

Academicians and Independents

The Contrast Enforced In Two Large Exhibitions

By Royal Cortissoz
The Academy of Design has taken good advantage of the suspicious circumstances under which it resumes activity at the Fine Arts Building. By rigorous sifting of the pictures offered for the spring exhibition it has managed to avoid the usual melancholy overflow into the "morgue," and the black and whites assembled in that room relieve it of any appearance of being a morgue at all. Renovation of the galleries throughout has improved the background and in the largest of them the betterment is noticeable in other ways. The huge radiators that always encroached unfortunately upon the floor have been done away with since the fire. In place of the great staircase which used to make a gulf at the west end of the room there are now two smaller ones, placed at opposite ends, and they are almost negligible. New coverings on the walls, fresh paint and clean skylights have a delightful effect upon the whole environment. With not a square inch of space added, the show nevertheless leaves the impression of being better housed than any of its predecessors.

Conservatism How It Is Justified as a Force in Art

In what way has the academy risen to the opportunity? By remaining, on the whole, true to its immemorial principles. This, we may be told, is only another way of saying that it has stuck to a conservative policy, rebuffing the progressive hammering at the gate; but it behooves the disinterested observer to keep his head. No doubt it is true that the contributors to this exhibition do not by any means form a "minority of all the talents." But that some of the younger men who are missing would have lifted the ensemble perceptibly is at least an open question. That certain of the older men who are to be reckoned among the absentees would have strengthened the show might just as confidently be asserted. This business of waiting over omissions may easily be overdone. The public interest—and we have always maintained that the public had a large stake in the matter—bears chiefly upon the character of the exhibition as it stands. Looking simply to that, regardless of whether this or that revolutionary genius has been cruelly clipped in the bud, one cannot help feeling that a conservative policy has something to say for itself.

It stands, at any rate, for a certain artistic self-respect, which happens to mean in this connection a respect for standards impossible to peep-poop out of existence. The disheveled amateur grows, after all, a little wearisome—sometimes. The public has been bored half to death by the "painter" who loftily declines to learn how to paint. The point to this year's academy is its affirmation of the desirability of sound workmanship. We are spared the fumbblings of the so-called pioneer of a new heaven and a new earth. Space is given to artists, young and old, who are content to play the game. A good many of them have reduced it to routine. They have very little to say, and they say it in a commonplace way. But that is their misfortune. Do not let us make the mistake of attributing their mediocrity to the conservative principle. That principle never yet killed an artist who had the creative spark in him. When all is said it is to the individual, not to the academy, that we are bound to return when we embark upon a survey of a lot of new American pictures. The influence of the academy, as an institution, is not inimical to the production of a great work of art. On the contrary, it is on the side of the angels, when, as in the present instance, it enforces the claims of discipline. Discipline, we repeat, never hurt anybody. The brighter spots in this show are all due to painters who have accepted it.

Here is where we begin to look for the individual. It is interesting to observe how beneficial he has found it to master his craft. Take, for example, Mr. Walter Griffin, the painter of the "Grand Canal, Venice," which quickly detaches itself from its surroundings in the first gallery. The sumptuous color and the thick impasto are very personal to him, ingredients in a distinctive style. Also it is to be noted that they rest upon technical mastery. The landscape painters over and over confirm the point. Mr. C. H. Davis, we imagine, would have nothing whatever to do with modernism. He, too, plays the game. But since he has a sense of beauty, with what genuine independence and with what rich results does he play it! Look at "The Wind Driven," or "The Sunny Hillside." There is a fine emotion in them. And Mr. Davis, like Mr. Griffin, has a touch of style, a touch of the quality which will do more to carry a picture than all the violent self-assertion in the world. Originally, character, these precious elements are certainly not missing here. They are disclosed especially in the landscapes, in pictures like Mr. John Noble's "Moonlight, Brittany," in the forest scenes by F. M. Grant, Charles Chapman and Robert Woodward, and in a considerable company of paintings which, if not as vigorous as these, are, in a gracious way, equally beguiling. Graciousness is a trait very characteristic of American landscape painting. Our studies of nature have so often the charm of truth delicately, even tenderly, interpreted. Consider the fine serenity of Mr. Walter Nettleton's "Winter Landscape" and the kindred temper of the snow scenes painted by Ernest Albert and

