with Pablo Picasso's "Parade" (Cocteau-Massine-Satie). An able technician in every field of paint, Picasso understood the conditions of the stage better than many who followed him. The Monte Carlo Company still shows his "Three-Cornered Hat" (*Le Tricorne*, De Falla-Massine, 1919). It is still, in spite of repaint and fading, a splendid calm background for dancing, simple and evocative of Goya's high, hot Iberian plateau, as opposed to José Maria Sert's Velasquez dolls: (*Le Astucie Femminili*, 1920). The costumes are bold and ingenious, perhaps too broken up for an interesting

choreographic pattern, but since Massine's choreography in this work is, except for his own solo "*Farucca*," no longer interesting, the costumes aid the lack of choreographic value. This often happened in the later Diaghileff ballets, where the contribution of paint, or even music, was more absorbing than the dancing.

After Picasso's "*Parade*," 1917, "*Pulcinella*," 1920, "*Mercury*," 1924, came Matisse ("*Le Rossignol*," 1926), Derain ("*Le Boutique Fantasque*," 1919), Juan Gris ("*Les Tentations de la Bergere*," 1924), Braque ("*Zephyr and Flora*," 1925), George Rouault ("*Le Fils Prodigue*," 1929), Chirico ("*Le Bal*," 1929), and all the rest: Marie Laurencin, Max Ernst, the constructivists, Gabo, Pevsner and Iacouloff; the naiviste Bauchant; Pruna, Picasso's pupil, Max Ernst and Tchelitcheff. Hardly a well-known painter of the School of Paris, from 1917 to 1929, escaped a Diaghileff collaboration. Many of their designs were charming for their single initial season, which supported the ballet they graced, but they were no more proof against being outmoded by the next year than the music or dancing which was their *raison d'être*. Too often the painters would be determinedly simple-minded, in order to produce a deliberately naive effect. After all the luxury of Bakst and the native Slavs, it seemed quite comic for Matisse to produce a large Chinese decoration which looked as if it had been hand-painted by a talented child of twelve ("*Le Rossignol*"). A certain freshness of sophisticated amateurishness made fun of all the decor that had been thought so grand before, and now seemed only in bad taste. The spontaneity of an original sketch had to be maintained at all costs, but too frequently what seemed amusing in a sketch six inches by nine seemed vast and empty when enlarged to twenty by forty feet, or even more. A technician of genius, Prince Scherwachidze, executed much of the actual scenery. His rich transcription to canvas of Rouault's small sketch for "*The Prodigal Son*" (Prokofiev-Balanchine, 1929), the original of which is now in the Hartford Museum, was one of the most re-

markable purely practical scenic achievements of the epoch.

The reaction against Bakst continued for fifteen years after his actual eclipse. But Bakst left to his parodists hardly an historical period which he had not amplified or made more grandiose. His followers amused themselves by diminishing his vision, which had at least the virtue of nobility, making it merely more modish, à la 1920, 1925, 1928, for a more cosmopolitan consumption. A rage for contemporaneity swept the ballet. Fashionable dressmakers rather than even well-known painters were sought after. Also, historic periods were telescoped for the excitement of the knowing audiences. The Stravinsky-Balanchine "*Apollo, Leader of the Muses*" (1928) was decorated by André Bauchant with infantile "Classic" paintings, suggesting Rousseau's idea of David's idea of Rome's idea of Greece. The clothes by Chanel the couturière were a combination of Greek chitons and Taglioni-1840 ballet-skirts. This historic amalgam was a great and deserved success, but it would be too old-fashioned purely by 1935 standards to bear a revival. Its preciousness would seem more outmoded today than even Bakst's antiquities of 1910.

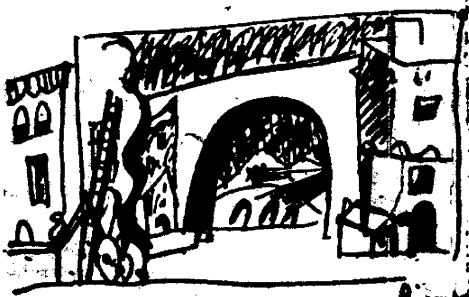
The Monte Carlo Ballet, generally speaking, follows the Diaghileff formulae in mounting their new ballets. In 1932 "*Les Sylphides*" (1909) underwent a revival in a Corot background. Younger painters were used, notably Juan Miro's fresh and sweet "*Jeux d'Enfants*" (Massine-Berlioz, 1932) and the white, gold and red Christian Berard ballroom for "*Cotillon*" (Balanchine-Chabrier, 1932). This year Jean Victor-Hugo contributed a 1935 version of an 1850 version of an 1890 version of 1580, in "*Les Cent Baisers*" (Nijinska-d'Erlanger). The delicious clothes and paint were infinitely more distinguished than the dancing, but even the presentation of the portmanteaued epochs seemed irrelevant, a kind of elaborate private joke conceived over a luncheon table on the Cote d'Azur. It was okay for 1925; in 1935 we say—so what?

