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# ART FRONT

MAR 11 1937 M



Woodcut: LEOPOLDO MENDEZ

## SURREALISM and REALITY

A Discussion:

I DEFY ARAGON

By Salvador Dali

THE MAN IN THE  
BALLOON

By Clarence Weinstock

SURREALISM and  
MARXISM

By Samuel Putnam

National Conference  
of Artists Unions

The Rental Issue

MARCH, 1937 **21**

**We Kept Our First Promise—Thanks to You  
Help Us Make The Next Step A Reality**

# A DRIVE FOR \$100,000

**BY APRIL 1st**

**for an American Base Hospital  
in Spain**

The next hospital unit to include ten ambulance cars, an X-ray station, complete laboratory equipment, a large supply of surgical instruments, and medicine of all descriptions.

...plies here it was decided to send Mr. Château to Valencia and thence to France tomorrow.  
The Spanish Government, which has been most fortunate in its help from the International Column, has not been receiving enough medical supplies from abroad.

... Drive Halted

In-

MEDICAL BUREAU, 20 Vesey Street, New York, N. Y.

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF SPANISH DEMOCRACY To help establish by April 1 an American Base Hospital in Democratic Spain.

I enclose \$.....

Name .....

Address .....

City..... State.....

A-3

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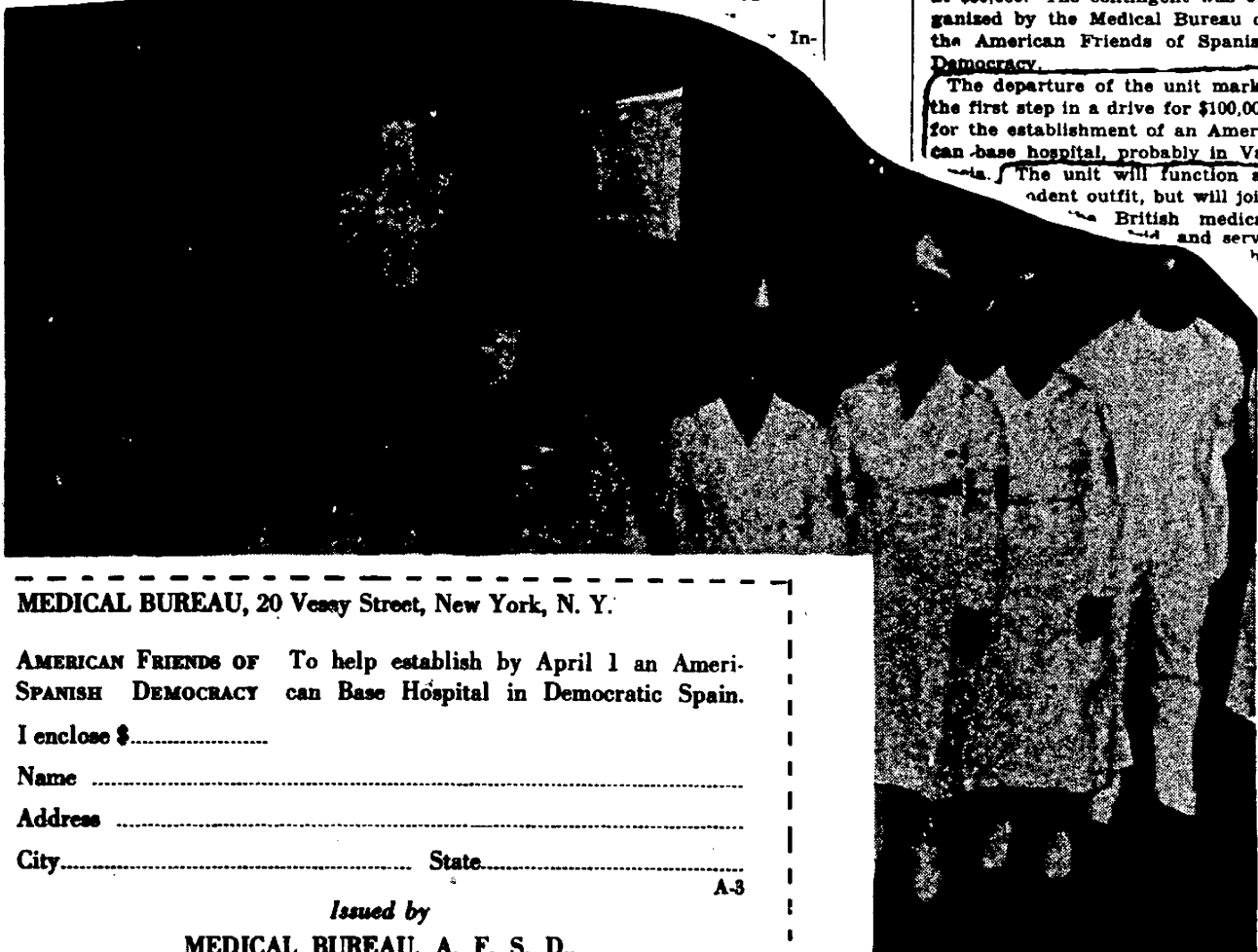
reported in the New York Times, Jan. 17, 1937.

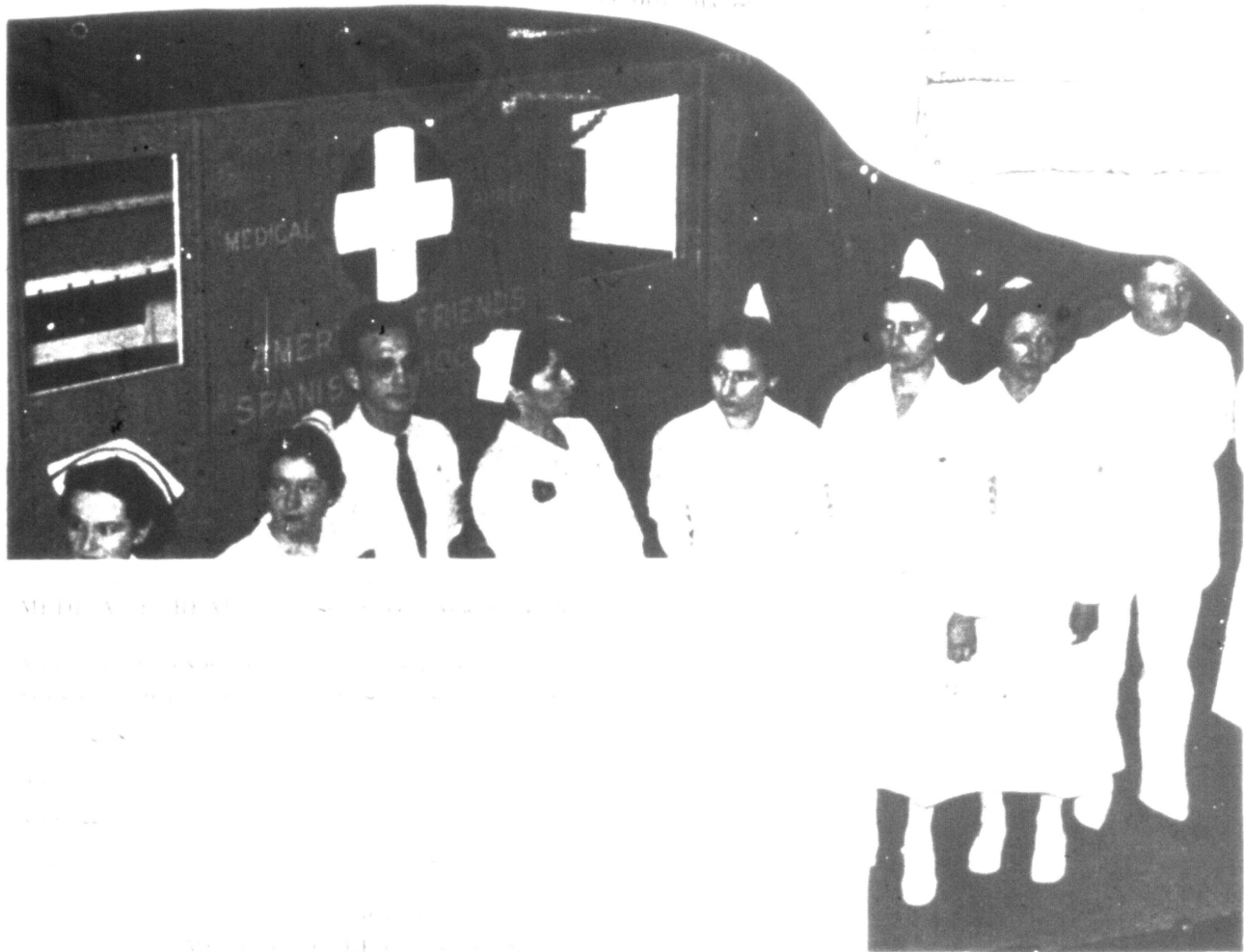
## HOSPITAL GROUP SAILS FOR SPAIN

Sixteen in Party Leave on the Liner Paris to Treat Wounded Loyalists.

Cheered by a hundred friends and sympathizers of Loyalist Spain, the first American surgical unit and ambulance corps to go to the aid of the defenders of Madrid sailed yesterday on the French liner Paris. Headed by Dr. Edward H. Barsky of 127 West Eighty-sixth Street, the unit was composed of sixteen men and women with four ambulances and twelve tons of medical and hospital supplies valued at \$30,000. The contingent was organized by the Medical Bureau of the American Friends of Spanish Democracy.

The departure of the unit marks the first step in a drive for \$100,000 for the establishment of an American-base hospital, probably in Valencia. The unit will function as an independent outfit, but will join the British medical unit and serve the





MEDICAL TEAM AT THE ...

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# ART FRONT

March 1937

## NO FIRING!

**A**S ART FRONT goes to press the policy of the Roosevelt administration is once more threatening the existence of the work relief program of the W.P.A. and the Four Arts Projects have again been singled out for special attention.

Mr. Harry Hopkins, who in case you have forgotten, is the gentleman who not more than a month ago said that no one in need would be dismissed from W.P.A., has now issued orders for a medley of cuts, reduction of quotas for personnel and wage cuts which are the first step in the process of stripping some 600,000 persons from the payroll of W.P.A. and forcing them back to the Home Relief rolls from whence they came. It is a safe assurance to say that a good share of them will be refused even this meager aid. Here we have, in concrete form, the fruit of Franklin Roosevelt's pre-election promises to fight for the rights of the unemployed. Through the announcement of these cuts the Roosevelt administration exposes itself as the perpetrator of the biggest political fraud ever attempted in our country. These Democratic Party pirates are now scuttling the ship they professed to save in November, 1936.

Without the support of the projects by the government, production in the field of culture becomes non-existent as far as it will effect any considerable fraction of Americans. The Roosevelt Administration by instituting and carrying through a program of cuts which can only result in the liquidation of the Cultural Projects labels itself as *reactionary* and is infested with the most despicable demagogy.

The workers on these Projects, have no intention of allowing this policy of liquidation to succeed. We have in the past built strong organizations, such as our Artists Union, and have fought off successfully previous attempts of the Administration to slash the Projects and institute regression into American culture. We have been brutally beaten by the police who were called in to defend the policy of the Administration. Today we are stronger than ever before and we can say with confidence, we have just begun to fight.

## THREE CONGRESSES

When three congresses of artists take place in three countries almost simultaneously and without prearrangement, we may assume that artists throughout the world are deeply concerned with some common problem. In countries as politically and esthetically diverse as England, Mexico and the United States, the same shadow of evil falls. As a result, the practitioners of three nations have convened their most progressive and forward-looking artists in a determined effort to help forestall the disasters of war and fascism and to further the spread of an art-consciousness in their respective countries.

The Mexican Congress, just concluded, has the most advanced and completely worked out program of all, but we must remember that the Mexican government is strongly anti-fascist and has made several tentative steps in the direction of socialism. The English Artists Congress is held this month in London. Surely this gives the lie to the venerable notion of hidebound England, fearful of cultural innovation. Imperialist Britain fears progress, but labor and culture are at odds with Downing Street. The balance of power still functions as the most corrupt and hypocritical force in European politics, but artists will have none of it.

The Second American Artists' Congress will be held in New York City this fall. Points of concentration will be the Federal Art Bill, extension of the art projects, unity against war and fascism, municipal art centers and the problem of democratizing culture.

These congresses afford another example of the fact that labor and culture are international in their community of interests, and that chauvinist nationalism is of necessity anti-labor and anti-culture.

## ON TO SPAIN

**A**WELL equipped ambulance on the loyalist side of the Spanish front, named after the American Artists Congress, with American artists as chauffeurs and helpers to a doctor and two nurses, is the aim of the Executive Board. Collection of

funds and enlistment of volunteers for Spain is proceeding.

