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Harold Rosenberg - 1/13/78

It's a real canard that the ab-ex people were gloomy. They had a wonderful time, much more fun than artists do now. It was a real community then. Franz Kline was a marvelous raconteur, telling of how he'd been thrown out by his landlord, and drawings floating down the street. This is one of the myths that people like Rauschenberg have perpetrated, and it's absolutely untrue.

Everybody liked Bob R. - he was a nice kid. But he didn't know anything, and he played no real part in the scene at the Cedar or the Club.

DeKooning and those artists really were deeply versed in art history. They related to it - Gorky particularly. They didn't pay much attention to political events of the time (e.g., McCarthyism) because they felt somewhat removed from all that. But they were deeply involved in thinking about art and art history. "Rauschenberg has not yet come up with a substitute for thought."

The Erased deKooning was "a bright idea." Nobody was offended. DeKooning cooperated fully.

There was no bitterness toward new generation. Nobody who was really good among the ab-ex generation really suffered from the advent of Pop -- deKooning sells for huge prices, is a millionaire today.

(But then, Harold mentioned the "snow job" that had been done on abstract expressionism. It became very clear that he felt it bitterly, and that he attributed it to what Auden -- not deAntonio -- referred to as "the homintern." A very real and very powerful international network. It didn't play a part in art during the fifties becaue there was no money then. When money came into the art world, and also chic, so did the homintern. "Which leads to the next question, which is, is there homosexual art? And I think the answer is unmistakeable. Yes there is. It has to do with decoration, and pleasure, and having a good time." This is a real poltical power thing, a factor of major importance in contemporary art, and everybody knows it but nobody ever mentions it. "How are you going to deal with it?")

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Tom Hess on Ab-Ex Disputes

There were no feuds as such. The only thing approaching a feud was the Newman vs. Reinhardt lawsuit, over a Reinhardt article in the College Art Journal in which he called Newman a "professor." Newman got Still to promise to testify for him, but then Still never showed up, for which Newman never forgave him.

Mainly though it was more a drifting apart. New York becomes impossible for an artist at a certain stage in his career, and they all left it. The pressure, the drinking, the attacks of younger artists on the big boys, etc. W

DeKooning used to think Newman was a Johnny-come-lately, but then he came around to considering him a very good painter. It's not true, as Tworkov says, that Newman took up painting all of a sudden. He'd painted all his life, but did a lot of teaching to earn his living.

Rothko was very much one of the boys, very macho. He always wanted you to tell him what you really thought of a new painting, wanted to engage you in serious discussion.

Reinhardt was unpopular because he made fun of them all. Things were too serious in those days to accomodate any joking. This was also Rauschenberg's problem.

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Maxine Groffsky - lunch 12/15/77

Grew up in Maplewood in the fifties, the suburban belle of Roth's "Goodbye Columbus." Two years at Cornell, then the last two at Barnard, majoring in English. Graduated in 1958. Had met Howard Kanowitz thru a blind date, and been introduced to the art world through him. Having no idea what to do with her life, and fascinated with this world, she got a summer job at The Five Spot in Water Mill -- it was only there one summer -- as a waitress. At first there were two chefs and lots of waiters but soon enough it came down to the owner and Maxine. Their only clients were the artists and poets out there, and she met them all. Met Larry Rivers there, and started going with him. Larry introduced her to Bob and Jasper.

In New York after that, they went to the Five Spot at least once every night to catch a set. Jazz was the great thing among the artists then. Oscar Pettiford had just appeared, Monk was playing etc. Bob didn't appear much there or at the Cedar or the San Remo (the bar favored by Frank O'Hara, ~~on Bleecker~~). There was also a lot of dancing in people's lofts. It was a wonderful period, much more exciting than college.

Franz Kline as much the king as de Kooning. Kline was always at the bar in the Cedar. There were booths in the back, but Franz would be at the bar. Once Hedy Lamarr gave a party to meet the artists. They were agog with delight, and several worked on a drawing for her then and there, and signed it. Leaving, Hedy soul-kissed Franz.

Maxine was so naive she didn't even know Larry was on drugs. When he would be sick on heroin, she made chicken soup. She didn't write or paint, kept her mouth shut, but always had her own apartment and her own job so she wasn't treated as badly as the other artist's girls. She had an affair with Jasper at one point. Jasper never could decide what he was going to be when he grew up -- once she heard him say to others, "I'm not a homosexual."

When Bob and Jasper broke up it was very very tense. Nothing overt -- both were too private for that; on the surface it would be OK, but the tension if you were out with one of them and met the other was terrific. Before the break, though, they were never overtly lovers, never made a point of it.

