

News and Reviews of the World of Art--Work of Alfeo Faggi, Sculptor, Problem for Critics

Pins His Principals on Mantle of Pisano--Portraits by Mlle. Dufau.

By HENRY MORRIS.

ALFEO FAGGI, who presents himself as a sculptor in the Bourgeois Galleries, is a difficult nut to crack, and there will be many to attempt it who will be cracking themselves (the present writer included, of course). However, nothing ventured, nothing won; so here goes:

I am aware that the word "nut" now has a slangy sense attached to it by slangy persons, and if there were time in the midst of the rush of this newspaper traffic to look up such a one I would do so in order to discover if one might apply the term "nut" with equal right as Mr. Faggi is, without odium. But, of course, there is no time to look such a person up; there never is time to look any one up--so I will venture it, feeling strongly, as I do, that there is something inherently complimentary in the word, especially as addressed to artists.

The right kind of an artist never would object to being called a nut. Mr. Faggi will not, I think. If he does, why then, of course, he's not one, and that would be a pity, for it would cut him off from intercourse with the nutty, of whom there are several millions in this town, and with whom it is good business to deal. Nuttiness and seriousness are synonyms, and I have no preference in the use of these terms, and used the first one only because the word is so much more common. "Seriousness," to swing over by degrees to the other word, does not necessarily imply greatness. For instance, almost any one in Greenwich Village would apply the term "nut" with equal freedom but unequal justice to Rabbin, dranchath Tagore, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Pery Mackay, Alfred Steiglitz and Gertrude Stein, yet they can't all be great, can they? But there is no doubt whatever of the implied admiration--the insinuation of the commendable desire for greatness or even that a nut contains within itself the makings of greatness. In short, the word is one of those words that is all right coming from a friend and only wrong coming from an enemy. Mr. Faggi, I am your friend--pray accept the word.

War Halted His Work.

The difficulty that the public, and even more so the critics, will have with Mr. Faggi is not so much that he is a nut as that he is not yet quite ripe for cracking and by cracking, of course, I mean nothing more than taking his measure. If the exhibition consisted but of the head reproduced upon this page and two or three figures of his latest work, the world would be likely to feel that it might come to terms with this sculptor, but, unfortunately for a quick acquaintance, the artist is one of those whose careers were interrupted by three years' service in the war, and consequently is considerable jerkiness in the story of his soul development as revealed in the sequence of his sculptures. It is conceivable that a young man just beginning to express himself as an artist and obliged by his conscience to fight in such an extraordinary war as this last one was might accumulate thoughts in his mind that could not be reduced to sculptural terms. That his sculpture suggests thinking and compels thinking is enough for a beginning.

Mr. Faggi is one of those (there are a number of them) who repudiate the unarchitectonic works of Michelangelo and his modern reincarnation, Rodin, and hark back to earlier masters. Mr. Faggi pins his principles to the mantle of Pisano, and Pisano's mantle was made from a stout piece of goods, quite capable of supporting any artist's weight that are so soft and flowery in line that they are bad company for a sculptor who aims to be architectonic. A lily has structure, of course, but not architecture.

Mr. Faggi erects an entire figure at times out of soft and flexible curves. The backbone is so remarkably absent that one trusts the armature is not, and lines are also among the things missing from Mr. Faggi's work.



Portrait by Helene Dufau, Knoedler Galleries

is genuine and even exalted feeling in some of Mr. Faggi's draped figure compositions, notably the "Mother and Child," but as a structure it is mushy. A still more debatable inclination of the artist is to combine the relief and the round in one composition. As I have frequently explained before I am not in favor of this sort of thing, either in sculpture or in painting. It is a disintegration, but a disintegration without bones. Boocione, one of Mr. Faggi's countrymen, disintegrated his figures with a seismic, cyclonic force, but the composition remained firm.

Best Work is His "Eva."

Mr. Faggi's best work is his "Eva," and fortunately it is his last. Eve is not particularly the Mother of Men, according to him, but she has the apple and intends that Adam shall bite it. She is slender, girlish and astonishingly large, scarcely broken planes, revealing a power that comes out from within. Take his Woman and Child as an example. The figure of the mother rises straight into space like a column, in large, scarcely broken planes, revealing a flat submerged plasticity, so that the round body of the child against it seems to emerge from the impassive plane, to start toward us like an inner force. The whole is like a growth of nature, and like nature has something about it of the inevitable. And this within a single sweep of tight contours which disclose the greatest possible plasticity within the smallest possible compass.

"But these qualities of form do not exist for themselves. They are the visible manifestation of a profound dominant spiritual mood, which is evoked by the relation of the plans and lines and masses and the fluid light. There is no pantomime, and the expression is never explicit. It is the irradiation of the whole thing."