The American Artists Congress joins with other artists, writers, playwrights and theatrical workers in the formation of an American Artists and Writers Ambulance Corps under the sponsorship of the Medical Bureau of the American Friends of Spanish Democracy, which already has doctors, nurses and tons of equipment and supplies in the field.

The Artists and Writers Ambulance Corps will be composed of 20 ambulances, 15 surgeons, 45 nurses and medical supplies. It will become part of a huge American Base Hospital in Spain, which has the approval of the Spanish government and the Health Ministry, and is being organized with the help of leading American medical authorities.

Individually, Stuart Davis, Max Weber, Hugo Gellert, Art Young, William Steig, Maurice Becker and others have joined in support of this project with a distinguished list of American writers which includes Ernest Hemingway, Dorothy Parker, George Kaufman, Edna Ferber, Upton Sinclair, Van Wyck Brooks and at least a hundred other writers and artists. The League of American Writers has announced their unanimous endorsement.

Artists and writers of many countries are giving help to loyalist Spain. Helios Gomez, Spanish artist, is leading a battalion. Andre Malraux, French novelist, leads an aviation squadron. Ludwig Renn, German novelist, is an officer in the world famous International Brigade. Ralph Fox, English biographer of Lenin, was recently killed in action. But the American Artists and Writers Ambulance Corps, is the first unified effort of its kind in any country.

ART FRONT, in the name of the Artists Union, joins the distinguished group of American writers, artists, playwrights and theatrical workers in giving its support.

**FLASH**—The Artists Union has given its unanimous approval to the sponsorship of still another ambulance, to be sent in the name of the Union, carrying its insignia. All funds for this purpose are to be sent to the union or to the Medical Bureau, designated: For the Artists Union Ambulance.



# RENTALS

IN order to correct the situation in relation to the rental question, which has been thrown into confusion by the action of the Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers, which has dropped the boycott, the question has been discussed in the National Steering Committee of the Artists Unions and the following proposals were made to the New York Union, and have been adopted by it. These have been sent out to all Unions throughout the country.

We regard the action of the American Society as being against the interest of the Union membership throughout the country. However, there is no basis upon which we can change the decision of the Society to drop the boycott. In this situation the Artists Unions have the chief responsibility for keeping rentals a live issue and maintaining an active fight which will have the effect of defending the ground which we, particularly local unions, have already won on this issue. Wherever possible this struggle must be pushed forward vigorously. The proposals listed below are intended to make such an active struggle possible by the Unions, and to keep the issue alive among the other artists who are not yet Union members by means of an aggressive educational campaign.

## Proposals:

1. The Rental Committee in the New York local is to be immediately strengthened so that it can act as an educational and informational center in relation to this issue, not only for the Union membership but for all the artists of New York and if necessary nationally.

2. The Union delegate to the Artists Coordination Committee, which represents all of the artists' organizations in New York City including the American Artists Congress, has been instructed to immediately make the proposal that the committee shall establish a broad and representative sub-committee which will have the job of carrying out a national educational program on rents and distributing information (such as shows which are being boycotted by local unions, etc.), which will help carry this fight on.

3. In future issues it is expected that ART FRONT will carry up-to-date information on rentals. In order to make this possible every local must send in its material.

4. *Local Unions.* The National Steering Committee has discussed the present crisis with a number of Unions which are involved directly by the issue. On the basis of this discussion we strongly urge all local Unions who have taken action in boycotting local or state shows successfully to continue to take this type of action. It is clear that the smaller museums and insti-

tutions which sponsor these exhibitions do not have the very good reason that they must use of local public funds. If the situation from this angle, it is to take successful action on local shows if we work on the basis of getting community support for our just demand for rent.

The only condition which will make this fight impossible is the substitution for the local shows of exhibitions of work by nationally known people. Every organization which has a membership of this kind will be sent an explanatory letter by the National Steering Committee which will inform them of the general conditions prevailing in relation to rentals in the local Unions and which will demand that they refuse to send substitute work or to allow any of their members to jury any show which is under a boycott.

On this basis we believe it will be possible not only to continue the fight for rentals where it has been started, but even to inaugurate it in new places. The only guarantee we have that the above scheme will work is a prompt and constant exchange of information, well in advance, of all boycotts of local exhibitions or other pertinent information.

This should be sent direct to the National Steering Committee.

It should be realized by all the local Unions that the defection from the boycott of the Society does not mean that the rental issue is in a complete state of collapse among the nationally known artists.

We feel that this issue is in many cases of paramount importance to the local Unions and we strongly urge that you immediately give us your opinions as to whether the above proposals provide an adequate basis for action locally on rentals. If they do not, let us have your suggestions immediately as to proper action. If you approve of the above—let us know.

*National Steering Committee,  
Artists Unions of America.*

*An Open Letter to the American Society  
of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers*

Sirs:

The Artists' Union of Baltimore has recently been informed that, after a poll of its members, your Society has decided to stultify the movement toward securing Rentals, by cancelling its own support of the boycott. This report reached us from a thoroughly reliable source (not from the Society itself), so we assume it to be established fact.

The Baltimore Union had experienced a sample of the Society's opportunism last Spring shortly after the boycott was initiated. (On that occasion a member of its executive committee, over our protests, had served on the jury for the All-Maryland

show at the local Museum which we were boycotting.) But despite this previous experience we found it difficult to believe that after having asked artists for nationwide support of both Rentals and Boycott, in these words of its spokesman, Katherine Schmidt: "If you are a member of an artists' organization not yet affiliated with this movement, I hope you will help persuade it to do so. If you are invited to an exhibition, do not send unless a rental fee is paid. If we act collectively we shall assert our dignity as artists and our right to that consideration which every socially productive person deserves"—and after having received whole-hearted and unqualified cooperation from artists' unions everywhere—after all this, we found it difficult to believe that the Society would leave itself open to clear charges of perfidy and cowardice by conspiring to withdraw its own support from a movement it had helped to launch.

And, of course, irrespective of its ultimate decision, the mere fact that your Society would even conduct a poll on the matter without including in the poll any and all cooperating artists is full justification for the anathema being heaped on the Society by faithful supporters everywhere.

In light of the definite results that are being achieved by self-sacrificing rank and file artists toward the eventual widespread acceptance of Rentals, the Society's opportunistic decision is an obvious implication that the old days of artistic rugged individualism are not beyond recall, but, in fact, are being revived with improved cut-throat methods.

The Artists' Union of Baltimore feels that the Society's attempt at sabotaging the entire Rental issue will not be accepted passively by the nation's artists, and herewith is issuing a call to all artists' unions to join immediately in consolidating the gains already made. And to the American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers we say,

R. I. P.,

*Larry C. Rodda,  
Corresponding Secretary.*

P.S. If any members of the Society resent being included in this blanket denunciation, we should refer them to the illuminating remarks by Katherine Schmidt before The American Artists' Congress, concerning resignations: "A few members of our Society, some of whom had voted for the resolution, hastened to resign upon learning of the museum directors' sharp disapproval of it. I think I am not doing some of these artists an injustice when I add that they saw a personal advantage in sending to shows to which others refused to send. Their obligations to their fellow artists sat lightly upon them." Your minority's course of action is clearly indicated!

# Manifesto of the Spanish People To the Civilized World

**A**LL parties and trade union groups of Spain, represented in the People's Front, have published an appeal in which it is stated, *inter alia*:

At Madrid, in the heart of the Spanish Republic, one of the greatest and most decisive battles is being fought that the world has ever seen. The heroic champions of the people, who with admirable selflessness are prepared to give up their lives rather than permit the fascists to triumph, know quite well what is the character of the fight in our country.

They know why Italian and German fascism is aiding the Spanish rebels: because they wish to deal a deadly blow to democracy and because they wish to seize possession of Spain on account of its strategic position, so as to realize the criminal war plans of fascism.

But they will fail in their endeavor, for the Spanish people know that the fate of international democracy is bound up with their fate. This is the reason why they are fighting so passionately, with such valor and courage, throwing their whole soul into the fight. With altruistic devotion, with self-abnegation, they are sacrificing themselves for the future of the world, for democracy, for peace and freedom.

Therefore the Spanish people call to all of you, men and women of the world, who in the depths of your souls respect the life and dignity of humanity. The Spanish people call upon you to protest against the crime that is being committed against a defenseless people. They protest with the whole power of their soul, and their cry must awake an echo in the heart of humanity in order that the destruction of Madrid and the annihilation of its best sons shall be prevented.

All the attacks of the enemy have up to now been repelled, and in their impotent rage the rebels are resorting to the worst crimes, to murder, to monstrous acts of violence; they are killing women and innocent, defenseless children. As they are unable to capture Madrid they intend to raze it to the ground. Their repeated attempts to advance to the point where the heart of the people's resistance beats have failed. In view of the collapse of their plans, which they thought they would carry out with ease, they are bombarding the open town from Junker and Caproni planes, spreading destruction and causing conflagration and, like ordinary criminals, are making use of the darkness of the night.

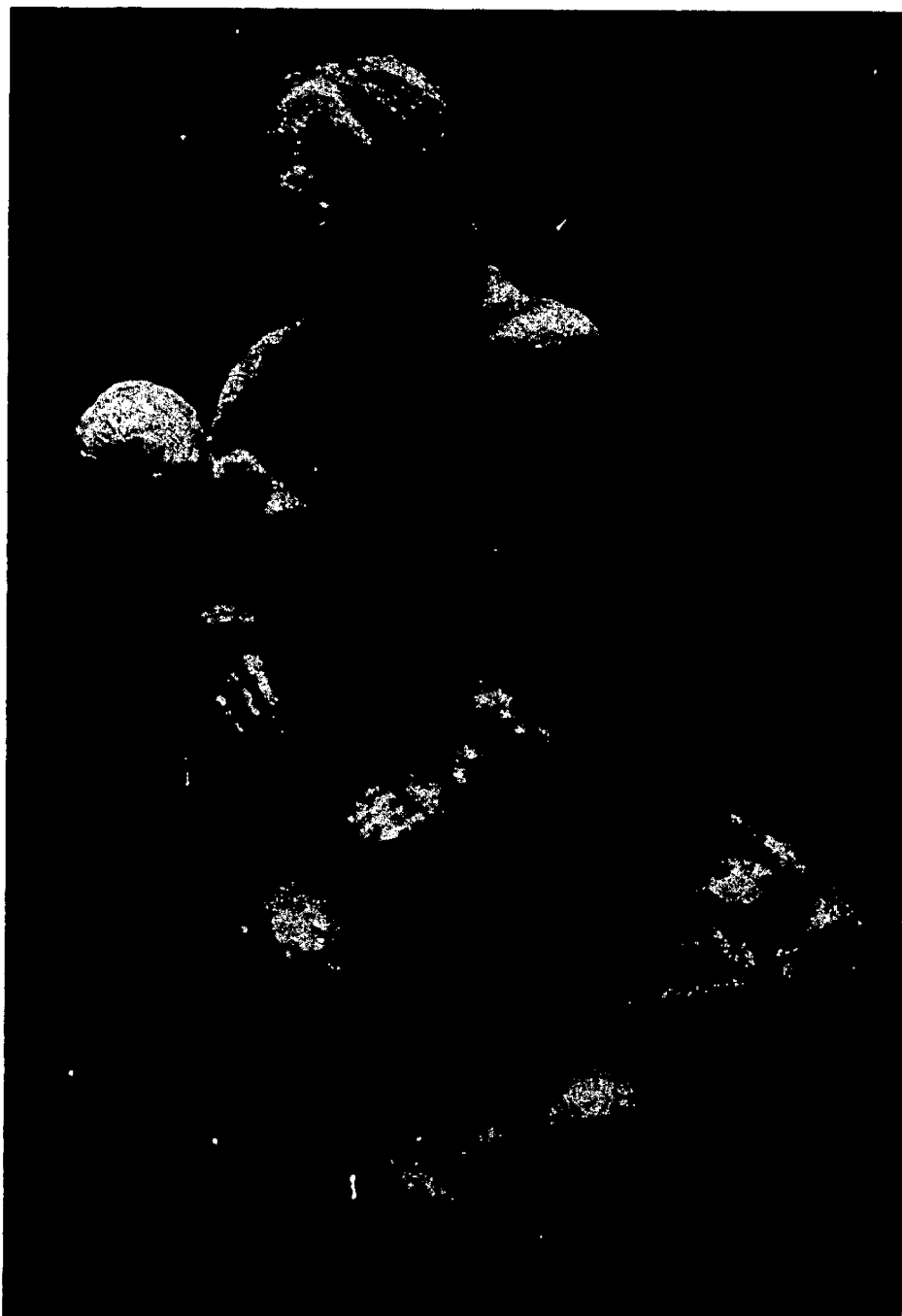
Brutes without conscience, hirelings in the service of vandalism and of fascist brutality, are directing their weapons mainly at the hospitals, the museums, the houses of culture. Several hospitals have been torn to pieces by machine gun fire. Invaluable works of art have been destroyed in the flames.