Everybody went to see The Living Theater productions -- a big part of the scene then. On Monday evenings, there would be open night at the Theater and they'd go to hear Ginsburg and others read poetry, Cage lecture, etc.

The thing about the Cedar was that everybody would be there. You'd see the whole crowd, having a drink after work.

Maxine broke up with Larry, then met Harry Mathews and went to Paris with him two weeks later. This was in 1962. Paris was another new world, but not as exciting as New York in many ways.

She went up to Amsterdam for the Dylaby show at the Stedelijk. Bob's room was indescribably beautiful. But Bob couldn't stand Spoerri, and one night when Spoerri was holding forth at the table, shaking or pointing his finger to emphasize a point, Bob bit his finger so badly that he broke a tooth.

Paul Taylor -- Bob and Jasper eventually broke with him on esthetic grounds, feeling he just wasn't pure enough.

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Art: Elegiac Works Of Lee Krasner

By HILTON KRAMER

THE paintings of Lee Krasner have lately acquired a place in the history of the New York School they did not have 20 years ago, or even 10 years ago. The reasons for this revised status are in no way obscure. It is no secret that her marriage to Jackson Pollock — the most famous artist of his generation — had the (then) inevitable effect of overshadowing Miss Krasner's artistic career. Until Pollock's death in 1956, moreover, the conditions in which Miss Krasner worked apparently precluded the production of large-scale paintings, and this was a further handicap at a time when size began to be equated with artistic ambition, at least in popular thinking about the New York School.

The influence of the women's movement on the writing of art history also has contributed to the new visibility that Miss Krasner now enjoys. So has some recent research into the early history of the New York School. The exhibition, called "Abstract Expressionism: The Formative Years," which was seen at the Whitney Museum last fall, was thus one of the first surveys of the subject to accord her an honored place in its history.

For all of these reasons, the show of Miss Krasner's work that has now come to the Pace Gallery, 32 East 57th Street (through March 10), is an event of obvious interest. It focuses entirely on paintings — all of them large, and a few of them immense — produced in the years 1959-62. These were, I believe, Miss Krasner's first really large-scale paintings. It was to be expected that they would reflect Pollock's influence in their scale, their method and their imagery — Miss Krasner has never denied that Pollock was an important influence on her work — and they do. That they encompass this influence with a confident authority of their own also is true.

This is Abstract Expressionist painting of the "classic" type — all energy and struggle and outsize gesture finally resolved in a pattern of hard-won coherence. Painted in the immediate aftermath of Pollock's death, these paintings also have a certain elegiac quality, and a certain fury, too.



Lee Krasner's "Feathering" (1959) at the Pace Gallery
Energy and struggle resolved in a pattern of hard-won coherence.

What is especially curious about them is their color, or lack of color. Painted, for the most part, in earthy and muddy browns, they are devoid of the chromatic qualities that one has admired in some of Miss Krasner's other work. The presence of Matisse is rather sorely missed. Miss Krasner explains this absence of color interest — in a dialogue with the poet Richard Howard for the catalogue — by the fact that the paintings were done at night. "I realized," she says, "that if I was going to work at night, I would have to knock color out altogether, because I wouldn't deal with color except in daylight."

Whatever the reason, this denial of color deprives these paintings of a certain strength to be seen elsewhere in the artist's work. But in the act of homage to Pollock's memory that we feel to be at the center of these paintings, perhaps it was appropriate to sacrifice the pleasures of color — something that Miss Krasner returned to in the paintings that followed those currently on view.

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Other exhibitions this week:

Donald Judd (Castelli, 420 West Broadway): In this selective survey of work since 1963, we are given an opportunity to reacquaint ourselves with sculpture that is now almost universally regarded as the classic statement of Minimal art. It was Donald Judd who, more than anyone else, elevated the simple form of the "box," open or closed, stacked on the wall or sitting on the floor, to its present position of museological eminence.

It is interesting now to see the way Mr. Judd's choice of materials has developed. These have lately been both a little plainer and a lot fancier than they used to be. There are the "raw" plywood boxes, with their uninteresting variations, that seem deliberately designed to starve the eye of anything resembling the decorative impulse. At the opposite extreme are the polished copper and brass boxes, with elements of red plexiglass, say, that are astonishingly decorative in effect. These differences serve to remind us that it is not only — and at times, perhaps, not primarily — the "idea" that we respond to in Minimal art, but the quality of the materials employed in its production. (Through Feb. 24.)

