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COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM

WHAT'S ART TO ME: PROGRAM #10

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1939
6:30 - 6:45 P.M. EST

CUE: (COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM)
(.....30 seconds.....)

ANNCR: The Columbia Broadcasting System presents --

VOICE: "What's Art to Me?"

ANNCR: ---the tenth of a series of programs presented each Saturday at this time, in co-operation with the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Tonight's program is on the subject of "The Artist in America", and here is Mr. Holger Cahill, our critic and conductor of these programs, and Director of the Government's W. P. S. Art Program. Mr. Cahill:

CAHILL: Perhaps we should call this broadcast not "The Artist in America", but "The Position of the Artist in America", because that's what we're going to talk about.

JOHN: Just a moment before you begin, Mr. Cahill. I'd like to ask you a question or two.

CAHILL: What is it, John.

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JOHN: Do we have a real art in America?

CAHILL: Why, certainly. Why do you ask?

JOHN: Well, I always thought we had been too busy in our past to build an American art. And then too, our history has been so short there hasn't been the time to develop an art, in the sense of European art. Isn't that so?

CAHILL: Not at all, John. There's always been an American art, almost since the very beginning of the settlement. In the Colonial and early American period, roughly

JOHN: from 1670 to 1850 there was a coherent tradition of portrait painting somewhat in the style of the English portrait school, but clearly marked by the hard-headed objectivity of American character. High points in this group are the anonymous painter of the picture called "Madame Freake" and "Baby Mary" 1674; Robert Feke who began painting in the first quarter of the 18th century; Ralph Earl and John Singleton Copley, who were painting at the time of the Revolution. We also have John Trumbull and Charles Willson Peale, and of course Gilbert Stuart, who painted so many portraits of George Washington, and whose death in 1828 marks the end of our strong early portrait school.

JOHN: That's right. I've forgotten about those early portraits. I've often seen them in the museums. But that's about all there is to American art. Isn't that so?

CAHILL: Not at all. In the period between the war of 1812 and the Civil War the American artist turned from portraiture to historical allegories; to close observation and dramatic statement of the American scene particularly of the so-called Hudson River school of painters. But most interesting of all in this period, to me at least, is the homespun-vernacular of the painter of scenes from everyday life, George Caleb Bingham, for instance, who comes along in the 1840's. Then, aside from the professional painters we have, in the 19th century, the racy and idiomatic folk

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and popular art of America which expresses the varied experience of the common people. And then at the time of the Civil War there are James Abbott McNeil Whistler, one of the most cosmopolitan of American talents; Winslow Homer, the painter of the epic of America out of doors, and a little later, Thomas Eakins, our greatest portrait and genre painter of the latter half of the 19th century, and Albert Pinkham Ryder, one of our most extraordinary geniuses. And there are other names -- George Inness, Homer Martin, Alexander Wyant, John LaFarge, Frank Duveneck and John Singer Sargent.

JOHN: That's quite an impressive list.

CAHILL: And there were others. The American Impressionist painters like Theodore Robinson, John Twachtman, Childe Hassam, Maurice Prendergast and Marry Cassatt, and toward the close of the 19th century the group called "The Eight", which included Robert Henri, Arthur B. Davies, George Luks, John Sloan, William J. Glackens; Later George Bellows. And then the modernist group which came along about 1910.

JOHN: That's all very well, Mr. Cahill, for all those fellows already in the museums, but what have we got today? What kind of American paintings and painters flourish now -- if any?

CAHILL: "If any?" I'm surprised at you, John. But I'll answer your question just the same, and I can do it best by introducing our program guest, one of the leading painters in America today. He is Mr. George Biddle, the well-known mural painter, President of the Mural Painters' Guild, and a man who has done a great deal in developing the present public art program in our country. Mr. Biddle, will you tell our skeptical young man here something about American painting today?

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BIDDLE: I'll be glad to do what I can, Mr. Cahill.

JOHN: Mr. Biddle, I've heard a lot of people talking about an American renaissance in art. What do they mean by that?

BIDDLE: We have heard a good deal lately about an American art renaissance. There's no question that we've had good artists. Yet, in my opinion, it may be years before we have a significant birth of American art, let alone a re-birth. What America has today is a whirl of interest in American art, -- a greater curiosity and excitement about art than ever before. Indeed, there is a greater popular interest in art in America today than has existed anywhere in Europe for hundreds of years. And that is a matter of fact, not of opinion.

CAHILL: What makes you say it is a matter of fact, not of opinion, Mr. Biddle?

BIDDLE: Mostly because of the current popularity of art reproductions, art magazines, and art exhibitions throughout the country. Popular magazines, with colored reproductions of contemporary American and classical art, reach an audience of approximately ten million people a week.

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BIDDIE: (CONT'D) The yearly attendance at art exhibitions is nearly twenty millions. The W. P. A. art galleries have had an attendance of over six million in the past three years. ~~And the attendance of art exhibits at the New York Museum of Modern Art has been over five million in the past three years.~~ In other words, the best contemporary ~~art~~ art has, within the last few years, been democratized, popularized, made familiar - in the same sense that American skyscrapers, sports and literature are familiar.