The world cannot look with indifference at the destruction of one of the most beautiful cities of Europe. Madrid is one of the most prominent centers of civilization

and culture. It is the cradle of cultural traditions, the repository of ancient works of art, of historical monuments of progress. The whole world is in duty bound to defend and maintain this city.

We Spaniards, representatives of the party organizations which embrace the majority of the people, appeal to all who love peace and progress for aid for the defense of Madrid, which belongs also to them, because it is part of the culture of mankind in general.

You who wish to live a life in which you enjoy peace, work, and freedom, remember that the lives of thousands of innocent people are threatened. Remember that the magnificent treasures, such as those in the Prado Museum, which have been collected



*Tragedy of Spain:* NAT WERNER



*Figure in Stone, New York*

can be destroyed in an hour by the fascist aircraft. Remember that one of the most wonderful cities of civilization is threatened by the barbarian instincts and destructive mania of fascism. Help us! Demand weapons for the Spanish people! Demand that the bombardment of Madrid shall cease and the destruction of human lives and of Spanish civilization by fascist

barbarism be prevented.

Defend in Madrid, your culture, the culture of the world!

Signed by the representatives of the Republican Union, the Republican Left, the Syndicalist Trade Unions, the U. G. T., the United Socialist Youth, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party.

# National Conference Of Artists Unions

HELD IN BALTIMORE, JANUARY 16, 1937

*The following article cannot treat the details of the important discussions which took place at the Conference. We will be glad to supply copies of the minutes to those interested...*

**J**ANUARY 16 marked the third meeting of delegates of the Artists Unions from a number of states. The two previous meetings were regional in character, the first including the Unions from the Atlantic seaboard States; the second was held in Chicago including those of the Middle West. Although the latest occasion was essentially of emergency character, it constitutes the first impressive step toward national unification of the Unions and artists' groups which have multiplied so rapidly during the last two years. Despite the great financial hardships and the relatively short time allowed for preparation, the following Unions were represented: Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, St. Louis, Chicago, Springfield, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Cleveland, Woodstock.

Reports from the Eastern and Mid-Western Districts indicated a rapid growth of new organizations of economic character among the artists in all sections of the country. This movement has spread over the boundaries of the United States and is responsible for a similar movement in Canada. The Artists Union has locals in 18 states at the present moment with groups in the process of organization in many others.

## *Work of the Conference*

Although the delegates were only able to meet for a single day the following review of the topics discussed will indicate the enormous amount of work which was accomplished.

## *Project*

The dominant fact brought out in relation to the Federal Art Project was that it is failing, in practical terms, to solve the twofold purpose for which it was established, namely, to provide jobs for the un-

employed artists and secondly, to provide for the cultural needs of the various communities. A further point brought out was the strong feeling on the part of the delegates from all sections that a Federal Art Project is the only means of serving and enlarging the cultural life of America. The facilities of the Federal Art Project have been spread so thinly throughout the country that it has of necessity failed to make more than a slight dent in these two fundamental problems. Many important cities have been left entirely without benefit of the services of the Project and their artists totally without work because of the stupidly narrow policy of employment which is based on the utterly inadequate appropriations made for this important responsibility.

In the course of discussing this situation the Conference brought into clear relief the essential character of both aspects, taking a position favoring the employment of every artist in need of a job under the Federal Art Project and so expanding the facilities available to the public to a point of making the Project a vital and permanent force for the building of a truly democratic culture in our country. A definite program of a Public Use of Art has already been prepared and will now be presented on a national scale. The adequate carrying out of this program will depend not upon the Administration but upon the artist whose concern for his economic security and the widespread use for his work has made him the logical and original force around which community sentiment will and must crystallize in favor of this program. This heralds a new day in America not only for the artists but for the millions as well, who for too long have had the cultural advantages withheld from them.

## *Federal Art Bill*

The Bill concretely embodies the foregoing program on a scale including all of the arts now incorporated in the Emergency Program of the Government. It will make the present and emergency program

permanent by recognizing the fact that the need for this work is not of an emergency nature but a permanent aspect of legitimate activity of a government in a democracy. This Bill represents the practical solution for this double edged problem and the fight for its enactment is not only the concern of every artist but that of every citizen who believes that the benefits of our society should be enjoyed by all.

## *Art Front*

It was pointed out that we have a valuable weapon at our disposal nationally and the locals have undertaken the responsibility for building up the magazine so that it will be able to adequately carry our issues to a very broad section of our population making these understood in relation to their cultural problems.

## *National Organization*

To coordinate the activity of the various Unions nationally a temporary National Steering Committee was formed with head quarters in New York City. The Committee is composed of the already formed Eastern District Committee enlarged by a representative from the New York Union and one from the Harlem Artists Guild. The full National Committee provides for a representative from each Union who is responsible for bringing proposals to the national body and for securing approval for the proposals of national scope within his Union. Upon this committee has been placed the task of preparing and carrying out national campaigns for the benefit of the Union and making necessary arrangements for a National Convention at which time a permanent National organization will be established.

The National Steering Committee is preparing a national campaign to put the Rental Policy Issue firmly on its feet. A national campaign committee is being set up to coordinate all activity around this issue to be accompanied by an educational and publicity program. As a means of establishing a really public and democratic art throughout the country, the Committee is preparing a campaign for the Public Use of Art which will be built to a great degree around the efforts of the Unions and their supporters to secure a Permanent Project by means of the Federal Art Bill. Pledges from Congressmen have already been received on the basis of a rough draft of the Bill.

At this moment, when the central economic problem facing the artists, the continuation, expansion, and making permanent of the Government program in support of art, has become a national problem of the most pressing character, the artists and our friends may well be proud of the fact that there is now, for the first time, a national organizational structure through which this, and other pressing economic and cultural problems may be met.

# SURREALISM and REALITY

## A Discussion

### I DEFY ARAGON

By Salvador Dali

IN 1932 during a seance of surrealist experiment I described a complicated project for a surrealist object to be called "thinking machine", for which several hundred small goblets would be required, filled with warm milk and hung so as to conform with the structure of a large rocking chair. Louis Aragon, who was present at the seance and who still belonged to our group, took it upon himself to declare, with the greatest seriousness and to the stupefaction of all, "I protest against Dali's object—glasses of milk are not for the making of surrealist objects, but are for the children of the unemployed." That declaration, in my opinion, was the unequivocal announcement of our imminent rupture; sounding the note of intellectual and moral abjection to which Aragon was to descend, finally plunging ignominiously into that most servile of all conformity, Stalinist bureaucracy.

At the time when Louis Aragon believed in the possibilities for himself of a brilliant (and capitalistic) literary career, he did his best to please the bourgeoisie with

a pose vaguely anarchical. His attitude at that time towards the U.S.S.R. in sum was expressed by his cynical qualification of Moscow as "the Idiot who has lost control over the excretory organs," an attitude typical of the fickle Aragon vis-a-vis the Russian revolution during the period when the brilliant genius of Lenin still ruled the destinies of that country and justified the more than fanatic adherence of all true revolutionaries.

Upon his return from a visit to Russia Aragon again saw possibilities for himself of another brilliant career (this time socialistic). Because the promise of his Parisian beginnings seemed to droop, Aragon noisily broke relations with the surrealist group and unconditionally (of course) adopted the platform of "proletarian art," probably inculcated by the Congress of Kharkov from which he had just returned.

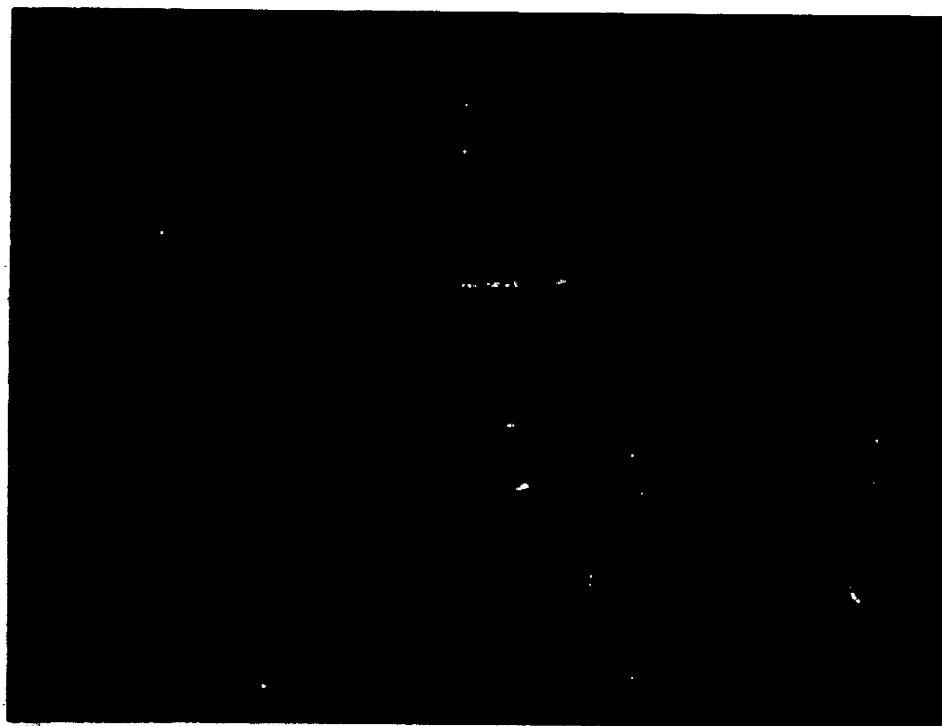
At that time, as everyone will recall, proletarian art consisted of a sort of pitiable and elementary idealization of the terms and myths furnished by the degra-

ation of socialist work, big hands, and the illustration of political slogans. It was the time when Aragon agitated for the assassination of Leon Blum in his poems, ("Feu à Blum! feu aux ours blancs de la social democratie"). Obviously this was more than was required, but it was the last anarchist and individualist residuum that the party might utilize in its own fashion,—direct action and terrorism. Moreover, at that time nobody had as yet dreamed of that apotheosis of the "front populaire" which, according to Aragon, was to mark the ineluctable end of those photographs of the beautiful, exciting, and exhibitionist women of Man Ray, photographs which up until 1934 could still be exciting, but after the 6th of February \* lost all their effect and all their sex appeal.

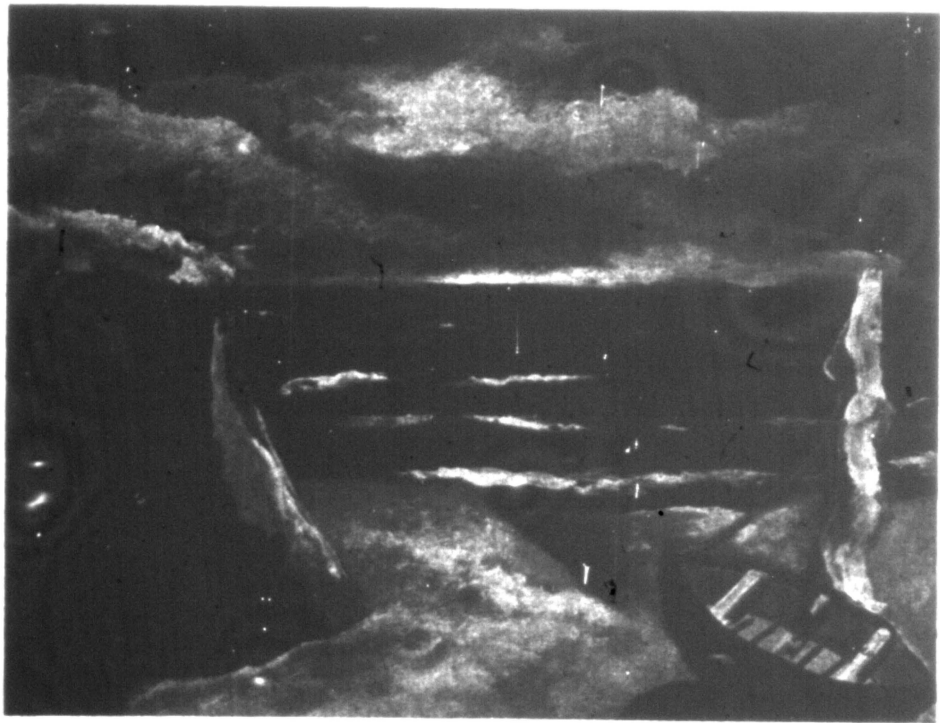
AS SOON as Russia decided to abandon the platform of "proletarian art" because of an unprecedented defeat suffered by that definitely luke warm formula, Aragon straightway adopted the new slogan of "Socialist Realism" since that had just been decided upon. In one day proletarian idealization was replaced by socialist realism but the new formula possessed all the stupidity of the old, as if one were to say "proletarian chemistry, socialist physics, socialist automobile." Why a socialist automobile? When a laboratory is installed in Russia for the study of cancer, or a factory for the production of automobiles, it is attempted, I think, to approximate all the most advanced accomplishments of capitalist countries, to surpass them if possible. Most advanced in the æsthetic domain is the surrealist phenomenon which attempts to resolve the most astonishing and recent discoveries of the imagination.

