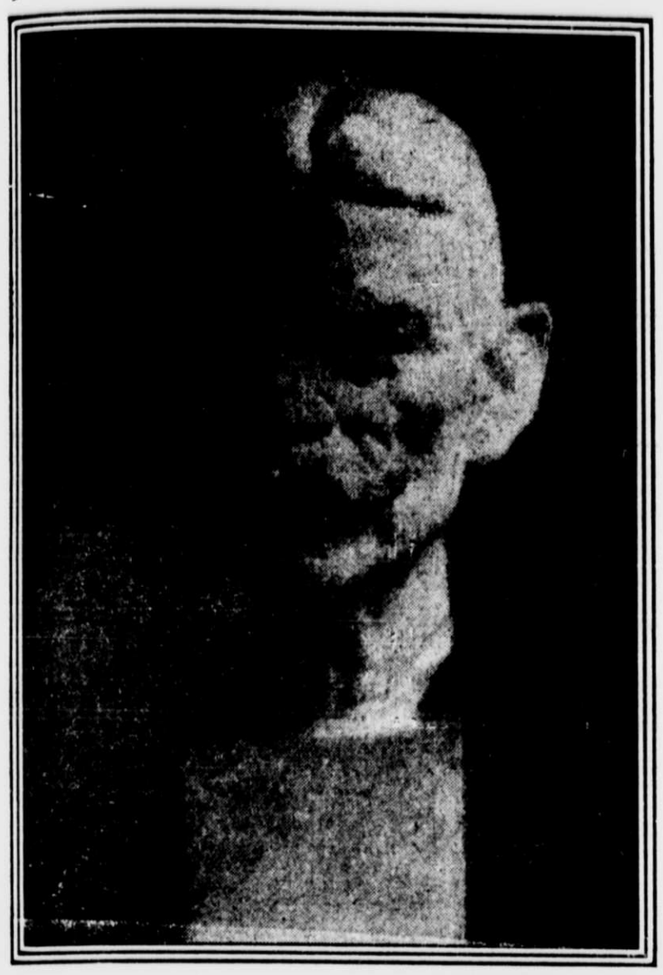
WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF ART



Frank Harris, from a recent bust by Jo Davidson.

THE Macbeth Galleries open for the season with a selected group of paintings by American artists. Those chosen are Gifford Beal, Emil Carlsen, Elliott Daingerfield, Arthur B. Davies, Charles H. Davis, Ben Foster, Frederick C. Frieseke, Childe Hassam, Charles W. Hawthorne, Ivan G. Olinsky, Henry W. Ranger, Chauncey F. Ryder, William Sartain, Robert E. Spencer, Gardner Symons, J. Alden Weir and F. Ballard Williams.

These artists were all chosen by this house long ago and the clientele of Macbeths will know in advance exactly what to expect from all of these names but one. The black sheep of this respectable company hangs by the door as you enter, and some visitors pass it by indulgently with that fine first flush of generosity with which all normal healthy people rush into an art gallery. But not all. Some see it. And rebel!

This black sheep is, since you must know the truth, Arthur B. Davies. He is still a cubist. Small figures recline and creep along the edge of the frame of his panel, and above them are some dancers and a young man doing physical exercise, while the background breaks up everywhere angularly into myriads of color. He calls it "Interwoven," and it is.

Some of the generous ones already spoken of were enjoying the soothing Dutch landscapes of Mr. Williams and Mr. Ranger when suddenly out of the corners of their eyes they became aware of what was going on in Mr. Davies's picture. They turned and they had no need to inquire the name of the artist.

"Gracious!" said the lady of the party. "What has happened to him. I wish he'd return to his former manner. I don't understand how any one who can paint can do such a thing as that."

"It is like those he showed in the exhibition with the American Modernists last spring," said the young lady. "I sometimes wonder whether it is I who am crazy or they," added she.

"I suppose this picture would not seem so strange hung in such a collection," said the gentleman, "but here it is quite out of place."

All of which is instructive and illuminative of several things, but chiefly of the fact that an artist who is alive is in the position of continually reconquering his audience. The lady who said "gracious" and who probably now adores the Davies canvases of a dozen years ago is the same lady who said "gracious" upon the first apearance of these pictures in the funny little gallery in the cellar of Mr. Macbeth's establishment of those days.