CAHILL: It may be popular and may be made familiar - but, to coin a phrase, is it art?

BIDDIE: Perhaps this art is not yet great art, but it is a working-up of the raw material of our country toward a national tradition. This, I think, is the double importance of the movement; the familiar, humble, democratic, thoroughly American aspect of our art, and the enormous popular interest in it.

JOHN:

~~I had no idea that art was becoming so popular.~~
I had no idea that art was becoming so ~~popular~~ popular. But if it's true, then it must be pretty good for you artists. You must be making plenty.

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~~_____~~

BIDDIE: By no means. Indeed the reverse seems to be true. The curious fact is that the most popular our art becomes, the more intelligently it becomes adjusted to the social life of the community, the less artists are able to support themselves by the sale of their paintings or sculpture.

JOHN: Why should that be, Mr. Biddle?

BIDDIE: Unfortunately there are very few reliable statistics to back me up on this, but my guess is that museum and gallery sales of American art are from one-fifth to one-tenth of what they were fifty years ago. Yet today, fifty or a hundred times as many people visit exhibitions and show a lively interest in art. My guess again would be that one out of ten of the successful artists over forty-five supports himself by the sale of his art, and perhaps one out of fifty of all professional artists thus supports himself. I doubt very much if the average yearly earning of the older successful artists is as much as that of the average carpenter or bricklayer.

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JOHN: That sounds awful, Mr. Biddle. I'm sure most people have no idea at all that such a thing is true. What do you think can be done about it?

~~It is the only thing that the people themselves~~
~~can do.~~

BIDDIE: There are various solutions for supporting the artist, that is, of course, for supporting art. The government has made a very intelligent beginning.

It has subsidized, directly and indirectly, over five thousand artists through the two art projects, ^{(the WPA Art Program}
^{+ the Section of Fine Arts both under the Federal Work Agency.}
~~are now being studied by government~~

^{plans}experts to make possible, perhaps, a social security for artists.

JOHN: Aren't there other ways for an artist to support himself, Mr. Biddle?

BIDDIE: Yes ~~the government~~ ^{most artists} have to resort to ~~many~~ ^{many} different ways to make a living.

An artist often supports himself by teaching, if he's lucky, and sometimes by writing, or lecturing, ^{or walking}
~~the painter obtained the same copyright royalty for~~
~~the reproduction of his works as writers obtain for~~
~~the reproduction of their manuscripts, he~~ ^{might} ~~be~~

able to support himself comparatively well.

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BIDDLE: (CONT'D) Again, if museums and galleries offered the artist a modest rental fee for the use of his painting, which some twenty million people may see on exhibition, ~~the artist would be able to support himself~~ ~~for the support of his work.~~ --- The important point to keep in mind is this: Many of the best things in our life, things that we enjoy the most, do not support themselves. Our roads, for instance, our parks, free education, our army and navy that protects us, the legislators that frame our laws. All these are supported by the government. And if our art is wanted and needed by the people, ways can be arranged to support American art, too.

GAHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Biddle. I find it hard to be as philosophical about it as you are, but I must say that I agree with you. Perhaps the most important phenomenon in the world of art today, and also the most important since the Italian Renaissance, is the new economic and social readjustment between the artist and his audience, which is taking place all over the world today, in totalitarian countries as well as democracies.

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Biddle

(CONT'D) The Renaissance perhaps for the first
time in history established ^{a direct} relation between
the artist and his audience, ~~of the~~
~~relationship of the~~
~~relationship~~ -- the relationship ^{between the artist as}
~~the producer and the buyer.~~ ^{public as}
But in our time the ^{public as buyer has failed}
the producing artist and
~~the~~ a new relation of the
artist to the ^{community is being}
~~relationship~~ established, ~~relationship~~
~~relationship~~

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JOHN:

~~And what relation is this, Mr. Cahill, -- how is it different from the old relationship of the producer and the buyer?~~

Biddle

~~7 solar~~

The artist is being recognized more and more as serving a social function ~~in the state~~ just as a doctor serves a social function, or a clergyman, or a teacher, ~~or a government official.~~

~~The artist is being supported less and less by the sales of his pictures, and more and more by the state.~~

JOHN:

When did this sort of thing begin? ~~Isn't it something fairly new?~~

CAHILL:

The ~~the~~ great change took place in America ^{after} ~~around~~ 1929 ~~which was certainly a year of change, you'll remember.~~ It had taken place in Mexico ^{in the} ~~early~~ ^{early} 1920's. I'm speaking of the government support of artists -- and it has taken place since in ^{many} ~~many~~ European ~~totalitarian~~ states ^{in Europe} ~~the~~ the artist is ~~state-supported and~~ regimented for the state. ~~A bad thing for art, perhaps, and~~ luckily in our democratic country the artist is not regimented, but his social value ~~to the state~~ is being recognized more and more

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JOHN: In what ways, Mr. Biddle?