The true laboratory wherein one pursues the systematic exploration of uncharted regions of the human mind is "Surrealism." Why not use this laboratory then, representing as it does all experience of the history of art? If surrealism develops and continues its ex-

\* On Feb. 6, 1934, fascists rioted in Paris, in an effort to seize control of the government under the cloak of indignation over the Stavisky scandal.



*Boat in Storm; JOHN LONERGAN  
Courtesy A. C. A. Gallery*



*Boat in Storm* JOHN LONERGAN



periments in a socialist society it will occur naturally that the historical, political, and social changes will one day leave their mark, their decisive influence, upon the development and continuation of surrealism, but who can tell, and by what means can one know, how all this shall come about? Furthermore the historical factor changes only the aspect and "means of expression," and we know that surrealism aims essentially at the more profound contents of the aesthetic phenomenon. "Paranoiac-critical activity" has discovered and proven in no uncertain fashion that pictures apparently different, and belonging to the most diverse periods of history, as in the case of *La Gioconda*, *L'Embarquement pour Cythere* of Watteau, Millet's *Angelus*, and Courbet's *Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet* intend to say "exactly" the same thing, and it is in what things intend to say that we are interested,—the manner of the saying also, but secondarily. In my last book I have answered these questions in more detail. It is called the

*Conquest of the Irrational* and it is tied with a red band upon which is written "Face au réalisme socialiste!" I repeat as a slogan: "Conquest of the irrational opposed to socialist realism."

(A photograph, which lack of space keeps up from reproducing, was to be included here. It shows Greta Garbo, her face dramatically hidden by a robe, evading cameramen. EDITORS.)

Aragon ignores the fact that Vermeer of Delft had already invented "colour photography" such as is painfully attempted today. He makes an apology for the "news photo," such as this one of Greta Garbo hiding from the reporters. If instead of Garbo the photo were of Stalin it would already be "Socialist Realism," or if it were of Hitler it would be "National Socialist Realism." All depends on the face which is hidden. What ideological poverty! In comparison Vermeer is "Surrealism Integral."

rich Wolf's "The Sailors of Cattaro," the textile worker, Emil Ginkels "A Pause on the Pneumatic Hammer," and dozens of plays, novels, poems and reportage by other worker-poets and correspondents. One might "recall" that the delegate from the Ukraine reported that, while from 1798 to 1916, during 118 years of Czarist tyranny, there were issued in the Ukrainian language 2,804 titles, in one year alone, 1930, under the "Stalinist bureaucracy," 7,000 titles were published. Or perhaps Dali has some other, more refined idea of culture?

The Congress was primarily organizational. Its main concern was to solidify, to coordinate the struggle of revolutionary and anti-fascist intellectuals throughout the world against the menace of fascism and imperialist war, and for the defense of the Soviet Union. Delegates to this conference understood that watching them were the eyes of the oppressed people of every capitalist country and of the colonies, workers of every race united in desire to overthrow the exploiters of their lives and creative capacities. The concept of art as a task, as a weapon in this struggle filled their minds and directed the resolutions of the Congress. On the basis of evidence such as that of German literary production it was resolved that the tremendous creative reserves of the working class and peasantry must be roused, might even be made the ground for revolutionary art and literature, that the "small forms" of literature, one-acters, short stories, sketches, satires, skits, puppet plays, etc., be encouraged, and that writers of other than proletarian origin make every effort to participate in the lives, experiences and struggles of the working class. It was decreed the intellectual duty of every writer and artist present to acquaint himself with the class struggle and with the dialectical, materialist approach to nature and history, known as Marxism, and to relate his thinking to a concrete course of action.

The adoption of these resolutions started an unprecedented reaction among intellectuals everywhere. Thousands who had been straddling between their desire for solitude plus reputation and the realization of their true position and spiritual interests gathered to oppose those forces behind the mask of the state which were threatening to solve the great crisis in which they were involved by fascist oppression or war. They did not succeed everywhere in averting fascism, and hundreds have suffered, been maimed and killed side by side with their fellow workers in German, Polish, Italian, Japanese, it is needless to name so many prisons. But do not think they have lost. In France, England, Spain, Mexico, here they are fighting ever more fiercely for the economic security and political freedom of all workers of hand

## THE MAN IN THE BALLOON

By Clarence Weinstock

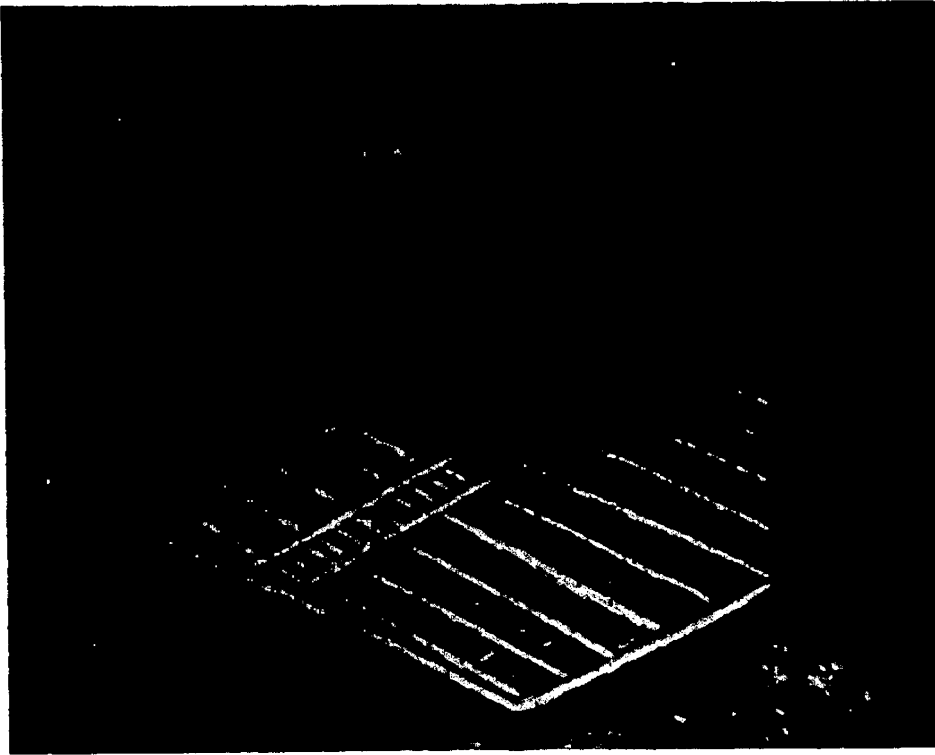
IT MUST be difficult for anyone not acquainted with the Aragon-Surrealist break to understand the above melange of art, politics and personality. Imagine a seance such as the one described, an ouija board taking the place of milk bottles, a "master" instead of Dali, and a medium, Henry Jones, for Aragon. Darkness, mystery, hocus pocus. Suddenly, "to the stupefaction of all," Henry Jones comes to his senses, emits a horse laugh in the master's face and the lights go on over a scene of "intellectual and moral abjection." Jones is torn apart by mystics, while bureaucracy—one shudders at the fate of bureaucracy. Can you blame anyone for deserting such a thick atmosphere?

Before treating Dali's attack seriously I should like to clear up an impression one might get from his charging Aragon with revolutionary opportunism. Aragon is said to be pursuing a brilliant career, "this time socialistic," after his chances of capitalist success had faded. This of course after the death of Lenin, who "justified the more than fanatical adherence of all true revolutionaries." When will Dali and his friends stop acting as though Lenin would have been dying to meet them? (This seems to be a common fixation in certain "true revolutionary" circles today.) I am not aware that Dali has lost faith in the possibilities of his career (this time capi-

talistic). Who is pleasing the bourgeoisie anyway, Aragon with "Red Front," or Dali with his slimy watches? Dali whose revolutionary culture can embrace the idea that the Communist Party utilizes "in its own fashion (!) direct action and terrorism."

As for the exciting women of Man Ray, no, they did not lose their sex appeal after February 6. But sex appeal lost its appeal. The People's Front is being forged by men to whom resistance to fascism is not a grand gesture but a serious problem, more serious than the dreamy recapture of desires worn out by overpractice.

The Congress of Kharkov, in the Soviet Ukraine, to which Dali refers, was held in Nov. 1930, when capitalism was in the throes of its deepest and most prophetic crisis. Writers from 22 countries attended. "Everyone" will not "recall" that at that time proletarian art concerned itself with the "degradation of socialist work, big hands, and the illustration of political slogans." Proletarian art had already been enriched, in one country alone, Germany, by the novel of the miner, Hans Marchwitz's "Storm Over the Ruhr," the miner, Kurt Kläber's "Third Class Passengers," the compositor, Ludwig Turek's "A Worker Relates," the metal worker, Willi Brodel's "Machine Plant N and K," Fried-



Ship in Drydock: MAX SCHNITZLER

and brain and against imperialist aggression and war.

Where then is the "unprecedented defeat"? Has proletarian art vanished? There has just appeared "Tsushima," a story of the Russo-Japanese naval battle of 1905, a book of extraordinary visual and analytical strength, written by A. Novikoff-Priboy, paymaster's steward on the battleship Oryol, one of the defeated ships. This book had a distribution of over a million and a half copies in the U.S.S.R., without the help of a publisher's press agent, some palm greasing, and William Lyon Phelps. Perhaps it was sold by force, at the tip of a Stalinist knout? Or has Dali a more refined idea of success?

Dali thinks he is ridiculing socialist realism when he stumbles across his own analogy to ask, "Why a socialist automobile?" (Not a bad idea, incidentally. The character and quality of products is naturally altered by a change in the system of production, this being accomplished by a change in the system and form of social relations. For example, a socialist razor blade, not being merely a commodity, would not have its edge deliberately weakened so that the manufacturer could sell more packages to pay the price of advertising, competition and Tootsy-Wootsie's fur coat.)

**N**O discussion of socialist realism is possible here\* in so limited a space. But it must be said that it in no way presupposes an abandonment of proletarian art, but rather its extension through a Marxist approach to the aesthetic experience.

Human sensibility and imagination have no one, eternal character, but they are products of history determined by a vast congeries of social forces of which they are reciprocally causes; classes and their conflicts, governments, philosophy, law, science, technic, art. The first term of these, though not the one and only cause, is the mode of production at any given period. A historical crisis occurs when the potentialities of production can no longer be released through the social forms which

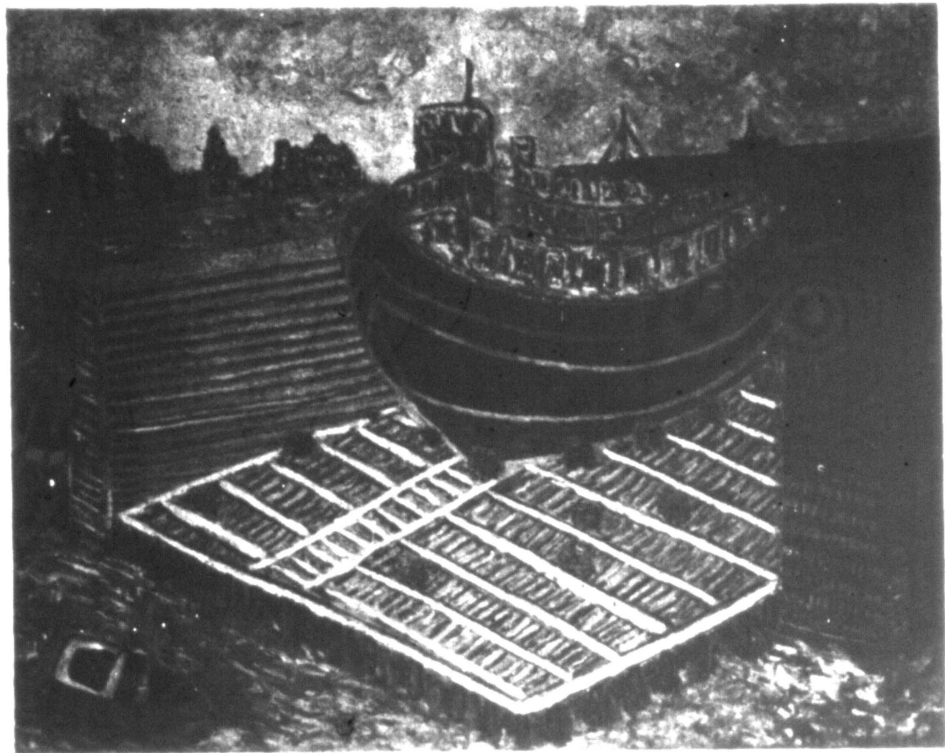
\* John Howard Lawson, in a section on Marx and Engels in his book, "The Theory and Technique of Playwriting," says, "Socialist realism is opposed to either a subjective or a naturalistic method: the artist cannot be content with an impression or with superficial appearances, with fragments and odds and ends of reality. He must find the inner meaning of events; but there is nothing *spiritual* about this inner meaning; it is not subjective and is not a reflection of the moods and passions of the soul; the inner meaning of events is revealed by discovering the real connections of cause and effect which underlie the events; the artist must condense these causes; he must give them proper color and proportion and quality; he must dramatize the 'superstructure of diversified and characteristic sentiments, illusions, habits of thought, and outlook on life in general.'"

were once adequate for them, as bourgeois democracy for capitalist production. A struggle begins in the course of which not only the social forms, the state, are shattered, but all the structures of the intelligence and fantasy of humanity are shaken. The intellect, the mode of experience and, therefore, the form of expression are revolutionized. Painting changes because, in the conflict, the mind changes, the eyes are no longer the same eyes.