All the other canvases present met with polite approbation. Mr. Frieseke's girl stretched upon a chaise-longue in a garden is in the brightest, most French color, and Gifford Beal's "Fountain" before an attractive residence is equally sunny, though rougher in execution. Ben Foster and Alden Weir submit quiet landscapes and Chauncey F. Ryder and Gardner Symons more striking and also more obvious ones. Robert E. Spencer, who won so many medals and prizes last year, has not rebounded to the skies in consequence. His touch is less light and crisp than it was and the pale chocolate tint pervades like a dye his atmosphere. He will get over this. It is probably nothing more serious than stage fright, which old actors assure us is always more to be feared the second year than the first.

It is Charles Demuth who now makes his debut in the Daniel Gallery. He exhibits twenty-five aquarelles, which are washed in with great freedom and are in pretty color, but whose landscape subjects are sometimes so vaguely indicated as to be practically negligible. This drawback will not puzzle that portion of the public which has learned to admire the faint color evocations of John Marin, but then it must be confessed that this portion of the public is the scared minority not numerous enough as yet to dare to raise the voice of praise.

John Marin's "indicated" water colors are not more elusive than many of Whistler's most popular pastels, but then Whistler went further upon occasions into completed portraits that anybody could recognize to be likenesses, and these could be rushed to the defence by the Whistler enthusiast, when attacked. Marin laughs at likenesses and defies you to recognize the particular hill or particular bridge. For that matter it is seldom that he even admits it is a bridge." In consequence his followers get into difficulties when proselyting for him, and are sometimes called "highbrows." Nevertheless, their number increases steadily.

For them the question will not be "Is Mr. Demuth too vague?" but "Is he sufficiently different from Marin?"

This the present exhibition does not answer with sufficient distinctness. It will be allowed that Mr. Demuth's drawings are worthy of exhibition and that they have merit enough to induce us to hope that this artist will do still better. He has at his present command a good but not extraordinary sense of color. His drawing is uncertain and in consequence the waters in some of his seascapes travel up and down over a too concave earth. This might be forgivable if the color had been sought for in passionate subtleties, but the color is only "good"; and if the lines as lines had relationships to an idea worth expressing, but they are not concerned with ideas, and so as drawing must be rated "weak."

An amusing and novel feature of Mr. Demuth's show is the extreme simplicity of his catalogue. Six of the aquarelles are labelled with the same title, "Trees," five are called "Dunes" and five "The Bay." Two are called "Conestoga." We have a vague notion that "Conestoga" is somewhere in Pennsylvania and that therefore our artist is a Quaker. In that case he will be more than ever worth watching, for he must be revolutionary, his sense of color being already beyond what we expect from a Hicksite.

Every one will wish success to the art benefit in aid of the Red Cross fund which opened this week in the studio of C. S. Pietro, 630 Fifth avenue, under distinguished social patronage and with contributions from many prominent artists. Many American sculptors and painters with ateliers upon the other side have been conspicuous in various projects for the assistance of innocent victims of the war, and it is but natural that the artists here who also owe so much to France and Belgium should wish to aid the unfortunates of those countries.

The galleries are crowded with paintings, drawings and sculptures that represent all schools and should appeal to all tastes. Robert Henri sends a characteristic example of his virile art, a portrait study, a little "Girl in Red Stripes." Daniel Garber's landscape is a fine and decorative sketch and Jonas Lee's canvas contains, as usual, a boldly brushed in effect.

Harry Townsend and F. Usher De Voll are two names that are not well known in New York, but are signed to clever street scenes. Louis Kronberg exhibits a ballet girl in pink and S. J. Wolfe shows a studio scene with model resting and sculptor smoking a pipe, both of which are reassuringly conveniable. Two pronounced "modernists," Samuel Halpert and Zorach, exhibit side by side. Halpert sends a still life and Zorach one of his weird decorations, in which strange plants grow beside a strange pool and very strange nymphs stir the waters. Other contributors are Ossip Linde, Arthur Helsby, Adolph Borie, William L. Lathrop, Mrs. Gertrude V. Whitney, Mrs. Sara Morris Greene, Daniel C. French, C. D. Gibson, Albert E. Sterner, Cecelia Beaux, Clara McChesney, Paul Cornoyer, George Bellows, Arthur Friedlander, E. H. Blashfield, Robert Aitken, Carroll Beckwith, H. S. Hubbell, W. H. deB. Nelson, Glenn Newell, F. Luis Mora, Thomas Moran, Bessie Vonnoh and C. S. Pietro.