•

Anthony Padovano (Graham, 1014 Madison Avenue at 78th Street): Anthony Padovano is at his best as a carver of stone, and it is therefore the small marble pieces in this exhibition that are the most appealing. Especially in the blue marble "Pastoral" and in the white marble "Circular Composition," he brings a delicacy and refinement to this traditonal medium that succeeds in converting an obdurate material into a statement of lyric feeling.

The polished bronze pieces tend — in this viewer's eye — to vulgarize forms that are conceived, if not actually executed, for another medium. There are ample precedents for this sort of thing, and many celebrated sculptors have done it. But the fact remains that forms belonging to the realm of stone carving rarely "convert" successfully to polished bronze. The basic shapes remain, but the pleasures of sensibility evaporate. In a trditional style like Mr. Padovano's, everything depends on the refinements of detail. In several of the pen drawings, too, we see that it is in the carver's universe of feeling that he is most at home. (Through Feb. 28.)

•

Kenneth Evett (Kraushaar, 1055 Madison Avenue at 80th Street): Since 1948 Kenneth Evett has served on the art faculty of Cornell University, and his latest exhibition consists entirely of portraits of his colleagues on that campus. To an outsider, it is impressive to see so many members of an academic community so consistently depicted with affection and respect. It is almost enough to persuade us of the nonexistence of academic politics. As painting, however, the work tends to err on the side of innocence and "formula" (e.g., the repeated patch of light on the foreheads of so many subjects). It is a matter of some interest, however, that the best painting in the show is the portrait of Thomas W. Leavitt, director of Cornell's art museum. (Through Feb. 24.)

DO NOT FORGET THE NEEDIEST.

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U. S. art across time and space

2 Americans seen abroad

By Kenneth Rexroth

Headlines from Europe

Italian Reviews Milan Show

Borgese Calls Modern American Art 'As Bad as Russian—Both Rubbish'

MILAN, Italy, June 8 (UPI)—A leading Italian art critic, Leonardo Borgese, said today modern American painting is as bad as Russian and both amounted to "old rubbish provised in order to be bought by modern art museums."

"No profound necessity, no innermost torment, and not even a serious formal research," Borgese said. "not the late "exceedingly vain. It looks like the end of the civilized world."

Borgese said the best works in the Milan show were those by Arshile Groky, Grace Hartigan, Willem de Kooning and

Corriere della Sera, quoted in the Washington *Post Times-Herald*.

Vom Chaos bis zu Pollock

Moderne amerikanische Maler in der Hardenbergstraße

Von überallher strömen die Künste zu uns herein. Wir spüren in ihnen, was uns über die Grenzen hinweg mit anderen Nationen verbindet, wir lernen die nationalen Eigenarten der Völker kennen und achten. In dem vielfarbigen Mosaik der bildenden Kunst unserer Zeit fehlte

Bilder von *Th. Stamos* stehen dem Chaos näher als dem Kosmos. Damit aber erschöpft sich die Kunst in der Spiegelung der eigenen (unserer) Unruhlichkeit des Künstlers. ›

Frau *Hartigan*, die einzige Frau im Kreise der 17, versucht *Arshile Gorky* und Vitale im

Der Tag, Berlin ("From chaos to Pollock").

THIS IS NOT ART—IT'S A JOKE IN BAD TASTE

Save me from the great string spider webs

THERE is one great ... that modern art (generally) does ... things are not so bad as they can be painted.

... Sympathy

Reynolds News, London (review by a psychoanalyst).

GIGANTISME ET PETITESSES de la "Nouvelle peinture américaine"

PAR CLAUDE ROGER-MARX

SOUS les auspices de l'International Council du Museum of Modern Art de New York, notre musée d'Art moderne, dont on connaît le faible pour l'art non figuratif, présente, en même temps qu'une rétrospective Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), ad-

d'une tendance unique et, malgré la diversité de leurs tempéraments, de leurs origines, se réclament de cet Expressionnisme abstrait qui se-

n'ont pas eu à attendre la cinquantaine pour être comblés de commandes ou être nommés professeurs.

Jackson Pollock

Le Figaro Littéraire, Paris ("Giganticism and littleness").

Il Presley della pittura

Le opere di Pollock, esposte alla Galleria d'Arte Moderna, si muovono in uno spazio verginoso, costruito attraverso un'accumulazione ritmica di momenti dinamici: è la dimensione da cui nasce la fantasia fulminea di un Pound, o quella convulsa di Hart Crane

Avanti!, Rome ("The Presley of painting").