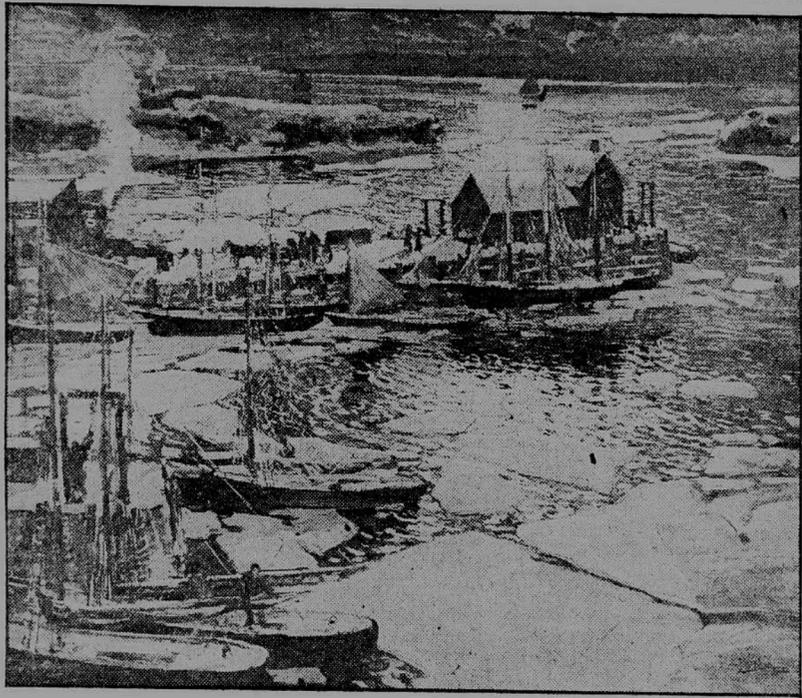
Ivan Summers. Mr. Redfield and others like him are here to commend the virtue of an excessively direct and forcible mode of attack. Very inspiring they are, too, these exemplars of skillful emphasis. But they cannot drown out the more subdued, more sensitive tones of those artists who paint more in the key of the beautiful "Autumnal Solitude" which hangs in the place of honor in memory of the late J. Francis Murphy.

We have paused for a moment on the landscapers as peculiarly representative of a ruling state of mind, but the truth is that the entire show is tinged by the same gentle emotion. This is a refined academy, if ever there was one. In no other way is it truer to the old tradition to which we have alluded. There is a certain play of ideas among the subject pictures, perhaps a little more of it than is customary. It keeps within clearly defined bounds. Mr. Will H. Low commands respect for his careful study of form in his "Ariadne in Naxos"; he does not enkindle us with the emotion implicit in the classic myth. Mr. F. C. Jones is a skillful and ingenious designer in "The Enchanted Wood," but there is not enough fervor about his medieval romanticism. One longs for some passionate force in these essays in pictorial invention. When Mr. Max Bohm goes to the Scriptures and paints his "Sermon on the Mount" his admirable idealism struggles with a problem too difficult for his powers of imagination. We are half won to appreciation of Mr. Walter Ufer's "Hunger," and then we are disappointed, for there is a residuum of nothing but