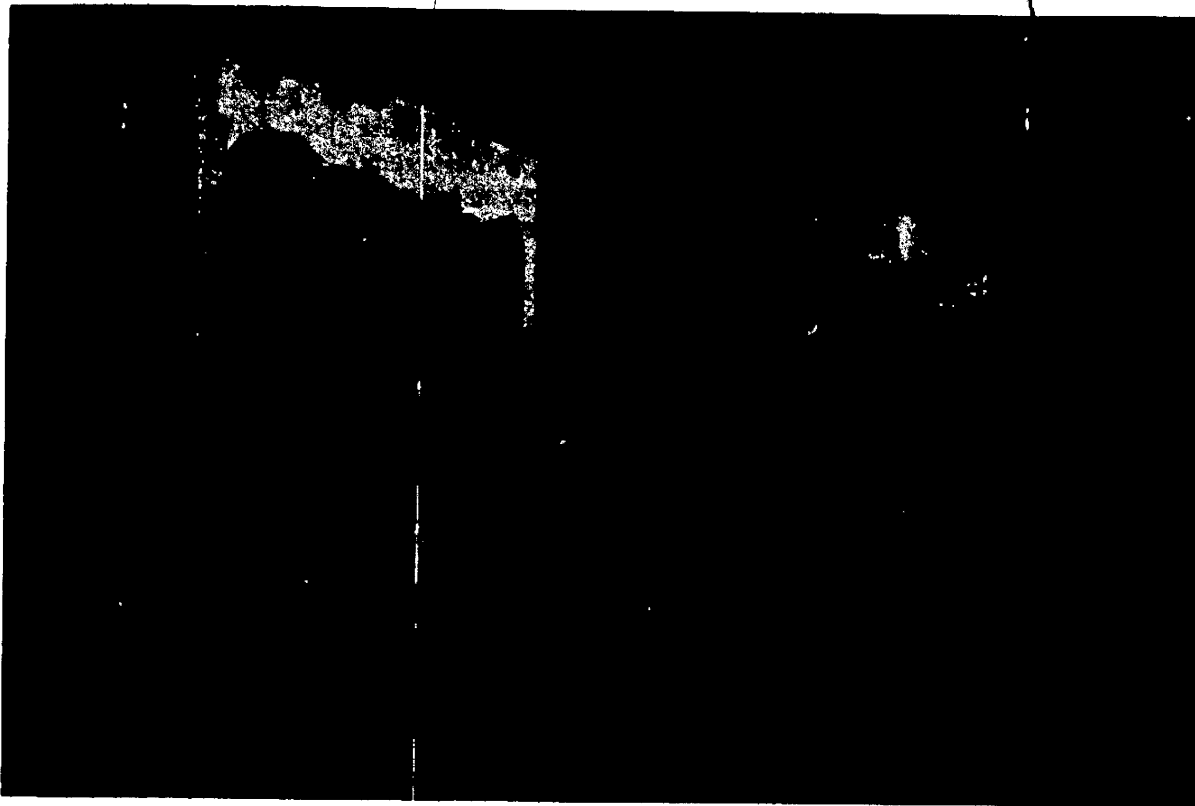
Such ballets as "*Choreartium*" (Laurit-Massine-Brahms, 1933), or "*Les Prèsages*" (Masson - Massine - Tchaikovsky, 1933) are choreographically far ahead of their feeble scenic backgrounds. The great difficulty with painted decor, even when multiplied into several changeable curtains, is its arbitrariness, its physically static patterns, however fluid the formal composition of mass or color may be. Hard outlines frequently conflict with the kinetic progress of the dancing. A set palette interferes with shifting groups

and various confused beltings and stripings on too many costumes deny the basic skeletal anatomy of the human dancer. The ballet skirt, particularly the short classic *tutus* (as opposed to the long Romantic 1850 dress), a round, floating accentuation of hips and the hinge of the female trunk, explodes in the air with the dancer's leaps, emphasizes the plasticity of her turns and sharp arrests. It is an excellent frame for stylization, when stylization is needed to intensify lyric action. As for the infallible costume for "classic" dancing—or any other kind—the naked body, or its approximate, dyed tights, are still unequalled.

The direction of effective scenery away from paint, toward light and plastic shadow has been indicated in the decorations of Pavel Tchelitcheff ("*Ode*," Massine-Nabokoff, 1928, and "*Errante*," Balanchine-Schubert, 1933). This artist uses transparent white depths of stuffs, projects shapes and stuffs upon them; not in paint but with mobile forms. There is a close connection of the actual movement in the background and the motion of the dancers.

