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NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN ART

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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Binding Title: NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN ART

1. The American Magazine of Art article "New Horizons", extolling the WPA Federal Art Project, August 1936.
2. MOMA exhibition: NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN ART
September 16 - October 12, 1936
 - A. Sample preview invitation
 - B. Illustrated newspaper and magazine coverage & critique of show which presented work by artists and children done under the WPA Federal Art Project.
3. Letter from Holger Cahil, Director of the WPA Federal Art Project, to Goodyear praising him on outstanding exhibit, November 1936.
4. MOMA exhibition: JOHN MARIN
RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION
October 21 - November 22, 1936
 - A. Sample preview invitation
 - B. The Bulletin of MOMA, October 1936 issue, devoted to exhibit.
 - C. Illustrated newspaper & magazine coverage & critique of show.

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*The American
Magazine of*

ART

*Including
"Creative Art"*

August 1936

NEW HORIZONS

LAST month an exhibition of pictures and sculpture by artists on the WPA Federal Art Project closed at the Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington. Next month another WPA show will open at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Even critical observers saw in the Washington exhibit a vigorous answer to those who hold that the artists on relief should be handed a pick and shovel in place of the tools of their profession. And the enthusiasts, who are growing steadily in number, were reaffirmed in their belief. There really is justice in the Modern Museum's choice of a title for its September show—New Horizons in American Art.

If what was shown in Washington indicates what New Yorkers will shortly see, they will be surprised—those so far uninitiated by the Federal Art Gallery in the metropolis—and reassured by the promise and accomplishment. Promise of course predominates; but in these days the promised land no longer lies along the Seine. The new horizons are those of plain and mountain and prairie.

This is no blissful hosannah for American scene acrobatics. On the contrary it is a grateful acknowledgment of the fact that American artists as never before are unself-consciously at home. Artists like everyone else enjoy being wanted, even by so huge an abstraction as a government or a people. Their delight is proportionately keener when no curb is placed on progressive experiment by the obliging government. Freedom of this kind exists here as nowhere else on earth.

Other vistas toward new horizons are being opened by the Project, supplementing the permanent function of the Treasury Art Projects. Artists of a wide range of experience and abilities can do effective work on programs that are not immediately "creative," like the Project's flourishing local art centers in southern and western states, like its urban galleries, its Design Laboratory, its Index of American Design, and its varied teaching projects. Much of this work, supplementary but productive, is winning a permanent place of esteem for art and artists in the localities affected.

This is true to an extent that prophets of the 1920's could not foretell. Now, in the midst of it all, it is still difficult to see beyond the horizon. Certainly today American artists are more firmly rooted than ever before in the growth of our national life. They are taking today's chance to develop tomorrow's market. When the government withdraws gradually from the art market, private buyers will be waiting. For, as Miss Constance Rourke writes in *The New Republic*, "A flexible and well organized movement has been brought into existence, proceeding from a concept of art not as the possession of the few but as a free impulse that should have a large and natural place in our society for pleasure and use."

F. A. WHITING, JR.

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THE PRESIDENT AND THE TRUSTEES OF

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART INVITE

YOU TO ATTEND THE PREVIEW OF

"NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN ART"

ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON - SEPTEMBER

FIFTEENTH - FROM THREE UNTIL SIX

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1936

U.S. Art Project Display to Open 53d St. Season

Modern Museum Will Put
Work in Many Mediums
on Exhibition Wednesday

New Tendencies Noted

Regional Lines Dropped in Arranging the Show

An exhibition of outstanding work executed by artists throughout the country on the Federal Art Project since August, 1935, will open the 1936-37 season of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West Fifty-third Street, it was announced yesterday. Entitled "New Horizons in American Art," the show will open to the public next Wednesday and will remain on view through Monday, October 12.

Selection of the several hundred exhibits of mural painting, oils, watercolors, sculpture, prints, posters, photographs, drawings and watercolor plates has been made without regard to regional representation. The exhibition has been directed by Miss Dorothy C. Miller, assistant curator of painting and sculpture of the museum.

In announcing the exhibition, the museum made public a statement by Holger Cahill, director of the Federal Art Project, in which he observed that during the twelve months the project had been in existence the American public became conscious of art and of the part it could play in the community; while on the other hand artists began to grow aware of public tastes in art.

"For the first time in American history," Mr. Cahill said, "a direct and sound relationship has been established between the American public and the artist. In the discussions and interchange between the artist and the public concerning murals, easel paintings, prints and sculptures for public buildings,

through the arrangements for allocations of art in many forms to schools and libraries, an active and often very human relationship has been created. The artist has become aware of every type of community demand for art, and has had the prospect of increasingly larger audiences, of greatly extended public interest. New horizons have come into view. American artists have discovered that they have work to do in the world.

"The organization of the project has proceeded on the principle that it is not the solitary genius, but a sound general movement which maintains art as a vital functioning part of any cultural scheme. Art is not a matter of rare occasional masterpieces; it is not merely decorative, a sort of unrelated accompaniment to life. In a genuine sense it should have use; it should be interwoven with the very stuff and texture of human experience, intensifying that experience, making it more profound, rich, clear and coherent. This can be accomplished only if the artist is functioning freely in relation to society, and if society wants what he is able to offer.

"It is fortunate that under government auspices an opportunity for the development of significant new tendencies has been provided during these crucial times. The outcome is full of promise."

Among the New York artists whose work will be on display are:

Murals—Charles Alston, Frances Avery, Louisene Blum, James Brookes, Alfred Crill, Wyatt Davis, Philip Evergood, Seymour Fost, Archie Gery, D. L. Rice, Benjamin Swick, Edward Levitt, Guy MacKay, Abraham Lesh, Eric Moss, James Michael Nease, William C. Palmer, Max Spivak.

Oil Paintings—Eugene O'Neil, Joseph de Marini, Emmet Edwards, Donald Fortson, Karl Fortson, Louis Gagliardi, J. J. Giv, Charles Hestley, Georgia Kilgus, Lawrence Labadie, Julian Levi, Loren MacVoy, Austin Macklin, Roland Moussey, John Nichols, Joseph Pardo, Carl Fey, Pauline Gregory, Frederick Misha Rosenkoff, Joseph Stella, Elizabeth Terry, Manuel Tolsen, Bunker Uhl, Fredo Vidar, Dorothy Varian, Arnold Wild.

Sculpture—Eugene O'Neil, Aaron Gonsky, Jose Ruiz de Rivera, Hugo Robau, Conetta Scarsione.

Photography—Berenice Abbott.

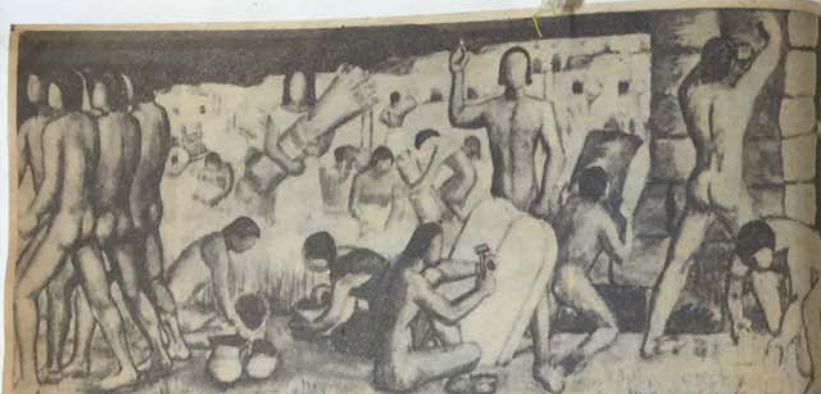
Among the objects to be shown in the forthcoming exhibition will be forty-eight oil paintings, sixty-six watercolors, fifty-two prints and about forty works of painting and sculpture by children. The oldest exhibitor is William Sommer, seventy, of Ohio; the youngest, Dolores Wright, six, of New York City.

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NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1936

The Art of the American Shakers



"Evolution of Western Civilization," Sketch for the first panel, "Primitive Civilization," in a series of frescoes, by Michael New, Evander Childs High School, carried out under the WPA Federal Art Project. At the Museum of Modern Art.



"The Story of Richmond Hill," mural, oil on canvas, by Philip Evergood, in the Richmond Hill, L. I., Library. Sketch included in the Museum of Modern Art's "New Horizons in American Art."

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Shaker Furniture

Included in the exhibition, *New Horizons in American Art*, opening Wednesday at the Museum of Modern Art, will be photographs and specimens of Shaker handicraft from the religious colonies in New Lebanon, N. Y., and western Massachusetts. Above is a rendering of a Shaker storeroom at the Hancock, Mass., colony. Left—A guest room of Shaker furniture and rug in the home of Dr. Edward Deming Andrews, Pittsfield, Mass.



Shaker Bonnets and Bonnet Box at Hancock

These creations were photographed at the Massachusetts religious colony. The pictures are included in the Index Portfolio of the Federal Art Project, a national survey of American arts and crafts. The Index will form part of the *New Horizons* exhibition.



Sister Sarah Poses for the Photographer

This member of the Hancock colony was standing on the carriage landing of the community. The religious sect, which originated in England in 1747, was founded in the United States in 1774 by Mother Ann Lee.



Shaker Medicinal Instrument

This device was for the purpose of producing electricity for therapeutic purposes. It is now in the possession of Dr. Edward Deming Andrews at Pittsfield.

All photographs by Vincenti-Hartich.

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A Shaker Stove

Left—This stove is in the laundry of the Shaker colony at Hancock. Some remarkable Shaker pieces are included in the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.

Chairmaking

Sister Lillian at work of the Shaker colony at Hancock. The philosophy, "Humble hearts to God," is in the Shaker colonies.

FEDERAL ART PROJECT MAKES A MAJOR REPORT

By CARLYLE BURROWS

FOR the first time, at the Museum of Modern Art, it is now possible to look over the accomplishments of the Federal Art Project in their most comprehensive form. The large show there, with the beaming title "New Horizons in American Art," presents, with certain necessary restrictions owing to a lack of more abundant display space, a general selection of art work resulting from the Project's country-wide efforts of the last year in putting worthy artists to work at their calling and reducing their unemployment. It is, from more than one point of view, an illuminating exhibition. It brings to public attention scores of artists who, though not readily identifiable by name, are, at all events, capable and worthy of recognition. It points out certain trends, vague though none the less distinguishable, which American art is taking throughout the country—trends which it is apparent conform more to the sentiment and spirit of American life than to that of any other single outside influence. And it promises much toward the re-establishment among American artists of a broad, reinvigorated naturalistic approach in painting which is keenly susceptible alike to the values of craftsmanship and personality.

The Federal Art Project began operations a year ago last August, when it took over a number of state projects then functioning under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and unified them under a national program. It has now 5,500 artists and art instructors in its employment, and has grown to be the instrument whereby, Holger Cahill, its national director, asserts, the United States government has become the greatest art patron in the world. During the year's activity several thousand works, such as the museum is showing—paintings, sculptures, watercolors, drawings, prints and photographs—have been turned into project headquarters by these employees, produced on relief wages paid to them by the Federal government. What, of specific value, has all this to show in justification of the methods and the money expense employed?

It should be pointed out that the functions of the Federal Art Project are concerned primarily with relief, with the re-establishment on a producing basis of artists who, having started art careers, and been faced during the lean years with abandonment of their work, have been enabled by the project to continue developing their embryonic, and in some instances, already well-formed talents. The work on display should be distinguished from that of another government project, the Treasury Department Section of Painting and Sculpture, whose interests have been concerned with the decorating, with mural paintings and sculptures, of various Federal buildings throughout the country. The artists employed for this work have been selected, in large part, by invitation and by competition. The art at the museum is important in illustrating, not so much the work of well established painters and sculptors and graphic artists, as that of artists yet working toward public recognition. This fact has been responsible, incidentally, for something the project officials have evidently taken great pride in—their "discovery" of a large number of new talents who have been found to be blossoming in various near, as well as more remote parts of the country.

In the Project exhibition, which has been selected and very attractively installed at the museum by Miss Dorothy C. Miller, assistant curator of painting and sculpture, appear several striking mural decoration exhibits—one of the most authoritative in plan and execution being that of James Michael Newell, a New York artist, whose series on "The Evolution of Western Civilization" is represented by a finished detail in fresco, and by a miniature scale model of the library of Evander Childs High School, the Bronx, showing the miniature sketches of the finished panels in place. Like various of the muralists represented, Mr. Newell gets inspiration for his colors, if not for the form and composition of his subjects, as well—as is the case with Mitchell Siporin, for instance—from the crisp, earthly palette of the Mexican painters, notably that of Orozco. Mr. Siporin's design for the "Prairie Poets" mural, however, shows striking decorative invention and character. Max Spivak has done a very spirited, amusing mural of puppet motive for the Astoria Branch Library, and Arshile Gorky, one of New York's foremost adherents to abstractionism, floods a wall with forms and colors which have little appropriateness to mural designs, although intended as such, for the Newark Airport administration building. Few of these murals are as seriously worked out, and as finely integrated decorations as those of Mr. Newell, or those on the Law Courts exhibited by Anatol Shulkin. These latter designs include a beautiful detail drawing of a woman, which is one of the authentic attractions of the show.

We have already seen, at the Federal Art Project headquarters, one comprehensive show of the Index of American Design, an extensive record of native decorative arts the project is making to be included in portfolios for record and reference. A room at the museum given to drawings and watercolors selected from hundreds more that have been completed, furnishes an intimate idea of this work of great precision and care have been lavished on these "copies," giving

them a positive authenticity.

The oil paintings attributed by the project, outdone by the watercolors and gouaches, prove a little disappointing, although these two groups make, on the whole, a very satisfactory showing. It is possible to mention here only a few salient exhibits—such, for instance, as Heiner Müller Murray's "Buffalo Hunt," Frède Vidar's decorative "The Pool," Roland Moussau's deft "Landscape," Jack Levine's "Conference," which is very capably painted humorous satire, and Joseph De Martini's subdued "Moonlight," among the paintings. The watercolors, on the main floor, are perhaps the most attractive of all the groups—representing among others such promising talents as Samuel J. Brown, whose "Mrs. Simmons" is extraordinarily keen portraiture; Joseph De Marx, whose "Post No Bills" is stamped with fine clarity, and Edward Lewandowski, with "Lobster Markers," Joseph Vavak, with "Dispossessed," and Raymond Breinin, whose landscapes in gouache incorporate unusual taste in color.

Sculpture, whatever the extent of its production under the Project, is limited in the exhibition to a few scattered pieces. These are quite excellent—the life-size plaster "Gull With Pawn," by Conetta Scaravaglione, finely executed and decorative; an abstract "Bird Form" in polished brass by Jose Luis De Rivera, suggesting Brancusi, and a group of wood carvings of religious subjects by Patrocino Barela, of New Mexico, which are extraordinary for their simplicity and imaginative feeling—though now far they depart from antique models is not clearly apparent—all these are well worth seeing.

The range of material presented also takes in some very interesting work by school children, both watercolors and small sculptures being shown. The visitor's attention should be called especially to a study of an elephant in wood—a remarkable bit of stylization—and to another, of the head of a miner. There is also a display of photographs, showing activities of the Design Laboratory, a craft studio conducted in New York by the Project; and black and white prints, a small room of which are displayed but which left us wholly without enthusiasm.

There is enough, however, in all the types of work included to assure one conclusively of the presence in the show of many fine talents worth cultivating. The Federal Art Project has done well to enable these artists to work and carry on their professional toward a successful culmination.

The record for the first year's phase is made complete with an illustrated catalogue of the exhibition. This contains a brief foreword by Mr. Alfred Barr Jr., director of the Museum of Modern Art, and an introduction by Mr. Cahill. A hundred half-tone illustrations of salient works on display are included, together with an index of the artists represented.

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Western Civilization (Detail)



From the mural painting by James Michael Newell, at the Museum of Modern Art

Girl With Fawn



From the sculpture by Concetta Scarsavaglione, at the Museum of Modern Art

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1936.

OPINION UNDER POSTAGE

American Artists' Congress Apparently Wants Project Unreservedly Praised

FROM Stuart Davis, national executive secretary of the National Executive Board of the American Artists' Congress, a long communication has been received in which exception is taken to the article (appearing in these columns last Sunday) on the Federal Art Project and the selected work, done under the project, now exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art.

Mr. Davis's letter speaks for itself. It may be appropriate, however, to prelude what he has to say with a word in reply to questions posed and to one misstatement he makes.