ment connotes anything but aesthetic taste. What can beauty mean to the maker of a piece of literalness like this? It is hard to say just where, in craftsmanship, the machine leaves off and the aesthetically minded man begins. But one recognizes the effects of the transition immediately when they are developed. Sometimes, if they fail to appear, this is due to a passing lapse. Mr. Spencer B. Nichols, for example, has been steadily doing finer and finer things, as the exhibitions have shown, but in his latest canvas, "The Screen, the Girl and the Flower," he is as gauche and heavy-handed as though decorative harmonies were unknown to him—which is absurd. Mr. Daniel Garber's "Orchard Window," on the other hand, reflects in its crisp play of light a trick of artifice which has become a fixed mannerism. Sooner or later, in a slow journey around these galleries, one is aware of a craving that will not down, the craving for a personal way of painting allied to an interesting point of view. The phenomenon crops out now and then. You are conscious of it in the robust marines of Jonas Lie, Charles H. Woodbury, Eric Hudson and Paul King. It makes a more delicate appeal in Robert Vonnoh's "Grez Bridge" and in the landscapes by Ann Howe Foote, Ernest Lawson and Howard Giles. Among the figure men there is generally no ambiguity; quality is there or it is not. Occasionally the beholder is left a little in doubt. We are always expecting Mr. Leon Kroll to produce something remarkable. His "In the Hills" is a well painted picture, yet it leaves us still expectant. Perhaps in the next canvas he gives us we will arrive at fulfillment. There is, to be sure, nothing disparaging in this comment. We must confess to a weakness for the

Society of Independent Artists. In the tabernacle of conservatism the wheat is ruthlessly separated from the chaff. Under the canvas of liberalism everybody has his or her say, with no jury to intervene. We say "canvas" advisedly, for there is something irresistibly suggestive of a circus about this affair. It is a strange medley of freakish things, pictures painted by amateurs, "studies" of the figure which seem not studies at all, but ineffectual fumbblings around the problems involved in mostly sprawling forms. We alluded in these columns last Sunday to the unusual opportunity afforded for comparison of the Academy and this Society as two rival camps. We ought to withdraw that remark, with apologies to the Academy. This isn't a rival camp, a place where the same thing is being done in a different way. It is a place where a totally different thing is being done.

Let it be granted that here and there a few things have strayed into the exhibition of the Independents which can be taken seriously. There is an excellent piece of technique by Mr. Robert Henri. Mr. Archie Gunn contributes a couple of smoothly drawn nudes. There is a really charming winter scene, "The End of Main Street," by Mr. Joseph Wyckoff. Perhaps a dozen such likable pictures might be hunted down in the mass. There are also a few meritorious pieces of sculpture. Mrs. H. P. Whitney's "Chinoise" is a figure of alluring grace. The big "Peacock" by Gaston Lachaise is a beautiful thing, most decorative in conception and superbly modeled. As for the rest of the show it is a chaos of crudity and dullness. There is a picture by J. E. Bourquin which may not unfairly be taken as representative of the show. It depicts a man and a woman in a bleak scene,



WHEN DAYS GROW LONGER
(From the painting by Jonas Lie in the Spring Academy)

technical adroitness in his study of famine-stricken Indians kneeling before a crucifix. A modest but very charming contribution is made to the group of subject pictures by Mrs. Prellwitz in "The Fountain." She expresses true poetic feeling, and her color is worthy of her slight but convincing inspiration. Glancing at large over the figure work and the portraiture one presently realizes that the matter of feeling is in abeyance; that it is through their craftsmanship that most of the artists reach their goals. Of course, there are some exceptions. Mr. Greacen discloses some subtlety in "The White Mantilla." Good workmanship is similarly heightened in interest, given a more personal edge, in such a picture as Mr. George Elmer Brown's "Slave Market," or in such portraits as are contributed by Mr. Fromkes and Mr. Bredin. The portraits of men, we may remark in passing, are particularly good. Witness the half-length of William A. Coffin, the artist, by Mr. De Witt Lockman, and the portrait of another painter, J. McLure Hamilton, by Wayman Adams. These two canvases alone do much to support the portraiture, and there are good pieces besides by Irving R. Wiley, Fred Nagler, Leopold Seyffert, William Auerbach-Levy and Robert Philipp. Mr. C. W. Hawthorne raises portraiture to a pictorial plane. "The Clipper Ship Captain" is a striking bit of characterization, and it contains also some beautiful painting.