During the past winter two shows of American painting organized by the Museum of Modern Art have traveled about Europe. One, "The New American Painting," just opened in New York and runs through the summer. It is a representative selection, some four or five pictures each, of William Baziotes, James Brooks, Sam Francis, Arshile Gorky, Adolph Gottlieb, Philip Guston, Grace Hartigan, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Theodoros Stamos, Clyfford Still, Bradley Walker Tomlin and Jack Tworkov. In Europe at the same time was a large one-man show of Jackson Pollock. In Basel, Berlin and Paris the two exhibitions were shown together. In Amsterdam and London "The New American Painting" followed the Pollock show. In three cities—Milan, Madrid and Brussels—the Pollock exhibition was not shown at all.

This is the first chance most Europeans have had to see this aspect of American painting. Most other shows have taken in the whole range of contemporary and not-so-contemporary styles, from Grant Wood to Clyfford Still, and so have been, to strangers certainly, confusing rather than informative. Most informed people in America would consider this selection, give or take a few names, representative of the most important recent tendencies in our painting. And certainly it is among these painters that the first American "movement" to exert a powerful, world-wide influence was generated.

How did Europe react? On the visible official surface, how did the critics react? Beneath the surface, what was the real reaction? How did the artists, the people one knows—how did the people the show was for respond? By and large, as might be expected, the two levels had little in common.

Newspaper art critics prepare themselves for their careers by memorizing a collection of acceptable stereotypes. This works just fine, year after year after year. Who will dispute that Cézanne is powerful, van Gogh is forceful, Picasso is inventive, Vermeer is lucid, Tintoretto is noble? By judicious extrapolation you can keep pretty well up to date—three paragraphs of Cézanne, one paragraph of van Gogh, one paragraph of Ryder, apply

"The New American Painting" show, containing four or five works by seventeen more or less vanguard painters, and a large Pollock retrospective—both organized by the Modern Museum—separately visited eight European cities in 1958. Generally the press was hostile [left]; most of its criticism was based on political anti-American arguments.

p30

Center. Almost all other criticism was simply a workout of the given paper's editorial policy vis-à-vis the State Department, Standard Oil, Coca-Cola, Rock 'n Roll. "The subversive and dangerous plot of a barbarous people."

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Jackson Pollock, whose work was shown in a traveling retrospective in five European countries, is also represented by four works—including *Number 12*, 1952, above—in "The New American Painting" exhibition. Lent by Gov. and Mrs. Nelson A. Rockefeller.

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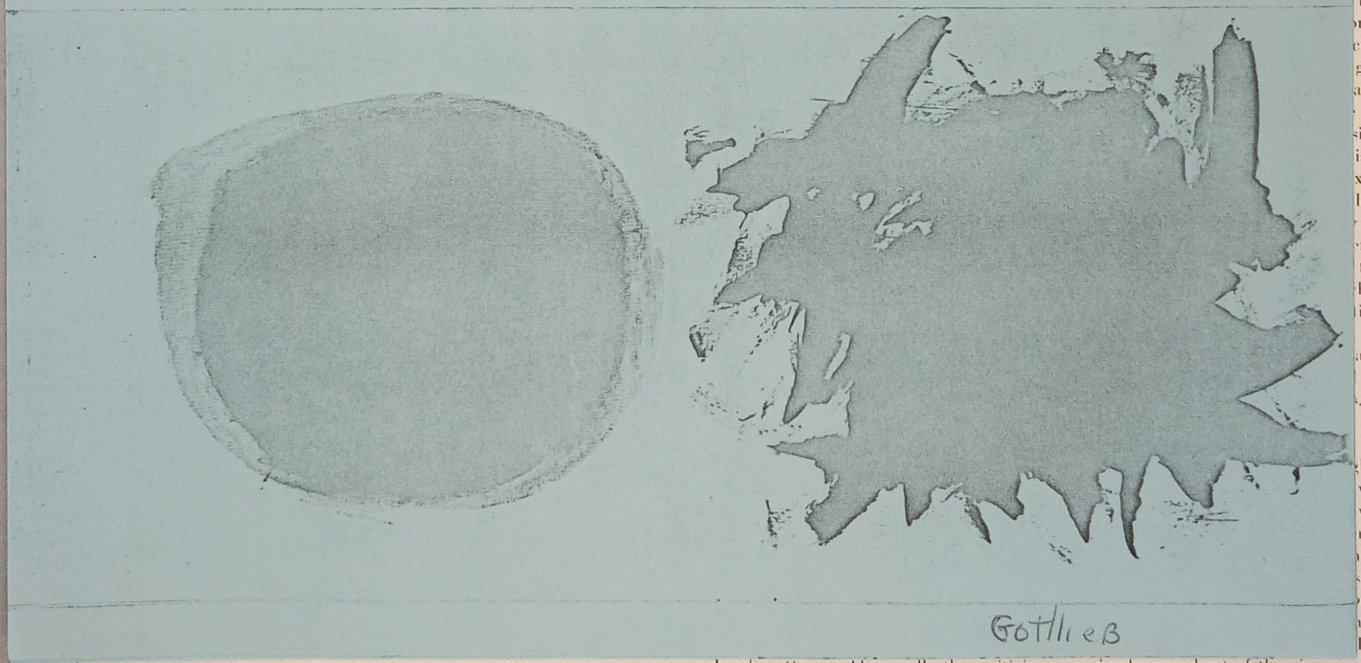
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Reproduced upside down