Paint is not necessarily exhausted as a means for setting off dancing, but such sets as those Isamu Noguchi, Arch Lautner or Sandy Calder have recently invented for Martha Graham are much richer in implication, much more indicative of an enlarging development on a progressive line, than the back-drops of the big ballet companies, however tasteful or rich in painting qualities they may have been. This is primarily true because these young American designers are willing to accept as their problem the single condition of providing a space in which movement may happen, instead of a background against which dancing—from the first floor plane alone—may be seen. If their results are still meager, nevertheless they are genuinely promising. It is perhaps significant that Noguchi, Lautner and Calder are not painters, like most of the Diaghileff collaborators, but primarily sculptors. A conception of formal masses in air is necessary for anyone who works for the present and future of dancing. Very possibly sculptors can sense direction; painters never knew.





"Les Joies d'une Heure Etrange"—1913. Giorgio di Chirico. Courtesy of Pierre Matisse Gallery.

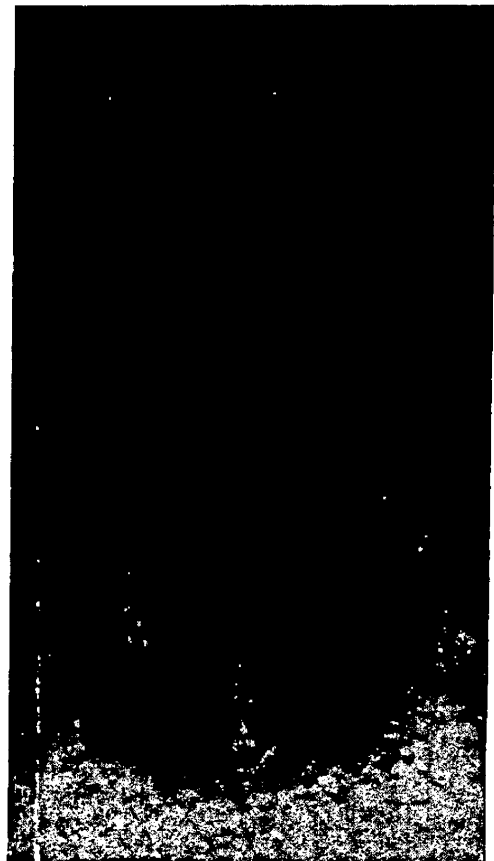
E X H I B I T I O N S

A. C. A.—52 W. 8 St. 44 original lithos by Hugo Gellert from his "Comrade Gulliver". Dec. 16-28. American Place—Stieglitz—509 Madison Ave. Some remarkable water-colors by John Marin, through Jan. 6. Recent oils by Georgia O'Keefe painted in New Mexico, Jan 7-Feb. 27. Another Place—43 W. 8 St.—Work by Charles Duncan, through Dec. Frank H. Schwarz. Drawings and paintings, Jan. 4-30. Artists' Union—60 W. 15 St.—Christmas exhibit by members. Bignou—32 E. 57 St. Renoir, through Jan. 10. Brummer—53 E. 57 St.—Comprehensive exhibit of Lipchitz's sculpture, through Jan. 21. Contemporary Arts—41 W. 54 St.—"For the Xmas budget", Dec. 9-28. Edmund Quincy, one-man show of a Boston painter, Dec. 30-Jan. 18. Delphic Studios—724 5th Ave. Paintings of Mexican Santos by Perkins Harnly. Abstractions by John Davidson, Dec. 9-30. Adam Saunders, a modern American sculptor, Jan. 1-15.