There is a distinction to be drawn between the technique here that takes in something of beauty and the technique that is efficient but void of charm. Mr. Hassam's work, for once, is not of the former order. His receding figure, "April," seems to have been painted by main strength, with a cool doggedness which has left it inert, quite without any of his wonted brilliance of handling. It is curious, the way in which the finer attributes of the technician elude some practitioners. Mr. William Paxton paints his "Woman Sewing" with his eyes unmistakably on the precedent established by Vermeer, but without Vermeer's breadth and quality his hypothesis remains as hollow as a drum. We look with a kind amazement at a canvas like the big "Mountain Preacher," by James R. Hopkins. His hard, dry mode of state-

artist whose best work lies always just ahead of him. There is matter for reflection in the turn which may be given to this thought by applying it to the Academy exhibition as a whole. The prevailing conservatism which we have cited as characteristic of it excites, as we have indicated, a certain approval. It gives the walls almost unbrokenly a creditable appearance. The artists present are well instructed, they know their business, they make pleasant pictures. Normally, at all events, everything is here for the best in the "best of all possible worlds." Disillusionment comes when we muse upon the defect of the exhibition's quality. The exhibitors are perhaps too much at ease in Zion; possibly there is a trace of smugness about their contentment. We are grateful to them for their refusal to share in the divagations of the Bolsheviks. And at the same time we sigh wistfully for more breakages in the crust, for a wider diffusion of the individuality we have noted at one point or another. The paintings are so agreeable, the few pieces of sculpture have often so much merit, the etchers, lithographers and draftsmen play up in such good form. But nobody is precisely exciting. The Bolsheviks, we dare say, would claim that it was all because they had been excluded. Fiddlesticks! The real reason is not hard to seek. It is to be found in the state of American art at large. There are absentees from the Academy who would have helped enormously if they had contributed. But even when our best men have been counted in and have leavened the lump, a big miscellaneous exhibition of American pictures must always contain a quantity of stuff communicating no thrill. Let us look the fact in the face and be philosophical about it. And before we become disheartened let us remember that exactly the same thing may be said about French art, or the art of any other nation.

Liberalism (?) How It Works Out at the Waldorf-Astoria
There are not quite five hundred exhibits in the Spring Academy. There are fully a thousand in the show which is made at the Waldorf-Astoria by the

writing perhaps from grief, perhaps from colic. Behind them a cross reared above a grave bears the picture of a child's head, a pretty head such as you might find on a Christmas card. The cross carries an inscription, "Peg a Mongrel." Turning to the catalogue to find if possible what it is all about we learn that this picture is called "Tears and Caresses." Concentrating again on the painting as a painting we observe that it is pitifully feeble. Now that is the kind of adventure that is yielded by liberalism as it is embodied in the Society of Independent Artists.

It might be retorted that there are contributors endowed with more manual dexterity than Mr. Bourquin can claim. This is quite true. We make the admission freely for what it is worth. But for our own part we cannot help feeling that the admission is beside the point. Of what earthly use is manual dexterity when it is wreaked upon nothing more interesting than the swirling cubistic figure in the "Mar's Plume" of Mr. Warren Wheelock? When this exhibition does not fool the spectator with the inanities of foolishly flung paint it irritates him by the spectacle of middling abilities misdirected. The Society of Independent Artists may be a clearing house for people who like to amuse themselves with paint and brushes. But there is nothing amusing for us, nothing profitable, in the substitute they offer for artistic currency. Amusement? The oddest thing about this array is the note of dejection that is constantly sounded in it. If these dobeaters get any joy out of their work they certainly have queer ways of showing it. That they make for progress is a proposition which we cannot, with the best will in the world, perceive. If, in fact, this is liberalism's idea of progress then give us the conservatism of the Academy in its most reactionary phase. At least the Academy, as we have remarked before, stands for the sober idea that the artist, as well as the plumber or the carpenter, should learn his craft.

A memorial exhibition of paintings by the late George Hitchcock opens to-morrow at the Reinhardt gallery. He died in 1913. It is years since any number of his works came into view in this country.