BIDDLE: My the great attendance at art shows, the sale of art books, and by the tremendous public interest in the government art programs. Mr. Cahill will be able to tell us about that.

To answer that I'd like to quote the words of the late
CAHILL: The American public has supported the W.P.A. Art Programs in an extraordinary degree. Public schools, libraries, and other institutions have sponsored the production of 1,400 murals, 50,000 oil paintings and watercolors, 90,000 prints, and 3,700 sculptures for public buildings. They have also sponsored a community art center program which has already given six million people in every section of the country some understanding of the significance of art in everyday life.

JOHN: I didn't realize there was such a demand for art as all this.

CAHILL: It's too bad that this public demand for art did not begin long before this. If we had created as insistent a demand for the work of the creative artist in the past thirty years as we have for automobiles, American art ~~past~~ would have been immeasurably enriched. American art patrons have spent many millions for the work of foreign artists and for the rare antiquities of other lands, but if their money had been spent for the works of American creative talent, it is entirely probable that American talent would have met the demand.

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CARILL: ~~of native talent, I'm sure these worthy products~~
(CONTIN'D) ~~would have appeared.~~

JOHN: ~~But how can you be sure they would?~~ ^{Edw} How ~~was~~ a demand for art produce art?

CARILL: ^{To answer that I'd like to quote the words of the late John Collier Sans, founder of the Ulster Museum. He says:}
~~It is easy to show by example. "The Italian renaissance came when it was invited to come - when it was paid to come. The rich and powerful leaders in those Italian cities four and five hundred years ago found that they must mark themselves as a distinct and superior class, and one of the best ways of doing this was to patronize art. They made collections of paintings for their fine palaces, and tried to outdo each other in the magnificence and glory of their art treasures. And when these works of art were not found in sufficient numbers in neighboring countries, or were not suited to the special needs of this or that noble person or place, the rich straightway proceeded to command Italian artists and artisans to produce with the result that the renaissance in fine arts came into being. It came into being, as I say, because it was invited, but the American renaissance is not even courtesously invited to~~

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CAHILL: appear. In Italy the artists were commanded to
(Contin'd) produce, and at times the commands were even
guided by discriminating taste, but in America
our artists are continually ignored. Genius,
talent, and skill are not called forth by the
demand for them.

JOHN: How can we become art patrons, Mr. Cahill --
that is, without first being millionaires?

CAHILL: There is a way to promote American art, to
become helpful patrons of it in the best sense
of the word. The formula is very simple.
First, we must buy it; next, we must study it;
next, we must criticise it; and finally, we
must praise it where we can.

JOHN: Do you have any suggestions for buying -- what
sort of thing, that is, to look for?

CAHILL: In buying, with the patronage of art in view, we
must of course discriminate. To be able to
discriminate, to the end that we may encourage
the serious and accomplished artist -- and
by neglect, discourage the pretender -- we must
seriously study our subject. Unless one is
rarely gifted and has an intuitive knowledge of

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JOHN: Well, I guess we've improved a lot since Mr. Dana's time. We're certainly inviting the American renaissance. You think, if we keep up the interest that Mr. Biddle has told us about, we can help the American artist -- make art flourish in this country?

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~~CAHILL: (CONTINUED) what is fine and sound and enduring in art, one must select a narrow field, study it, master as far as your opportunity will permit, become an expert in it, or, what is even better, an honest amateur.~~

~~JOHN: And in this way the artist can be helped -- can flourish?~~

CAHILL: / In answering that I'd like to quote Mr. Dana again: Art has always flourished where it was asked to flourish, and never elsewhere. If we wish for a renaissance of art in America, we must be students and patrons of whatever seems honest in art here at home. If American art does not flourish ~~it will not be because there are too~~
~~many artists and patrons in the country.~~
It will be because we refuse to become discriminating patrons of the every-day good things that our fellow citizens, the artists, can produce, if a little intelligent interest and co-operation is shown in them.

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ANNOUNCER: You have been listening to "What's Art to Me", the tenth in a series of programs presented by the Columbia Broadcasting System each Saturday at this time, in co-operation with the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Today's program was on the subject: "The Artist in America," and it was conducted as usual by Mr. Holger Cahill, Director of the Government's W. P. A. Art Program. The guest was Mr. George Biddle, eminent American painter and President of the Mural Painters' Guild. -- Next Saturday at this same time, "What's Art to Me?" will present a broadcast called "Painting American," and the guest of the program will be the distinguished American painter, Mr. ~~George~~ ^{John (pres) / eto Soc. - independent} Sloan ^{artists & authors} -- If you ^{of the list of art} are interested in these programs, you might also enjoy listening to the series called, "So You Think You Know Music," presented by Columbia each Sunday afternoon from two-thirty o'clock to three, p. m., Eastern Standard Time ... This is the Columbia Broadcasting System....

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W. Meyer

COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM

WHAT'S ART TO ME - PROGRAM NO. 11

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6th, 1940
6:30 to 6:45 PM EST

CUE: (COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM)
(.....30 seconds.....)

ANNCR: The Columbia Broadcasting System presents---

VOICE: "What's Art to Me?"