Something quite new to the art world will shortly be publicly shown in the galleries of Goupil & Co. It consists of a group of portraits, mural decorations and decorative projects by Mrs. De Loria Norman, an American lady who has lived most of her life abroad and who married in England, and who returns here after many years because the war makes art life difficult for the moment upon the other side.

Mrs. Norman's work in itself might not startle us; the astonishing thing is the manner in which it has been produced. The lady has never studied art as a profession and had thought little upon it at all; in fact gave all of her energies to fitting herself for a career in music; when all of a sudden something compelled her to take up the palette and brush, something compelled her to put ideas upon canvases, which astonished no one so much as Mrs. Norman herself when, returned from out of these uncanny influences, she gazed upon the work she had been "compelled" to do.

This it will be seen at once is very different from the old fashioned and ordinary "inspiration." The old fashioned artist studied hard for three or four years at the Art Students League, and afterward worked four, six or eight years in foreign ateliers before the muse even so much as deigned to nod in his direction, and sometimes "inspiration" never descended upon him at all and he would be forced to take up mural decoration for a living. Mrs. Norman, on the contrary, has never had to ask of any one the secrets of the profession, and on the contrary many baffled and discouraged artists come to her asking "What do you do upon the second day of your painting when your canvas is all sticky?" for they all see that technic has no terror for her.

Mrs. Norman does not attempt to explain these "influences," or at least she did not attempt to explain them to THE SUN'S chronicler. THE SUN'S chronicler is unfortunately what is known as a "young soul" and has not had sufficient existences to attain to a state of receptivity upon all these points, and of course Mrs. Norman knew this. He was eager to know if the lady could identify the influences and if artists with well won earthly reputations such as El Greco, Sebastian del Piombo and William M. Hunt were struggling for expression through her or whether the influences at work were those of spirits who had never succeeded in attracting our attention in the flesh but who now think that fame is better late than never. But he did not dare to ask, and the information was not vouchsafed.

Points of this kind are comparatively unimportant to the public, but are of vital significance to the critics, as George Bernard Shaw has pointed out. It will make a vast deal of difference to the experts whether Sandro Botticelli or the late Algernon Roberts, Esq., painted these canvases, as you may fancy. In the meantime and until these difficult questions are settled for us the corporeal agent, Mrs. Norman, must be credited with the praise or blame that shall be meted out to this work.

In England Mrs. Norman has had a great deal of success, but as she is being impelled more and more toward mural decoration upon the largest scale all such projects had to cease in the complete disruption from peaceful occupations that the great war has brought about. She has come to America at a trying time, for conditions here are affected too, but with the utmost confidence. She feels certain that the next seven years of her life in America—her life is always in sevens—will be crowned with success, equal to that she has enjoyed in England.

The feature of the coming exhibition will be a small cartoon for a large wall decoration, to be carried out in various marbles fitted to the lines of the design, much as stained glass is fitted to the leads in windows, with gilt instead of leads to bind the design together and with brilliant colors everywhere. Mrs. Norman has never studied the methods of intaglio or stained glass processes and does not wish to. One of the stipulations she insists upon when this wall decoration shall be finally commissioned is that she shall not be told any of the ordinary workman's tricks. She sees already in her mind's eye exactly how the thing shall be carried out, and representatives of some of the big decorative houses who have heard of her scheme say that while such work as this has never before in the history of the world been undertaken, there is nothing inherently impossible in it.

The reader who is not occult is begged not to attempt to read any flippancy between the lines of this article. It is a sincere attempt to put down the story of an unusual art enterprise exactly as it was given. There must be many to read this account who will understand it far better than he who narrates it. For the others it should be explained that Mrs. Norman frankly confesses to being a "mystic" but has no more mysterious errand here than the wish to have this work seen and accepted. She is established in a studio fitted up in admirable taste and spoke only enough of her "views" to show that her designs were to be approached in a different manner than the usual.