A paragraph in the executive secretary's letter runs in part as follows:

"In your article you include several statements which we believe must be substantiated by facts. Specifically, your statement, 'Quantities, alas, of perfectly terrible art have been brought into existence under the WPA,' and again, 'much grossly worthless or mediocre art. It is true, has been and no doubt will go on being produced.' If you have personal knowledge that these statements are true, Mr. Jewell? Or are they merely offhand remarks which unfortunately reinforce the unskillful opinions of those who put all art in the category of boondoggling?"

The answer to the first of these questions is "Yes," to the second, "No." The term "quantities" is a mistake. I am not prepared to say exactly what proportion of the total work produced that I have seen serves in my opinion to be called inferior. I have seen enough to warrant, from my point of view, regarding such statistics into a general survey of accomplishment. It could be explained, however, that was thinking in terms of the entire period of government patronage rather than, specifically and exclusively, of that in which the present project has operated. Narrowing consideration to the effort alone of the last year was not my intention.

In the next paragraph Mr. Davis writes:

"Many of our members have a personal knowledge of the collection of the Federal Art Project and they do not agree with you that the project is characterized by terrible and wasteful production." This might represent merely a legitimate disagreement of opinion. As a matter of fact I have never said, never dreamed of implying, that the project is "characterized" by terrible and wasteful

production. I am at a loss to understand how any one who read last Sunday's article or any one who has followed my comments since the government began its notable experiment several years ago under the FWAP could so completely misconstrue plain words and so fail to appreciate the warmth of my enthusiasm for what-taking the large view-has been and promises to be accomplished.

E. A. J.

HOWEVER, the article also, like Mr. Davis's letter, speaks for itself. The not as yet quoted portions of this letter, in so far as space permits, follow:

"You quote from Alfred Barr Jr.'s foreword to the catalogue as follows: 'The material, assembled from every section of the United States, has been selected by the director of the exhibition for its artistic value alone.' This simple statement of fact is twisted by you to seem to give support to your unsupported statement regarding the 'quantities, alas, of perfectly terrible art,' &c., for you inform your readers, following the quotation from Mr. Barr, that they must not lose sight of this qualifying clause. By implication you ask your readers to believe that the work included in the exhibition is the cream of the production of a project which you hasten to add has produced quantities of perfectly terrible art. There is no such meaning intended or implied in Mr. Barr's factual statement. Further, we have communicated with Miss Dorothy Miller, director of the exhibition, on this point. We asked her whether in her capacity of selecting the works for the exhibit she had found quantities of perfectly terrible art and whether the work selected by her represented the ounce of cream skimmed from the top of a grade C project. Her reply follows:

"In selecting the work for the WPA exhibition I saw about two thousand works in all. It seemed to me that all these works were of a remarkably high standard, and I felt that if the museum had had the space I could easily have trebled the exhibition in size, still maintaining a standard as high as that of the present showing. My principal difficulty was in choosing between items equally good. The problem was somewhat simplified by the fact that I wished to emphasize the work of the younger and less known artists and to leave out the work of the older, better-known men. The thing that im-

pressed me about the work of the Federal Art Project was the great amount of vital, fresh and explorative work."

"Another series of paragraphs in your article refers to the futility of hanging thousands of 'average' pictures on walls all over the country. You state that while the exhibition itself has significance, the individual units lose their value when separated from the aggregate. Such a statement seems very

weird coming from a man who has made a life work of thinking and writing about art, because it is equivalent to a statement that universal education is to be discouraged. Would you say that you see no use in training thousands of 'average' school teachers who will be distributed throughout the country to carry on the work of preserving and developing our common knowledge? Or would you advocate that the work of educating the youth of our country be carried on by an occasional genius, whenever one may be found available?"

"American society has decided against you, Mr. Jewell, because it advocates, at least in theory, that the fruits of the manual and intellectual labor of the people belong to them. Your conception that no purpose is served by the wide distribution of what you term 'average' works of art would have more chance of finding favor under a Fascist régime wherein each class is told exactly what it may or may not think or own."

"American society is based on the belief that the 'average' person has equal rights with the 'above average' in certain basic matters such as education and freedom of thought and expression. Surely you would not deny the right of the average American to participate in the artistic development of the average American artist."

"The American Artists' Congress has supported the idea of government support of art because we believe that art is not a practice dissociated from all other human activities, unaffected by social events. We believe that special excellences in art develop from a broad base of art production and that the possibility of the achievement of the great masterpiece is directly dependent on, and is thus an integral part of, the work of many artists working toward a more or less common objective."

Such movements of art development have come to be known in terms of the product of their strongest workers. But it is indeed an error because of this fact, to seek to promote art in terms of masterpieces. Such a practice has meaning only for the art dealer and speculator. Holger Cahill, director of the Federal Art Project, has given sound expression to the basic value and significance of the art project in his introduction to the catalogue of the present exhibition when he says:

"The organization of the project has proceeded on the principle that it is not the solitary genius but a sound general movement which maintains art as a vital, functioning part of any cultural scheme. . . . In a genuine art movement a great reservoir of art is created in many forms, both major and minor."

"It is always well to remember that works of art are produced by human beings. The Federal Art Project has made possible the preservation of skill of mature artists and has been the only source to which the young artist could go for recognition of his right to develop as an artist."

"The existence of the Federal Art Project with its 5,300 artists employed means the difference between the preservation and development of American art and its decay and dissolution."

"The artists of America, through the various artists' unions, the Artists Congress and the Federal Art Local, have maintained a constant struggle for the enlargement and permanent establishment of the Federal Art Project, because they know that without such Federal recognition of the cultural necessity of art the artist is doomed in America. With the establishment of a permanent art project on an adequate scale the promise of fulfillment for a vital American art, which, in our opinion, is amply indicated by the works of the large number of artists under 30 years of age in the present exhibition, is assured."

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THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, BOSTON, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1936

Home Building and Furnishing

Artists Record American Handiwork

By Helen Johnson Keyes

Special from Monitor Bureau

THE selective exhibition of work accomplished in various sections of the United States, under the direction of the Federal Art Project, is now current at the Museum of Modern Art. The title is "New Horizons of American Art," and includes as one of its features drawings, water colors and photographs for the Index of American Design.

The enterprise differs from other FWA art projects by reaching into the past for its material. It is the first nation-wide effort to uncover and record pictorially the folk arts of the United States. The plan is now operating in 25 states, where museums, libraries, public and private collections and homes provide artists and research workers with examples of craft work executed in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These examples include furniture, costumes, utensils, ironwork, ceramics, glass, silver, pewter, wood, sculpture, scrimshaw, needlework, toys.

The research workers submit their discoveries to a staff of artists—some of whom have worked in the fine arts, others in the commercial fields and in whose ranks are included also a few younger men and women who emerged from the schools when opportunity was lacking and who are now enjoying their first employment. They all labor under the direction of supervisors and these men, indeed, be perfectionists, for the quality of the work is exceptionally fine.

Many Water Colors

When color is important in the object to be portrayed—as, for instance, in quilts, embroideries, costumes, some glass, costumes, and inlaid and painted furniture—water colors are the medium of reproduction. Black and white washes and pencil drawings are employed for metal and leather objects.

The records made will ultimately be published in the form of portfolios, each illustration being clarified by an informative text regarding the materials of which it is composed, the locality and period from which it derived, its present location and condition, and—where these facts are known—the name of the maker and of the original owner.

In his introduction to the catalogue, Mr. Holger Cahill, national director of the Federal Art Project, reminds us, in analyzing the value of the index, that "American artists and designers have always lacked the sense of continuities which well-known traditions can bring." It is particularly interesting, therefore, in studying the examples now on exhibition to think of them as source material for creative workers in the fine arts, the decorative arts, the stage arts, and costume; also for collectors, teachers, fiction writers, historians and biographers.

Shaker Furniture Depicted

This collection comprises 133 pieces and is so hung in its gallery as to form topical groups. For instance, there are two groups of regional furniture and household items, the more extensive being devoted to Shaker cabinetwork from New York and Massachusetts. These functional designs should be of much interest to the modernist, although they sprang from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The other classification embraces Pennsylvania-German chests abloom with tulips; an iron toaster and an iron skillet of graceful forms, whose surfaces, rendered again by the illustrator, serve to remind us how lovely iron objects often were in the long ago; pottery plates of red clay showing either a yellow slip or a lead glaze. A particularly handsome one, lead glazed, was painted in 1805 by Johannes Neesz, and depicts a dashing equestrian bugler in an environment composed of flowers and a circular motto.

Yet another classification explores a field hitherto very little examined, that of the ecclesiastical and secular art of California, Colorado and New Mexico. From Colorado we have two santos retablos in tempera on gesso panels. From New Mexico, a wooden sculpture of a religious subject, a lunette depicting the creation of the world, a church wall-hanging of buffalo hide painted with the figure of a saint, and three secular pine chests.

From a New Mexico Chest

We illustrate on this page a detail from the front panel of one of these chests, itself painted in oils. A pair of bulbous white horses, that remind one of the rubber surf animals which are sold on our contemporary beaches, are galloping through a reddish landscape with a green buggy in tow. California contributes embroideries, leatherwork and metal-

craft. A spur done in 1852 by José Tapia, combining handsomely tooled leather and finely etched steel, is shown on this page.

To the American of New England or southern lineage, few records are more appealing than embroideries, quilts and coverlets. The water colorists have rendered these patiently wrought testimonials to the need of beauty and creative effort, in clear, sparkling tones, and where embroidery is the theme they have achieved astonishing texture.

An unusual sampler was worked by a child of 11 years in Alexandria, Va., who eschewed the customary cross-stitch and alphabet and in long-and-short depicted a singing bird among flowers. A nine-year-old girl in Los Angeles in 1845 made an

appliqué quilt of hundreds of pieces of wool cut to the shapes of birds, plants, pinwheels, polygons and whatnot. A radiance like stained glass is in the colors of the painting of a patchwork quilt composed of small, oddly-shaped blocks of patterned calicoes.

Effective Realism

The costume paintings partake of this quality of vibrant color and fabric texture and so do the paintings of decorated furniture, such as the Hitchcock chair illustrated, whose black paint and stenciled design are so reproduced as to affect us aesthetically just as the chair itself would do. A banjo clock of mahogany, trimmed with brass and with gilded and carved wood and painted glass, reveals the character of all these materials. (The clock, by the way, is attributed to Aaron Willard.) The inlays, carvings and readings of fine mahogany pieces are set down firmly and delicately by brush on paper, as are the dignified forms of silver, glass and stoneware. We become conscious that these century-old articles can teach us much today about simple forms and about organic color and decoration.

This exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art will travel to various museums the country over. Furthermore, more, in the Antique Exposition, which will display its collections this fall in New York, there is to be a further showing of the illustrations made by the index. The Newark Museum has announced an extensive setup, not only of the paintings and drawings, but also of many of the original objects.



Several hundred American artists have been organized in a WPA project for making drawings and paintings of American craft work produced before 1850, to compose a record which is called the Index of American Design. An exhibition of many of their works is being held now at the Museum of Modern Art in New York city. From photographs of this exhibit the above views were selected.

In the upper view are shown a Guilford, Connecticut, chest; an iron weather vane; a wrought and cast iron balcony rail from Louisiana. Below, a Hitchcock chair from Connecticut; a patch-work crib-quilt from New York State; a spur from southern California, the leather and steel both decorated; a painted panel of a New Mexico pine chest.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1936.

IN THE REALM OF ART: THE SEASON ACCELERATES ITS PACE

ART IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Scope of the Various Federal Programs— Advance in Recent Mural Painting

By EDWARD ALDEN JEWELL.

NOTABLE advance has been made during the last two years in the field of American mural painting. Government sponsorship has resulted in nation-wide activity, mural work having been produced in abundance under both the Treasury Department Art Program and the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

As Forbes Watson explains, the Treasury Department program has two divisions. On the one hand is the Section of Painting and Sculpture, which has to do with work designed for particular buildings to which an allotment has been made. On the other hand is the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP), which pays salaries to accepted artists under a fund allocated by the Works Progress Administration. In each case, however, "employment is limited to professional artists capable of meeting the standards established by the Supervising Architect's Office for the decoration of Federal buildings." Material produced in these two branches of the Treasury Department program is shown in the exhibition that opened last week at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Again, as Holger Cahill explains, the Federal Art Project (work produced under which is found in the also current show at the Museum of Modern Art) was set up a little more than a year ago by the Works Progress Administration. "It took over a number of small State projects operating under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and unified them under a national program." Mr. Cahill, national director of the Federal Art Project, tells us, in his catalogue introduction, that with this project approximately 5,300 artists are now enrolled.

Both exhibitions have been discussed in a general way. The present article proposes to deal just with American mural work done under government auspices—work illustrated in the exhibitions at the two museums.

The present account cannot hope to be inclusive, nor can there be more than brief comment upon any particular example. The commissioned murals by Henry Varnum Poor, Reginald Marsh and George Biddle in the new Justice Department Building at Washington were discussed rather thoroughly in an article that appeared on this page Aug. 30, and, although they figure in the show at the Whitney Museum, these major works will not be included in this survey.

INDISPENSABLE to any mural artist is practical experience. It would be futile to expect America to bring into existence overnight a new army of painters capable, as if through some miraculous dispensation, of meeting all the demands, of coping with all the problems, that attach to the effective embellishment of walls. The situation will have to be faced much more realistically than that.

I have liked to look upon our great government experiment as a kind of laboratory in which, for the benefit both of themselves and of the public, artists may become better and more technically accomplished exponents of their profession. If we do not learn while working at the thing we love best, it means that growth has ceased. And life and growth should be synonymous.

I have liked to think of this government experiment—conceived, as it was, in a spirit of true wisdom—as a mammoth atelier operating, so to speak, with one eye on the present and one eye on the future; a future embodying fruitfulness untold, though dependent in very large degree upon the strength of the foundations that now are being laid.

Those who would obtain some concrete idea of the advance alluded to at the beginning of this article have but to think back to the mural exhibition put on in 1932 at the Museum of Modern Art. That affair, it is true, revealed the efforts of only a small invited group and could not be held representative of the country as a whole. It did demonstrate, however, that, with a few exceptions, the artists involved were lamentably unequipped for work of this nature.

They groped and stumbled, sometimes making a wild if valiant stab at what they instinctively felt should be the mural technique, more often content just to enlarge an easel picture and trust that increased dimensions might suffice to turn it into a mural. That show, which antedated by many months the government's emergence upon the scene as an art patron, proved to most of us, I believe, that murals cannot effortlessly appear; that they must grow, if at all, out of the soil of long and patient experience.

COMPARE with that now distant attempt the present demonstrations at the same museum and at the Whitney. Neither the WPA nor the Treasury Department program has succeeded in producing an unbroken legato of masterpieces. But at length, the public is in a position to observe with what augmented confidence our artists today proceed toward their difficult goal; how much they have learned; how gratifyingly, for the most part, they recognize the fact that the mural is a distinct art form, not to be confused with any other, if satisfactory results are to be attained. Yes, the advance should be pronounced very definite and encouraging.

Vigor and courage bulk large in the show at the Whitney Museum, which, except for the sculpture and a bare handful of easel oils and water-colors, addresses itself to mural art.

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Some of the painters, it must be admitted, elect to keep well within the safe bounds of conventional procedure—the sort that can turn out pleasant, undisturbing murals by the yard. Now and then it struck me that an artist had done little more than design a section of "landscape wallpaper," once so popular, and that "repeats" could carry it smoothly along from wall to wall. In tendency, at any rate, the murals by Henrik Martin Mayer for the Marine Hospital in Louisville, Ky., and by David Granahan for the Postoffice at Hopkins, Minn., would seem to come within the circuit of the wallpaper school—though the work remains emphatically mural. Mr. Mayer's two panels for the postoffice at Lafayette, Ind., are particularly well composed.

Picturequeness is rampant. There are at least seven or eight brush tributes to the Wild and Woolly West, which run a kind of gamut from the chromo scale employed by Peppino Mangravite to the gay, light touch of Fluke Boyd or the mastery grouping of figures in the sketches prepared by William C. Palmer for walls in the new Postoffice Department building at Washington. All of this, whether or not distinguished as art, bears reference to the substantial theme of pioneering and so transcends mere aimless juvenile story-book adventure. It has a constructive place in the American perspective, which is more than can be said for the classic cheesecloth and pastoring of a generation or two ago.

EXUBERANCE itself may be defended as a typical American trait. So long as they are kept within the reasonable bounds prescribed by mural art, who is going to outlaw healthy animal spirits? From the cold, shiny, static design by Clarence Carter for the Postoffice in Ravenna, Ohio, or the mannered forms of Umberto Romano and Howard Cook or the calligraphic decoration by Louis Bouché, it is invigorating to turn to an assertive "Western" such as Joseph Fleck's; to the splendid, almost savage rhythms of George Pickens, in his airplane mural for the postoffice at Hudson Falls, or the impish humor of Edna Heindel's captivating little room designed for the Connecticut Public Works Administration Housing Project in Stamford.