The transformation of styles in art in the past took place in an indirect way and over long periods of time; for while the artist expressed his age and the judgments of its dominant or rising class he had no way of examining those judgments with regard to their historic necessity. He saw the world *through* certain values, but not those values in relation to the world and society. Values thus took on a comparatively stable, even static character, and this explains why so many were able to survive, in the minds of artists, the periods and conditions which produced them.

Now Marxism, *i.e.*, dialectical and historical materialism, enormously accelerates the destruction and transformation of old values. With its help the artist is able to relate the aesthetic and social movements of his time to a world outlook whose basic principle, unlike say theology or humanism, is *verifiability in practice*. The class struggle, the decay of bourgeois production and values with the rise of the proletariat, theories of science, even theories of aesthetics are so verifiable, though the instruments of analysis are not equally developed in every field.

Socialist realism is the effort to describe the world and society in terms of the philosophy, the system of meanings of the proletariat, dialectical materialism. It is not realism in the bourgeois sense, not naturalism: it makes no pretense of detaching its values from, nor does it believe in the "pure recorded fact." It is not propaganda either, which aims to convey ideas and meanings economically, that is, with only the most relevant parts of an experience, the whole experience being subordinate to the intention of using it for a certain end. The socialist realist projects experience saturated with values, with revolutionary meanings, values imbedded in experience, completely accessible only to the artist with a Marxist culture. His art is the finished metal out of the forms. (I have said nothing about form as an element in socialist realistic art, because I believe no discussion of form is possible which is abstracted from the general problem of uniting experience and values. One thing must be said about form, however. The socialist realist is no philistine. He may find that an artist like Leger, by the revolutionary character of his form alone,



is nearer a dialectical view of the modern world than a Dali with his pseudo-revolutionary self-conscious Unconscious framed in a reactionary technique.)

And what is Dali offering opposed to this art which demands unremitting study, athleticism of mind, a disciplined culture, love of construction, of the people, and understanding of all "the elementary rules of social life" by which they have survived with integrity centuries of darkness and oppression?

A miserable eclectic art, the ethics of a man born in a balloon, the *bidet* in revolt against the institution of marriage. These "astonishing discoveries of the imagination," (which, even if it ruptured itself trying, could not encompass what takes place in one hour in some Ethiopian or Spanish village occupied by fascists) are no more than the products of a paranoiac-critical activity which began with reading

issues of the Journal of Psychoanalysis. Dali ends up with an idealistic, counter-revolutionary art, in which the images of personal inner conflict are exalted to the place of abstract human nature, the old bourgeois bogey man to fool the bystanders. His unconscious stands revealed not in its potentiality, as part of the experience of a free, active individual fighting for or constructing a new social order, new cities, new countries, filled with bright, powerful symbols, but as a damp cellar in which one rat eats another and thinks he is bringing down the house.

**T**HE photograph is a piece of vulgarity proving nothing. Dali's book is tied with a red band. Why not a brown one? Then you could call it, not "The Conquest of the Irrational," but "My Struggle, or Why a Working Class?" A red ribbon. What ideological presence of mind!

## MARXISM AND SURREALISM

By Samuel Putnam

**I**N a letter to his father, written in his university days and bearing the date, November 10, 1837, at a time when he was engaged in poetic and other literary composition, Karl Marx expresses the determination to "seek the idea in reality itself." (Reminiscent of Goethe's "*das Ideale sie im Reelen anzuerkennen*"—the Ideal is to be discovered in the Real.)

This, of course, was before Marx' views had taken definitive form; it was not until 1844 (1844-48) that he and Engels were to set about the creation of Socialism. The year 1837 is, nevertheless, a significant one in his intellectual biography. Not only was he himself attempting literary creation; he was very much concerned with the question of the plastic arts, as is shown by the critical attention which he accords to Greek sculpture, in his dissertation, begun about this time, on the atomic philosophy of Epicurus as differentiated from that of Democritus (*Differenz der demokratischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie*).

The real, then, is Marx' starting point.

It was the effort to fathom the nature of reality, that problem of all metaphysicians, which led to the evolution of the Marxian dialectic. As every Marxist knows, Marx' point of departure was Hegel's dialectic idealism, and, let us not forget, Feuerbach's criticism of Hegel (see the *Theses on Feuerbach* of 1845, within the period of gestation, so to speak, of scientific Socialism). Marx is commonly said to have "stood Hegel on

end"; that is to say, he took the Hegelian idealistic dialectic, which was standing on its head, and put it on its materialistic feet. The results was dialectic materialism.

All this is "primaire," as the French would say; but this article, owing to the nature of the subject, has to be more or less of that sort. Any reference to a "super-real" which may at the same time conceivably be Marxian implies a woeful ignorance of the very bases and whole trend and character of the Marx-Engels teaching. *Nowhere throughout that teaching is there anything whatsoever to justify the assumption that there is anything more real than reality, any reality "above" the real.*

The questions posed are, rather: the metaphysical one as to the nature of reality (answered through dialectics); and the epistemological one as to the source and mode of our knowledge of the real. In aesthetics, which with logic and ethics goes to make up the philosophical theory of value, we are obliged at the start to concern ourselves with the metaphysical and epistemological answers,—unless, in our consideration of "the beautiful," or whatever it is that constitutes the domain of aesthetics, we are to run off into all the vague idealistic categories and categorical differentiations from Plato down through Kant, and on down through the "pitiful eclectic broth" of Neo-Hegelianism, through the "lyric intuition" of a Croce, and the "inner formative reality," the "absolute will

to art," the "significant form" and "fine aesthetic tremor," etc., etc., of all the modern subjectivist fakers and poseurs in the field of aesthetics.

If we are to build an aesthetic, that is, a philosophy of art, providing an answer to all the questions that may be raised, we must first determine what we mean by reality, and what our relation to reality is; a theory of knowledge is indispensable. (As Lenin points out, dialectical materialism is such a theory.) If we are to go on calling ourselves Marxists, our metaphysics (view of reality) and our epistemology must correspond to that of Marx.

Marx' debt to Feuerbach has been stressed above, in passing. Marx was greatly influenced by Feuerbach's view, to the effect that *being conditions thought (consciousness); thought does not condition being.*

Hegel says: *thought is the subject; being is the predicate.*

Feuerbach says: *being is the subject; thought (consciousness) is the predicate.*

And so, eventually,—we cannot dwell on all the intermediate steps—we come to the fundamental principle of dialectic materialism: *all knowledge is nothing other than the reflection in human consciousness of a material sense-perceived world, existing independently, outside of consciousness, but of which that consciousness is an objective part.*

Consciousness, in other words, is the mirror of an external, objective, material sense-perceived reality, a reality of which it is itself a part (I am a subject to me, an object to others, the not-me). This theory of mirroring is basic for the investigation of all forms of human consciousness, including the aesthetic, what Lukacs terms "the problem of the objectivization of artistic form."—"It applies fully to the artistic mirroring of reality" (Lukacs). Bourgeois aestheticians and artists have muddled the process in two ways: through philosophic idealism; and through mechanical ("metaphysical") materialism.

Lenin's admirable definition of philosophic idealism (contained in Addenda III, "On Dialectics," to the *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*) may be quoted with point and profit here; I give my own translation, which is not precisely the same as that of Kvitko, in the English edition of Lenin's works (Vol. XIII.): "*a one-sided, exaggerated, uberschwengliches (Dietzgen) development (puffing-out, swelling) of one of the facets, sides, limits of knowledge into an absolute, divorced from matter, from nature, apotheosized. . . . A rectilinearity and one-sidedness, woodiness and ossification, subjectivism and subjective blindness, voilà, the gnoseological horns of idealism.*"\*

\* Russian edition of *Lenin's Works*, t. XIII, str. 304, "k voprosu o dialektike."

I ask the reader to pause and apply this definition to Surrealism!

**A**S for mechanical materialism, applied to art, it leads to a fatal attempt at the direct reproduction of reality, as with Zola and the Naturalists. Here, starting out to depict (reproduce) the world "as it is," the artist at once decides that this can only be *as he sees it*; by way of "external spice," he will add a dash of "temperament"; and what we have in the end is "a nook in nature viewed through a temperament" (Zola),— which is a long way from objectivity and back to the subjective once more; for mechanical materialism leads to subjectivity as surely as does philosophic idealism.

A Marxist art, on the contrary, is one in which there is no attempt at the direct reproduction of reality, or photographic representation, on the one hand, and no flight into the realm of the subjective on the other, but instead, *a dialectical deeping of reality in its human essence*. For Marxist art is essentially human and essentially social. Out of Feuerbach, Marx derived the principle that *the essence of the human is the sum-total of social relationships*.

But what if reality is unaesthetic in character, that is, adapted to the slaying of art? It was from such a postulate that those sons of the after-war bourgeoisie, the French Surrealists, set out. They would produce, they affirmed, a "revolution in consciousness," which must precede the social revolution. (The exponents of Stein and *Transition* are still saying this, with reference to "the revolution of the word.") It simply doesn't work out that way, however.\* There was a time in pre-Hitlerian Germany when Dada was taken seriously as a social-revolutionary technique. It didn't work. In so far as it was revolutionary, it wasn't Dada. As for the Surrealists, the social end of the road for them has been portrayed by Ehrenbourg; there is nothing more to be said; for some time now, they have been consorting with young Storm Troopers from across the Rhine.

The reason is obvious. The Surrealist ideology is absolutely cock-eyed from the Marxist point of view. Marx, too, it is important to remember, started from the unaesthetic character of reality, that impasse for art in the modern world which Hegel had reached. But let us also remember what the nature of this reality was: that of capitalistic-bourgeois society, civilization and culture. Hegel had said, under "Christian government" or "governmental absolutism"

\* This is to assert, as Hegel does, that the march of thought determines the march of things; whereas the Marxist says, the march of things determines the march of thought.

art must perish. He significantly paused there. As Marx discerned, the idealistic Hegel with his "world soul" had become reconciled to the art-slaying reality about him. The Marxian answer to this is: Change the world! Change the world, that art may go on. (Fascism brings the thing to a head.)