ANNCR: ---the eleventh of a series of programs presented each Saturday at this time, in cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Tonight's program is on the subject: "Painting American," and as usual, the broadcast will be conducted by Mr. Helger Cahill, eminent writer on art, and Director of the Government's W.P.A. Art Program.

Mr. Cahill:

CAHILL: "Painting American" -- that's a phrase that may look better in print than it sounds on the air, but the phrase expresses exactly what we mean, so we can't call the broadcast anything else.

GEORGE: It's a good phrase, Mr. Cahill -- "Painting American" -- but just what does it mean?

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CAHILL: American painting has been a genuine reflection of American life and American character since the very beginning, since its earliest days, but in a different sense today than it used to be. In Colonial and early American times, most American painting was devoted to portraiture.

GEORGE: Portraits like the Gilbert Stuart "George Washington", you mean?

CAHILL: Yes, but there are many others, just as good, often much better, and many of them by anonymous artists. There's the famous "Mrs. Freake and Baby Mary," one of the best portraits of all time, painted around 1674; and there's the lovely portrait of "The Gibbs Children," and the celebrated "Elizabeth Paddy Wensley," all painted about the same period, in the middle of the seventeenth century. These portraits are, in the best sense, records of American people, American character. Undoubtedly they were influenced by English and Dutch painting, but every art is influenced by other art.

GEORGE: If these early American pictures were influenced by European artists, Mr. Cahill, how are they, then, typically American, or native to America?

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CAHILL: As Ernest Fenollosa, the great American art critic has said, "The Alien influence is invariably at the heart of the native development." In this sense, then, the ancestry of painting is like the ancestry of human beings, they come "out of the everywhere, into the here." But while the ancestry of art may be called universal, every art, like every individual, must exist in a "here and a now." The artist and the work of art must belong to a locality and a time, before they can belong to the world and to the ages.

GEORGE: So the early American portraits are a record of people who lived here at a certain time, is that it?

CAHILL: Yes -- records of a people, a certain people, that existed at a certain place and a certain time in history. Another portrait painter, Ralph Earl, not only shows the character of the American people in his awkwardly powerful Sherman portrait, but he also shows the American scene in his portrait backgrounds.

GEORGE: "The American scene" -- that's a phrase I run across all the time, Mr. Cahill. Just what is "The American scene?"

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CAHILL: Well, George, it's mostly a very useful expression, though I must admit it's been vastly overworked. The American scene is certainly as old as American portrait painters, who first discovered the value of painting the life and people around them. But in discussing the American scene, we first come to the subject of regionalism.

GEORGE: "Regionalism" -- yes, that's another word I come across frequently. I still have no clear idea of what it means.

CAHILL: In recent years, a number of cities and towns throughout the country have gradually risen to challenge the leadership of New York as the art center of the nation. In some respect, many of these towns have outstripped New York, especially in their more direct response to the inspiration of the country. This is true of a number of art centers in the Middle West, the Rocky Mountain region, the Southwest, and the Pacific Coasts. The rapid growth of these centers and the enthusiasm with which many artists have turned to local and regional matter, leads one to believe that regionalism is the most popular current trend.

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GEORGE: But will this art be regional or national in character, Mr. Cahill -- related to the interest of the people of that locality, or to the sentiment of the people as a whole?

CAHILL: That depends, of course, on how good is the work produced. Much has been written about regionalism in recent years, but no very clear critical chart of it has yet been drawn. Most museum directors would insist that regionalism is designed by location, legend, and landscape, but a good many artists and some critics will say, and rightly, that there is more to it than that. The artist produces in terms of his talent, his training, and his experience. Heretofore he has had to seek training and experience in the art centers of the East and in Europe, where his expression has tended to become burdened with subject matter and conventions that have little in common with his native background. Today, good art training may be had in almost every section of this country, and it has become possible for the artist to attack the problems of art among familiar surroundings. (CONTINUED)

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CAHILL: (CONTINUED) This naturally gives the artist the opportunity of saying something in his art about an environment and a social life which he is likely to know well.. As the artist goes on, and as he is joined by other artists, certain selections and eliminations will inevitably be made. These will, in time, tend toward the formation of an attitude, toward a recognized trend in observation, sentiment, and even in technique, until we have the beginnings of a school. One sees this sort of thing happening today in the Middle West, and even more in the Southwest, where a group of artists has gone far beyond local narrative, or the sentimental-picturesque in landscape, toward the development of a regional point of view.

GEORGE: How is this point of view part of the American scene, Mr. Cahill?

CAHILL: By being representative of an American locality, and thus being included in the whole American landscape. No matter what one thinks of regionalism, one real gain in these various local developments is that many little-known aspects of our richly varied country have been brought into the general currency of art. (CONTINUED)

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CAHILL: (CONTINUED) After all, there is no reason why artists should not find in the Middle West or any other region, the flowers of a local romanticism which may not have the bloom of Gauguin's South Seas but which are, just the same, plants from a similar garden. This regional work, partly because its subject matter is familiar and not exotic, is able to get its message over to a public which heretofore has had little contact with art.