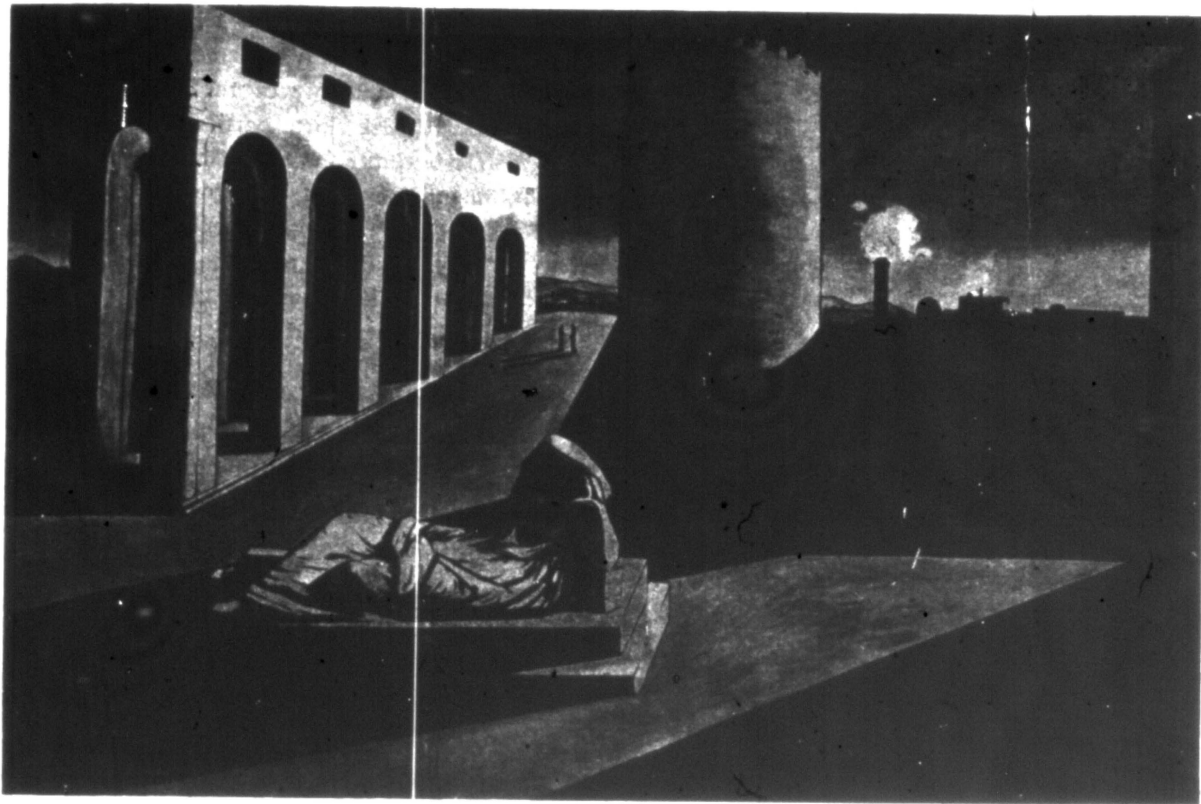
Downtown Gallery—113 W. 13 St. American Printmakers. Carl Walter's ceramics. Murals of the South by Anne Goldwithe, through Dec. Recent work by Alexander Brook, Jan. 4-25. Ferargil—63 E. 57 St.—Recent oils by Luigi Lucioni, Dec. 28-Jan. 18. Guild Art Gallery—37 W. 57 St. One-man show of Lloyd Ney's work, Jan 6-25. Marie Harriman—63 E. 57 St.—Water-colors by Loretta Howard, Dec. 9-23. The architectural models of Harold Sterner, Dec. 30-Jan. 11. Juban Levy—602 Madison Ave.—

Recent oils by Campigli, a sensitive neo-classicist from Italy. Also work by Mina Loy, Jan. 7-27. Pierre Matisse—51 E. 57 St.—Important paintings by European artists. Jan. 7-31. Metropolitan Museum of Art—82nd St. & 5th Ave.—Loan exhibit of 18th century French art. Midtown Galleries—605 Madison Ave. Gouaches by Myron Sokole, one of our native Romantics, Dec. 10-24. Oils by Waldo Pierce, genial colorist, Jan. 7-27.

Montross—785 5th Ave.—First show of "The Ten", a group of American expressionists which includes Ben-Zion, Bolotowsky, Harris, Kufeld, Gottlieb, Schanker, Solman, Tschacbasov and Rothkowitz, Dec. 16-Jan 4. Museum of Modern Art—11 W. 53 St.—The large van Gogh show winds up Jan. 5th. New Art Circle—Neumann—509 Madison Ave. Water-colors and oils by Kandinsky, one of the most important living abstract painters, through Jan. Marie Sterner—9 E. 57 St.—Sculpture by Warren Cheney. Glass decoration by Alice Laughlin, Dec. 30-Jan. 15. Dorothy Paris—56 W. 53 St.—Group show, Dec. 15-30. Mark Datz, Jan. 6-27. Mrs. C. J. Sullivan—57 E. 56 St.—Utrillo again, with about a dozen exquisite examples from his 1908-14 period, through Dec. Valentine—69 E. 57 St.—Drawings by Elshemius, Dec. 16-Jan. 4. Major examples of 20th century French masters including Rousseau, Matisse, Picasso, etc., Jan. 6-Feb. 1.



Mother and Child, by Irving Lehman, from his one-man exhibition at the Uptown Gallery.



"Les Joies d'une Heure
Etrange"—1913. Giorgio de
Chirico. Courtesy of Pierre
Matisse Gallery



Mother and Child by Irving Lehman from his one-man exhibition at the Uptown Gallery

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