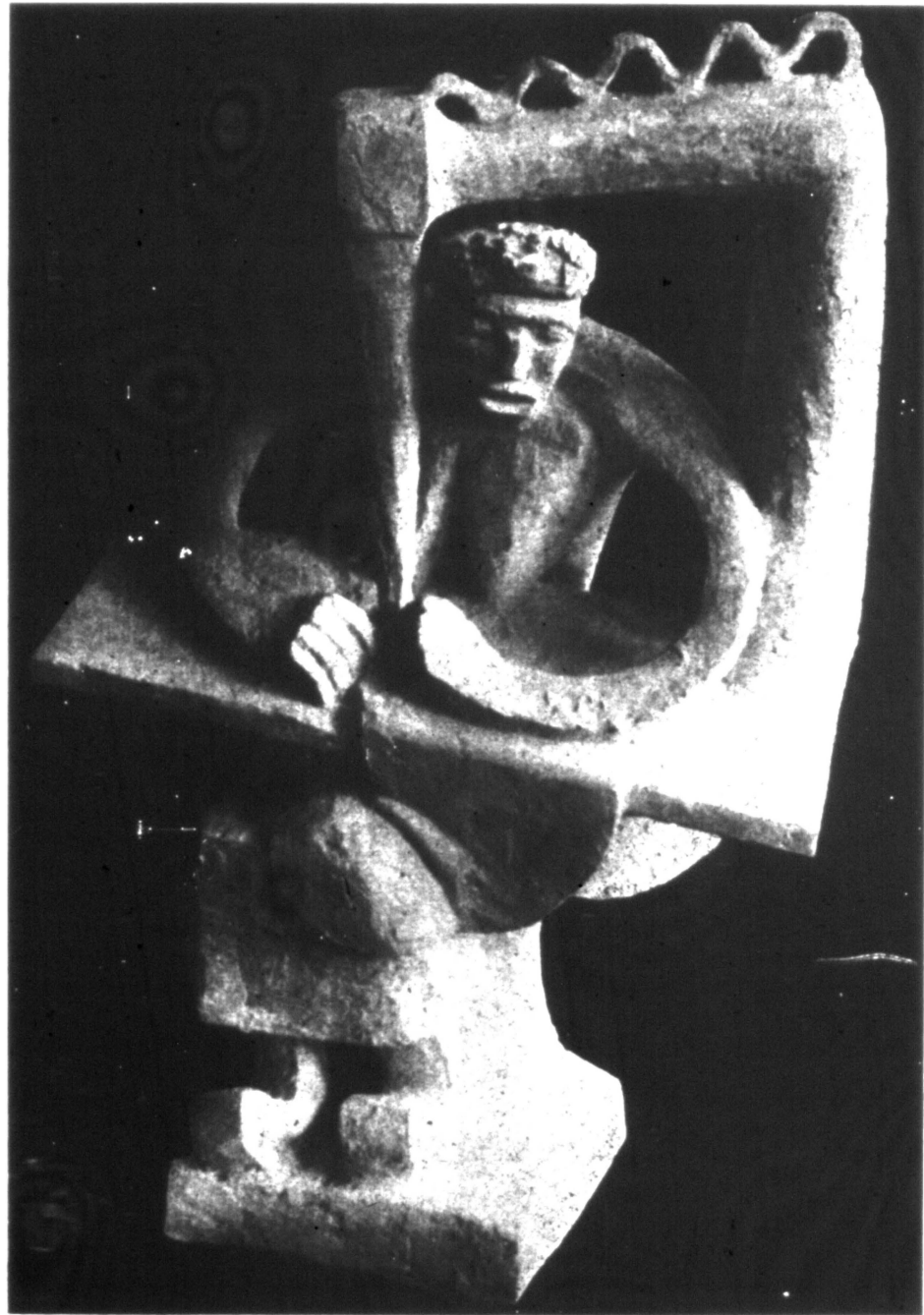
The Surrealist does not set out to change the world, the material, *real* world of social relationships, human in its essence. He proposes to change, not the world, but the *reflection* of the world in consciousness. (Cf. Marx: by acting on the world, man changes himself—consciousness—the mirror.) He is being utterly false to Marxist principle, by asserting that consciousness

conditions being, not being consciousness. He is asserting, contrary to Marx, that thought is the subject, being the predicate. Marxism and Surrealism are, therefore, diametrically opposed, in their very essence. If you want to be a Surrealist, well and good, but don't go on calling yourself a Marxist. Read over the sixteen points of materialist dialectic as outlined by Lenin and recapitulated by Dutt. Take, for instance, the very first one: *Objectivity of observation, not examples, not unrepresentative forms (Abschweifungen), but the thing in itself*. Etc., etc.

No, the only truly Marxist art is a socialist realism. The principles underlying the



Finisher: MILTON HERALD



*Finisher* MILTON HEBARD



Marxist creative process are to be worked out in the laboratory; and they are being so worked out at this moment by a number of Soviet aestheticians. Naturally, the thing cannot be put into a word; but if one were to try doing so, he could not hit much nearer, perhaps, than did Schiller when, in the foreword to his *Jungfrau von Messina*, he observes that the purpose of art is "not to satisfy the appearance of truth," but to build a meaning "in truth itself." Schiller, unfortunately, did not live up to his own doctrine. How many artists do?

## Some Contemporary Sculptors

By RUSSEL BONG

**O**SSIP ZADKINE, who had his first comprehensive New York exhibition at the Brummer Gallery in February, is, according to the program blurbs and Mr. Wilenski, the European art critic, the "most agile-minded and technically adventurous figure in the whole field of European sculpture." He has likewise been called the Picasso of modern sculpture.

By the use of concave surfaces to delineate form (in which he resembles the Spaniard, Gargallo) in the small bronze groups, he is comparatively successful; he has achieved a quiet, restrained, almost classic dignity to these pieces. Although, as in the musician series, too much interest is shown in the natural forms of the instruments for their decorative effects.

In the numerous other bronzes the combination of the convex and concave surfaces is often irritating; the breaking up and the embellishment of the figures with lavishly modelled drapes, which occur like motifs in much of the work, make it not much more than decorative.

It is in the larger pieces, the *Homo Sapiens* and the *Concerto for Two Violins* that Zadkine seems to rely altogether on the decorative functions of surfaces to supply him the heroic forms the conceptions call for. Likewise, the small bronze model for the *Orpheus* of which the original is in the *Musee d'Art Moderne*, Paris, is more convincing than the huge, more completely worked out figure.

The *Niobe*, carved from a single trunk is the best of the large pieces; the attenuated figure with outstretched arms is simply modelled without the customary obsessions with decorative padding.

There are two nudes in the round, plaster casts, a *Kneeling Woman*, very much like the Picasso nudes of the *Rose Period*, and some pieces in relief of which the *Girl and Bird* is reminiscent of the Epstein stylized *Rima*.

The *Sculptor*, dated 1933, in painted glass, stone and lead, conveys the impression that Zadkine is obsessed with the creative faculties alone of the artist, which explains his failure to do heroic work without having to rely solely on superficial experiments in surface, which have little to do with the realization of any organic, concrete idea.

The sculptor, like other artists, must derive his heroic conceptions from the predominant heroic conceptions and struggles of his own generation; and Zadkine, it

seems, has not adequately struggled with the problems facing the sculptor today.

**H**AVING experimented with the abstract forms of primitive sculpture, Chaim Gross in his one-man show at the Boyer Galleries was able to make much use of his subject matter drawn for the most part from contemporary American life.

His interest in abstract design, although the acrobatic figures seem clearly to derive from the columnar pieces of the Mayan, keeps his work from assuming the place of amusing commentaries. It is to Gross' credit that he has escaped that obsession with technical form itself that makes so much of Zadkine's work, for example, inherently static, turned in on itself.

His use of a great variety of woods has led to certain distinct definitions of form clearly his own; although, as in the *Tight Rope Dancer*, Gross occasionally takes too much for granted the linear design of the natural wood grains to indicate, rather than conceive form.

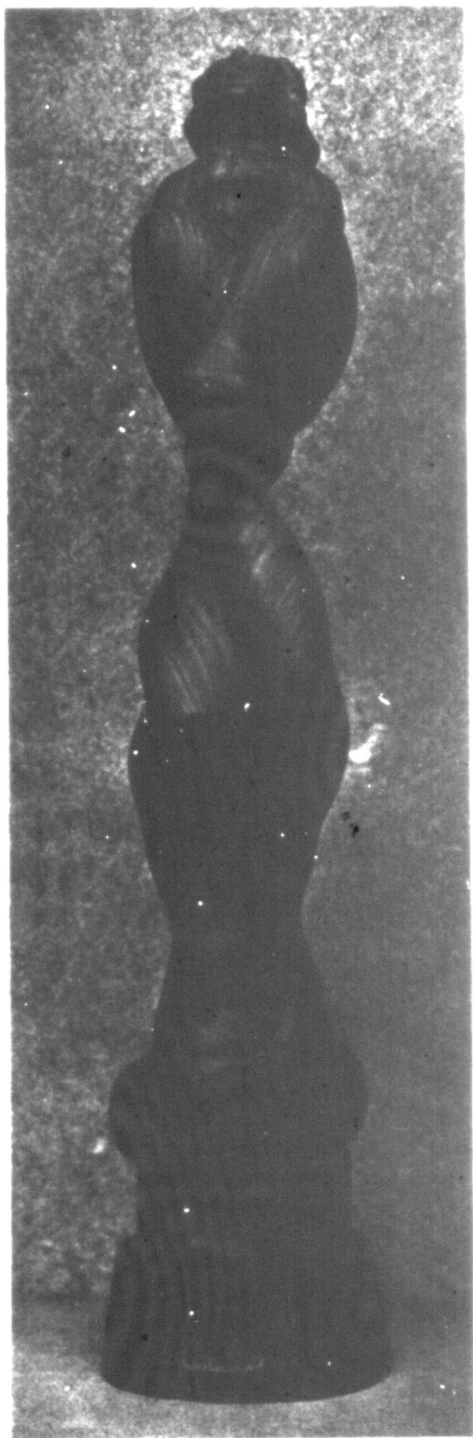
It is in the *Mother and Child at Play* that Gross seemed to find his most mature expression; and in the reclining *Pole Walker*, both in wood. These last two pieces indicate his general future direction, both of them unmarred by any excessive misuse of wood grains.

The two portraits in the show, that of Mrs. Gross, an exquisitely carved head from boxwood, and the somewhat stylized *Self-Portrait*, showed respect for the model and the natural, physical quality of the particular wood.

**T**HE second exhibition of sculpture by W.P.A. sculptors at the Federal Art Gallery, 7 East 38th Street, comprised sixty pieces; there was work in plaster, stone, wood and terra cotta. Some of it had been done for decorative purposes, for example, the two *Jaguars* of Paul Hyun intended for the approaches to the Brooklyn Museum; and the studies of Glickman and Aaron Goodelman for the much discussed war monument at Port Chester, N. Y.

In spite of the particular uses for which much of the work was intended the show as a whole maintained a very high standard. In some instances the work was impressive.

*Balancing*: CHAIM GROSS  
Courtesy Boyer Gallery



Because of the large number of exhibits it is virtually impossible to refer to each work individually. The fact that the "public is asked to view this exhibition and to give its opinion of the work . . . for the public must be the final judge of the sculpture which belongs to it" removed the entire show from the stigma of much contemporary work modelled almost to scale for private gallery showings, from which, naturally, the great majority of the people are totally isolated.

The two decorative pieces of Vally Wieselthier, *The Summer*, one of a series for the garden of the Grover Cleveland High School, and the large *Figure in terra cotta*, both imaginatively conceived in their respective mediums, were balanced, on the other hand, by the small, whimsical *Giraffe in limestone* of Edna Guck.

Of Virginia Drake's three fine pieces in brownstone, wood and alabaster, the last was the strongest; a vigorously carved nude.

Beside the exceptional *Heads of Paul Block*, *Thomas Mins* and *Elizabeth Mangor* there were the entertaining "painted compositions" of Eugenie Gersahoy intended for the Children's Room of the Astoria Library.

If the future exhibitions of the Art Project continue to fulfill the promises embodied in the project's program and much of the work shown this time, public response must ensure the establishment of a permanent sculpture department of the government to meet the constantly growing understanding of the public that the artists of this country contribute valuable assets to its social life.

**A**T the Westermann Gallery, 24 West 48th Street, Ernst Barlach showed drawings, wood-cuts, lithographs and sculpture in wood and bronze. The work covered the period in sculpture from the *Moses*, 1919, to the *Peasant Woman* carved in wood of 1934.

The drawings and wood-cuts revealed a personality absolutely foreign to contemporary art; the rough, swart drawings and cuts seemed to bridge the enormous gap between modern industrial life and the medieval, religious turmoil of middle-European peasants. The two *Self-Portraits* in lithograph showed Barlach like Van Gogh.

It was interesting to see the difference between the earlier bronze and the recent *Flute Player*, *Drinker* and *Doubter*; the drawings and studies for these pieces were more vehement in their expression than the tapered-down completed bronzes.

It was in the *Peasant Woman* in wood that Barlach was at his best in the show. This passive figure with bulging belly and stupefied face and arms clasped across the breast in mute resignation was admirably finished off without any finesse.

Unlike the passive dignity of Barlach's work, the two pieces shown by Aaron Ben-Schmuel at the Guild Art Gallery attain merit by solid craftsmanship. The *Dancer*, archaic and massive, and the *Portrait* also carved out of Tennessee marble are good examples of Ben-Schmuel's work.

It is to be regretted that Ben-Schmuel did not have a more comprehensive showing of his work. The two carvings do not sufficiently represent his unusual talents.

## An Open Letter To President Roosevelt

February 15, 1937

Dear Mr. President:

The American Artists Congress passed a resolution at its last meeting objecting to calling the proposed gallery to house the Mellon collection a "National" Gallery of Art. The reason for this objection is that a gallery devoted exclusively, or mainly, to the great works of the past, in no way represents or fosters the national culture. It would be true to the facts to call the institution what it actually is—the Mellon collection and let it stand for one wealthy man's conception of a valuable gift to the Nation. To seal with Congressional and executive approval the idea that a National

Gallery should be remote and protected from living art would be no less than a cultural calamity.

This statement in no way detracts from the value of a collection of great art of the past; it merely emphasizes what should be an obvious fact. Mr. Mellon's belief that the greatest social value lies in the chance to gaze in awe and reverence at a rare and costly masterpiece of other times and places, rather than in production and participation, is an illusion indicating his divorce from the art experience and his consequent fear and incapacity to deal with the experience for its living, constructive values.