Gottlieb

Gottlieb's Burst, 1951, and Rothko's Number 10, 1950

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Americans seen abroad continued

to Marsden Hartley and rub well. Once in a great while something comes along that can't be handled by stereotyped response and then all breaks down in confusion. It is just a simple fact that most journalists over the world are quite incapable of looking at pictures, and seeing paint and canvas and not preconceptions.

The press reception of "The New American Painting" and the big Pollock retrospective by most European newspaper critics was, by and large, a parade of busted clichés and demoralized preconceptions. The majority didn't, apparently, bother to go to the show (or shows, since sometimes the two collections were shown together, sometimes separately). They just went to the newspaper morgue and had the librarian fish out the press notices of Buffalo Bill's first European tour, and went to work with scissors and paste. Even those who did go somehow got a hold of the wrong catalogue and were under the impression the pictures were painted by Wyatt Earp and Al Capone and Bix Beiderbeck. This is a generalization. It isn't altogether true, but it is certainly the first impression you'd get from reading the clippings. A few evenings spent struggling through artistical journalese in six languages and you're in complete agreement with George Washington—"America has nothing to gain from European entanglements."

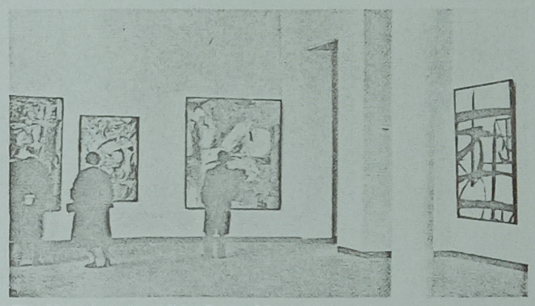
There were exceptions and there was a definite pattern in the exceptions. Those countries which are too small to even dream of competing with America politically and economically were, to judge from their press, most receptive. Not only were most of the Swiss, Belgians and Dutch receptive, some of them were very astute. A Belgian said wryly that Sam Francis should be the most popular because he is so perfectly in the French taste. A Swiss noted that Grace Hartigan would be liked because critics can pretend to like her "abstractly" while really approving of her because she is mildly "figurative." A Dutchman said that it would be a mistake to think of de Kooning as a missionary of European Expressionism in uncultured America just because he once lived in the Netherlands. Another said flatly that we must never forget that it is America that first appreciated the masters of modern art, and that painters like Kandinsky, Picabia, Klee had a great influence on American painting before they were known outside of small circles in their own countries. Again, a Dutchman: "These painters have been criticized [Continued on page 52]



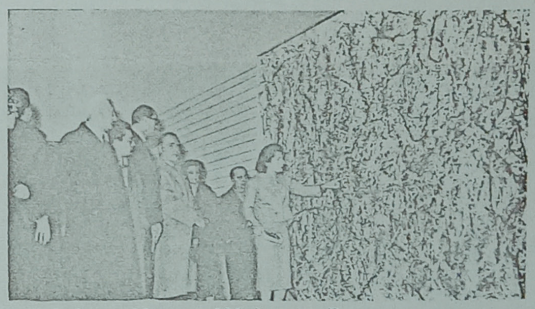
"The New Americans" in Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts.



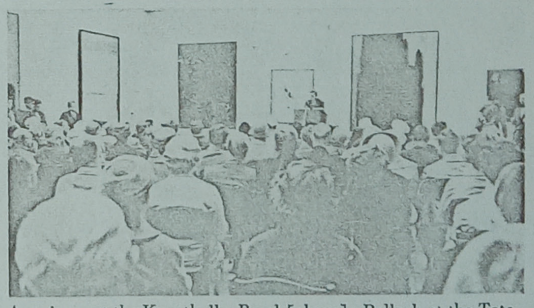
Pollock exhibition in Berlin, Hochschule Für Bildende Künste.



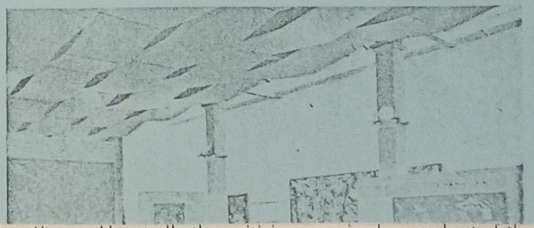
"The New Americans" in Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne.