"Or take his most monumental conception, the more difficult and austere piece, it is built in the broad, flat planes of basso rilievo and great architectural lines. Its aesthetic is in the intimate inextricable fusion of the two bodies, of the two spirits. The Virgin, more than Virgin, more than mother, some heroic female Jehovah, holds the great sacrifice enveloped by her body, bowed but unshaken by earthly bereavement. As all superior spiritual experience dissolves the consciousness of expression or even betrayal, so the highest spiritual significance proceeds from

drawn especially interesting. There were some remarkable peasant work much homespun linen-work, Hebedo embroidery, Amager shawls and is a matter of swift brushwork, but the light from the breaking clouds has been preserved.

The thirtieth annual exhibition of the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors, now open in the Anderson Galleries, contains 130 pictures, twenty-four of which are sculpture and eighteen miniatures. Harriet W. Friesmuth won the National Arts Club prize with a small bronze called "Extase."

Paintings by Louise Utton Brumback are viewable in the upper galleries at Knoedler's. Miss Brumback paints with the utmost vigor and with bold pigments. One of her best is "Fierceman Clouds," in which several purple islands springing from the sea have been handled with considerable breadth.

A small painting by Alexander H. Wyant carries off the honors in a show in the Folsom Galleries that also includes works by J. Francis Murphy, Bruce Crane, Chaucer F. Ryder, Charles H. Davis, Theodore Robinson and J. Adler Weir.

NOTES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE WORLD OF ART

Nikol Schattenstein, the distinguished Russian painter, whose works will be seen for the first time in America at the Kingsore Galleries, 668 Fifth Avenue, Mar. 1 to Mar. 19, has won many honors in European exhibitions. His portrait of a lady, best known of his many portraits, made its sensational debut at the International Art Exhibit in Vienna.



Portrait by Alfeo Faggi, Bourgeois Galleries

Mlle. Helene Dufau, who comes to America with the enviable reputation of being the best portrait painter in France, exhibits a group of her recent works in the Knoedler Galleries. They are most impressive performances, which will be looked at with profound respect by the artists of the city and will elicit a degree of curiosity to see what Mlle. Dufau accomplishes with her American sitters, for she has come here to do Misses Anne Morgan, Evelyn Herbert and Madeleine Prentice and others.

Mlle. Dufau is quite unembarrassed by technique and knows precisely what she wishes to do and goes straight for it. Her work is not at all mannered. Her hats, chiffons have no terrors for her, and so she is left free to seek animated or characteristic poses. In the portraits she shows her sitters have been animated and she animates her new American friends. It is devotedly to be wished. It is, in fact, some time since any of our feminine candidates for immortality have engaged themselves with much abandon into a chaise-longue or have arisen with much precipitancy from a piano stool. Our portrait painters have rather frowned upon precipitancy of all sorts.

But with Mlle. Dufau all such things come in again. Her color conforms to the modern requirements and is far livelier than that of her masters, who were Bouguereau, Tony-Robert and Fleury. Mlle. Dufau was born in the Bordeaux region, and went to Paris at an early age to study in the Academie Julien. Her first picture, "Ricochet," won her the Bachelier prize, and after that her career has been a series of official successes. She has had her works purchased by the Government and has been given public commissions. She has had special success with the portraits of women, and her well-known sitters have been Mme. Pol Neveu, the Baroness Frachon, Mme. Verneuil, Mme. Alcora, the Comtesse de Noailles and the Duchess de Clermont-Tonnerre.

Mlle. Dufau's preoccupation with design is so evident in each work that it is not surprising to learn that at home she is achieving a number of important murals. Edmond Hosten entrusted this artist with part of the decoration for his famous villa, "Annaga." Among others she signed the "Black Swans" in the library and the "Parrots, Peacocks, Flamingoes" of the stairway. A Frenchman said of this last: "Three women, nude, are bending among the fruits, the flowers and the birds. In order to appreciate the decorative genius of Mlle. Dufau these medallions must be seen in the white stone where they are placed and of which they actually appear to be the colorful flowering. One cannot imagine a more perfect harmony between stone and pigment, between her colors and the peculiar light falling from an opening in the ceiling."

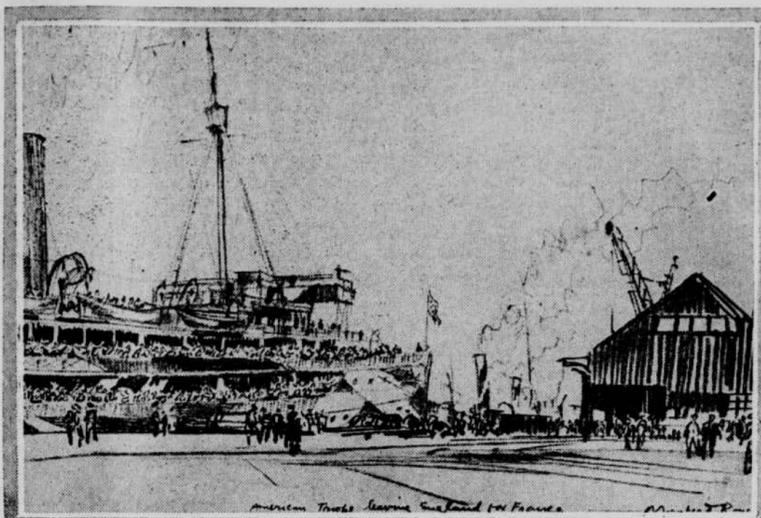
CEZANNE, VAN GOGH, OTHERS.