England has not acquired India in vain, and although there is plenty of Eastern thought in vogue in America, it has not broken out in the art circles to the same extent as it has in London. Mrs. Norman says she began her present work under the guidance of Fiona MacLeod, with whom she corresponded for two years and whose stories were the first that she was impelled to illustrate. She has worked a great deal with Walter Crane and is now illustrating a book for him. She has decorated book covers for the celebrated binder Riviere, and Sir William B. Richmond in a letter testifies to his astonishment at these extraordinary manifestations. She appears to know everybody in London, including our own Jo Davidson, Augustus Johns and Jacob Epstein.

Courtesy of Hahlo & Co.

Soft ground etching by the young etcher Wm. Auerbach Levy.

ART NEWS AND COMMENT.

SOME curious sidelights have been flung by the great war on certain art secrets hitherto held sacred. Georges Ohnet writes in the most recent *Gaulois:*

"I have an old cabinet maker for a neighbor who has a veritable talent for making 'old furniture.' He is an artist and a revolutionary. He was on the pontons in 1871 and if he didn't assist Ravachol in making bombs he might just as well have. He has a friendship for me and talks freely to me. The other day I went to see him and found him in a ruminating mood.

"'I read in the papers,' he said, 'that to punish the Germans for the infamies they have committed in Belgium and France the allies are to take objects of art from their palaces and museums. They had better look sharp, for many of these objects are imitation! I know what I am talking about, for that is my line. I may venture to tell you that even at Potsdam in the royal palace in the salon of 'William's lady' I know of a little Louis XV. table which is of my fabrication. It was W—— of London who sold it there for 125,000 marks. Some price, what? and guaranteed against fracture like the table of the daughters of the king, Loque, Chiffe and Graille. It's an object of pretension, carefully patined, with plaques and inlaid violet wood, chiselled copper ornaments, all number one, and it cost me three months of work. He paid me 2,500 francs for it. But they mustn't bother with it. It's a fake, but it's a good fake.'

"Ah, if I only wanted to blab I could tell a few things. Monsieur, you can scarcely imagine the number of fakes there are, even in the best European galleries. I used to know a chap named C—— who made a specialty of false miniatures. Here's the way he did. He bought a real Petitot or a genuine Blarenberghe and paid roundly for it. Then he would have several copies made by Italians or Dutchmen, who are clever at it. There are some men who succeed at that game marvellously. C—— always had a lot of old ivory tablets on which were worthless miniatures. These he would blur over and have the fake miniatures painted on top. The pack side with its spots and injuries remained as it was to establish authenticity. Really they would fool the cutest experts. These copies he would sell for the same price he had paid for the original, but he kept the original for himself. He got in this way a splendid collection, and when he showed them to his cronies who were in the secret he would say:

"'Here's a Hall which is in the Musee de la Haye. This Boucher is in the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg. This Vestier is in the Munich Pinacotheque.'"

"I interrupted the old man:

"'The Crown Prince hasn't been diplomatic, has he?' He rolled up his sleeves and packed up the bibelots of the chateau de Baye. Is that war or brigandage?"

"'But what astonishes you, monsieur, in that? replied the cabinet maker. 'Have you no memory? Pillage is a family trait among the Hohenzollerns. That pious hypocrite of a William, "my unforgettable grandfather," occupied the chateau de Ferrieres during the siege of 1870, and when he left he pinched a little souvenir. He took a ravishing little picture by Mieris which ornamented his room and put it in his valise. Electrified by the august example the etat-major helped himself to the silver, which was swell and very heavy. After that the Baroness de Rothschild, who had already paid a charge of 250,000 francs for the pates that had been consumed by the royal suite, said with a quiet smile:

"'"The next time I won't even leave them so much as a piece of German nickel."'"

The exhibition of American art in the Montross Galleries, which includes recent work of Guy Pene Du Bois, James Preston, Eugene Speicher, E. Ambrose Webster, Alexander Schilling, Rolston Keeler, Hugo Balin, Elmer L. MacRae, Jonas Lie, Alden Twachtman, George Bellows and Randall Davey, will be continued until November 7.