Whereas the well-painted mural designs by Aldis B. Brewster are shrill and lurid, those by Norman Chamberlain, exhibited in one of the largest of the models, aspire to a monumental sobriety. It often hedges by the obvious, this comes through with fine effect in an end panel (reproduced). Thomas La Farge has brought real decorative freshness to his narrow panels for the New London Postoffice. And I thought the model sketches by George Harding among the most imaginative and promising of all those shown. They are so untram-

meled and individual in conception, so ingratiating in color.

On a sketch basis Glenn Shaw also gives an excellent account of himself, and the same may be said of Ernest Halberstadt, though the latter's rich monochrome bravura does suggest a pretty close analogy to the style of the Spanish Sert.

SKETCHES, of course, can seldom give us anything like a conclusive idea of what the finished mural will be. Not even the very helpful models can tell us all. As I have insisted again and again, murals should be judged in a comprehensive fashion alone when they are completed and in situ. Thus for the ambitious series Maurice Sterne plans for the library in the Justice Department Building (here adumbrated in photostats) we shall have, manifestly, to wait.

On the other hand, it is not an insuperable task to carry in some measure to completion in our minds the stately academic lunettes by Leon Kroll or the handsomely decorative Big Injun panel by Buk Urelich. And I should be willing to wager on good results in connection with the admirable designs submitted by Charles W. Ward. Among others in the show whose sketches predict felicitous conclusion are Thomas Laman and Karl Free.

Harold Weston may perhaps, upon the walls themselves, breathe some life into material that, in model form, looks suffocatingly dry and tight and detail-loaded. Entries that seem to me conspicuously off the mural beat are John R. Ballator's, deficient in rhythmic flow, and Richard Lahey's, which, I am sorry to have to report, appears in just about every respect an unconvincing piece of work.

But be they commonplace or fresh and inventive and original, the designs that go to make up the beautifully installed exhibition at the Whitney Museum argue for the most part an awareness—more articulate or less so, as the case may be—of attributes essential to this particular art form. That is the point to be underscored. Had it during the period of effort traversed to date accomplished no more than this, our government could refer with justifiable pride to the outcome. But that, as we know, is only a part of the harvest.

MURALS on view at the Museum of Modern Art bring into participation more than forty painters who have been at work under the Federal Art Project of the WPA.

The series of panels by Edward Laning, which deals with the rôle of the immigrant in the industrial development of America and is to cover walls at Ellis Island, publishes further development and will continue to be followed with much interest. The capital laboratory murals by Eric Mose, some time ago installed at Samuel Gompers

High School in the Bronx, have ere this been commented upon; so has the very accomplished work by William C. Palmer for Queens County General Hospital.

Among the other artists, some that make a particularly favorable impression are Philip Evergood, James Michael Newell, Alfred Crimi, Anatol Shulkin, Max Spivack, Wyatt Davis, James Brooks and Edgar Britton. The last-named painter had produced six fresco panels for the entrance hall of Bloom Township High School, Chicago Heights. His egg tempera detail included in the present show indicates good use of color and vigorous drawing. The forms carry. Photographs of completed panels

are also shown, and while in not all of them does Mr. Britton appear to have designed with distinction, the photograph placed at the lower left of the group, and that at the upper right, demonstrate a mature, intelligent understanding of mural principles.

Murals by Mr. Evergood, Mr. Newell, Mr. Crimi, Mr. Brooks, Arshile Gorky, T. Loftin Johnson (not represented in the show at the Museum of Modern Art), Lucienne Bloch, and perhaps a few other painters I propose to discuss in a future article. Work by most of these artists I have seen either in completed form or in process. Mr. Evergood's charming panel in the library at Richmond Hill will probably be finished, he tells me, in a month or so. Mr. Newell is making steady progress on his extensive fresco series at Evander Childs High School, and Mr. Johnson's enormous mural in the dining hall at West Point was unveiled last June.

CLOSING A CONTROVERSY

IN a further communication Holger Cahill expresses himself as dissatisfied with my reply to his charge that I did not base upon sufficient first-hand knowledge such adverse general comment as appeared in my review, Sept. 20, of the WPA show at the Museum of Modern Art.

To me my criticism seemed and seems just. Enlarging the scope of one's personal contact with work produced throughout the country could not serve to diminish the number of works I have considered inferior.

I did not say that the "quantities" of bad art referred to represented any considerable percentage of the vast quantities of art produced. And my comment was meant to apply not exclusively to the WPA project, but instead to the entire period of government patronage.

I feel, as I have so frequently emphasized, that an immense amount of good is being accomplished through this great government effort. And it seems to me unfortunate that there should be so much stir over the inevitable existence of

E. A. J.



Painting Scenes: "Morning Watch," by Tom La Farge. Design for New London Postoffice mural (Treasury Department art project). In the current exhibition at the Whitney Museum.



Panel in a series of murals by Norman Chamberlain and assistants for Huntington Park, Calif., Postoffice (also at Whitney).



"Preventive Medicine and Surgery." Detail from a mural by Alfred Crimi for the Harlem Hospital. In the Federal Art Project exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.

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THE ART GALLERIES

East and West

ABOUT all you have to do to keep me away from an exhibition is to call it "New Horizons in American Art." I have lived through too many suburban renaissances, and have barked my shins against too many broad horizons upon which the sun almost rose. An old dog knows that if he wants to pick up the scent, he must keep his nose to the ground and let the horizons take care of themselves. But don't let this keep you away from the opening show at the Museum of Modern Art. For once, the title means something.

No one could have imagined in 1933 that the first attempts to keep a few amiable souls from starving would broaden into a movement as solid in achievement and as encouraging to the younger painters and sculptors as the Federal Art Project has now become. In the early days—if your memory for initials is good, it was under the PWAP—even the artists had a tendency to look upon the provision of public funds for their support as a mere windfall, and the work they turned in was almost a face-saving device—like leaving behind a few sketches when you move out without paying the landlord. But the government has done something more than provide makeshift jobs. It has set up schools, it has created museums and art galleries, it has exposed, for the artist's exercise and the public's delight, whole acres of hitherto desolate walls in schoolhouses and post offices and libraries and prisons. And the artists have admirably risen to the challenge. Gone are their art-dealer blues and their barren monkeyshines.

It is all very sudden and unexpected and fabulous—enough to set one singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" aloud while walking down Fifty-third Street. Most of the talk so far has been about the murals, but I am not sure that the emphasis is right. While there are some fairly promising murals, like that of Hester Miller Murray and Mitchell Siporin in Illinois, and Arshile Gorky in the Newark Airport, most of them tend to fall into heavy-footed platitude—even Gorky's abstractions are by now something of a platitude—while for really fresh talent one must turn to the easel paintings. Here are some fine things: Jack Levine's "Conference" and Loren MacIver's "Dune Landscape" and Louis Guglielmi's "Wed-

ding on South Street," to say nothing of Rainey Bennett's two water colors, and the freshly conceived "Houses on the River"—in green, edged unexpectedly with red—by Karl Zerbe of Massachusetts. There is not a touch of officialism or nationalistic bumpiousness or academic timidity in the whole show; that in itself indicates what an able piece of work Mr. Holger Cahill and his assistants have done.

Children's art, created under the Art Teaching Project, is not the least vital part of the show. But if one person stands out as a capital discovery, it is the New Mexican sculptor, Patricio Barela, who worked as a day laborer until the Art Project singled him out. He is a young man of imagination, drawing upon some childhood memory of saintly figures from old churches, but refashioning his fantasies in terms of solid blocks of wood till they are as strong, if not as highly finished, as a Congo idol. His "Heavy Thinker," with a weight crushing down the figure's head, telescoping his legs into his trunk, whilst two angelic figures hold him up, is as accurate as it is funny; and "Hope, or the Four Stages of Man," is another fine piece of carving, full of meanings, too, about being born and dying. No cultivated primitivism here; this is the real thing. I have a special curse ready for the first cameraman or newspaper interviewer who tries to get hold of Barela. So far he has been in good hands.

Exciting as all this original work is, there is still another section: the Index of American Design, which is making a documentary record of old American furniture, pottery, textiles, painting; and for the first time an adequate folio of materials toward a cultural history of the country will be in existence. This exhibition gives one a queer shock; but it is hard to say whether one is more happily surprised by the aesthetic competence or by the administrative intelligence that has brought it into existence. If Mr. Roosevelt chooses to confine his platform to art, he may consider himself elected as far as I am concerned—and I'll give him either Mr. Harry Hopkins or Mr. Holger Cahill for Postmaster General.

THE NEW YORKER

SEPTEMBER 26, 1936

General Offices
116 East 59

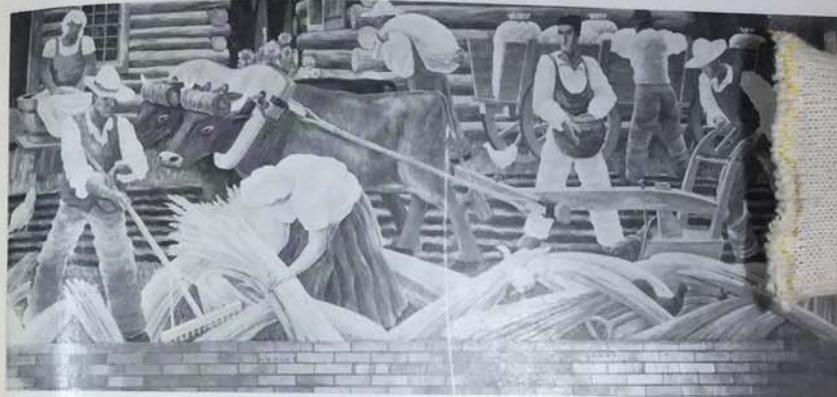
The ART DIGEST

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF ART

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Early Farmers: KARL KREPL. Mural in Oak Park, Ill., School

Meet Uncle Sam, World's Greatest Collector of a Nation's Art

NEARLY FIVE HUNDRED selected works acquired in the past year by the world's greatest art collector, Uncle Sam, are on view through Oct. 12 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in a three-and-one-half-floor opener for the 1936-37 season, assembled as the first "vital report" by the Federal Art Project to that mysterious critic, the American taxpayer. Entitled, significantly, *New Horizons in American Art*, the display includes murals, oils, prints, sculpture, and other objects selected from the twelve-month production of 5,300 artists and art teachers.

The selection, made by Miss Dorothy C. Miller, assistant curator of Painting and Sculpture at the museum, attempts to show only the cream of this huge activity, admittedly to be taken, discounting the personal equation, as the project's best foot forward. There were, however, severe limitations operating against Miss Miller, including the small space and the fact that much good work that has been done cannot be transported about.

Most of the eager questions readily invoked by the prophetic cadences of the title are answered in part in the splendid introductory project, and in part by the works themselves. The new horizons that come into view are not new vistas of method nor style nor "isms"; they are widened areas of de-as-to where art can be used in America. It may yet be that under federal patronage, the been driven into the grip of speculation that originally separated the artist from his public.

Mr. Cahill notes in his essay that: "The artist has become aware of every type of community demand for his art, and has had the prospect of increasingly larger audiences, of

greatly extended public interest. There has been at least the promise of a broader and socially sounder basis for American art with the suggestion that the age-old cleavage be-

tween artist and public is not dictated by the very nature of our society. New horizons have come into view."

Support for this observation is found in the exhibition. There is, first of all, a preponderance of work in mural design—an art form that has never been practical to merchandising on the 57th Street exchange. There is, further, an overwhelming concern with everyday social context, ranging from an appendectomy at the local hospital to driving 40 miles an hour in an automobile. Finally, there is a section devoted to work done by youngsters—good, but somehow hard to place in the inventory of a New York art gallery.

A research activity of considerable extent undertaken by the agency is represented in a section devoted to the *Index of American Design*. This department is engaged in making water color and black-and-white reproductions of meritorious examples of early American design in the useful arts. With 3,500 plates already completed, representing the arts of such regional groups as the Shakers, Pennsylvania-German and Spanish Colonial, the project promises to become a veritable legacy in historic design.

In general, the New York critics favored Uncle Sam's spending. Edwin Alden Jewell of the *Times* concluded a neither hot nor cold review in agreement with a colleague that: "It would get us nowhere, as Margaret Marshall pointed out the other day in *The Nation*, to assume that the whole problem of the artist in society has been solved by putting him on relief; but the Federal Art Project does serve as a blueprint to indicate the function that art might and should perform in society."

"That," it seems to Mr. Jewell, "is the true touchstone."

The exhibition is important to Carlyle Bur-



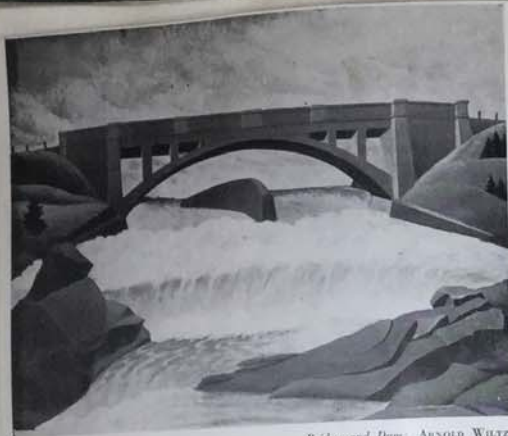
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Bridge and Dam: ARNOLD WILTZ

rows of the *Herald-Tribune* for, among other reasons, the evident pride that the project officials have taken in "their discovery of a large number of new talents who have been found to be blossoming in various parts of the country." Hailing Uncle Sam as no dabbler in "the precious," Jerome Klein, *Post* reviewer, finds "a new complexion, an altogether ruddier one," in American art. The title of the show, commented upon by all the critics, refers, according to Melville Upton of the *Sun*, to regional rather than aesthetic horizons. "But, for all that," he continues, "the work shown marks a sharp break with what has obtained in the country's art centers in recent years—takes on the air even of a popular uprising against the inherent snobbishness of the cult of a precious art for an initiated few."

In matters of technique and aesthetic considerations Mr. Cahill noted a strong tendency away from hero worship. "There is very little in this work," he says, "which follows fashionable reputations at home or abroad; no residue of the point of view which in the past has tended to make American art a tasteful résumé of European practice. In view of the great influence of the Van Gogh exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art last winter it is interesting to note that the work under the project has conspicuously failed to echo either the design or the color of this master. The influence of the school of Paris is rather slight. With the decline of dependence on outside influences, preciosity and self-consciousness have tended to disappear. The artists have come to see that preciosity is related to the worship of esthetic fragments torn from their social contexts, and to the idea of art for the select few. The lack of self-consciousness may be an expression of American naïveté."

Edward Alden Jewell's review, however, takes exception on this point to note that "the ample milieu between extremes is prone to be pedestrian and to reflect a trend toward the standardizing of certain now popular styles and techniques, notably illustrated in the frequent employment of a method of painting that is supposed to derive from something primitive and that offers, as its chief characteristics, hard, dry simplifications, sharply defined wooden forms and color that as a rule

is without a trace of resilience or functional depth."

The exhibition is the third display of government art to be shown at the Museum of Modern Art and, in the opinion of Alfred H. Barr, Jr., director of the museum, it shows "a remarkable increase in quality over preceding work done under government patronage."

The museum had not originally announced a Federal Art Project show for this year, but, according to a statement issued there, the quality of this art so impressed its president, A. Conger Goodyear, and Mr. Barr, that the schedule was revised to make room for the exhibition, which is to be sent on tour to other cities.

Whether the costly project made Uncle Sam the owner of even one masterpiece in painting, sculpture or graphic art was a matter cautiously reserved by both officials and critics. That it did provide a leavening, pointing to better economic days for the American artist, maybe a renaissance, all seemed to agree.

Politics Under the "E": MICK ARSENA (Age 18)



WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

WALKER-JOHNSON BUILDING
1734 NEW YORK AVENUE NW.
WASHINGTON, D. C.

HARRY L. HOPKINS
ADMINISTRATOR

November 14, 1936

Mr. A. Conger Goodyear, President
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Goodyear:

I have been intending to write you for some time but a rather longish period of illness has put me out of the running as a correspondent.

I want to thank you, the trustees of the Museum, the director, and the Museum staff for the splendid presentation of the work of the W.P.A. Federal Art Project in the recent exhibition, "New Horizons in American Art." It seems to me that it took real vision and generosity on your part to plan a large exhibition of the Project's work during the middle of last summer when very little was known concerning the quality of our work.