GEORGE: But why is the American scene receiving so much attention?

CAHILL: Every community appears to be trying to say in its art something about the particular meaning of its own locality. The total may not build up to a national or even a regional school, but it has importance nevertheless. In spite of the fact that we are living in a highly mechanized civilization, which tends toward standardization, there is still space enough and time enough in America's way of living for every community and every state to cultivate its own personality, its own ideals, and even its own peculiarities.

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GEORGE: How do the paintings of these different communities differ, Mr. Cahill, apart from the difference of landscape?

CAHILL: It is in the paintings devoted to the American scene that one sees, of course, regional differences in their most obvious form -- the quiet spaces of eastern farming country, the pleasant valleys of the Appalachians, the vast horizons of the middle western plain, the grandeur of the Rockies, the giant sweep of the Pacific coast. But it is here that one may see most clearly the differences in point of view; for, roughly, American painting is divided into three main divisions: conservative, middle-of-the-road, and modern. And now I think it's about time I introduced to you our guest of the program, one of the greatest painters and teachers in contemporary American art - Mr. John Sloan. You know his work, George?

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GEORGE: Indeed I do, and I admire his work very much.

CAHILL: Mr. Sloan has probably had a greater influence on American art than any other man living. As a teacher he has launched hundreds of artists on their careers, through his work at the American Art Student's League. Also, Mr. Sloan is the author of that new wise and witty book called "The Gist of Art", which serves as an excellent handbook for artists in any field, whether it be painting, music, writing, or any other medium. Mr. Sloan, can you tell my good friend George, here, something the artist today, and his preoccupation with "painting American"?

SLOAN: There is so much talk today about the American scene as though it is something that's been discovered in the last ten years. American painters have always painted it, from Glackens, Luks, Shinn and myself, back to Winslow Homer, Eakins, and even earlier artists. It is not necessary to paint the American flag to be an American painter. As though you didn't see the American scene every time you open your eyes! I am not for the American scene: I am most of all for mental realization. If you are American, and work, your work will be American.

CAHILL: What about the social significance of your work, Mr. Sloan?

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SLOAN: There is also too much talk today about socially-conscious painting. My old work was very much so, unconsciously. But now I feel that such a thing should not be put into painting, and I reserve it for my etching. You may say that I am fiddling while Rome burns, but I question whether social propaganda is necessary to the life of a work of art. I don't see how a thoughtful artist under a Fascist or totalitarian government, where free expression is heresy, could help wanting to express his social feelings in his work; but in a democratic country like ours, where we can talk about things freely, we can go on painting any kind of subject matter we like.

GEORGE: It doesn't matter, then, Mr. Sloan, what subject matter the artist chooses?

SLOAN: I have never thought the subject matter important, even to the finished picture. An artist must work for himself first. He can paint best the things he likes or even the things he hates, for you cannot paint well if you are indifferent. You express a mental opinion about something you are sensitive to in the life around you. There is a profound difference between sentimentality and sensitivity. Artists are sensitive to life, they respond to it. But if you start out with sentimentality, where will you end?

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CAHILL: It is true, isn't it, Mr. Sloan, that you have always lived and painted American - that you have never, that is, studied in the European schools?

SLOAN: I have never been outside the United States; and while this fact means that I have seen few of the great masterpieces of the past, such as the works in the great French and Italian museums, it may mean that I have got my own share here and now. Perhaps I agree with the Chinese philosopher who said that if you stayed in one spot, all the world would come to you.

GEORGE: What did you mean, Mr. Sloan, when you said a moment ago that you were for "mental realization?" How do you mean that as a painter?

SLOAN: All fine art is the result of the artist coming to grips with the reality of things. He must see clearly and form his own mental concept of the thing. He will form his own mental concept, automatically, if he is an artist. There is such a thing as looking at nature too calmly, without any excitement. The artist must get a kick out of something in nature before he can create. If you only get a kick out of other works of art, you should not be an artist. You should be a connoisseur, or a buyer or a consumer of art.

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GEORGE: Why isn't subject matter important, Mr. Sloan?

SLOAN: Subject matter is only important insofar as it interests the artist. If the artist is interested, he will turn out an interesting picture, for the artist has first of all to find something in or about life which interests him. He has to pause and select the elements that will put his idea across. It doesn't have to be some great tragic or moving event; a few plums on a plate, seen with the mind, is enough for subject matter. A man like Renoir puts three plums on a plate and turns the surface of an eight-by-twelve-inch canvas into a result that is as aesthetically vivid as a piece of carved relief.

GEORGE: But that wouldn't be painting in the American tradition, would it? The tradition of regionalism and the American scene we were speaking of ...

SLOAN: It might be said that there is no real traditional art in the world today except in the work of the Indians. None of the great nations are really following traditions in the sense that the Gothic period had tradition. The Indians have a great traditional base. They work together with the same feeling of being a part of the community that inspired the unknown artists of the great Gothic period.