Pollock show at Museum of Modern Art, Rome.



Americans at the Kunsthalle, Basel [above]; Pollock at the Tate.



ipathy was the individual European's main reaction e New American Painting" sent abroad last year. Such s Rothko's *Number 10, 1950* (lent by the Museum of n Art, page 36 top) and Gottlieb's *Burst* (lent by the ellers, page 36 bottom), for example, is frequently derstood in Europe, although Pollock generally is ed as a "master" who produced too many followers.

The Pollock and "The New American Painting" shows, seen here in six installations, provoked formal and informal gallery talks while on tour. Most European museums keep no attendance records; an exception is the Tate which records that 14,000 Londoners saw the 81 "New American" canvases, now at the Modern Museum [to Sept. 8].

P33

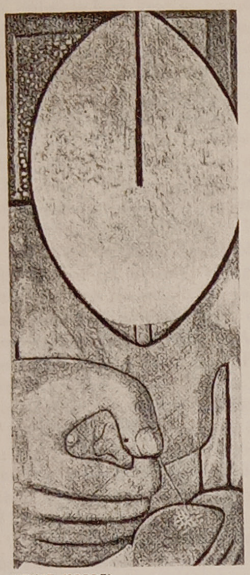
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Work by
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International Exhibition of

MARIETTE LYDIS

May 15 through July 15, 1959



"Ange sans ailes" Angel without wings

Galerie Paul Ambroise
6 rue Royale, Paris 8e OPE 8642

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Manager for Mariette Lydis

Americans seen abroad continued from page 33

because they make a great deal of money. Is it a fault in the Americans that they pay their artists well, that most modern European painting is now in America, and that the Americans are slowly buying up all the so-called Art Treasures of Europe? Is this a fault? If it is, all we have to do to overcome it is go and do likewise." This may not be art criticism of the highest order, but it is certainly astute observation.

Vulgarity is international. We expect the lower British gutter press to make bad jokes, run solemn features under the byline of newspaper "psychiatrists" and generally behave in a rowdy (what they would call "American") manner. Still, it's a bit of a shock to find an apparently civilized man in Lausanne saying, "One turns away from this violence, fraud and depravity to stand in reverence before the *Angelus* of Millet." Honestly, the man said that.

On the other hand, thinking back over the long struggle that modern art of every variety has had in Great Britain, it is more surprising to discover that the best-tempered and most judicious reviews were in the better English papers. However, these very reviews did reveal one thing. By chance of location, the Tate, a most perfect and perfectly valid comparison lay right to hand, but nobody used it. Housed in the same building as the great abstract Turners, the show never once elicited the comment that Turner was the artist who, of all British painters, was an ancestor of this show. The old imaginary gulf between *moderne* and *passéiste* art still seems to act as an effective barrier in England.

If this was true in London, it was far more true everywhere else. With the exception of a few scholarly historians, mostly German or German-trained, everybody accepted these pictures as either utter novelties, subversive of all tradition whatsoever, or as just amateur provincial imitations of their own painting of years gone by—Ecole de Paris, or Expressionism, or Futurism, depending on the nationality of the critic.

The French, as might be expected, were by far the worst. It is an embarrassing task to review the French press on any subject involving America. In France the words "United States" do not mean a country—they mean an extremely disagreeable reaction-pattern common to almost all Frenchmen, a purely subjective phenomenon. The vulgar press was just vulgar, like its British counterpart, but it is always a little startling to see the ravings of the *American Weekly* of the 1920s about lunatic modernist painting, or, still worse, "the *pompiers* of American charlatans financed by the Guggenheim billions," translated into the French language. Most of the criticism was entirely political, and had nothing to do with any kind of painting. Even civilized papers like *Express* and *Combat* had their men bone up by going to a Western movie and reading some of the more inflammatory recent statements of American generals. They may have read the catalogues, too, but there is little evidence they entered the galleries. They agreed that these Americans, like all other Americans, were dangerous and ignorant barbarians, redskins, in fact. On the other hand, the critics of the "official" Left were singularly open-minded and judicious. One of the most intelligent reviews was in Aragon's *Les Lettres françaises*. The reason may be that it was Be Kind to Americans Week in the Kremlin, but still it must be admitted that here was a man who had considerable intelligence and insight when he was permitted to exercise it. The review ended, "Fine. But this is only a beginning which has itself already come to an end. What next?" Since this is exactly what some of the boys themselves are saying along Tenth Street, it is hard to quarrel with it. The best French reviews by far were in *Le Monde* and *France Observateur*, representing the Moderate Right and the Independent Left, respectively. Both critics pointed out that although the paintings were truly American, their sources were in the whole European tradition, but most especially in Expressionism, Klee, Matisse, and the organic Surrealism of André Masson and Miró. The critic for *France Observateur* made the specific comment that these American painters were among the founders of a new international style and ended his article: "Jean Cassou in their behalf speaks of waterfalls and fields. In Soulages it is the forest. Truly all these works discover a new Nature. Abstract painting? No. Natural Painting."