It seems to me, also, that most of us accept rather too casually the remarkably fine work which the Museum does in all its exhibitions, the intelligent ideas which guide the exhibitions, the fine selection and presentation of material, the excellent and authoritative catalogues. I cannot praise too highly the work of your staff in its presentation of our exhibition. The work was selected with greatest sensitiveness and understanding and presented with real genius. The catalogue, I think, is a really fine work, and when one considers the short time that your publications department had in getting it up, a real achievement. The publicity concerning the exhibition was handled with the greatest intelligence and with real sympathy for the Project and its work.

I cannot praise too highly the work of the entire Museum staff, especially that of Miss Dorothy Miller in selecting and arranging the exhibition, Mrs. Frances Collins in editing, and in handling the lay-out and publication of the catalogue, and Miss Sarah Newmeyer in handling the publicity.

With kindest personal regards,

Very cordially yours,

Holger Cahill
Holger Cahill, Director
Federal Art Project

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The Art Digest

15th October, 1936

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EXHIBITED AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM

"ASPECTS OF SUBURBAN LIFE—GOLF," PANEL BY PAUL CADMUS

documenting the development of decorative art in America. The artists have admirably reproduced the color and texture of glassware, pottery, iron work, and other decorative objects. In the materials copied by Elizabeth Moutal, Massachusetts, the tactile sensation is so strong that one is tempted to touch them for confirmation. The policy is to use photographs generally wherever color is unimportant, but instead of drawings, it seems that photographs, for such pieces of furniture as the *Sill Cupboard* and the *Two Step Bench*, could more adequately reproduce the solidity of the original. Since they are in monochrome an appended color sample could easily make the necessary indication.

Spontaneous and indigenous subject matter is not the only virtue of the creative objects. The quality of the works in different media is surprisingly excellent. Although mainly by artists until now unknown to the New York public, they compare most favorably with the work of well-known artists. The mural done by Alfred Crimi for the Harlem Hospital has the monumentality of an early Italian fresco. It is a true reflection of contemporary society and its worship of intelligence and science.

In the paintings executed for the Treasury Department Art Projects and now at the Whitney Museum, high quality comes as no surprise. These are the works either of nationally acclaimed artists or of artists who have won competitions. The Project fosters mural painting and sculpture solely for the purpose of decorating government constructed buildings. Since the Treasury Department has charge of most Federal building it consequently has become sponsor of this Project. It appoints acclaimed artists and also conducts competitions. A chairman and committee, including the architect, are appointed in the region of the Federal construction. They announce the competition and select the winner from sketches which are submitted unsigned. This highly stressed anonymity must only have partial value since the artist's work is his signature and we can assume that a local artist of talent is usually fairly familiar to the art public—to say nothing of the better known artists. The local decision is rarely reversed in Washington. There is a conscious attempt to keep the main office decentralized so that the art work will retain its regional characteristics and its close connection to its

community. The danger of a relapse into academicism is kept in mind by the WPA and its officials, who are apt to

Although subject matter permitted a great deal of freedom, the official American art of the past has led to narrative, unlike the WPA work, tend to the history of the community, told about events or characters.

Not all of the paintings remote events. A notable example, *Suburban Life*, one of which is shown in the Art, an attack on the laxity in its full glory and during the past decade, the Department of Justice Building in American the stringencies imposed by the stronger than his sketch for the Pennsylvania column, of its Van Veen has incorporated the glorious past—its constitutional industrial Pittsburgh. Tom



EXHIBITED AT

CARVED OVERDOOR FOR C

for his murals in the New L. splendid sweep of figures and

Some of the other paintings worth while because of their no great American mural has been able to meet the challenge their new opportunity. Sculpture finds its suitable expression in Maniship, Kreis, Von Meyer.

Art for art's sake has been given a purpose. For a little America have been the rec-

cash consideration was involved, but Alfredo, shown above, became a life member of the Museum.

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THE ART NEWS

October 10, 1936

The Government as a Patron of Art

By Martha Davidson

THERE can be little overstatement of the social significance of the current exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum. Both offer for inspection the art work that has been done under Government supervision and patronage. *New Horizons in American Art* at the Museum of Modern Art shows what has been accomplished by artists under the WPA Fed-

statements of America's democracy. A frequent scene is the comradeship between the races and there is a new interpretation of Luca della Robbia's choirs in Lucienne Bloch's vision of white, black and yellow children all singing together.

In addition to the mental aspects of the country, various scenes of America spring into life. *Lonesome Farm* by Breinin sets forth



EXHIBITED AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM

DESIGN FOR A POST OFFICE MURAL AT ST. JOHNS, OREGON, BY JOHN BALLATOR, EXECUTED UNDER THE TREASURY ART PROJECTS

eral Art Project. This was created in 1935. Although it has been functioning only one year the 5,300 artists who are employed have produced an enormous number of easel paintings, murals, watercolors, sculpture, and prints. They have established art classes for adults and children and have begun a monumental index of American design.

Quantity, however, has no positive value in itself. The importance of this work lies in its distribution over forty-four states, in the consistently high quality of the exhibited objects, and in the harmonious relation that has been reached between the artist and his environment. Art is being lifted from its limited circle of admirers and at the same time is being divested of its esoteric and precious nature. The vibrancy of human situations has replaced the intellectual coldness of abstractions. These paintings, for the most part, speak directly and easily to the people for whom they have been made. The artists have touched the pulse of their community and have thus made their works reflect the character of their country. A lithograph by Bettelheim shows the hopeless misery of the unemployed. The humour of a bourgeois discussion on weighty matters is grasped by Jack Levine and Guggenheim pokes fun at the East side in its full dress for a wedding. There are satires and also repeated

the quietude of the spreading land and low sky of Illinois. Striking regional differences lend a freshness to these paintings which are a vital expression of the society of which they have become an integral part. There are WPA units in forty-four states. New York is overwhelmingly represented; Illinois, Massachusetts, and California come next. In all, there are at least seventeen states exhibiting. It can be seen that such a comprehensive program would naturally lead to the development of local talent and local schools.

The children's work is remarkable for its unassuming directness and as a commentary on their surroundings. One boy has an amusing study of *Politics Under the "El"*. From this work, which alone is not owned by the Government, the Museum of Modern Art has just acquired nine watercolors for its permanent collection.

Sculpture is decidedly lacking in the exhibition. It contains only four pieces, all of which are good, especially the work of Concetta Scaravaglione. In his brilliant introduction to the catalogue, Holger Cahill, National Director of the Federal Art Project, explains that the necessary connection between sculpture and architecture has not yet been made possible on a large scale because of the absence both of popular demand and of moderate prices.

The Index of American Design has its interest in the past—in

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THE ART NEWS

bureaucratic control and of its comic sterility has been avoided by intel-

is merely suggested and the artist is seduced, the demand for a suitable decor in content. The Federal paintings, to fasten themselves more to the past, mity, than to the present. Stories are eristics of local history.

however, have found inspiration in ample is Camus' vivid satires on *Aspects* high shows the week-end foursome re-ruptulence. But even when the subject scribbled by an architectural necessity l a magnificent treatment of composi-um Poor in his decoration for the ding, Washington, has admirably met the curved walls and the doorway. In nia Post Office, Pittsburgh, Stuyvesant he cornice of the doorway in his design.

of the bridge which spans chosen *Whaling Scenes*



THE WHITNEY MUSEUM
CALIFORNIA, BY MICHAEL VON MEYER

London Post Office and he has swung a ships across the walls.
gs, not as fine in themselves, remain excellent decorative adaptations. With addition behind them these artists have nge which was presented to them by lure, also used to enhance architecture, the hands of such artists as Warneke, Waugh, and Zorach.
pletely disappeared and art has been more than a year small cities all over pients of these government projects.

NEWS

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a Patron of Art

ion

ents of America's democracy. A frequent scene is the comp- between the races and there is a new interpretation of Luca Robbia's choirs in Lucienne Bloch's vision of white, black flow children all singing together.

ddition to the mental aspects of the country, various scenes erica spring into life. *Lonesome Farm* by Breinin sets forth



RIGHT: "GIRL AND FAWN" BY CONGETTA SCARAVIA
LEFT: "TUMBLING BEARS" IN STONE BY HEINZ VON STEIN
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART



The Art Digest

15th October, 1936

Day After Next

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART's exhibition of *New Horizons in American Art*, comprising works created for the government, seems to have done much to turn public attention to the profound significance of this revolutionary movement in the cultural life of the American people. Along what trails and to what destination will American artists, nurtured by a benevolent government, be taken? Does the entrance of government in art point to a renaissance or to a regimented, official art, dominated by a politico-social clique? C. J. Bulliet, critic of the *Chicago Daily News*, has fears of regimentation, but he discerns compensating benefits.

"WPA art is becoming—perhaps it isn't too strong to say has become—the 'official art' of America," says Mr. Bulliet. "Artists who have been clamoring through the decades for some sort of 'government subsidy' are getting it in a torrent—in more abundance than France has ever poured it forth, or Germany or Italy.

"The outcome is inevitable. In America we are adding a strong political or politico-social element that the 'official' arts of Europe didn't have until the rise of the present dictators, Stalin, Mussolini and Hitler. This ingredient will serve to 'regiment' American art even

more thoroughly and relentlessly than French art, for example, was made to goose-step by the Salon of Bouguereau. The artists of France knew if they didn't paint things acceptable to Bouguereau, Meissonier, Cabanel and the clique they couldn't hope to get into the annual salon, the one ambition then of all French artists. Cézanne got his diabetes, doubtless, through the agony and anxiety of being rejected year after year by Bouguereau and his fellow dictators.

"But American 'regimentation' will not be an unrelieved curse in its ultimate effect on American art, to say nothing of the immediate bread-and-butter consideration, with starving artists actually eating."

At this point in the article Mr. Bulliet's internationalism, which has caused his numerous clashes of opinion with the nationalist Thomas Craven, comes to the fore: "American art, despite all optimistic reports to the contrary, is not now and never has been internationally important. Now and then a painter has risen to front rank in America who has made an impression abroad—Gilbert Stuart, Whistler, Sargent, Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins. But our first-raters are fifth-raters or tenth or twentieth in the eyes of the world—and through no snobbishness of the world. The world, indeed, bends backward in its admiration of American achievement wherever there is a chance—in architecture, engineering, in-

vention, Hollywood and a score of other phenomena. England vastly overrated Benjamin West and Sargent, to say nothing of Longfellow."

But, says Mr. Bulliet, there is hope in the WPA program. "Before we learn to walk we must learn to toddle, and the WPA and its successors, of whatever nature, are apt to supply the instruction."

"When the time comes, the 'official' American art will be a grand citadel of entrenched conceit and self-complacency for fiery young artists to revolt against—the future counterparts of Courbet, Manet, Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso. Out of that revolt may come an 'American art' worth while."

"It's actually the first hope America has ever had. And the New Deal must be thanked."

In conclusion Mr. Bulliet turns critical ire against the Museum of Modern Art, an attack inspired by the type of calculation schedule that institution has booked during the past two years: "As for the Museum of Modern Art, its show of *New Horizons in American Art* is just another spurt, a little stronger than those noted heretofore in this column, of its gradually progressive hardening of the arteries. It is a museum with a glorious past—a past in which it exercised its constitutional right of discriminating between what is good and what is mediocre."

THE BOYS' CLUB OF NEW YORK QUARTERLY

Vol. 9

NOVEMBER 1936

No. 1



THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART has acquired for its permanent collection the above painting by Alfredo Casale, 13, a member of the Boys' Club of New York. No cash consideration was involved, but Alfredo, shown above, became a life member of the Museum.

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Child Art Goes

"In our community we have never seen an original work of art"



"Mother and Child." Wood engraving by Hyman Dorfman, 14, New York. Owned by the government



"The Nativity." Pencil drawing by Joe Larkin, 12, Hartford, Conn. Owned by the government



"Miner." Plaster head by Mike Mosco, 15, New York. Collection of the artist



"Going to Town." Water color by Donald Liguore, 10, New York. Collection of the artist

On Tour

Begin In these words town, county, school-board, library and hospital officials all over the nation ask for products of the Federal Art Project. An exhibition of representative work turned out under the Project, shown first in New York and later to tour the country, has just been acclaimed by critical experts. These photographs show specimens from the exhibition. They are all by youngsters, six to sixteen, trained by teachers under the Project.



"Our Street." Water color by Robert Schubert, 11, New York. Collection of the artist



"The Butcher." Oil on paper by Louis Novak, 14, New York. Bought by Museum of Modern Art for its permanent collection.

November 4, 1936

Art for the people and by the people has progressed a long step under the Federal Art Project. European countries have subsidized their artists for a long time. Now America, spurred by the necessity of providing for artists impoverished by the depression, follows suit. Results: preservation of the skill of numerous artists from the deterioration that comes from disuse, renewed hope and vitality for individual artists and the entire American art movement, and, finally, a diffusion of works of art among vast sections of the population living in small, remote communities that otherwise would never have encountered them. Works produced under the project now enliven previously blank spaces in public buildings of hundreds of communities, large and small, not only enriching the lives of all that see them but also providing inspiration for young artists in the making.



"Chinaman." Wood carving by Tony Madonia, 13, New York. Collection of the artist



Conger Goodyear, right, president of the Museum of Modern Art, congratulates Nick Arsena, 15, on his painting "Politics Under the El," shown in the Federal Art Project exhibition at the Museum in New York.

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Silt or Mud?

"New Horizons in American Art," the exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art, to show the taxpayers what artists on the Federal Art Project are doing in exchange for their government manna, has paused on its nation-wide tour for a March booking at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco. Unlike the unanimously favorable criticism accorded this exhibition in New York, its reception on the West Coast has been one of mixed feelings.

"Uncle Sam," according to H. L. Dungan of the Oakland Tribune, "certainly took a beating when he bent his back to carry the artists who are exhibiting 'New Horizons of American Art' at the Legion of Honor." If the exhibition, continued Mr. Dungan, "went beyond the horizon" no one would miss it. Beside each picture is the title, the name of the artist, his place of residence and his age. Many of the artists are old enough to know better, but we are forced to suspect that painting a bad picture at the expense of the taxpayer is easier than raking leaves. We are forced to suspect also that most of the exhibitors are not artists, but they just happened to have some paint handy when the pay car went by.

"The exhibition is a part of the Federal Art Project, which has broken through the levees and is flooding the country with 'art.' Some rich silt will be left for the benefit of mankind, but there will be a lot of mud to clean up before humanity realizes the blessings that have been bestowed on it.

"This is set down as no argument against the Federal Art Project which is doing much both for art and artists. It is just a passing comment on Uncle Sam's catholic taste in art when discrimination would be wiser but of course impossible.

"The exhibition we confess, is a fascinating one, just as the intestinal cramps, now practically epidemic, give an added zest in life. We really enjoyed the show as much as any taxpayer could. We liked especially the copies of Dali. They were numerous—or at least seemed so—and terrible. Amateur artists, when in doubt, go in for surrealism, which is a safe guess."

All the critics noticed the gallery filled with works by children. Mr. Dungan felt that most of these exhibits "are of more interest than the works by their elders, but, after all, when you have seen one exhibition by children you have seen them all. Only parents continue to love them."

Entirely different in tone was the review by Emelia Hodel of the San Francisco News. "For those who adventure," she wrote, "New Horizons in American Art" is a very stimulating show. Predominantly young, (nearly all the artists were born after 1900), it fairly bursts with energy. It is uneven in tempo, not all of the workers are technically sure, but it is certainly the art of today.

"Certain critics have raised the question, 'Did the Government gain any masterpieces?' What does that matter? How many Michelangelo, Picassos or John Carrolls are there to an age? Potential 'masterpieces' are promised definitely in this exhibition. Vast, unexplored 'horizons,' geographically speaking, if not technically, have been opened through the benevolence of the Federal Government. Many of the works are initiative, but their caliber is high. One certain genius has been discovered—Patricio Barba, the Indian wood-carver from New Mexico. And everyone will agree that the children's room is astoundingly good."

THE NEW YORK TIMES,

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1936.

MARIN, MODERNIST,
DISCUSSES HIS ART

Water-Colorist, on Eve of One-Man Show at Museum, Says He Ignores Periods.

TO EXHIBIT 180 PAINTINGS

Objects to Art by the Truckload but Thinks WPA Projects May Uncover Talent.

John Marin, the 66-year-old American painter whose work of the last thirty years is to be exhibited this week by the Museum of Modern Art, objects to being divided into periods.

Seated patiently but unhappily among stacks of his paintings and four interviewers at the museum last week, he turned their questions back to them.