The Milch Galleries have arranged an exhibition with oil paintings by Edward Dufner, De Witt Lockman, William J. Baer and J. Campbell Phillips; miniatures by C. J. Hitchcock, A. E. Henderson, Mathias Sandor and Helen M. Turner, and sculpture by Edmond T. Quinn, Charles L. Hinton, Blanche Roberts and others.

A collection of paintings and sketches by Frank von der Lancken now occupies the art galleries of the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn. Mr. von der Lancken's subjects are equally divided among themes found upon both sides of the Atlantic. In all of his pictures one encounters pleasant color and a refined method of painting.

The original illustrations for "In Dickens's London," upon which F. Hopkinson Smith has been at work so long, are now on view in the gallery of Charles Scribner's Sons. These drawings are all in charcoal, an appropriate medium for getting at the soul of weary, time stained and soot stained London, and a medium in which Mr. Smith's art is at its best. Among the subjects are "Gadshill," the home of Dickens; the "George and Vulture Inn," "St. John's Church," the "Bull Inn" at Rochester, the scene of the duel in "Pickwick Papers," and many others that concern episodes in the life of the author as well as settings for incidents in the books.

The Keramic Society of Greater New York will open its annual exhibition of decorated porcelain on November 9 in the blue room of the Hotel McAlpin. This promises to be specially interesting as in addition to the usual table china there will be a large showing of lamps, tiles and china specially designed for period rooms. There will also be a collection of bowls entered in competition for a prize of $100, given by Mrs. Henry Elling, second vice-president of the society.

Except for the private view for members and their friends on the evening of November 9, the exhibition will be open to the public every day between 10 A. M. and 10 P. M., closing Saturday, November 14.

Alfred W. Martin will give a series of eight illustrated lectures on the Altman collection on successive Monday mornings at 11 o'clock in the Assembly room of the meeting house of the Society for Ethical Culture, 2 West Sixty-fourth street. The topics for the series and their dates are as follows: November 2, A Poet's Plea for the Old Masters (Browning's old pictures in Florence); November 9, Andrea del Sarto; November 16, Leonardo da Vinci and the "Mona Lisa's" Smile; November 23, Andrea Mantegna, "Madonna, with Child and Saints"; November 30, the Florentine Paintings of the Altman collection in the Metropolitan Museum; December 7, the Venetian paintings of the collection; December 14, the quasi-Venetian paintings of the collection; December 21, the Spanish paintings of the collection (Velasquez's portrait of "Philip IV." and "Christ at Emmaus.")

Photograph by Fajk.

"Mother of the Dead," by C. S. Pietro.
Artists' Benefit for Red Cross Fund.

The centenary of the birth of Jean Francois Millet on October 4, 1814, has given the prints division of the New York Public Library an opportunity for another one of its timely minor shows. A number of cases in the Stuart Gallery (room 316) in the main building at Fifth avenue and Forty-second street are filled with the etchings of Millet, the woodcuts executed by his two brothers after his designs, the four large lithographs of North American Indian life by Charles Bodmer in which the latter's friend and neighbor Millet drew the figures, and the usual prints and books concerned with the artist, the material being practically all part of the S. P. Avery collection.

It always gives a deep, serious pleasure to come back to these plates of Millet, these visions of the French peasant, simple and large in style, rendered in a big, classic spirit. These "Gleaners," "Diggers," the "Shepherdess," or that unforgettable "Peasant With a Wheelbarrow"—they are not merely illustrations of French rural life, but typical figures of the gleaner, the digger, the sower, in which the significance which such actions have for us is summarized with a noteworthy force of expression. The deep feeling that lies behind these works is contagious and compelling, and the apparent simplicity of expression becomes evidently subtle if we regard the harmonious flow of line in a composition such as "The Gleaners."

Technique, always a means with him and not an end, is also always intelligently fitted to his medium. So also in his woodcuts, bold in execution, done in few lines, with kinship to the work of the men of the sixteenth century. His art responds to no call of fad or fashion. Its interest is perennial because it is based on human ideals and sympathies that are part of our heritage and of our future hopes.

Another novelty in a season that bids fair to be replete with novelties is the announcement of Miss Christine Lumsdon's Conversations in a Studio at so much "per" which will occur on Tuesdays, beginning on November 10. The following topics have been chosen for the six conversations: "Art and Art Expression," "The Secrets of Art," Stimulating a Love for Art," "Truth in Painting," "Ten Living American Artists" and "Whistler's Valentine." The fifth of these conversations ought to be especially interesting. Miss Lumsdon should have the ten living artists present at the talk.