The French, however, even the best intentioned of them, like the English, did insist on always talking as though these painters were quite novel, with no roots in the older past. No one mentioned Guston's connections with Monet and Turner. No one noticed the influence of Tintoretto or Delacroix. This sort of comparison appeared only in the culture area of German art history, except for Italy, where of course painting like this is almost as old and well established as in the States. It is my opinion that *Le Monde*, *France Observateur*, and *Les Lettres françaises* represented real opinions of the bulk of the educated visitors to the shows, Left, Right and Left-Center. Almost all other criticism was simply a workout of the given paper's editorial policy vis-à-vis the State Department, Standard Oil, Coca-Cola, Rock 'n Roll. "The subversive and dangerous plot of a barbarous people."

Consider the following crypto-political diagnosis from a Geneva journal: "Baziotes, Brooks, Gottlieb, Gorky, de Kooning, Newman, Pollock, Rothko

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[sic] and Tworkov were all realist painters, most of them socialistic, when they started. It is only under mccarthyism that they got frightened and renounced their own politically committed past to hide among the esthetics of abstract art which, because it has no ideological content, can shelter the artist from all political inquisitions." (And this is by one Edouard Roditi, who claims to have lived in America, and so, one concludes, is committed to propaganda, not ludicrous misconceptions.)

So much for the press. What did all this expensive wordage in six different languages mean? Practically nothing. It simply reflected what a hundred or so newspaper men and/or their editors felt about America and sometimes about some paintings. But, as is well known, newspaper men are picture blind unless the pictures are taken with flashbulbs. How did the artists and the people who look at pictures respond?

The *France Observateur* man was right. Most artists are quite well aware that one of the major contemporary international styles started in America with some of these painters. In 1949 I attended a small showing of pastels in this idiom in Paris. Plenty of French painters came, but with few exceptions they all obviously thought the pictures were frauds, not bad, but actual jokes on the public. It was quite apparent on their faces and in their kind remarks. Ten years later, during the time the shows were in Paris there was an abstract show in Aix-en-Provence, where we were living, and the oldest painter there, Engel-Pak, a man about Picasso's age, was very obviously influenced by Rothko. That same month a friend of mine who works on *Cahiers du Sud* and the newspaper, *Le Provençal*, came back from a journalistic stint in Central Africa with three "Abstract-Expressionist" paintings done by a young Negro student at a Brazzaville lycée—a painter who had never been out of Africa. Except for their slightly tropical color sense, they might well have been done yesterday in the California School of Fine Arts.

Older painters like André Masson are proud of their influence on this American painting. Masson has been accused of boasting, but he is perfectly right. In 1929 my first wife and I were both conscientious compass-and-ruler painters and the appearance of the first Massons with their spontaneous, organic line had a tremendous effect on us and on all our contemporaries. Masson himself, of course, started out as one of the most rigorous Cubists—and a painter of birds, like Morris Graves! So he knows how hard the break was. Most older painters and most older serious critics, like Waldemar George, are still monogamously wedded to the Cubist tradition and find it very difficult to see anything else. If a picture doesn't look like Poussin and Raphael, it just isn't there, or worse, it is totally rescen, not just reinterpreted, in terms of early twentieth-century classical, architectural painting.

Nobody except journalists talked about Primitive Energy and Fantastic Vitality. The people you knew seemed all to have actually looked at the paintings. In fact, a considerable number of them traveled to Basel to see the show the first week it opened in Europe. Pollock, whose thirty-three large paintings were hung apart from the rest, towered in prestige. Most European painters have seen a Pollock or two and a lot of reproductions. His own statements, and the sometimes unfortunate praise he received, had prepared people for a combination James Dean, Davy Crockett and Jack Kerouac. Pollock, they discovered, in his completely achieved later paintings, as a very quiet, very lyrical sensibility, one of the least violent painters who ever lived. It is remarkable how quickly intelligent people faced with the record of his accomplishment (with, incidentally, plenty of storm and stress visible in the early paintings on the way to the final goal) made an immediate adjustment and took the paintings on their merits, not on their propaganda. It was a little like dropping in to hear Eddie Condon and discovering you are listening to Debussy, but almost everybody managed the readjustment. I think, in fact, that this was the biggest achievement of the show or shows. They demonstrated once and for all, to people who are not picture blind, that these painters are precisely the opposite of what their newspaper critics—and for that matter, sometimes their own anti-verbal selves—say they are.