"What do you mean by periods?" he asked. "Writers are always saying you belong to this or that. They always put you somewhere. You belong here, they say, or you belong there. I never thought about periods or schools. Painters don't care a rap about those things."

Has Exhibited Each Year

If Mr. Marin's work does fall into periods, all of them will be represented in the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition which will be opened on Wednesday. It will be composed of more than 180 water-colors, drawings, etchings and oils. The earliest of the etchings dates back to 1905, the earliest water-color to 1908.

Mr. Marin has been holding yearly shows in New York since 1909, each of them directed by Alfred Steiglitz, who will also direct the present one, which will continue through Nov. 22.

The Museum of Modern Art has only given one-man shows to two other American painters, Maurice Sterne and Edward Hopper. But this is not the first time Mr. Marin has been honored by the museum. When it held its first exhibition of contemporary American art in December, 1929, he was one of the nineteen artists chosen to exhibit. His home is in Cliffside, N. J.

"The WPA," he said in response to a question, "will probably do more good than it does harm. It will develop new talent if there is talent around. But what is to be, will be. There will be only a few real artists in the country. There may be a lot of chaff with the wheat discovered. I don't like to think of art by the truckload or by the ton."

Not Much of a Sailor

Mr. Marin, the bulk of whose Summer work has been done on the Maine coast and who is well-known for his pictures of the sea, confessed that he had never done much more sailing than to hoist his coat in a rowboat when he wanted the breeze to help him along.

Asked why he should have turned to oil painting in the last few years, he replied that he had painted in oil all his life. The only new departure was that recently he has begun to exhibit his oils. Some of them will be in the new show, but none is dated before 1931.

"I sometimes feel water-color is the lazy man's medium," he said. "But oils and water-colors—each has its own unique beauty, each is a medium by itself. Water-color is as permanent and as good as oil. The man behind the gun is the important thing."

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE. SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1936

Museum Offers
Marin Exhibit
Without Labels

Steiglitz Hangs Paintings
at Modern Art Gallery so
They'll 'Speak for Selves'

Public May Listen Soon

They Say 'Bigger Mouthfuls'
Than Matisse and Picasso

For twenty-seven years, Alfred Steiglitz has been staging small exhibits of the paintings of his friend, John Marin, leading American water-colorist, at his wandering gallery, American Place. Yesterday he completed the hanging of a major retrospective exhibition of the artist's work at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West Fifty-third Street. The exhibit will be opened to the public on Wednesday, but Mr. Steiglitz, veteran impresario of aesthetics to the American public, washed his hands of it yesterday.

"I've never seen a show that was hung so well," he commented, "and the paintings can now speak for themselves. It won't be John Marin on trial for the next few weeks, but the New York public. I had to fight to put over Matisse and Picasso and Rousseau twenty years ago, but Marin's paintings need no campaign. They talk in bigger mouthfuls, and if we'd only take off our earmuffs, we could hear them speak."

The exhibition, which fills the first and second floors of the museum, contains examples of Marin's work from his early architectural drawings through the etchings of a leaning Woolworth Building, which scandalized critics of a generation ago, to the dancing boats, poised on single blue waves of watercolor, which he has painted in recent years. More than 180 of the paintings are in water-color—"they called it a secondary medium," Mr. Steiglitz recalled—which has been the painter's specialty.

Mr. Marin was on hand himself, to nod a grave approval to the groupings of his pictures made by Mr. Steiglitz, who first sponsored him in 1909 at 291 Fifth Avenue, where an American Place, New York's most famous gallery, was first conceived. For all his modernism, he wore an old-fashioned stock, pinned with a single pearl, and his hair, streaked with gray, was cut round to look like that of a Renaissance page boy.

He also listened to Mr. Steiglitz expound his artistic point of view, pictured on the walls, and agreed with his sponsor that his style was at the same time modern and traditional, and that he belonged in the American tradition of Poe, Melville and Whitman.

"But I can't get excited about such ideas myself," he added. "I know they're important, and I know they are true, but I don't feel them. When we grow potatoes in this country, we use American soil, and when we paint pictures, I guess we use something like it, but I can't explain why."

"Can't Take Care of Universe"
Mr. Steiglitz explained, as he has been explaining for fifty-four years, since he first achieved renown as a photographer in Europe and returned to the United States to teach other people to see with their eyes. His explanation cascaded out in torrents of words, and carpenters and electricians putting the finishing touches on the exhibition stopped their work to listen to him.

"I can't take care of the universe," Mr. Steiglitz said, "and there are a lot of things I can't cover. But I've been trying for half a century now to show that something is happening to the world, and this painter can show it better with one small picture."

He poured scorn on the critics who look down on Marin's paintings because most of them have been executed in watercolor. All true things are equal to each other, Mr. Steiglitz said, and any medium that helps an artist to paint the truth is a good medium.

"We All Have Blinders On"
"I'd rather be a true blade of grass than a papier-mache oak tree," he said. "Most Americans would rather be the oak tree. That is one of the reasons why art has been wrapped in such pompous pretentiousness in this country that when a real painter comes along and paints real things, we all have blinders on and can't see them."

"This will be probably the first time in the United States," he continued, "except at An American Place, that important pictures have been shown in a public exhibition without a lot of tags and labels to confuse people and gratify the owners of each canvas. One of this museum's directors objected when I insisted on no labels, and spoke of the poor students who cannot afford to buy expensive catalogues."

"Aren't they lucky?" I answered him. "That means that they can look at the pictures instead."

The exhibition will be open to the public through Sunday, November 22.

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*The President and Trustees of The Museum
of Modern Art invite you to attend the opening
of a Retrospective Exhibition of Watercolors,
Oil Paintings and Etchings by John Marin
on Tuesday afternoon, October the twentieth,
from three until six o'clock, 11 West Fifty-
Third Street, New York. The Exhibition has
been selected and hung by Mr. Alfred Stieglitz.*

The Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art



Pertaining to Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street (1933)

Marin Exhibition

1 Volume 4

October 1936

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Yankee Artist

John Marin is an American original, a curious little man, wiry and frail. His face is incredibly wrinkled and puckers into all sorts of criss-cross lines. His candid eyes peer out brightly and mischievously under an outlandish curling bang. His hair is scarcely streaked with gray. When he comes to town he dresses with a quaint old-fashioned elegance. A few freckles. A dark blue tie knotted in a remembered way. A pearl. And a tense grace born of habitual alertness: the axis under control. He is ambidextrous and makes abrupt, nervous gestures with both hands. He seems to lean rather than stoop, his shoulders bent by relentless peering ahead. A strange, honest-to-God sort of man.

He is older than he looks, for it is more than sixty years now since his aunts used to bring him to town Saturdays to ride in Gimbel's new elevator. Those were the days when Brooklyn Bridge was building and the Lower Island was fringed with Yankee schooners—nasal talk, and lumber and brownstone unloading. But all his life, Marin has preserved his Saturday Afternoon habit and comes today for a chat with Stieglitz, a visit with the Boys, billiards less often than before. He takes the Weehawken Ferry and then the cross-town car, an object of suspicion to his fellow passengers, as he winks and grins back at them, or sits insulated within his personal vision of skyscrapers white and slender and red crosshatched scaffoldings. This is his happy hunting ground. He is at home here.

He was born just across the river during a storm, and grew up there after his mother's death. A little boy alone in a grown-up house, not playing much with other children. It was a Yankee household.

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proud, spick-and-span, with a few heirlooms handed down—a blue Canton platter and a dark polished table with slim, perfect legs. He absorbed Bryant and the Leatherstocking tales, and roamed the Palisades with his shotgun, then towards the Saddle River where the woods were thickest. There were woods everywhere in those days and he learned his home ground foot by foot and stored it away inside himself. On a rainy day he stayed indoors to copy an Audubon, or a donkey's head out of *Harper's Young People*. His aunts pinned his drawings on the wall or put them tenderly away, pinning all their hopes on him. Someday he would be famous and an artist.

But there were long years between. Art meant Paris in those days, and Paris money. Young John Marin went to work in an architect's office, where he might have stayed, he says, had anyone taken an interest in him. No one did. Then finally he managed to escape, we must guess at what a cost of dimes saved up and treats denied himself. Philadelphia and then Paris. He cherishes souvenirs of that first crossing, his first time really out at sea, little sketches, the ink faded, the paper turning yellow.

Paris was wonderful in those days! And wonderful to him. Beaujolais and omelettes and billiards in the back room of the Dome (it had only two). And best of all there were copains, fellows like himself to talk to. Artists and would-be artists.

But Marin was no Bohemian; he was a Yankee and sharp and saw through a lot of things. He liked the life. He celebrated. But he was older than most of the Boys and held a lot to himself. He worked too, worked darned hard, and soon had a mar-

ket for his things. Good sound etchings of cathedrals and canals and bridges and old leaning houses.

A book on etchers says, "When John Marin turned to etching he produced delicate views of Paris, Amsterdam, and Venice." Correct. He found a dealer too and numbered his prints. Art was on its feet.

Then he had to spoil everything. One memorable afternoon he tried to etch a crumbling tower. But the sky was full of rooks flying, dark wings forming crooked patterns, and Marin tried to catch the gesture of their flight. And soon, while etching another façade he found his hand (or was it the eye?) straying whimsically, biggledy-piggledy, with a will of its own. Marin dashed home and was delighted with his proof, but his dealer pulled a sour face and reminded him that art was a serious affair.

Thus, after that, he took to water-color, practically in self-defense, because he had no market for these and no one to care what sort of a mess he made.

Charles was one of the Boys then and through him Marin knew Steichen and through him met Stieglitz, the man with the camera, another original with whiskers growing in his ears. Stieglitz bought a water-color and they all went out for a drink. Stieglitz was from Hoboken, so they talked not only about Art but about Jersey and America. They complemented each other—the lean, dour Yankee with his apple cider humor and his tricks, and the American Jew, half poet, half surgeon. Stieglitz was sophisticated and smart but he had a solid common side that Marin could tie to. Loved sport of all sorts. Horse racing. Played a professional game of billiards, while Marin loved to bang the balls around. They became fast friends, affec-

tion rooting in respect. On the surface they will seem always to disagree.

Things were happening at home and Marin returned to America. What a homecoming! His eyes bulged out with excitement at the harbor—tugboats and plumes of steam—the banging elevated—the ride uptown—and soon he had a brush in either hand, working feverishly. Those were the days of the Armory show, the days of Right and Wrong in art, of taking sides. A whole generation of excited fellows gathered around 291. There were days of solid talk, swearing green into red and back again. Marin did his abstractions with the rest but he could not afford to spend much time in hullabaloo. The movement mainly gave him courage to do as he pleased. That is about the extent of Marin as a "Modern" artist. He stuck to Nature.

A Nature which many will not recognize, to be sure. Not naturalism, not a mere taxidermy. Marin will treat her with a high hand, but she will be his mistress all the same. He made the trees and skyscrapers lean merrily in Madison Square. He took Brooklyn Bridge apart and put it together again on his paper, and when he had some nuts and bolts left over, he scattered them around. And now Marin began to do those amazing factual reconstructions of nature. His color sang in clear dazzling washes or sputtered in tender staccato. Only his later water-colors can make these look less brilliant.

Marin settled down and married the Girl he knew before he ever went abroad. It was now or never with Marin; he must be a man and lead a real man's life. The way was not easy, through the war, the lean years. A few things sold. Stieglitz tended to that. Marin painted and hung on by the teeth. They never had a business arrangement and never got things mixed up.

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VOL. 4, No. 1

THE BULLETIN

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Finally he got to the Berkshires. How good it was to sit in a field! The tree leans thus but the hill turns so. See how their directions weigh against one another? Make a mark like a tree growing—like thirty trees! Marin looked straight into the sun and painted something. Called it the sun. Squinted and wrinkles began to checker his face. He had almost given up oil, finding himself at home with water-color, finding himself in a hurry too. He borrowed money to buy a thousand sheets of old paper, almost enough to last his lifetime out.

And then Maine, which surely was built for him. The rocky coast broken with straggling islands. The clean light. The

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scrubby pines. Marin's method developed without break or hesitation and now his peculiar zig-zag technique is full grown. Sometimes it is almost lost in gentle gray washes—again it sticks out like a granite rock. Marin frames pictures within pictures. His line has change of pace, that rare sense of plastic tension that is like the catch and release, check and flow of music. He uses shock as deliberate method. Jerks pictures together, the irregularities stimulating and exciting the eye. And Marin has increased his range. Perhaps a stretch of sandy beach, sand and gray sea and a sky reflecting them quietly, nothing more—or a boat pinched between the planes of sea and sky—or one of those hectic, three-ringed, panoramic rearrangements of Nature. Boats, rocks, islands, lighthouses, pine trees.

This intricate, bewildering, short-hand method is Marin's tic. His instinctive personal gesture. He learns to say TREE in three strokes, a soft dab with one hand, two lightning strokes with the other. First he sees, sharply and fully, sometimes comprehending slowly, then states with amazing speed. It is impossible to reconstruct a Marin, to reconstruct strokes in their order.

He has a passion for American places. American people too. He bought Marin Island, an island all his own, though the mosquitoes would never let him live on it. His own house was the next step. A real, two-storeyed house by the Hudson, with trees in the yard and a furnace to stoke. Carpets on the floor and neighbors with kids. The key under the doormat. Marin was forty-five.

Cliffside is perfect. Only half an hour from the Hackensack and the Saddle River. Near enough to watch the City. Marin sees the towers building higher



Tree and Sea, Maine (1919)

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The Sun of Suffer (1925)

every year, and daylight fading upward in the deep canyons. Near enough to town. Saturday afternoons he goes over to look around, stand on Brooklyn Bridge, talk to Stieglitz, have a cigarette with the Boys. And going home there is Times Square lit up like a merry-go-round.

Each Summer is a flurry of painting. On the Mount Desert Boat he does thirty sketches in a day. He knows his country by heart, when the shadow will strike this rock, how the currents swirl among the rocky islets. He lies in wait for a schooner, knowing just where she must tack, paints ready, pencils sharpened. There she comes! It is like shooting ducks from a blind. The feathers fly! Then the boat is gone and Marin lights a cigarette, squints at his picture. "Cracker-jack!" Sometimes he gets two in a day. In between times he fishes. Paints its portrait when he lands a good one. Or swaps yarns with the natives. They open up to him slowly, sizing him up. This is the way to live!

In the Winter he thumbs over his work and gets an exhibition ready. Frames his pictures and maybe prints an etching or two in the basement or paints an oil. Occasionally he goes over to a concert or an exhibition. Relatives come to dinner. Marin lays new plans. Compares and works with his head, back and forth across his experience, tying up the loose ends. He reminisces about fishing and New Mexico, his boyhood, Maine. The fashion in painting has gone by him; he is out of the current. And when the American scene is discovered they try to tar him, of all people, with the French brush. Why? God knows! Marin does not bother. Stokes his furnace and goes to the movies once in a while and eats Thanksgiving dinner in Brooklyn with his wife's relatives. Or takes a Western friend to see the bridge across

the Hudson and the pale bands of pink and yellow and green that lie on the Jersey horizon. Yankee love and pride in his eyes. Yankee Brag.

Fishing and Painting and America, these are the things Marin loves to talk about. He breaks his conversation with gestures and epithets just as he breaks his line. Caustic and calm, bitter and gentle. Marin speaks modestly of his own work, not deprecatingly, not lightly. He knows better than that. Nowadays more and more he seems to feel his painting in relation to the past, to what has been done before.

New Mexico was his Wild West holiday. In a true American way. He found friends there and learned to cast a fly in the clear, fast water. Did some of his most dramatic things looking at that great semi-circle of mountains at Taos. Watched the storms move across the desert. But he went to New Mexico a mature man. His heart was away in Maine, Manhattan, the Hackensack. He had unfinished business in those places. New Mexico was a parenthesis, something to remember.

Marin plays the piano, mostly on Winter evenings, not gracefully, not nimbly, but much as he draws, feeling the intervals, how things fit together. Usually after supper, when the furnace is banked for the night, a little while. Bach and Mozart.

Marin since sixty is more easily winded. He no longer runs up hill. And now he has a house in Maine, too, where he can sit on his front porch and look at the sea. He probably feels it more becoming to a man of his years than rowing around in a dory. And still he toys with dreams of another house. He has some land, in Florida. Stieglitz shudders.

A few years ago he returned for his boy's school and found the woods burning again in color. He turned to oil painting again in

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an Autumn mood. Repetition in a different key. The subjects are the same—Manhattan and the East River, Bear Mountain, the Hackensack and Saddle River, the Island surrounded by water. Some of these things are the result of months of careful assembling. Sober and mature. Stated in oil because they are conceived in the medium of oil paint, in the substance itself. The material and the statement cannot be separated in Marin. An etching is an etching. A water-color is a water-color. And there is oil painting. Marin repeats his theme in many ways, from new angles.