The Government art program of produc-



*Peasant Woman*: BARLACH  
Courtesy Westermann Gallery

tion and use of living art is of infinitely greater social value to the nation as a whole than can be any collection of great works of the past. This program takes its place in history as one of the constructive forces which have caused great works to be produced. It gives the people their historical chance to see their life translated into pictorial drama and some of its mysteries thereby explained. It is the only way in which "future antiques" can be provided for future art dealers to sell to future millionaires at \$1,166,400.00 each. Nineteen million dollars expended in this way over a period of five years would go far toward creating a national art which would place this country in the lead among civilized nations. The contrary program of enriching art dealers, honoring the great dead and protecting a "National" gallery from the infiltration of anything less than what is called "best" by dealer and historical "experts", is infantile in its naive pretensions to cultural significance.

As a member of the American Artists Congress, therefore, and as one deeply interested in *creating* a national culture, I object to misnaming the Mellon gift a "National Museum."

Sincerely

Ralph M. Pearson

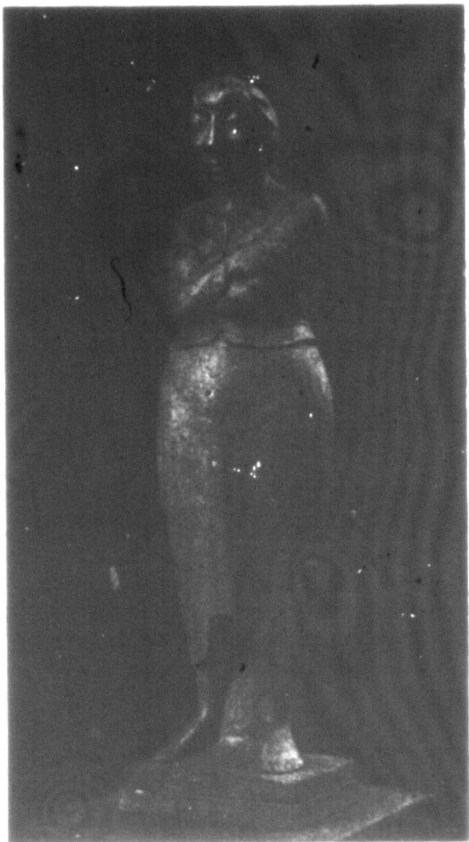
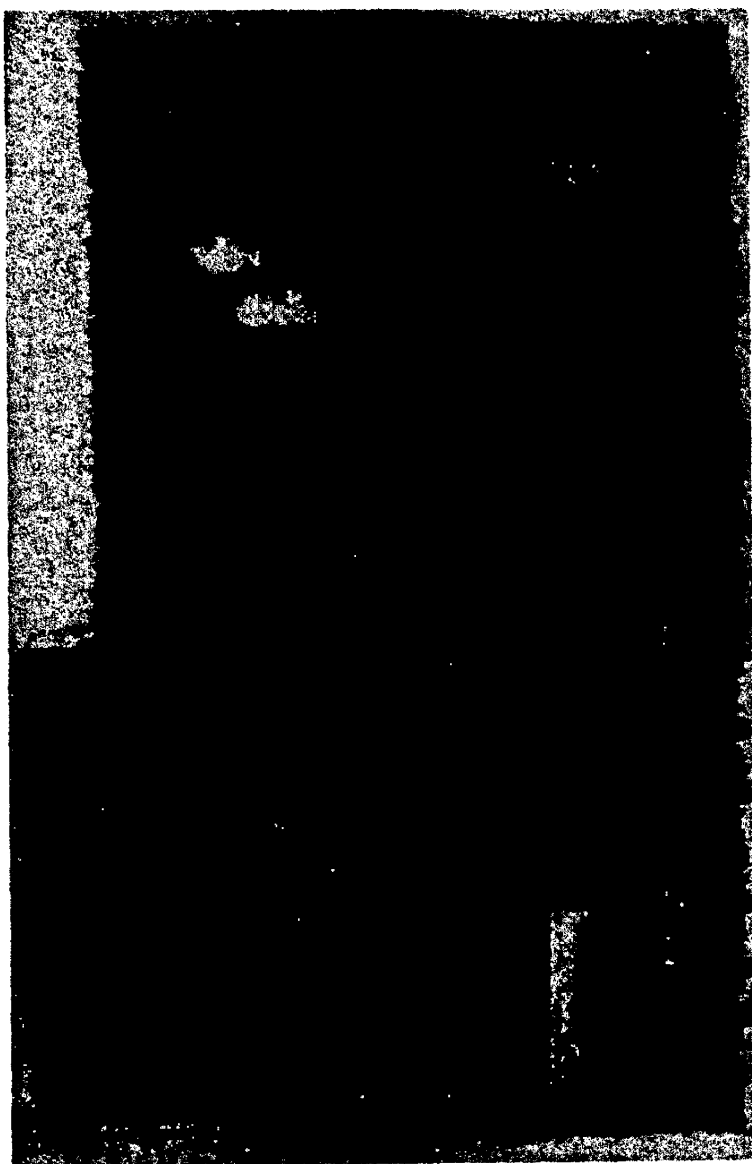


Figure 1. A standing female figure, possibly a statue or a person in a costume, against a black background.



Poster for  
London  
Underground

E. MCKNIGHT  
KAUFFER

the creator who courageously expresses his own point of view—and if occasionally he makes a mis-step we cannot be overly harsh, but try to understand that because of the immensity of the undertaking he must find some details most trivial.

Kauffer, unlike the American painter whose attitude towards work on the "boards" is one of snobbish aloofness, finds in his work a constant laboratory for serious experimentation. He has attacked his problem, it is true, from a generally modern viewpoint—having a keen sense of what is going on in the world and anticipating often the directions that others later take. Naturally he has been appreciative of the work of modern painters on the Continent. Consciousness of the meaning and function of texture and color planes has been increasingly evident along with an expert ability to evoke emotion in his work without the use of representational forms. Textual awareness is responsible for the separation of his planes and the creation thereof of the necessary tension needed to adequately hold his design together. It is true that at times he has not completely taken advantage of all the textural forms he might have—especially his typography and lettering. On the whole it is awkward and halting, rather than performing a function as a specific block of texture which works as completely with the whole as any other part of the design. Perhaps complete absorption in the rest of the problem retarded an early realization of this functional application of lettering. In fact one sometimes asks oneself whether or not it hasn't been stuck on, or deliberately attached to confuse. Aside from this rather surprising weakness there remains an additional one in that the spirit of the lettering or type is often as crossroads with the design as a whole, and sometimes even poorly designed or illegible.

Perhaps Kauffer's tendency to overdo or "gild" has a direct connection with his earlier work, which was almost entirely decorative. Even when a definite abstract approach became evident this habit persisted, making the work, one might almost say, exotic, and structurally weakening the whole. "The Early Bird" done for the Daily Herald in 1918 is, however, an exception.

In spite of his pioneering in the use of the photograph on the billboard—here again one feels that as yet this element or tool has not reached its most workable and expressive application, in the works presented at the museum. One notable exception, however, is his recent Shell Gas poster, wherein the photograph is certainly a working element in the whole. In this design we are possibly getting some hint as to a future and probably greater period of this master. Surely here, one must ad-

## McKNIGHT KAUFFER'S POSTERS

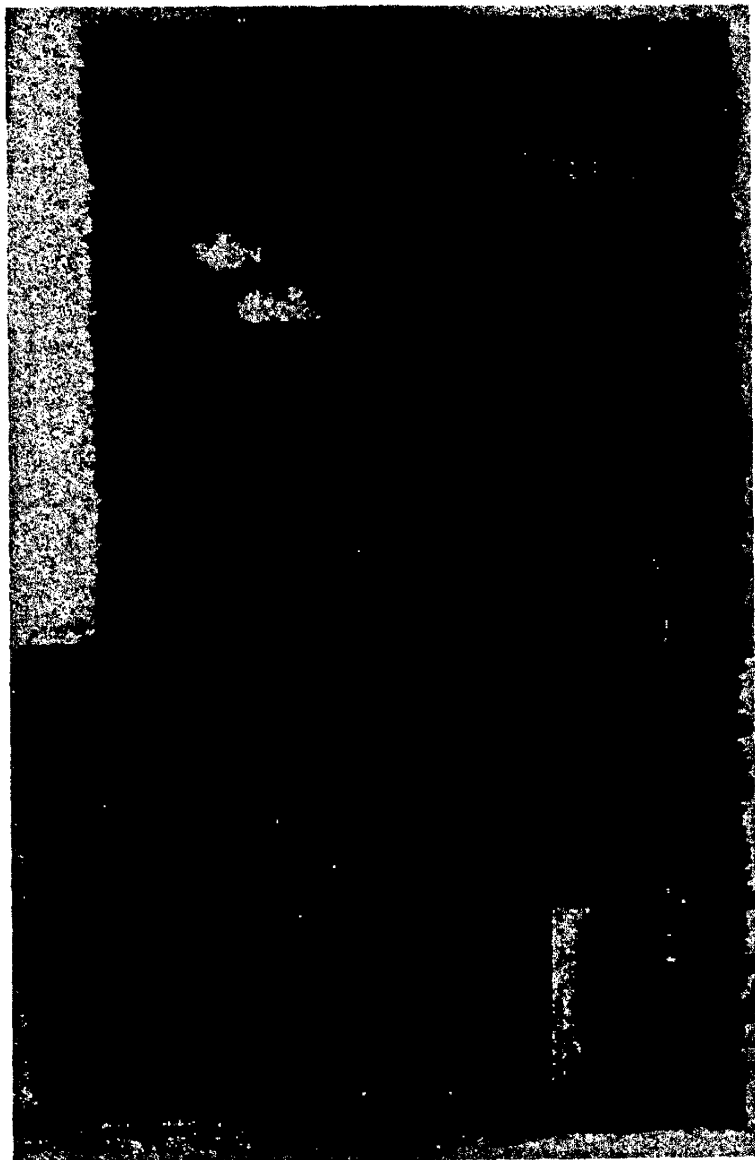
By Lester Beall

**E** MCKNIGHT KAUFFER, together with his French contemporary, Cassandre, undoubtedly occupies first place in the ranks of modern poster designers. The Museum of Modern Art is now showing a comprehensive survey of his work, included in which are his early works, his many Underground and Great Western showings, and his more recent as well as earlier Shell designs.

For the modern designer or student of creative design, this exhibition offers an excellent opportunity for tracing the progress of this artist, who in spite of the handicaps of tradition, and the ever present temptation to imitate the more active of one's

contemporaries, struck out in a new direction, in which he vigorously carved his own pattern. Even though modern painters such as Picasso, Braque, Gris, and others had at this time begun to be more or less universally listened to, the traditional English tendency toward naturalism, held its uncompromising sway over poster designers. This, coupled with the usual subjective approach to any advertising art problem, was certainly too much for any but Kauffer.

It's as an experimenter and pioneer that one likes Kauffer best, and probably one can appreciate his work more clearly in this light. One respects almost unreservedly



Poster for  
London  
Underground

E. MCKNIGHT  
KAUFFER

the creator who courageously expresses his own point of view—and if occasionally he makes a mis-step we cannot be overly harsh, but try to understand that because of the immensity of the undertaking he must find some details most trivial.

Kauffer, unlike the American painter whose attitude towards work on the "boards" is one of snobbish aloofness, finds in his work a constant laboratory for serious experimentation. He has attacked his problem, it is true, from a generally modern viewpoint—having a keen sense of what is going on in the world and anticipating often the directions that others later take. Naturally he has been appreciative of the work of modern painters on the Continent. Consciousness of the meaning and function of texture and color planes has been increasingly evident along with an expert ability to evoke emotion in his work without the use of representational forms. Textual awareness is responsible for the separation of his planes and the creation thereof of the necessary tension needed to adequately hold his design together. It is true that at times he has not completely taken advantage of all the textural forms he might have—especially his typography and lettering. On the whole it is awkward and halting, rather than performing a function as a specific block of texture which works as completely with the whole as any other part of the design. Perhaps complete absorption in the rest of the problem retarded an early realization of this functional application of lettering. In fact one sometimes asks oneself whether or not it hasn't been stuck on, or deliberately attached to confuse. Aside from this rather surprising weakness there remains an additional one in that the spirit of the lettering or type is often as crossroads with the design as a whole, and sometimes even poorly designed or illegible.

Perhaps Kauffer's tendency to overdo or "gild" has a direct connection with his earlier work, which was almost entirely decorative. Even when a definite abstract approach became evident this habit persisted, making the work, one might almost say, exotic, and structurally weakening the whole. "The Early Bird" done for the Daily Herald in 1918 is, however, an exception.