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SLOAN:
(CONT'D)

Certain conditions in the social relations of men must change before we will have any return of that kind of united spirit, which, running through the artists, will make them work together.

CAHILL:

We are coming to that, Mr. Sloan, I believe, or we will come to it in time. Up to recent years the artist has tended to become the purveyor of a luxury product for small groups of collectors; and also, up to very recent years, American art has kept pretty close to a few Metropolitan areas. This has caused a constant drift of art talent from all parts of the country toward the already-overcrowded art centers, especially those in the east. The result has been that the nation has suffered a cultural erosion which has left hundreds of communities barren of art interest. During the past twenty years, many artist organizations have been deeply concerned over this situation. Museums and galleries devoted to contemporary American art have been founded, and attempts have been made to stimulate the country's resources of creative expression, and to make them available to a wider public. In the past five years the groups interested in this program have found a powerful ally in the United States Government as art patron.

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CAHILL:
(CONT'D)

Through the employment of painters and sculptors to decorate federal and municipal buildings, the founding of community art centers in every section of the country, and the inauguration of a great program of popular art education through exhibitions, millions of Americans have for the first time been given opportunities to enjoy art. Hundreds of artists have found employment in their native towns. Ten years ago these artists would have been struggling to get to New York. Now many of them are finding it possible to live and study and work in their native environments, and to bring their art closer to the interests of a public which needs them and which is learning to understand them. The result of this new development is that art is taking root afresh in many American communities, and that the American artist is beginning to find the social assurance that he has not enjoyed in the past. That this development is healthy is shown in the high level of work that is being produced today by American artists from every section of the country.

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(CLOSING)

You have been listening to the eleventh program in a series of broadcasts entitled "What's Art To Me" presented each Saturday at this time by the Columbia Broadcasting System in cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. The guest on today's broadcast was Mr. John Sloan, one of America's most eminent artists, and author of "The Gist of Art."

Next Saturday at this same time, the program will be on the subject of sound-effects in the modern cinema, and will be called, "What Makes The Movies Tick." If you enjoy listening to these programs, you might also enjoy hearing Columbia's music series called "So You Think You Know Music," heard over this network every Sunday afternoon from two-thirty to three PM, Eastern Standard Time.

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Modern Museum

COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM

WHAT'S ART TO ME Program No. 13

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 1940
6:30 to 6:45 PM EST

CUE: (COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM)
(..... 30 seconds))

ANNCR: The Columbia Broadcasting System presents---

VOICE: "What's Art To Me?"

ANNCR: ---th thirteenth and last of a series of programs given each Saturday at this time, in co-operation with the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Tonight's broadcast, concluding this series, is on the subject: "The Adventure of Modern Art." The program will be conducted by Mr. Holger Cahill, eminent writer on Art and Director of the Government's W.P.A. Art Project. Mr. Cahill:

CAHILL: More than a hundred thousand people visited the Museum of Modern Art during the Picasso Exhibition. Some were enthusiastic, many were interested, but others ----

WOMAN: Look at that! By the wildest stretch of the imagination could anyone call that art?

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MAN: These may be worth a lot of money but believe me, I wouldn't give them house room.

WOMAN: How could any sane man paint such horrid, such ugly, such ridiculous pictures -- if you can call them pictures.

2nd MAN: My six-year-old kid could do better than that.

MAN: I always pride myself on being open-minded about modern art, but I must say this sort of thing has gone much too far. Now I like Cézanne. He was a great master.

CAHILL: Yes, Cézanne is a ~~great~~ master whom almost everyone accepts today. But not many years ago, Cézanne was criticized in much the same way that Picasso is now. The great Cézanne, now called the father of modern painting, was an affront and an outrage to the established tastes of his day. No less a painter than Whistler vented his spleen on such radical painting when he said --

WHISTLER: If a child of ten had drawn that on his slate, his mother, if she were a good one, would have whipped him.

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CAHILL: Those are Whistler's ~~own~~ words. This from a man who himself had suffered the persecution of critics and public, who, a few years earlier, had felt that Whistler's work was too advanced, too radical -- crazy. There is a famous case of the Whistler-Ruskin trial, when Whistler sued ~~the~~ John Ruskin for making the following statement about Whistler's painting:

RUSKIN: "I have seen and heard much of Cockney impudence before now, but I never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two-hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."

CAHILL: Poor Whistler was outraged ~~by such an insult~~, and I don't think we can blame him. He sued Ruskin, and the trial rocked England with Philistine laughter for weeks. ~~with the sad result that~~ Whistler won a farthing -- one farthing -- for damages, and was later forced into bankruptcy by the expense of the trial, to say nothing of being publicly humiliated. -- So the story goes, with artists in every age: from Whistler back to Rembrandt, who outraged the tastes of the good burghers of his time; back to the great painters of the Italian Renaissance whose work will be shown in the Italian Masters exhibition beginning next week at the Museum of Modern Art.