He paints upstairs in his own house. Until lately it was not even a regular studio. The place is a litter of cigarette butts, tacks, frames, paintings, brushes. On the door are tacked admonitions for himself. On the wall is a New Mexican Santo with a grayhackle fly snagged into it. There are water-colors everywhere, under the bed, in bundles, in boxes. Marin likes to have them around where he can look at them, fish them out once in a while. He knows perfectly well which are best, has his favorites too, pictures that remind him of wonderful, busy days or difficult corners turned. Now and then there is a wonderful remark written on the back of one. His letters as well as his speech are full of tasty Yankee expressions such as "Cracker-jack", "High Cockalorum", "Hum-Dinger". He is that sort of a man, naturally and without pose. He is no rustic rube, but an intelligent man. That he has cultivated and realized his own character is perfectly true. But he has not done it for effect. John Marin is no playboy.

He is the sort of a fellow who can look at you and say perfectly seriously, "A Nor'-wester makes the sea look silly."

LOREN MOZLEY

Catalog Corrections

The Museum regrets that through an unfortunate oversight the name of Mrs. Charles J. Liebman was omitted from the list of lenders to the Marin exhibition.

In the footnote to Page 28 of the Catalog it was erroneously stated that the Woolworth water-colors in the collection of Mrs. Eugene Meyer were first exhibited in the Armory show. They were first exhibited at "291", Alfred Stieglitz's Photo-Secession gallery.

There are eighteen untitled and undated small water-colors and early drawings in the present exhibition not listed in the Catalog. Their numbers are 182-199.

Exhibition Schedule

October 21—November 22

**John Marin:
Retrospective Exhibition**

Members' preview Tuesday, Oct. 20
Open to public Wednesday, Oct. 21

December 2—January 17

**Fantastic Art, Dada, and
Surrealism**

Members' preview Tuesday, Dec. 1
Open to public Wednesday, Dec. 2

January 27—February 21

**Modern English Architecture
Edward McKnight Kauffer: Posters**

Members' preview Tuesday, Jan. 26
Open to public Wednesday, Jan. 27

March 3—April 18

**International Exhibition of
Photography**

Members' preview Tuesday, Mar. 2
Open to public Wednesday, Mar. 3

April 28—May 30

**Primitive Murals From the
Frobenius Collection**

Members' preview Tuesday, Apr. 27
Open to public Wednesday, Apr. 28

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THE NEW YORK SUN, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1936.

Marin's Notable Water Colors

Display at Museum of Modern Art Affords Plenty of Subjects for Discussion.

By HENRY MCBRIDE.

The long-awaited John Marin exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West Fifty-third street, is now open to the public. It occupies the first and second floors of the building, with a special investiture—very spacious, and with the white walls that the Marin color schemes seem to demand, and so the public has an excellent opportunity to study water colors that have been in seclusion for some years, but which grew in fame in spite of this seclusion.

The collection was chosen and arranged by Alfred Stieglitz, who for so many years has been sponsoring this artist, and it has been recruited from the collections of the Gallery of Fine Arts at Columbus, Ohio; Fogg Art Museum, Metropolitan Museum, Phillips Memorial Gallery at Washington, D. C., and these individual connoisseurs—A. E. Gallatin, Philip Goodwin, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel A. Lewisohn, Georgia O'Keeffe, Fairfield Porter, Paul Rosenfeld, Mr. Bryner-Schwab, Robert H. Tannahill and Mr. Stieglitz himself.

Of all those who have ever been professionally concerned or interested in the doings of John Marin, I dare say I am his oldest acquaintance, and yet among all this gradually expanding group of those who pretend to know him, I also dare say I am the one who knows least of his personal idiosyncrasies.

This is not so much carelessness on my part as a willful preference—born in me the moment I began work as a critic of art—to form my estimate of a painting from the painting itself rather than from the manners of the artist at a dinner table. In fact I'm not certain I ever saw John Marin eat, though I once did live for a short time in the same house with him, and long years ago, before the war, and before any of Mr. Marin's numerous biographers had ever heard of him.

Dates Back to Venice Days.

It was in Venice where Mr. Marin, with his stepmother, father and brother, descended upon the hotel I was domiciled in, and where I am certain I saw others of the family eat. But Mr. Marin was more furtive. You didn't see him do anything if he could help it. When cornered, he was affable itself, but if he saw you coming in time, or any of his family coming, he much preferred to bolt into the nearest doorway, be it of a church or cafe, so long as it offered escape.

Nevertheless, I had several chats with him, the memory of which I have completely forgotten. Probably we didn't discuss art, for at that time I had no more thought of

colors were not sufficiently challenging to upset official opinion; but the younger connoisseurs do not look for profundities from their own set but for assurance. The one among them who doesn't ask how it should be done but goes ahead and does it, gets their admiration at once. Marin, for all of his "apartness" seemed to respond to this approbation just like a regular human being and with each show he put on, his assurance gained and very soon he painted with an authority that at times was positively militant. When the young people told Marin he was "great," apparently he felt he had to be great.

There was also the obligation to justify "291." In the little gallery generated by Mr. Stieglitz so much pulling down of the academy had been done that suddenly it dawned upon all the talkers and listeners that some building up had to be done, too. Marin, of course, was occasionally among the listeners and though no fingers were pointed directly at him, his subconscious got on the job and produced results. The light-hearted singing troubadour who had come from Paris, changed into a serious dramatist almost overnight. The little dancing boats in the harbor from which the artist had previously heard tinkling melodies, now bounced about on positively black waves and against gray skies; and the recurring tune sounded mighty like a dirge. The towering buildings of lower New York also occupied his attention and he did them in a perfect frenzy of appreciation of their significance and importance. He became an excited and exciting painter.

Still Seemed Aloof.

The war by this time had come upon us and had a lot to do with this nervousness of Marin. In personal contacts he seemed as cool and aloof as Voltaire is said to have been during the seven years' war, but when the year's supply of water colors was collected by Mr. Stieglitz for his annual Marin show, it was noticed that the passion in the drawings amounted to violence. Fortunately they were practically abstract, and as the numbers of persons at that time in America capable of apprehending an artist's emotion when expressed in abstract terms was limited, no unnecessary increase in the current war fury could be traced to them. The drawings themselves, however, were certainly furious but I think it was merely Marin's response to the furiousness that was in the air.

In any case, there is an explosiveness about the "downtown series" of drawings and about a group of sunset pictures of the same period that sets them apart from the entire range of Marin's work and gives them an especial interest. Dynamics are not necessarily a value in themselves, but a usual energy naturally takes precedence over milder statements from the same source. There is such a thing, of course, as tearing

emotion to tatters, of applying too much power to too frail a theme, as when Caruso did in his last two years. Years with the "furtive smile" that had previously been so exquisite; but Marin was fortunate in his rages to be raging against such things as Maine sunsets and New York skyscrapers; and one must admit, that can stand any amount of pressure. After the war, Marin calmed down much in advance of the rest of the populace, and his mountain scenes in New Mexico and his accounts of ships in distress off the coasts of New England had a premonition of statement that suggested a serene mind. There was still a certain amount of excitement in

them, for Marin is an artist who catches fire from a motif, but it is a contained excitement like that in Gluck's Orfeo and vehemence was not allowed to interfere with elegance.

As elegance seems to be more in request than passion, it happens that Marin's later days have witnessed an increase in his public, and so it is not so strange to have an extended representation of his work in a public museum as it would have seemed once. Elegance, however, cannot have been a conscious pursuit of his, and it may occasion him some surprise to be told that he has it, for elegance, like style itself, is, or ought to be, unaware. . . . It's just the bloom on the peach—but it's what sells the peach.



"The Old Salt," from the water color by John Marin, at the Museum of Modern Art.

NEW YORK POST, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1936

ART COMMENT

By JEROME KLEIN

MARIN TRIUMPHS IN RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBIT OF WORK

Almost 200 of His Pictures Installed by Stieglitz at Modern Art

HIS SUCCESS CREDITED TO STAUNCH CHAMPION

John Marin rides into port under full sail and rests triumphantly at anchor at the Museum of Modern Art, which plays host to a retrospective exhibition numbering nearly 200 of his water colors, etchings, drawings and oil paintings, selected and installed by Alfred Stieglitz.

Mr. Marin is known as a shy, retiring man. He has been too preoccupied all his life with the struggle for the mastery of his art ever to concern himself with the multifarious means by which an artist elevates himself to a rank that must be ultimately upheld by his work. Even at his own apotheosis he has been but a modest spectator.

Though his art meets the test, proves he deserves this recognition as much as any living American artist, it is only fair to state he would hardly have got it without the battle waged year in and year out by his staunch champion. Since their meeting in 1909 Alfred Stieglitz has ceaselessly trumpeted the virtues of John Marin. He has been a John the Baptist in a wilderness of indifference, proclaiming in Marin the true messiah of American art.

His Acolytes Gather

Around him have gradually gathered a band of acolytes, like true zealots carrying afar the torch of revelation, warring relentlessly on any heathenish aspersions on their genius of purest alloy.

Having no experience of revelations, I am unable to convey any of the inner mysteries. I can simply state that Marin is a man reported to have been born in Rutherford, N. J., in 1870, to have studied with Anshutz in Philadelphia and Du-mond in New York, and to have gone abroad in 1903 for a sojourn lasting six years.

The early etchings are evidence that he first followed the delicate imprint of Whistler in his Venetian views, that by 1909 his impressionism was already more full-bodied and personal ("Old Market, Rouen" and "The Quay, Seine, Paris"), and that by the time of his return to America he had felt the fresh force of Post-Impressionism. He gave this of his mature, individual graphic formulation in the etchings of Brooklyn Bridge dated 1913.

First Water Colors

Of the same style and period, but lacking in forceful color contrasts, are Marin's first water colors of the wild, swirling dance of Manhattan's skyscrapers, the visual counterpart of a Varese urban cacophony.

Within a few years the artist had charged his color up to its full power, and there then emerged what we know as the characteristic Marin. No more than the early work does the mature art of Marin appear as the manifestation of facilities. It only commands more respect that we see the marks of Marin's stubborn effort to strike true through the intricate pattern of visual rhetoric which he used. For the average public his handwriting has not been the most legible. But he could always answer that by his glancing, sharply rebounding stroke led only to fresh aspects of nature, jangling New York, the immense silence of the Southwestern range, or the thunder of his beloved Maine coast.

Returns to Canvas

For Marin water color is a complete art form, and everything he has to say is expressed in it. Nevertheless, he has returned to the canvas, possibly stirred by the paragonage of his main medium. Into his oils has gone all his stubborn force, but with one or two exceptions the vision does not ring out so clear and true.

The importance of this show lies in the fact that Marin at last meets the public on the terms which he should. The high priests have done their work and are no longer needed. Marin needs no niche. He must reach his full height with his feet on the ground. And I think he measures up very decently, judged by mortal standards.

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GLIMPSE OF MAINE BY JOHN MARIN



"Movement, Boat and Sea, Deer Isle" is the full title given by the artist to this water color in his retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM,

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1936.

MARIN'S

ONE
MAN
SHOWBY
EMILY
GENAUER

John Marin stands alone in the world—past and present—of art. There may be, perhaps, a half-dozen others who, like him, stem from no apparent school, ascribe to no doctrine, and have no followers. But we cannot at the moment recall even one of them.

But hold, you say, what about his debt to Whistler? Marin was, to be sure, influenced in his earliest period by the guided expatriate. But Whistler's importance to the young Marin, while it was based primarily on his artistic stature, derives just as much from the conflux which he represented of impressionism, the art of the Japanese printmakers, and Rembrandt; from his position as the apostle of "art for art's sake" during an era of sentimental, illustrative pre-Raphaelism, and from the glamour which surrounded his cocksure person.

Exhibit Shows Influence.

In the big retrospective exhibition of John Marin's art which opened last week at the Museum of Modern Art one may observe how quickly this influence was sloughed. Note the earliest etchings, done in 1905, '06 and '07, looking for all the world like so many Whistlers. Note the similarity of the line—fluid, delicate, and with a "drawn" quality. These were immediately followed by the descriptive plates, the facades of cathedrals, the romantic bridges. And then suddenly there came to Marin the realization that there was something fake about all this, that the artist must, above all, be true to his medium. The etched line has a hard, resistant quality, and to treat a copper plate as though one were drawing in pencil on paper was not to put it to its most effective use. Whereupon he began to work in disjointed, positive lines which had definite structural relationship to each other, and which were enhanced and strengthened by the etching process.

This brings us to one of the most significant characteristics of Marin's art, his respect for medium. Consider, for example, the early water-colors in the show. In the beginning, as shown in "London Omnibus" and "Four O'Clock on the Seine," executed in 1908 and 1909 respectively, Marin made Debussy-like overtures to the medium, securing glistening, poetic, atmospheric effects.

Mastery Attained.

Then it occurred to him that since color is the only means with which the water-colorist may work, having no recourse to chiaroscuro, for example, to secure volume, the color must be used organically rather than decoratively; that white space must be given as positive and

dramatic a role in the composition as color itself. At the same time he learned how, under sunlight, forms and objects become facets of color, and how effective (see "The Tyrol at Kuistein") are small forms juxtaposed against large ones. The water-color, "Stoughton, Maine," in the exhibit, is an example of how far this principle of structure carried him.

Marin attained such mastery over water-color as was vouchsafed no other painter in the history of American art. It was not surprising, then, that when he turned to oil pigments in 1921, after an interval of about ten years, he should have carried over with him the approach and technique which he had so completely at his service. So we find him working in oil with the large, loose rhythms of the water-colors. He recognized better than anyone the failings of these pictures, however, and again he left oil, not to take up his brushes before 1928, by which time he had begun to discover the essential quality of pigment, even as he had of water-color, and before that, etching. He learned, in working with oil, to depend less on spontaneous effects and more on painstaking research into plastic potentialities. The large oil, "Fifth Avenue Looking West at 42nd Street," indicates this maturing awareness.

"Difficult" at First.

So there you have an outline, however perfunctory, of Marin's development and of his methods. And yet no description of his work. But how may one describe this weaver of great orchestral harmonies of color, this artist whose talent, seemingly entirely intuitive, is so surely the result of constant experimentation and growth? A romantic he most certainly is, but so were the Hudson River painters and the men of Barbizon school, not to mention Delacroix or Bocklin. But Marin's art evokes neither twilight reveries nor the excitement of a dramatic historic incident. Like these, it is romantic in the sense that it does offer release from the harsh realities of everyday life. But it turns, instead, to nature, to rocks and sea, hills and trees, which are perhaps the only realities. It concentrates on New York as well, with Marin marvelling at the wild beauty and excitement of its skyscrapers, and then, romantically, seeing in them not a growing, pushing, explosive world, but abstract effects of color and line, mass and volume.

Marin's pictures may be a little "difficult" for those who have not seen them before. But even the tyro must find in them the exquisitely orchestrated color-forms giving the illusion of movement without confusion, composition which always establishes its own boundaries, so no frame is really needed for the picture at all, and a flow of superbly decorative pattern. And if one forgets about trees and sky in the real sense, accepting, instead, Marin's own short-hand symbols for them (triangle for a tree, speck of color for a flower), one will be extracting from them their real juice—and a rich, exquisite nectar it is.

PAINTING BY MARIN



"New York, 1925," a water color by John Marin included in his retrospective one-man show at the Museum of Modern Art.

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NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1936

JOHN MARIN'S WORK SEEN AT FULL LENGTH

By ROYAL CORTISSOZ

THERE is a cult for the art of John Marin and its ardor finds expression in a retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. Ample space is given—two floors, in fact—so that his drawings, etchings, water colors and oils, well arranged by his devoted impresario, Alfred Stieglitz, may be exhaustively studied. They illustrate a career that has been developed apart from contemporary currents. From the biographical sketch in the catalogue it would appear that as a young man he had some architectural experience, but began to sketch in water color in the late '80s (he was born in 1870), and some years afterward studied under Thomas P. Anshutz, Hugh Breckinridge and Frank Vincent Dumond. The drawings which here recall his earliest period suggest a conservative tendency, and, it may be added, no particularly striking talent. The etchings which date from 1905 to 1908, hint at the influence of Whistler in their lightly touched but exact treatment of architectural subjects. Even at this time, however, Mr. Marin was feeling his way toward a purely personal mode of expression. There is a "London Omnibus" of 1908, and there is a "Four o'Clock on the Seine," of the following year, which peculiarly mark a change. Thenceforth he more and more plows his own furrow.

