

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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PAINTINGS BY AMATEURS ON VIEW AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

PAINTINGS BY AMATEURS will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from October 12 through November 20 in an exhibition that aims to clear up some popular misconceptions about this increasingly popular pastime. Approximately 50 oils and watercolors are in the show, all the work of 14 typical adult amateurs in the People's Art Center classes, the Museum school directed by Victor D'Amico at 21 West 53 Street and on Long Island. Each student is represented by three or four pictures and his own statement telling why he is an amateur painter. By showing the pictures with these statements by the students, Mr. D'Amico hopes to demonstrate the aims and progress of amateur painters.

A dentist and his wife, a retired textile manufacturer, a purchasing agent, an accountant, several housewives and a personnel consultant are among those whose work is shown as typical of amateur painting. Still lifes, portraits, seascapes, landscapes and colorful abstract paintings show the variety of style and subject matter that interests amateurs. In their accompanying statements, however, the amateur painters are agreed that they feel a peculiarly personal satisfaction from their experience in painting and that while they do not have any interest in exhibiting or selling their pictures, they continue to study painting because with increasing technical ability they derive more pleasure by being better able to express their own ideas and attitudes.

An amateur is defined by Mr. D'Amico in the introductory wall label in the exhibition as an adult who pursues art for his personal pleasure rather than professionally, or for gain. Seeking awards, or competition with professional artists for prestige and sales, he says, is almost certain to defeat the good intentions of most amateurs.

"Painting for pleasure need not imply a dilettante attitude on the part of the students or a laissez-faire method of teaching," he says. "The greatest satisfaction results from a sincere exploring of one's interests and a discipline in applying the fundamentals of art....Creative endeavor not only helps the individual to express himself but makes him conscious of the aesthetic values of the art works of the past and present as well as in their application to everyday living."

The attitude toward continued study is expressed by Irene Kotuk, a New York housewife whose still-life in pink and yellow is shown. "I love the process of putting down color next to color and seeing a pattern emerge," she says. "Right now I feel that I haven't begun and that there is so much to learn. But I cannot think of any other medium where there is such excitement and contentment in learning."

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Another busy housewife, who has added painting to a full schedule of home and children, Mrs. Albert B. Buchanan, has a strong, grey and blue seascape in the exhibition. She says of her amateur paintings: "Like other hobbies it has brought to our whole family a real creative interest and much amusement.... The joy of being able to record occasionally feelings about scenery and places, the new awareness of color and form in our everyday landscape, city or country, and the sense of accomplishment that comes finally with a fairly successful attempt."

One couple, a dentist and his wife, are represented in the exhibition. Mrs. Raskin likes to make sketches when traveling and a European sidewalk café scene is included in the show. Last summer both Dr. and Mrs. Raskin joined the Museum art classes on Long Island and several of the pictures painted there are shown, including a beach shack by Dr. Raskin. In his statement Dr. Raskin stresses how relaxing he finds painting. Prodded by his wife he says he attended a few art classes and: "...no sooner had I begun to work than I completely forgot my fatigue and a new stimulation encompassed me." In describing the summer vacation devoted to painting, he says: "It was a totally new experience in that I had never painted on the spot and in the open. It was thrilling to see something develop on the canvas that was actually in front of you."

Joseph Lane, a perfumer, also took classes this summer on Long Island at the Museum school, and several paintings made there, including one of the ruins of a factory on Hick's Island, are shown. Mr. Lane begins his statement by saying that five years ago, at the age of 51, he began to paint and regrets not having tried it earlier because the reward is greater than one can imagine: "I'm not sure that I can say why I take art. The subject is so complex and involved. I do not expect to become a professional or ever to achieve high acclaim for my work but I would feel very honored if what I do and what I say would encourage other amateurs like myself to experience the satisfaction that I have enjoyed."

A flower still life and a portrait of two women are among the pictures by Peggy Frand in the exhibition. Miss Frand was born in Minnesota and is an accountant. She says her interest in painting has opened such diverse fields as mathematics and history.

Miscilla Lewis, a housewife and professional nurse, whose paintings of landscapes and a figure group are shown, points out in her statement that amateur painters frequently come to enjoy professional works of art more. "Since beginning to paint," she says, "I also learned to appreciate creative art on a different level. It literally opened my eyes to see and feel more vividly. It taught me to enjoy the great works of art. It made me aware of aesthetic values unknown to me before, but most of all, it induced me to learn more about art of the past and of our present day."

This special kind of relaxation which has led some of the world's busiest and most pressed people to take up painting is also described by Doris Lerman, a secretary whose colorful and moody landscapes are shown.

Among the more abstract paintings are several by Florence F. Liman who enjoys hanging her pictures in her house. She says: "as a housewife leading what is called a full life - full of housework, children, dogs, Girl Scouts, Sunday School teaching, adult education courses, gardening, social activities, etc....(painting) is a chance to create order and harmony - the housewife's *raison d'etre* - and have a tangible, permanent result. The end product may not be a work of art, but if it should turn out well, it can be used to decorate one's home. Hanging new paintings in place of last week's or last year's gives one a feeling of change more easily than replacing the carpet or recovering the furniture."

Elaine Heller, who is a personnel director has several figures of nudes against colorful backgrounds in the exhibition. She feels that amateur painting is of particular importance now and points up a reason which may be responsible for the increasing number of people who enjoy painting for their own pleasure, when she says: "In the dynamic and fast-moving world in which we live today...I find this sort of personal activity helps you arrive at a balance for yourself and enriches your whole life experience. I feel that the pleasures, even though it is often difficult and challenging to express on paper just as I would like to do it, are two-fold - an inner satisfaction in being able to express what you feel and see, and an external one in being able to produce in a tangible way as well."

Rebecca Bay, a housewife and mother who treats figures and backgrounds in a decorative manner says that painting has offered her a new world of absorbing interest.

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Another housewife, Nina Jacobson, who has two seascapes done at Montauk in the show, says that while she has always been more interested in art than in other fields it is only recently that she has begun to enjoy painting herself and that in a very personal way she finds it now a necessity.

Howard Mickle, a purchasing agent, who is represented by two decorative landscapes and a still life speaks of the pleasure he gets from using strong colors in his pictures. "I paint for my own pleasure and to satisfy the strong creative urge which has come to me during the past few years....I intend to continue painting, and am trying to improve my technique and ability to express my ideas."

Mrs. Edna Offner Leopold, a housewife whose children have attended the classes at the People's Art Center, is one of the students at the Center who started in an Orientation class and then in an experimental drawing class in order to discover which media gave her the most pleasure to work. "I don't really know why I am painting, except perhaps because I have come to the realization that in order to be really happy one must be creative in some way...I find in painting...as I progressed, I was again being faced with the old problem - that of solving problems, and for the first time it seems to me now, I faced them and tried to work them out as best I could. This seems to have helped me to solve many other problems..."



If you would like additional information, or would like to interview Mr. D'Amico or any of the amateurs, contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York City, Circle 5-8900.