Random Impressions In Current Exhibitions

Recent pictures by George Bellows, Guy Pene du Bois and Eugene Speicher are on exhibition at the Folsom gallery. Paintings by Herbert Meyer are at the Babcock gallery, a collection of recent works by Daniel Garber is at the Arlington gallery, and the Montross gallery announces an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Bryson Burroughs, to begin next Saturday.

Two collections are presently to be dispersed at the American Art Galleries. One is composed of the Jacobean, Queen Anne and other early English furniture, brought together by Major George Horsfield, of London. It will be sold next Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. The Ali Ashraf Soutanoff collection, brought from Constantinople, consists of 450 Oriental rugs and carpets. They will be sold on the afternoons of March 17, 18 and 19.

There is published in Paris an amusing magazine devoted to ideas of fashion. It is called the Gazette du Bon Genre. Over here it is circulated by Condé Nast, publisher of Vanity Fair and Vogue. At the Wildenstein gallery about a dozen members of the artistic set are making an exhibition of their originals, and nothing quite so diverting has been seen here this winter. Jacques Brissaud, Georges Lapape, George Barbier, André Marty, Etienne Drian and the rest are men who are sincere workers and who, perhaps for that very reason, produce their patterns of line and color as though just for the fun of the thing. They are fantastically clever. They are humorous and witty and they have grace. They deal everlastingly with "frivolities," but their work is well done and is worth while. It gives to the magazine aforesaid a most unusual character. It makes this exhibition joyously entertaining.

John Newton Howitt has an exhibition of twenty paintings in oil at the City Club, ambitious; diverse in subject, including portraits, landscapes and several compositions possessing a good deal of pictorial interest. The general tone of the show is pleasing and warm in color, particularly in the landscapes, which have a certain bright, atmospheric quality. For the most part the paintings are done in simple colors with a smooth, realistic touch. The landscapes are less suggestive of Howitt, the illustrator, though several of the others, among them "The White Scarf," are spirited and effective in their simplicity of tone.

At the National Arts Club galleries the exhibition of advertising art arranged by the Art Directors Club is a daily center of attraction for an admiring following both in and outside of the field of commercial art. The exhibition is representative. Nearly three hundred pictures are shown, varying in media from pen and ink, crayon and wash to water color and oil examples. Many of the pictures are already familiar through the advertising columns, as all of them have been used for advertising purposes.

The prize winner in the black and white class is F. R. Gruger's illustration of a battery of heavy siege guns in action. W. E. Heitland was awarded the prize in the class for paintings and drawings in color with a striking study of a Spanish dancer in bright red costume. René Clark was accorded the honors in the poster class. An oil painting by Dean Cornwall and several by Walter Biggs commanded favorable comment, as did the various examples by Henry Raleigh, Wallace Morgan, Franklin Booth, Adolph Treidler, Harry Townsend, Maxfield Parrish and Edward Penfield.

One is certain to find interesting paintings at the annual exhibition at the Salmagundi Club. Most impressive about it this year, aside from the general high quality and pleasing variety of subjects, is the large representation. In view of the many current shows one wonders at the scope of artistic endeavor. There are no less than 173 artists in the catalogue. The laudatory prize is awarded to Cullen Yates, whose "Uplands" portrays a hilly landscape. Two purchase prizes are announced. One of them is by Edmund Greacen, "The Old-fashioned Gown," a soft, airy illusion in pastel-like shades, representing a young woman. The other is a landscape by Robert Spencer, called "One o'Clock." Paintings by Emil Carlson, Charles C. Curran, Jonas Lie, A. L. Groll and Charles W. Hawthorne are to be found. One sculpture, a fountain group of seven figures by Willard Paddock, fills an imposing position in the center of the main gallery.

There is a showing of photographic studies by E. O. Hoppe at the Belman galleries, Wanamaker's, under the patronage of Princess Cantacuzene-Speransky, Mrs. Lydig Hoyt and others. Most of the pictures by this newcomer from England are portrait studies of personages socially and artistically prominent in America and England. There are, besides, a number of soft-hued prints of London landmarks in mist, a group of interesting character

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