In spite of his pioneering in the use of the photograph on the billboard—here again one feels that as yet this element or tool has not reached its most workable and expressive application, in the works presented at the museum. One notable exception, however, is his recent Shell Gas poster, wherein the photograph is certainly a working element in the whole. In this design we are possibly getting some hint as to a future and probably greater period of this master. Surely here, one must ad-

## MCKNIGHT KAUFFER'S POSTERS

By Lester Beall

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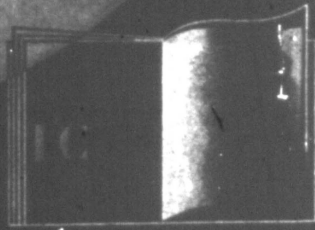
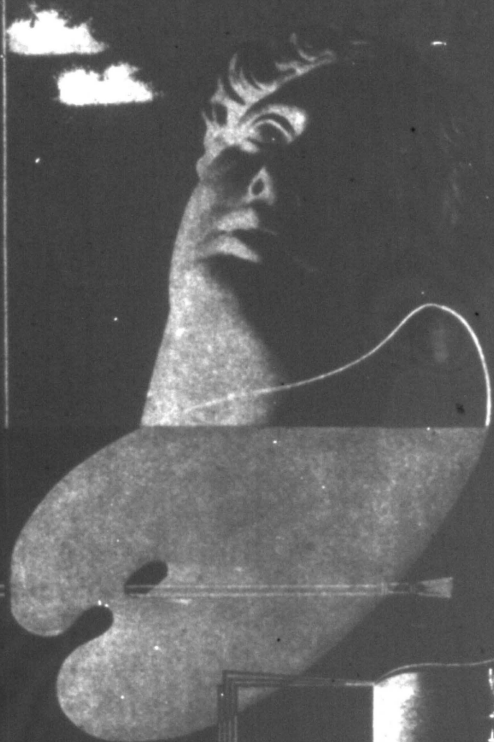
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*Poster 200*  
*London*  
*Underground*

F. MCKNIGHT  
KAUFFER

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# EXHIBITIONS

THE Downtown Gallery presents somewhat of an "old and new" program in work by their established figures and a host of new, young painters from all parts of the country. Of the newcomers, John Stenvall must be listed for his freshness of color as well as a painter-like conviction in handling oil. Rainey Bennett shows water-colors of rich charm. Jack Levine's ink drawings are vital illustration. There is also promise of real power in his heavily pigmented oils. Prestopino treats small-town America and its architecture with the brittle surface of an Italian primitive. Gurleniemi falls into a similar category but generally imparts a profounder mood. His "Funeral at Woodford" is a little too naively bisymmetric in composition and hardly comes up to the artist's imaginative Sacco-Vanzetti picture at the Modern Museum's Surrealist show. Andree Rexroth creates some interesting designs in a more modern style.

The gallery's penchant for super-clean pictures with sharp edges is too evident in some of these newer men. While the "open door" policy of the Downtown Gallery is to be highly commended, one is forced to deplore their enslavement to that pernicious symbol—the American Scene per se.

In the case of the old troupers the juxtaposition of men like Kuniyoshi, Sheeler and Karfiol with Marin's crashing water-colors is unfortunate. The hothouse nudes and stuffy factory chimneys look as though they need a brisk slap of oxygen.

## *Photo-Surrealism*

Added to the growing list of expert photographers is a show of prints by Lewis Jacobs at the gallery of Rabinovitch, well-known photo school.

Jacobs is an old hand at photography, having been a cameraman in Hollywood, editor of *Experimental Cinema* as well as a reputable critic in the realm of still and motion pictures.

His show, therefore, full of surrealist acrobatics and photo-montage with social content proves Jacobs to be one of the most alert photographers in town. He can set up a still on the table together with a few pieces of cardboard, cloth, miscellaneous objects, and imbue his photograph with a life of its own—either a droll piece of surrealism like "Adam and Eve on a Raft" or acute social satires like "The Last Act" and "Design for Dictators."

Superb printing as well as imaginative concepts are the property of "Man Within," "Refugee," "Dadaist Dream-Girl" and "Antiques"—the latter was used as a cover design for the November issue of *Art*

Front. Here is someone who has the courage to follow the bold, experimental tradition of the German revolutionary, John Heartfield.

## *Loneragan and a Baltimore Group*

John Lonergan's superior handling of gouache should be a lesson to those who still think oil is the only qualified medium. He paints fishing villages in an alert, intimate style, fluent and authentic. If some of the seascapes have not the sturdier composition of his earlier quarry hills there are still many excellent works, among them "On Shore" and "Fisherman and Net." (See reproduction). Of his drawings, the few gossip scenes are the most shrewdly observed.

Sharing the A.C.A. with Lonergan comes a young, provocative group of painters from Baltimore. There is plenty of material here in process of rich development. Herman Maril is probably best known. His "Concert" is a unique simplification of a pianist and audience with a perfect handling of black, grey and ochre. His second canvas is a tame, woolly affair. A few studies by Walter Bohanan show social concepts imaginatively translated into black and white. "Propaganda" by Mervin Jules is an intelligent little canvas, with social ideas in the group and in some cases the idea tellingly stated. His litho, "Butcher," is a lively print. Morgoreth is enamored of small town scenes. One of his views through a back window is freshly painted and captures with a light touch the quaintness of the locale. Karl Metzler is a man of dark brooding, uttering grim, well-composed statements about a garage entrance or an alleyway. His command of paint, however, is murky and insufficient as yet. Morris Louis contributes "Evicted" and "Talk of Relief," paintings handled in the key of the Mexicans. Larry Rodda's work is on a low level of illustration, puerile in concept. There is unified striving for social ideas in the group and in some cases well stated. We should like to see their achievements next season.

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Elsheimius, the Don Quixote of American painting, is with us again at the Valentine Gallery. It is this critic's firm conviction that the painter's profusion of letters to newspaper and magazine editors will live long after most of his lugubrious idylls have passed away. In fact, that poker-faced Dadaist, Marcel Duchamp, presented one of his most ironical quips when he said, "America, here is your painter," after seeing the furtive, virgin nudes, the rampant sunsets and the milkdew meadows of

"Mahatma" Elshemius. Our strait-laced American critics scrutinized the next Elshemius exhibit so keenly that upon discovering in certain pictures a freshly-painted meadow or a crisp bit of water they scrambled to their typewriters to hail a great "poet" of nature. A first-class Surrealist scout would have dug into Elshemius' letters and delivered them to Tzara or Breton as perfect examples of the automatic revelations of a Jehovah complex. ("My sunsets are the most glorious man has ever witnessed.")

Nevertheless, I found it very easy to forgive his naively cosmic ego, his foaming against modern art, his fairyland of droll nymphs—his crescendo arguments in galleries while I, gently pressed by him into a few art comments a moment before, sought shelter behind some pedestal or curtain from the inquisitive eyes of visitors. Here I must point out honestly that Elshemius and I were often in perfect accord as to the status of American art. He uttered many just declamations. In fact, like our Cervantes hero, his discourse was shrewd and salted with irony till the topic, by some strange mishap turned to his own art.

One must also explain that out of his flood of pictures—things done on cardboard, cigar-box covers and what not—there may be found an occasional landscape, fresh, honest, unacademic; such a one exhibited at the Whitney several seasons ago which, is not warranting too much attention in itself, managed to make most of the other inhabitants look stuffy and affected—like a child who has walked into a room of dilettantes.

In the present exhibition at least three pictures fit into the latter category, "Park Avenue," "Belgium Landscape," and "Shelter Island, New York." Long live dear old "Mahatma." I would sell my shirt to publish his collected letters.

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At Another Place are the earthy canvases of Stella Buchwald. Grim, almost ungainly, they have an honest impact. "Miner and Wife" imparts a deep-felt human sympathy. A landscape of a ploughed field and a young woman's portrait are straightforward, well-realized pictures. Sometimes her pigmentation is heavy and unvaried but at her best she conveys a feeling of solid strength.

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*Otto Botto*

Painters of fantasy generally hover on the border of lifelessness or hopelessly ineffectual romanticism. Otto Botto, despite the fact that he creates a never-never land of lush pigment, roots his work in the emotional realities of this world. His color functions as metaphor, with no compromise between the polarities of extreme gaiety and extreme melancholy.

Mr. Botto is anything but naive, which, at first blush, seems the only state of mind which can excuse fantasy today. Closer examination of his canvases at the Contemporary Arts will reveal a profound bitterness. "Cliffs" is an agitated picture, with the jagged shapes of color-saturated rock stark and poignant. "Cock Fight" expresses, in its oblique way, the reductio ad absurdum of the human struggle against a hostile environment. "The Bouquet," a picture showing a bouquet of flowers soaring far above a vitriolic nocturnal landscape does not require much explanation to reveal it as a document of bitterness and escape. "The Washline," "Circus," and "Operetta" are gay things, but of that positing gaiety whose heart is melancholy.

Botto's color has lost some of its former mussiness and gained in clarity and plastic freshness. A few more greys now and then might give his color more point and strengthen his forms, but if it lessens the felicity of his conceptions he should forget it.

J. K.

A.C.A., 52 W. 8 St. Satirical portrait show by members of the American Artists Congress called "Framed and Hung." Feb. 21-Mar. 6. Oils and water colors by William Gropper, Mar. 7-20.

An American Place, 509 Madison Ave. O'Keefe, until Mar. 17. Arthur Dove, Mar. 18-April 15.

Another Place, 43 W. 8 St. Paintings by Stella Buchwald through Mar. 6 followed by paintings by Nicholas Luisi.

Artists Gallery, 33 West 8 St. Murals and oils by Bertram Hartman, Mar. 8-23.

Bignou, 32 E. 57 St. Oils by Cezanne and Renoir to March 2. Paintings by the Post-Impressionists, Mar. 8-31.

Babcock Gallery, 38 E. 57 St. Paintings by Sol Wilson, March 1.

Boyer Gallery, 69 E. 57 St. Paintings by Boris Aronson, Mar. 1-31.

Contemporary Arts, 41 W. 54 St. Otto Botto, Feb. 22-Mar. 13. Guy McCoy, Mar. 1-20.

Downtown Gallery, 11 W. 18 St. Work by Marin, Karfiol, Sheeler and a host of new, young painters.

Guild Art Gallery, 37 W. 57 St. Lloyd Ney, Feb. 15-Mar. 6. Group show of Roszak, Dirk, De Martini, Foy and Liberte, Mar. 9-23.

Marrie Harriman, 61 E. 57 St. Walt Kuhn, Feb. 15-Mar. 13. Jean Oberle, Mar. 15-31.

Julien Levy, 602 Madison Ave. Kristian Tonny, Feb. 23-Mar. 15. Eugene Berman, Mar. 16-April 6.

Midtown, 605 Madison Ave. Paintings by Frederic Taubes, Mar. 2-20.

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St. International exhibit of photography, Mar. 7-April 15.

Pierre Matisse, 51 E. 57. Mobiles and Stables by Alexander Calder, Feb. 23-Mar. 13.

New Art Circle, Newman, 509 Madison Ave. Benjamin Kopman, Mar. 1-22. Lee Gatch, Mar. 22-April 10.

Uptown Gallery, 249 West End Ave. at 72 St. Theresa Bernstein, Feb. 15-Mar. 12. Group show including Meyerowitz, Rickey, Briggs, Drewes, etc., Mar. 13-31.

Valentine Gallery, 16 E. 57 St. 19th and 20 century French, Feb. 22-Mar. 15. Paintings by Pinto Brothers, Mar. 15-31.

The Society of Independent Artists are holding their annual exhibit at the Grand Central Palace from April 2-April 25. As usual there is no jury and entry fee (\$5.00) must be submitted to the secretary, Magda F. Pach, not later than Mar. 15.

ADDRESSES OF THE  
ARTISTS UNIONS OF AMERICA

Artists Union of New York  
430 Sixth Ave., New York City

Artists Union of Baltimore  
402 St. Paul St., Baltimore, Md.

Ulster County Artists Union  
Woodstock, N. Y.

Artists Union of Massachusetts  
6 Boylston Place, Boston, Mass.

Artists Union of Chicago  
2818 Sheridan Rd., Chicago, Ill.

Minnesota Artists Union  
2438 Stevens Rd.  
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Robert Brown  
37 Miller St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

Artists Union of Philadelphia  
1212 Walnut St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Santa Fe Artists Union  
Wyatt Davis  
902 Cañon Rd.  
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Artists Union of New Jersey  
34 Park Place, Newark, N. J.

St. Louis Artists Union  
2737-a Sutton Ave.  
Maplewood, Missouri

Harlem Artists Guild  
409 Edgecombe Ave., N. Y. City

Artists and Writers Union of Provincetown  
P. O. Box 383, Provincetown, Mass.

Taos Artists Association  
Blanche Grant  
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Artists Union of Western Massachusetts  
71 Victoria St., Springfield, Mass.

(Continued on next page)

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926 North Plankinton Ave.  
Milwaukee, Wis.

Painters and Sculptors of Nebraska  
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