Keppel & Co. have an exhibition of representative impressions of the four etchers Muirhead Bone, D. Y. Cameron, Anders Zorn and, last but not least, Auguste Lepere. Speaking of them Mr. Keppel says:

"To-day we show the work of four living masters of etching: Zorn, Lepere, Cameron and Bone. How many periods of the past have there been in which we could have done better? At a certain point in the seventeenth century, say 1640, we could have exhibited the work of Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Claude and Van Ostade. That would indeed have been an exhibition of four living masters of etching! In 1675 Claude and Van Ostade were still living, but we should have lost our two greatest names and should have had to replace them by Callot and Ruysdael. In 1700 we could not have shown a single great etcher. Canaletto was living at that time but was still a child. In 1750 we could have shown only the work of Canaletto and Piranesi, in 1775 that of Piranesi and Goya, in 1800 and 1825 Goya alone.

"With the year 1850 we come to another great period. In that year an exhibition of the work of great living etchers could have included Millet, Daubigny, Haden and Meryon. In 1875 Meryon had died, but in spite of that, with the exception of the period of 1640, it was perhaps the very greatest moment for etching. One could have exhibited Millet, Daubigny, Haden, Whistler, Legros, Buhot, Bracquemond and Lepere.

"It appears from this that while there have been two periods, one about 1625 to 1650, and another from 1850 to 1875, that were far stronger than the present day in etching, there have been many other periods, two centuries in fact, which were weaker."

Next Thursday evening, November 5, Dr. Bruno Roselli of Adelphi College, Brooklyn, will close the course of lectures on "Italian Towns: Their Art and Their Romance," which he has been delivering under the auspices of the Board of Education at Public School 59, 228 East Fifty-seventh street. The subject of the closing lecture will be "Siena: A Mediæval City of Dreamers."

On the evening of the 3d at the Museum of Natural History, Seventy-seventh street and Central Park West, Alexander T. Van Laer will continue his course on "The History of Painting" with a lecture on "Millet and the Barbizon Painters."

The following week the Board of Education will open two new courses on art. At Public School 165, 108th street west of Amsterdam avenue, John Quincy Adams will open a course on "Art and Daily Life," while at Public School 59 Prof. Louis Weinberg of the College of the City of New York will begin a course on "Modern Artists and Their Message."

The first of Richard Ederheimer's exhibitions is of early color woodcuts, including some exceedingly rare specimens of German and Italian origin.

"As in other fields of the graphic arts," says Mr. Ederheimer, "both Italy and Germany claim the invention of color woodcuts, dubbed by its Italian originator, Ugo da Carpi, 'chiaroscuro.'

"While the first German specimens antedate the Italians by a number of years—the first dated one in accordance to Kristeller (the Cranach shown here) bears the date 1506, whereas Ugo's first dated plate shows 1518—the Italian may be somewhat justified to claim the title of inventor, as his efforts soon developed a technique materially different from the German method.

"The German method consists mainly in the use of a regular woodcut block, to which another plate, containing one distinct tone with spared out highlights, is added. This gives the rich chiaroscuro effect to the regular woodcut where else the line work is predominant. This use of two plates had also at first been taken up by Ugo da Carpi. What, in accordance to Vasari, is to be considered his first effort, the 'Sybil and Child,' shows practically the same method of two plates. But soon Ugo tried to eliminate the line work entirely, working mainly with surfaces in different gradations of light and shadow. Thus we see him apply one plate for the deep shadows and a varying number of others for producing the lighter grades, although often using the same colors on each plate. The effect thus produced was entirely new in the line of engravings, imitating very cleverly the style of wash drawings or paintings 'en camayeu.'

"In Germany this method was apparently always considered more or less an experiment and never became of general practice. This accounts for the fact that the few specimens thus made are so exceedingly rare. They are more sought after by the ambitious collector than the Italian productions, where Ugo's new style found a few clever and industrious followers."

Arlington Art Galleries

Exhibition of Paintings by

Alexander Grinager

November 2nd to 14th inclusive

274 Madison Avenue

Between 39th & 40th Sts. New York City