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CANILL
(contd)

Tintoretto, for instance, was thrown out of Titian's studio because Titian considered his painting too ^{bold.} ~~bad~~. And Caravaggio, the bad boy of ^{late} 16th ^{and early 17th} century art, who rebelled against contemporary painting and sneered at artists who tried to copy Michelangelo and Raphael. Instead, Caravaggio himself painted ordinary subjects and made them exciting by painting them in a spotlight with dramatic action and realistic detail. An outraged painter said of Caravaggio's work: "He simply copied those forms which appeared to his eyes." And Caravaggio even committed the sacrilege of ignoring ancient art. Taken to see two famous antique statues that had just been discovered, he was unimpressed. "See how many masters nature has provided for me and other artists, he said, pointing to some bystanders, 'without your statues.'" But the enraged critics and public continued to see nothing but the ruin of art in Caravaggio's painting. -- Doesn't that sound familiar? -- "the ruin of art, a style without formal design, propriety, or beauty"? Doesn't it sound like some of the attacks on Picasso? ~~It is the same abuse so often levelled at the modern artist in any age whether it be in 1910 or in 1600 when Caravaggio lived and worked and shocked his contemporaries.~~

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CAHILL:
(contd)

But though Caravaggio shocked most of his contemporaries many of the best young painters followed his leadership. And in the next generation his work influenced such great artists as Rembrandt and Rubens and Velasquez..... And now I want to introduce to you a man who is familiar with this age-old revolt of a convention-minded public against the too-individual artist. He is a man who, by his patronage, has helped the modern artist and the public too, by recognizing the value of ~~an artist~~ ^{an artist} often before he has become acclaimed. He is Mr. Samuel Lewisohn, who owns one of the most important private collections of Modern Art in America, and who recently wrote about his pictures in his provocative book called "Painters and Personality." Mr. Lewisohn:

LEWISOHN:

Thank you, Mr. Cahill. But I'm against calling this program "The Adventure of Modern Art." I think "The Adventure of Art" would be better -- and your little discourse has seemed to bear this out.

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CAHILL: *There's a good⁶ deal in that, Mr. Lewisohn,*
~~Mr. Lewisohn~~ because "modern art" if it's good enough, becomes just plain "art" in time, lasting and true for any age. -- Mr. Lewisohn, we'd like to hear from you something about the fun of being a collector and just what a collector is, anyway.

LEWISOHN: I'm a collector, first of all, because I get a kick out of certain works of art. In other words, I think the main purpose in collecting should be to satisfy your own aesthetic needs. A picture or a sculpture should be bought for your personal refreshment for the same reason that you go to a concert. In fact a collector of art has, we can say, many different private orchestras at his command, which will perform for him at a moment's notice. But, even more than with music, he must join the performers in the performance.

CAHILL: Just how would you go about *d*oing that, Mr. Lewisohn?

LEWISOHN: In approaching painting or a sculpture as with any other form of art, a certain amount of patience and humility is necessary. You're sometimes tempted to wave aside the work of a master because you don't, at first understand it. But art is a language, and, as with any language, it takes a certain amount of patience and practice to understand what the painter is attempting to convey.

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LEWISOHN: There are so many obstacles to true art appreciation,
(cont'd) and one of them is that many people who look at pictures have a preconceived and unshaken idea of what painting should be.

~~They~~ They don't want to give the new painter the benefit of the doubt. They don't realize that he may be a pathfinder, exploring new territory. And then there is another great pitfall: many people, when they look at a painting, look for a story. They think of it just as they would a work of fiction. Thus they're likely to judge a picture by deciding whether or not they're interested in its subject-matter. But you can't judge painting that way. Painting does not depend on subject matter. It has a life of its own. --Now as to collecting, one should to some extent follow one's own personal taste. A discriminating collector is governed by certain standards that should govern everyone, but after these standards are met, there is still the question of what particular work meets your own personal requirements. There is a special kind of painting that fulfills your own personal needs. If these principles are followed, the painting that you have selected refreshes and stimulates you, just as a great novel does, or a sonata that you may be fond of.

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CAHILL: What would you say are the principles, Mr. Lewisohn, that have guided you in your collecting, ^{I am sure} that other collectors, would be interested in knowing about ^{them}.

LEWISOHN: The first principle, oddly enough is a don't. Don't try to make a collection unless you are sensitive to visual beauty, any more than you would go in for collecting wines without a sensitive palate. Collecting paintings is not like collecting beetles or stamps. For collecting beetles you need ^{to have} a scientific ^{heart} ~~heart~~. For collecting stamps you need ^{the spirit of an armchair adventurer,} ~~scientific training~~. But for collecting pictures you need, above all, a sensitive eye..The second principle is to form your personal taste if you haven't already done so. Too many people go blithely ahead with an art collection without any previous training or background. For some reason they don't realize that eye training is just as important as ear training is to prospective musical listeners.

CAHILL: How would the average man go about getting this eye-training, Mr. Lewisohn?

LEWISOHN: There's nothing better than frequent visits to galleries and museums, preferably with some friend who has already formed his taste, whether a painter or an amateur. ^{And that brings me to}

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~~Have you any third principle or rule to follow?~~

contd.