In the De Zayas Galleries there is a handsome old Dutch doorway that separates the main gallery from store room and office in the rear, and Mr. De Zayas complained recently that there must be something psychic about the Moorish doorway or nine out of ten visitors to the galleries pushed their way through it and examined the contents of the store room. Possibly the door formerly had a picture of a Moorish figure, which incidentally incited the curiosity of the constitutionally rebellious, but however that may be, thanks to its continued lure for those who have already visited the De Zayas Galleries have had either a peep or a full view of the Cezannes, Van Goghs, Gauguins and Toulouse-Lautrecs that are now being shown in the main rooms. There is nothing harmful about these works of the modern masters, and it must be allowed that all of them gain immensely by the light of the open day which is theirs.

Two of the Cezannes are large landscapes in oil, with the now familiar intensity and subtlety. Both have pools of water in the foreground, with landscapes reflected in them. Both are amazingly powerful without any visible effort upon the part of the artist to be so. Both are heartbreaking to the student who would appropriate the Cezanne secret. Cezanne had no secret other than incurable honesty and an intense desire to put down some of the wonders of the world on canvas. The Van Gogh landscape is one of the finest of his that has reached America, vigorous, colorful and alive. The two Gauguins glow with rich color and one of them contains one of the now fashionable Tahitianes. The Toulouse-Lautrec is an entertaining study of a woman seated in a garden with a peculiarly Lautrecian little dog in her lap. The exhibition, as may be seen by this list, is one not to be missed.

EXHIBITIONS OF THE WEEK.

Recent paintings by Augustus Vincent Tack are now on view in the Kraushaar Galleries. Mr. Tack is, if possible, more of a romanticist than Zeyer. He uses the most scintillating pigments that defy electric lights and shine forth like jewels under all circumstances. One of the most obviously romantic of the pictures is called "The Court of Romance," the court being a large, open, bare Italian terrace that is rather too large for the small people who fit across it. Rather, it is more generally acceptable romanticism is that of the landscapes "Hidden Waters" and "Mountain Slopes," which have an ingratiating decorative quality.



American Troops Leaving England for France. Water-color, by Muirhead Bone, in the Fatherless Children of France Collection, American Art Association

nothing more, nothing could be done perhaps but to deplore the fact. But--and here is my whole point--these criticisms also prove that insincerity, trickery and commercialism are 'getting by' in Chicago (over half the painters on lists I. and II.) and are serving as examples of 'artistic success' to our rising generation of artists, who, unless the tendency is checked, will probably adopt the same standard. (It may be charged here that the writer is an 'art for art's sake' fanatic. He is not. Of course, he realizes that an artist must live by the sale of his pictures. But he has not been an artist ever thought of the fact that the only pictures which ever increase in value are works of art.)

"Now, if you agree that my estimate is correct let me ask you, for the fourth largest city in the world isn't this, to say the least, a deplorable state of affairs? Chicago has acquired considerable distinction in the arts of music, literature and poetry, and that justly. Is Chicago satisfied to be known in painting as almost hopelessly ignorant, unappreciative, unproductive and uninterested? Why is it that whenever a Chicago painter shows signs of becoming a real artist or realizes within himself that he cannot be satisfied with a career of producing mediocre sure sellers he invariably leaves the city, very often to later reflect national or international lustre on some other place which was able to recognize and encourage him as an artist? Who is to blame? Is it the fault of our art schools, which teach only technical methods and principles (each teacher usually insisting on his own particular brand) while neglecting almost entirely the aesthetics or philosophy of the attitude which is necessary to direct and control workmanship if a work of art is to be produced?

"What are you going to do about it?" "Personally, the writer of this letter has no axe to grind--he has no personal acquaintance with or knowledge of more than a half dozen of the artists mentioned; he has never starved either before or since he came West; he has never even attempted to exhibit any pictures here. He believes that, if he cared to play the game as it is now played in Chicago, he could very soon be locally 'successful.' His only reason for not doing so--and his only reason for writing this letter--is that he wishes the standard were raised to such an extent here that the winners of honors, or even of admission to an exhibition, would mean to him and to other artists that they were considered primarily as artists and not merely as clever or popular painters. Then and not until then, Chicago would produce (and retain) some real artists.

"The writer is also, in all sincerity, a modest person, and his purpose does not include in the slightest degree a desire for notoriety for himself (but does perhaps include some for the present state of local artistic conscience), wherefore he signs himself only 'Just One.'"

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