A Colorist in Love With Nature

HOW is the maker of that furrow to be characterized and to what have his labors led? He is to be characterized as a colorist with a passion for nature who has never quite mastered his own hypothesis. Mr. Marin is ever on the verge of registering a conclusive impression and always allowing his curious, brusque, even explosive technique to interfere with its full realization. Standing before one of his more puzzling water colors I once asked an initiate to explain to me the grounds for his faith. "Well," said he, screwing up his eyes and flourishing his thumb at the work, "there is a spottiness." There is too much of that in Mr. Marin's productions. Take, for example, one of the best things in the present exhibition, "The Little Boat." There is no denying the buoyancy of the boat or the sense of enveloping space which goes with it; but the foreground is whelmed in "spottiness" and the picture, as a picture, misses fire. "As a picture," I would stress the words, for it is precisely in pictorial character, in design, that these water colors are weakest. They are "notes," and rather recondite notes at that. Their semi-validity, if I may risk the phrase, is unquestionable. When Mr. Marin tackles a mountainous formation he gives you a vague consciousness of its bulk and weight, just as he somehow adumbrates the truth in that early "Omnibus" of his. When he paints the sea he can suggest its depth and he has a quite special aptitude for depicting the movement of a boat, its sails filled with the wind. Always, too, there is the effective play of his gift as a colorist. Unfortunately, the net result is frequently obscure, inchoate, only a dim echo of nature arising from the conflict between the artist's observation and his awkward, mannered technique.

Creation Versus Representation

MR. MARIN'S work poses a problem, and a clue to the solution of it may be found in a passage from one of his letters to Mr. Stieglitz: "When the Greeks began their copyings of the human figure," he says, "their work as art matter began its downgrade. When individual objects became of more import than Concepted Creation and rightly put—the great seeing—the piercing seeing of the object begets an intelligent understanding so that one is Equipped for the making of Creative forms which have an Equivalent balance with those of nature—therefore becoming natural forms in themselves created by that *natural the Artist*—as real as anything—for it has its own reality—which is finality—has it that your real artist is your *Realist*." It is a pretty argument, and phrases in it, like the "piercing seeing of the object," are evocative of what all the great masters, in every age, have sought. On the other hand, when we search out the operation of Mr. Marin's thought in his art, it resolves itself into the impulse, so familiar in our modern time, toward "self-expression" in place of "representation." I have no quarrel with it. I only feel that self-expression should be reinforced, as it historically has been, by design and craftsmanship. All through Mr. Marin's exhibition I have at this point or that felt the pull of his individualistic communings with nature. I look at his "Maine Islands" and respond to the mood in which he has drawn his panorama of land and water. Yet I find myself all the time wistfully craving a more lucid, more artistic statement of both facts and mood, a more authoritative technical approach. It is a fine thing to see nature for yourself, in your own way. It is even finer, when capable of this "piercing seeing of the object," to convey it to the beholder through consummate craftsmanship and style.

The Little Boat—1914



From the watercolor by John Marin, at the Museum of Modern Art

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1936.

IN THE REALM OF ART: SECOND THOUGHTS AND FIRST VIEWS

A MARIN RETROSPECTIVE

Richly Diverse Exhibition at the Museum
Of Modern Art Directed by Stieglitz

By EDWARD ALDEN JEWELL

PRIOR to the large one-man show that opened last week at the Museum of Modern Art, many of us were convinced that John Marin is a great creative artist. This admirably assembled retrospective directed by Alfred Stieglitz is certain to prove a means of bringing to the same decision a much larger public.

The rich diversity of a spirit that nevertheless seems always so single-minded and direct in thought and purpose is in an effortless and inevitable manner stressed throughout. The exhibition may be said to accomplish two major results: It passes in review the phases that go to make up this abundantly fertile career, and it collects a large number of Marin's finest achievements, thus refreshing the contact of those who have long felt they knew the artist's work well, and reinforcing or further clarifying an estimate substantially formed already.

The retrospective side, it is true, could have been dramatized with more effectiveness by arranging the work in chronological sequence. That method would have made it possible for us to build, as we went, a step-by-step cumulative picture of the artist's growth. But without such explicit aid one can, after all, assert and reconstruct for one's self. The exhibition was put together so as to constitute a handsome, harmonious whole; and that, no doubt, is as it should be. The Marin show is its own best spokesman. It tells us all.

* * *

WHEN we consider individual works, the sum of our response is likely to appear a sum of differences. Those water-colors that for me do not quite click may by you or by your neighbor be allocated to the top of the pile. Nor is such preference in the least predictable. We are dealing here with an artist of sheer genius; and when you have to deal with an artist of sheer genius it is never wise to be too dogmatic.

Marin once said: "I am forced to pit my horse sense against yours—otherwise there would be no race, no fun." And yet in the end, he added, the divergencies may be found with unexpected neatness to dovetail, since "we are just a bunch of humans, anyhow." The universality of genius can play strange tricks.

E. M. Benson remarks that to him even Marin's "failures" seem "scarcely less stimulating than his successes." That is because deep within everything Marin does burns the fire of a profound creative urge. Sometimes we may feel that the outcome does not represent a fully objectified realization of what the artist intended to convey. But the authentic, the distinguishing fervor is there, none the less.

And when a masterpiece results (a water-color such as the beautiful "Maine Islands," reproduced, or the "Marin Isle" of 1926, or that superb "Morse Mountain," numbered 117 in the catalogue) then indeed are we persuaded to agree with Marsden Hartley (another of the catalogue commentators) that no one else, in this field, has "so completely realized the exact condition of a high moment."

* * *

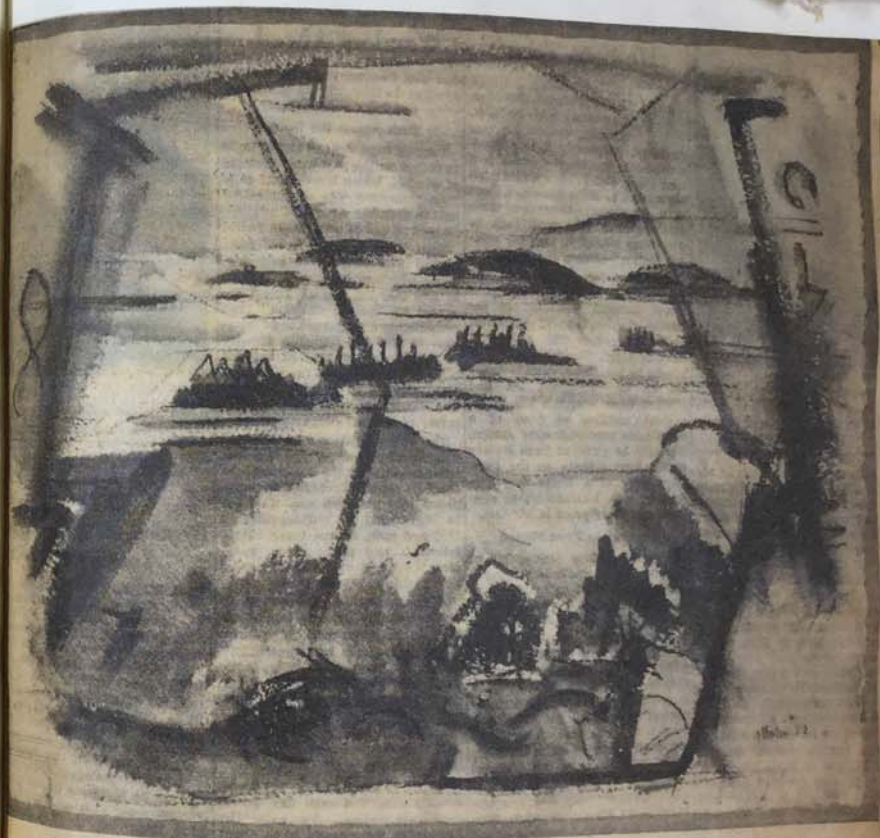
THIS "high moment" of which Mr. Hartley speaks cannot, perhaps, be defined with mathematical preciseness. It embodies the loftiest experience of artists, poets and musicians—of all who create and of those likewise who appreciatively respond to what has been created or, breathless before the splendor of some vision of their own, do not communicate.

How, on Marin's part, is the "high moment" expressed so that it may be shared? What is the unique idiom summoned into use by this man who has looked out so long and so ardently upon mountains, the sea and things "pertaining thereto"? That question leads us upon surer ground.

The secret of John Marin's art lies in its often uncanny power to interpret through the lightning-swift shorthand of suggestion. He is at grips primarily not so much with an object per se as with a concept. In varying degree the language is abstract, a language of essences. This is not, to be sure, the mountain one can climb, or from the heart of which miners could dig their minerals. It is mountain. The sea is a flashing synthesis of blue, a rhythmic wash of gray. Marin once remarked: "I find my brush moving in the rhythm of wave or sail or rock." It is that that counts. It is the deep interior reality. It is great art.

The late Julius Meier-Graefe, when he visited America in 1927, said of Marin's magic: "The stroke was formerly a tree, with branches and leaves. Nothing of this remains but the colored volume."

Yes, nothing left, when the "high moment" stands revealed, stripped of all that might impede its clear, enveloping sovereignty, but the experience itself—serene or demoniacal, savage or of thistledown tenderness, "contained," complete; never a fragment of what by inference spreads off indefinitely beyond the jealous frame; instead, the moment seized and understood and loved; a living, regnant whole.



"Maine Islands," water-color by John Marin, at the Museum of Modern Art. Lent by the Phillips Memorial Gallery.

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NEWS-WEEK

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EXHIBITED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

JOHN MARIN: "MIDTOWN NEW YORK", IN THE CURRENT RETROSPECTIVE

This watercolor, painted in 1908, is on exhibition in the current show at the Museum of Modern Art. The composition displays the artist's interest in balancing and controlling the warring forces within his frame.

Marin abbreviate
calligraphic line and
Zen pantheism and

Marin's water color of a Maine buoy

Alfred Stieglitz's study of John Marin

Two short, stood happily the newly re museum of M John Marin, Alfred Stieglitz modern-art common the piercing eyes ance. Together art-world ten are critics w ering photo g them the volve The Museum Marin for the seven years of tell the wolo the hanging lory with rep ing, and, an the 251 peo Bobbitt, othert be in harbor nautical til finger through hair, draw h his teeth, and sailed a boat Besides the and rugged bi chiefly around and Marin Isl in simple woo painted silver the freshness treatment of in's. The etch to point up h colorist.



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THE ART NEWS

OCTOBER 24, 1936

Marin: Master of a Minor Medium

By Martha Davidson

AT THE age of sixty-four, John Marin wins honor and acclaim in a retrospective exhibition of his works at the Museum of Modern Art. Over one hundred and eighty watercolors, drawings, etchings, and oils establish the genius of this artist. He has more than weathered the storm of a retrospective.

What is it that constitutes Marin's genius? On the one hand it is his awareness of forces at play in nature and in objects. On the other, it is his ability to capture this play of forces in his watercolors. Watercolor is the ideal medium for Marin's direct, spontaneous personality. He has made a virtue of the finality of a material which is immediately absorbed by the paper and which permits no re-working. And he has used the translucency of his medium to define atmosphere and to pierce its profundity.

A seething turbulence characterizes these paintings; they are alive with motion and intensity of light and color. A clear description is found in Marin's irresistible letters which are parallel to his

one year in the Stevens Institute, four years in architects' offices and, after some practice, studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. After two years he came to New York and continued his studies at the Art Students League. In 1905 he went to Paris, where he stayed intermittently until 1911. The earliest works in the exhibition are drawings and Paris etchings of 1905.

These etchings have the soft line of his drawings. The influence of Whistler is apparent, yet in the spotlighting of the center in *The Seine* and in the darkening of the periphery, there is a definite presence of Marin's developed style. Such atmospheric etchings are supplanted by tight and conventional views of buildings (1908-1910). In these only does the artist's training as an architect obtrude. In the etchings and watercolors which were inspired by Marin's return in 1911 to a rapidly growing New York, this training is visible only in a feeling for cubic form and structure.

During Marin's sojourn in Paris his oil, *The Mills of Meaux*, was



EXHIBITED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

(LEFT) "PERTAINING TO FIFTH AVENUE AND 42ND STREET," OIL, 1933; (RIGHT) "TAOS AND VICINITY," WATERCOLOR, 1929

paintings in their blustering individualism and sensitive awareness. It is this quality which invests his paintings with power and at the same time tempers and organizes his visions. The artist's primary concept is defined as follows: "In life all things come under the magnetic influence of other things; the bigger assert themselves strongly, the smaller not so much, but still they assert themselves, and though hidden they strive to be seen and in so doing change their direction. While these powers are at work pushing, pulling, sideways, downwards, upwards, I can hear the sound of their strife and there is great music being played."

There can be no better introduction to Marin's art. Once this, which is his creed, is understood, those who were insensitive to his departures from nature will comprehend his paintings. These will be appreciated as interpretations of visions which are conscious of all the interlocking and counteracting forces that make our sight far richer than a static photograph.

Marin's art, as just described, naturally did not spring into its full force in his first works. A native of New Jersey, Marin spent

purchased for the Luxembourg (1906). His works were shown in the Salon d'Automne of 1908 and of 1910 and in the Salon des Independents of 1909. His paintings came to the attention of Alfred Stieglitz, who, since 1909, has championed him as a member of the famous "291" group. His work was included in the Armory Show in New York in 1913.

The earliest watercolor in the exhibition, *London Omnibus* (1908), shows Marin's dependence on impressionism and at the same time a complete mastery of his technique. The colors of his Paris paintings and of his 1912 building series are softer, more delicate, and less dense than those that followed. Already in them is found a pictorial expression of his statement, "And so I try to express graphically what a great city is doing. Within the frames there must be a balance, a controlling of these warring, pushing, pulling forces. This is what I am trying to realize."

Like a sail the Woolworth building bends over the city. There is constant movement in these paintings. Nothing is at a standstill, for our eyes are incessantly focusing and readjusting their sight.

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AN EARLY WATERCOLOR: "MOVEMENT, SEINE, PARIS," 1909

Space and time as well as movement negate a static vision. But Marin realizes more than the effects of these factors; he knows that the inherent character of the subject must remain visible, that it must keep its identity or else lose its value.

So articulate an artist should be permitted to speak for himself, especially since the artistic quality of his writings is perhaps as great as his paintings: "You can transpose, you can play with and on your material, but when you are finished that's got to have the roots of that thing in it and no other thing. That's the trouble with all lesser men. And an inner vision of your own has got to be transposed onto your medium, a picture of that vision. Otherwise there's no use, no excuse, for, basically—you're no different from any other living thing, other than an intensity, other than direction of vision."

Marin abbreviates nature in the same manner as the Zen Buddhists. What is more, he uses the same medium—watercolor, and a calligraphic line and "splash." The relation is also strong between Zen pantheism and Marin's exuberant passion for all of nature's forms. He finds the same fascination in the pine tree, perhaps because of its rugged tree form and its gentle puffs of green. This correspondence is not irrelevant. It reveals an underlying philosophy which otherwise may be difficult to discover in a contemporary.

Once Marin's art becomes crystallized, any changes occur within a narrow range and are unimportant except, perhaps, to show how his style bends to suit his subject and his reactions to it. Most striking is the conformity of style to the broad plains of New Mexico. Sensing the difference between the wide panorama of the West, with its distant mountains and wide sky, and the intimate and hill-bound glimpses of New England, the artist expanded his



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"BARE POLES, TWO-MASTER, MAINE," WATERCOLOR, 1923

vision and set it back from the spectator, giving it the sense of distance and of light that is known only in the West.

The strange use of framing lines or of black space around the painting springs from Marin's attitude towards sight. There must be "focusing points" and "spots of arrest." The artist reorganizes nature and objects so that they can exist, alive, in the painting. By centralizing his force he controls the vigorous movement of the "fighting" elements that make up his picture. In *Dance of the San Domingo Indians*, Marin records the vibration in the atmosphere caused by moving, passing figures. In *Sun Spots* he paints the sky with an after-image and registers its effect on the land.

A wide variation of themes precludes any expectation of monotony. Some examples from an almost inexhaustible range are: the blazing *Sunset, Casco Bay*; the symphonic greys of *Storm, Taos Mountain*; the suggestive tree tops of *Spruce with Moss*; the crystal purity of *Deep Sea Trawlers*; the grandeur of *Red River Country*; and the explosive vibration of the etching, *Woolworth Building* (1913). In this etching and in those that followed, Marin realized the sharp clarity of the bitten line. The strength of his drawing, less visible among the washes and colors of the aquarelles, can easily be seen.