LEWISOHN: ~~My~~ ^{which} third principle for the collector is to keep looking-and to keep feeling. He shouldn't forget that not only the mind is involved, but also the emotions. You must be ready to "give yourself" to a painting just as one "gives oneself" in a religious experience - Then there is another "don't". Don't collect trash; avoid the second-rate. Superficial brilliance is not the thing to be sought, but more substantial qualities. The painting which gives you a thrill at the first glance is not always the painting that will last. The new collector should avoid the trivial, so that he will have a work of art that can be appreciated for more than a few weeks.

CARILL: How about the man with a modest pocket-book, Mr. Lewisohn? In your opinion, is it possible for him to buy first-rate works of art?

LEWISOHN: It is perfectly possible to do so. There are lithographs of most of the modern masters available at moderate prices, and there are etchings by such giants as Whistler, Goya and Manet that can be collected for a modest figure. I have seen Goya's etchings advertised at one of our popular department stores for from \$2 to \$8 .(CONT)

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LEWISOHN: They may of course be prints of a large edition, but it is better to get something fine and not so rare than to get some poor original just because no one else has it. A collection should be used to develop your taste instead of as a means of "showing off". And then, of course, the works of many of our younger artists are very moderately priced.

CANILL: And it's always important to keep in mind, isn't it, that the unknown painter of today may be the great master of tomorrow?

LEWISOHN: Yes; and if you like his work, pioneer a bit and so help him to become recognized. But do so only after you have formed your own personal taste -- And finally, the amateur collector should remember that art is not imitation. Subject matter has its place; but the method of building a picture, the form and design, are most essential. With these principles in mind, an art collection can be started -- and I speak from experience when I say that it is a fascinating adventure.

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CAHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Lewisohn - And now I want to introduce to the radio audience a famous American painter. He is Mr. Henry Billings, widely known for paintings, especially his exciting murals which make brilliant decorative use of machine forms, for instance, his mobile mural in the Ford Building at the World's Fair in New York. Mr. Billings, what do you think of the perennial story of the modern-artist-and-the-outraged public?

BILLINGS: It's the same old story. The more modern the artist the more outraged the public. But I don't believe the artist's intention today is just to outrage the public. Of course, certain romantic painters of the 19th century quite frankly set out to shock bourgeois taste. That was the reason for the flowing tie, the velvet trousers and always living in an attic. Today it seems that if the artist is honest and alert to the contemporary world he will end up with forms that are so startling and so new that again the general public will be left behind. Social and technical changes in our generation have been so rapid that aesthetic change has had a hard time keeping ahead of them.

CAHILL: You don't think the artist's aim, then, is to lead the public taste, Mr. Billings?

BILLINGS: I wouldn't put it exactly that way. The artist tries, among other things, to restate the vision of life anew, as for instance, nature gives us a fresh day each morning. As the artist is successful in this matter, so he will lead public taste. But to do this he must recapture contemporary life while it is still alive and still contemporary.

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CAHILL: What would be a concrete example of this, Mr. Billings?

BILLINGS: Well, this may serve, Mr. Cahill. A modern artist who happens to see beauty in a locomotive, for instance, will not try to force his conception of the locomotive into an old art form. He won't paint a vague impression of steam and light and speed as the impressionist painters of the past century would have done. He won't see a locomotive as Monet or Turner, for instance, but will see it, and paint it, in terms of the present, with his present-day understanding. The result is that it will look like a locomotive, and a very modern and up-to-date one at that. For example, I try to paint the dynamics or even the abstract shapes and forms that make up a locomotive, the concentric and excentric circles of its machinery, and the forward thrust of its driving shaft. This is one way in which the modern painter reflects the spirit of the age in his own work. The modern artist must be adventurous in his attitude toward the modern world. In this connection, I'd like to quote a very interesting statement made by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum of Modern Art. Mr. Barr writes as follows:

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VOICE: "Modern art is an adventure of the eye and mind. Like many adventures it is beset with pitfalls and quick-sands, false starts and blind alleys -- many of which are really imaginary difficulties, born of our general reluctance to face anything new or strange. Understanding modern art does not require any great effort of the intellect. The theories back of most apparently abstruse paintings can usually be expressed in a few sentences. But understanding modern art, or for that matter, the art of the past, does require some initiative and imagination. Modern art is not for the timid or complacent man who does not want to be disturbed, but for the alert, the youthful-minded, the adventurous."

CAHILL: Thank you, Mr. Billings. That makes a very good concluding statement for this last broadcast of our series.

ANNOUNCER: You have been listening to the last broadcast in a series of programs entitled "What's Art to Me", which have been presented each Saturday at this time, for thirteen weeks, by the Columbia Broadcasting System in cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. (CONT)

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ANNCR:
CONT.

It would be a great help to us if you would send your opinion of this series, whether favorable or unfavorable. A few lines on a postcard would be welcome if you feel you cannot send a longer message. It is only through your comments that the Museum of Modern Art and the Columbia Broadcasting system can tell whether or not to broadcast a future series on art, and what changes, if any, to make in it. Tell us what you would like.

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