The artist's use of oil, however, is less successful in that he



EXHIBITED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"BROOKLYN BRIDGE," 1913, ETCHING BY JOHN MARIN

treats the medium as he does his watercolors. One only has to look at the horse in *Circus Forms* to recognize the transference of a wet wash. However, in *Pertaining to Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street* (1933) and in the recent *From Seeing Cape Split* (1935) the surface and texture of oil are used with far greater skill.

In these later oils and in the later watercolors there is a movement towards the human being which coincides with Marin's turn to indoor painting. The pure poetry of *Young Man of the Sea* (1934) shows how seductive Marin's more remote images can be.

The exhibition proves that John Marin's dominant place among the masters of watercolor remains undisputed. His etchings are less important, although the *Woolworth Building* of 1913 is undoubtedly a masterpiece. The oils make evident that watercolor has been the natural vehicle for Marin's personality. The direct relation that watercolor creates between the artist and his work is considerably hampered by the slower oil technique. Marin's present tendency towards the oil medium may be a sign of a changing, possibly older, personality. If so, we can expect to find new elements, such as are foreshadowed in *From Seeing Cape Split*, in his future paintings.

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EXHIBITED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
"BARE POLES, TWO-MASTER, MAINE," WATERCOLOR, 1924

NEWS-WEEK

October 24, 1936

MARIN: Boats and Towers Reel Through Two Floors of Museum

Two short, fragile-looking old men stood happily side by side last week in the newly redecorated galleries of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. John Marin, 65-year-old artist, and Alfred Stieglitz, 72, photographer and modern-art impresario, had more in common than slight, bony builds, keen, piercing eyes, and disheveled appearance. Together through 30 years of art-world tempests they had lived to see critics who once called them blithering idiots give way to those who gave them the velvet-gloved accord of genius.

The Museum of Modern Art chose Marin for the fifth one-man show in the seven years of its existence. To Stieglitz fell the welcome task of supervising the hanging of two floors of the gallery with representative Marin etchings, oils, and water colors.

The 181 pictures abound in sail boats—some bobbing on a blue-green sea, others bending to the wind or tied up in harbor, but all with an authoritative nautical tilt. Marin runs his thin fingers through his gray-streaked black hair, draws his loose lower lip under his teeth, and grins elfinly: "I've never sailed a boat in my life."

Besides the boats, there are harbors and rugged bits of the Maine coast—chiefly around Small Point, Deer Isle, and Marin Island—all specially framed in simple wooden cases, many of them painted silver. These help accentuate the freshness of coloring and masterful treatment of motion so peculiarly Marin's. The etchings and oils serve only to point up his supremacy as a water colorist.

Born two days before Christmas, 1870, in Rutherford, N. J., Marin worked in architects' offices, studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and the New York Art Students' League. In 1905 he went abroad. Four years later in Paris, a photographer friend, Eduard Steichen, introduced the painter—whose work had been bought by the Luxembourg and shown in several salons—to Alfred Stieglitz. When Marin returned to America some years later, the two became fast friends. In 1909, at his Photo-Secession gallery, Stieglitz gave the first of 27 successive annual one-man Marin shows.

These have always made conservatives jitter and wrangle. In 1913 the artist produced a series of personal impressions of the new Woolworth Building—then the tallest in the world—as he thought the building might feel toward its smaller neighbors. The architect, Cass Gilbert objected: "Is the man drunk when he does this?" Gilbert found it hard to believe that Marin made as many as 1,000 sketches before going to work on a composition.

From the start, in Alfred Stieglitz's opinion, no artist could surpass Marin. At the celebrated 291 Fifth Avenue gallery, Stieglitz introduced the American art world to many now well-accepted French painters—Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Paul Cezanne, and Henri Rousseau—and discovered much American talent, including Max Weber, and Georgia O'Keeffe whom he later married. But he always reserved his greenest laurels for John Marin. Pleased at the recognition the Museum of Modern Art has accorded his protégé, who now lives quietly across the Hudson at Cliffside, N. J., Stieglitz says: "This is not the last, but the only big Marin show that will ever be done right."



Alfred Stieglitz's study of John Marin



Marin's water color of a Maine buoy

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The Art Digest

1st November, 1936

John Marin, the Isolated, Honored At the Museum of Modern Art

THE MAGIC of John Marin's brush fills two floors of the Museum of Modern Art, where a retrospective exhibition of this distinguished artist's work is being held until Nov. 22. Arranged by Alfred Stieglitz, Marin's sponsor, lifelong friend and loyal "persuasive advocate," it consists mostly of his water colors, augmented by 21 oils and a number of etchings and drawings.

Although the works are not arranged in chronological sequence, the display gives a complete view of the artist's development, with significant water colors from all periods of his career and virtually all the subjects representing his long career of creating. Included are examples from London, France and the Tyrol done during 1903 to 1910; the Maine water colors from 1914 to 1934; water colors from Delaware, New Jersey and New York, from 1916 to 1925; a White Mountain series and his New Mexico water colors, painted in Taos in 1929.

Always the center of controversy, Marin has never identified himself with any school of painting, domestic or foreign. He stands as an isolated figure in contemporary art, holding an unique place among American painters. In a critical essay in the handsome Marin catalogue issued by the Museum of Modern Art, E. M. Benson writes: "He has few followers and no disciples. For 27 years he has exhibited his work at the various galleries over which Alfred Stieglitz has faithfully presided. Today at the age of 66 he is as uncompromising a free-lance as he was at 36. Perhaps no American artist has courted Nature more tirelessly and with greater understanding of all her seasonal moods. Boats and building are as much his province as skies, seas, islands and mountains. He has stamped his creative signature on all of them—a signature which many of us have come to regard as unique in American art."

Marin speaks for himself in one of his letters to Stieglitz: "Nature arrangements are finer, more, infinitely finer than your studio

arrangements. Seems to me that the true artist must perforce go from time to time to the elemental big forms—Sky, Sea, Mountain, Plain—and those things pertaining thereto, to sort of re-train himself up, to recharge the battery. For these big forms have everything. But to express these, you have to love these, to be a part of these in sympathy. One doesn't get very far without this love, this love to enfold in the relatively little things that grow on the mountain's back. Which if you don't recognize, you don't recognize the mountains."

No one else in the water color field, comments Marsden Hartley in the catalogue, has so "completely realized the exact condition of a high moment." This zenith of emotion quivers from Marin's brush. His pictures are that moment. Nothing remains but colored volume, the experience of that emotion itself. "Serene or demagogical, savage or of thistle-down tenderness," it is, according to Edward Alden Jewell in the *New York Times*, "the moment seized and understood and loved. . . . It embodies the loftiest experience of artists, poets and musicians."

"We are dealing here with an artist of sheer genius," pointed out Mr. Jewell, "and when you have to deal with an artist of sheer genius it is never wise to be too dogmatic. . . . Deep within everything, Marin does burn the fire of a profound creative urge. Sometimes we may feel that the outcome does not represent a fully objectified realization of what the artist intended to convey. But the authentic, the distinguishing fervor is there, none the less."

More and more Marin plows his own furrow, said Royal Cortissoz in the *New York Herald Tribune*. "How is the maker of the furrow to be characterized and to what have his labors led? He is to be characterized as a colorist with a passion for nature who has never quite mastered his own hypothesis. Mr. Marin is ever on the verge of registering a conclusive impression and always allowing his curious, brusque, even explosive technique to interfere with its full realization. . . . When we search

out the operation of Mr. Marin's thought in his art, it resolves itself into the impulse, so familiar in our modern time, toward 'self-expression' in place of 'representation.'"

"I have no quarrel with it. I only feel that self-expression should be reinforced, as it historically has been, by design and craftsmanship. All through Mr. Marin's exhibition I have at this point or that felt the pull of his individualistic communings with nature. I look at his 'Maine Islands' and respond to the mood in which he has drawn his panorama of land and water. Yet I find myself all the time wistfully craving a more lucid, more artistic statement of both facts and mood, a more authoritative approach."

The ancestors of John Marin, who was born in Rutherford, N. J., settled in New York and New Jersey before the Revolution. His blood makes him a "Yankee cocktail." "My ancestors," he once wrote to an inquiring magazine editor, "were of the best English Ale, Dutch Bitters, Irish Gin, French Vermouth and Plain Scotch." From 1899 to 1901 Marin studied at the Pennsylvania Academy under Thomas P. Anshutz and Hugh Breckenridge; and after that for two or three years under Frank Vincent Dumond at the Art Students League.

Loren Mozley, one of his young friends, gives a vivid picture of Marin in the Museum's bulletin: "A curious little man, wiry and frail. His face is incredibly wrinkled and puckers into all sorts of criss-cross lines. His candid eyes peer out brightly and mischievously under an outlandish curling bang. His hair is scarcely streaked with gray. When he comes to town he dresses with a quaint old-fashioned elegance."

"He seems to lean rather than stoop, his shoulders bent by years of relentless peering ahead. A strange, honest-to-God sort of a man. . . . a brush in either hand, working feverishly. He made the trees and skyscrapers lean merrily in Madison Square. He took Brooklyn Bridge apart and put it back together again on his paper, and when he had some nuts and bolts left over, he scattered them around."

THE ART GALLERIES

John Marin



A FEW years ago I came upon John Marin in the Metropolitan Museum. He was looking intently at some fifteenth-century Flemish primitive. When he turned to me, he said, "Sometimes, when I am walking down Fifth Avenue, I say to myself, 'Marin, you are a mighty fine fellow, but do you know your job as well as those old boys did, and will your stuff last as long?'"

The answer to one part of this question is now spread over the walls of the Museum of Modern Art: a superb exhibition, beautifully ordered and arranged. Here, for the first time, one can see Marin's work as a whole, from the sweet, youthful beginnings of his pencil sketches to the masterly, graphic condensations of his mature work. Here it is, in all its complicated inwardness, its subtle feeling, its audacious decisions. The creator of these paintings is now sixty-six years old, and no one who has been painting during the last

generation in America has a greater claim on our attention. To say that he is the best of our water-colorists today is at best grudging praise. The truth is that he is, without reference to the medium, one of the few American painters whom one dares place confidently in the first rank, with Constable, Bonington, Cézanne.

Marin belongs to that lonely aristocratic band which includes Thoreau and Ryder and Frost—men who are not afraid to withdraw, to see what they see and to feel what they feel, though the world look somewhere else and think differently. Artists with large, copious social talents often show their best traits as readily at twenty as at sixty: the Raphaels in one age and the Sargents in another are more apt to spread themselves thin with maturity than to develop beyond their first intuitions. It is different with the lonelier type of artist. There is often a long period of conventional effort, of fumbling, of trying to "be like the rest," before the artist discovers his real sphere of interest and his appropriate method of attack. John Marin was thirty-five before he finally started on the road that led to the creation of the completely individualized paintings of

his maturity—those paintings which are more like the work of the Chinese masters of the Sung dynasty than that of his European contemporaries.

Movement: JOHN MARIN



THE NEW YORKER

OCTOBER 31, 1936

The path of Marin's growth led through Whistler, but fortunately it went beyond the point to which Whistler, or even his Japanese exemplars, had carried it. And at the beginning, as shown in the present collection, there was a tiny germ that was Marin, awaiting the right moment for fertilization and development. In the very first etching, of a few barges on the Seine, there is the hint of those breathless abridgments, short-circuiting and sharpening the ordinary apprehension of the eye, which one finds in his latest etchings. Marin, indeed, was to learn at an early stage the general truth expressed by the Chinese philosopher of landscape painting, Kuo Hsi: "If you wish to paint a big mountain, you must not paint every part of it, or it will not seem high." Similarly, in the earliest water color shown here, that of a London omnibus, done in 1908, one observes the most typical of Marin signatures: the use of rectangular shapes—here timid and scarcely visible—to serve as a sort of dynamic internal frame for the central motif of the picture.

Up to 1910, if one may judge by Marin's etchings, he was at home in cities—the great culture cities of Paris, Amsterdam, Venice. At this point a break came in his work. It is

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marked by the effulgent rainbow lyricism of the scenes in the Austrian Tirol, radiant and gay, with a rich blue which was to return in more than one later picture; observe the water in No. 153. Then the return to America and the discovery of another kind of city, more uproarious in energy, but also more disturbing to the soul. From then on Marin became rooted in the land of his birth, and the roots sank deep. New York became for him not simply another city to paint, a shattering place, filled with movement, visual disturbances, broken rhythms, exaltations, irritations; New York became a sort of radioactive substance, transforming itself, bombarding and decomposing the spirit.

No other contemporary has better caught the beat and tempo of the great city: its crazy exaltation and its restless surge, the disordered march of slow beats and fast beats, the dead spots that seem an eternity spent on a stalled subway train, and the live spots, so packed with unmanageable vitality that the

juice overloads the circuit and causes a blowout. The two Movements Related to Downtown New York (Nos. 72 and 73), the "Lower Mannhattans" (Nos. 37 and 39), the paintings of the black sun over the dishevelled geometrical shapes and the red sun smoldering between the cables of the Brooklyn Bridge—all these are splendid. Like Alfred Stieglitz, Marin has faced the city, has utilized its violent contrasts and its intense stimulations.

Some of this quick, urban sensitivity never departs from Marin's fingers. While weak spirits seek a refuge in nature because they wish to escape the tortured hours of contact with their fellow-men, the stronger ones do not refuse to carry the lesson of those moments into their solitude. Before new patterns can form, old ones must be broken; and it was New York that perhaps made the Maine and New Mexico landscapes "ready" for Marin. Marin is an inquisitive and persistent questioner of nature. He delights in the moods of the sky, the varying qualities of the surface of the sea; and the play of light over distant water, framed by a cove or a group of islands, quickened into movement by a sailing ship, is often triumphantly achieved. But the relation between Marin and nature is one of give-and-take; there is more when he has finished with it than originally met the eye. And what appears in Marin's painting is there in a double sense, *by design*. Hence his remoteness from the sentimental realists; hence his ability to give body to those essences that escape the realists.

In its freedom from sentimentality, Marin's attitude toward nature is as healthy as that of a trapper, a hunter, or a fisherman. He angles for his picture as a fisherman angles for his trout, conscious of the light, the ripple of water, the dart of the dark body under the stone, conscious of the beauties that arrest smoother artists, but always waiting for the moment when his interest in all these accessories will coincide with the lift of the rod or the pull of the trigger which will give him his game. Nautical nature, geological nature, meteorological nature, all have a share in these paintings, but instead of provoking further thoughts about the sea or about the formations of the land, they bring the spectator to that point of rest where further thoughts are impertinent. Marin has no need to justify his pleasure by relating it to something else. These paintings are as American as an old coverlet or bed quilt of the forties, and I think an American Indian artist might

understand them better than a painter of Americana.

I have singled out for special praise a few of Marin's urban water colors, but it is almost impossible to choose this or that landscape without emphasizing one type of achievement at the expense of another, equally precious. The grave moment of blank serenity of "Popham Beach" (No. 107), the dark brooding of the coming storm seen through a windshield (No. 102), the sharp accuracy of the forms in Deer Isle Harbor (No. 93) are all extraordinarily fine; but no less characteristic, no less important, are "The Little Boat," the complicated composition of No. 84, the lacelike tree at Cape Split, the serenity of "Tree Forms" (Nos. 22 and No. 28), or the marvellous purity of No. 30. The endless invention of these pictures, the range of resources, the achievement of textural depth without the use of body color and without muddiness, the deftness of the sudden strokes and quick washes—all these things are beyond praise. No less masterly is his color—a narrow palette whose combinations seem inexhaustible. It needs a rich spirit to evoke such craftsmanship; the very existence of these technical resources points to an inner demand.

But perhaps the greatest surprise of the show is that Marin's oils, far from being dwarfed by his water colors, easily establish their own right to existence; some of them, like "Pertaining to Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street," have won the right to be considered among his major works.

It is not easy to sum up the works of such a spirit as Marin or to estimate his final significance; much remains to be discovered, even after one has looked long and patiently at his work. Marin grew up in our brittle American world, and his art has both expressed and transcended the environment in which he was placed. His brush, marching to a quick tempo, has recorded a civilization in which the swift and the unexpected become the traditional, in which stability consists in a gift for improvisation, in which the frame has disappeared into the picture and the picture spread out into the frame, and in which, at all events, the old boundaries and guiding lines have disappeared. Seeing that world in Marin, one greets it with a sudden sense of exhilaration and astonishment; it was not what we thought, but far different. And by means of art such perceptions, even when most strange, most lonely, most isolated, lead back into society.—LEWIS MUMFORD



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