Pollock, de Kooning, Gorky, Rothko, Guston, Hartigan—all these painters have some obvious link with "the European Tradition," if not with the specifically Cubist-Classical one. Everybody with any sense managed to *see* them. But Clyfford Still, who didn't bother to furnish a "statement" (the catalogue quoted some remarks from long ago) or even a photograph of himself—Still was another matter. People came up to his vast pictures very quietly, and toppled over into them without a murmur and came out with nothing to say. It was all very still. It was really wonderful to re-live the first years of his reception in California, where now, alas, the Still Style has become a mass produced cliché. I should say that we can expect a lot of echoes of his painting to crop up in Europe in the next year.

Everybody knows that from Barcelona to Warsaw, probably even Moscow, in spite of all the billions spent by the American government to lose friends and influence people, the most powerful American influences are modern jazz and these very painters. "Everybody knows" that these paintings were the beginnings of a new way of seeing things; as the man said, a new natural painting of Nature. Huge pictures into which you can walk like Alice, marshaled on wall after wall—and so quiet.

It was the sense of achievement which impressed many European painters. To quote from a letter from Edwina and Barney Rubenstein, two painters in the same general tradition as most of the painters in the show, from Boston (the home, as somebody in Switzerland pointed out in attacking this show, of "the great American school of Bitter Realism") but now permanently resident near us in Aix-en-Provence:

"The sour note was struck by a not-too-young French painter who remarked that while it was good to see what had been done during a powerful creative period, one felt that it was as much finished as Paris, in exactly the same sense. Not that no more painting could or would be done, merely that the thing had 'set,' the mold was formed. He could not understand how all this stuff got to be hanging on the walls of a museum, catalogued and labeled Great Art for all the world to see. What we see here on the wall, is it still happening, or have we been invited to a funeral?"

The Dial continued from page 29

until quite recently by the *Dr. Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak. Miss Moore, of course, is a close second but the applause that greeted the news of her first great success has scarcely faded on the horizon before the then editor of *The Dial*, Alyse Gregory, took her to task, and quite ferociously, for not making it sufficiently clear in her poem about "Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns" that these animals were mythical and not likely ever to be encountered at our Bronx Zoo. But if this were a rebuff it did not dismay Miss Moore much nor halt her long, for she has gone on accumulating prizes and distinctions ever since and only a short time ago saw one of her poems printed on the editorial page of the *New York Herald-Tribune* and fortified by an editorial insisting upon the importance of this poet with a fervor and assurance that sounded for all the world like Scofield Thayer of *The Dial* in the old days.

Those days were, in fact, "The days."

With that remark, it behooves me to quit. I have no desire to expand the idea that times were better then, though incurably persuaded that they were. Only one of these world wars had been fought then and the dread bomb had not yet fallen upon Hiroshima. The dollar was still something like a dollar and the paths for the critics and performers lay straight before them and they had no difficulty in finding the way. Who knows now what to do to safeguard the future? But old gentlemen in all periods of time have been querulously making that reproach, and I have no wish to be classed with them; so, you, if you happen to be thirty or a little less, are advised to discard this postscript to my comment upon *The Dial*. It's not original and I should hate to be saddled with it. I'd prefer being embalmed, when the time comes, with my fellow-spirits of the twenties. What I say now, is, you understand, "Off the record."

Rococo sculpture continued from page 44

modelers at Sèvres, where also Pigalle made important contributions to the production. None was esteemed less because of such activities, for in the climate of the period, finely executed work was appreciated fully on its own terms, and the maxim "There are no minor arts, only minor artists" was the measure of quality. Therefore, much of the curious, sophisticated spirit of the decades between 1720 and 1770 is mirrored in the fragile compositions in porcelain, and in the gleaming pieces of *bronze doré*, in the cane handles, clock cases, furniture mounts and table decorations.

In all these hardly anything survives of the heroic sculptural statements of the preceding period. If the Baroque had stolen the thunder from the hands of the gods, the Rococo subtly invaded the Elysian Fields, their gently swirling waters and shimmering atmosphere, and deftly incorporated these elements into its plastic vocabulary. True, they had been used in sculpture before: the Renaissance nymphs of Jean Goujon, the fountains of the Italian *seicento*, the grottos and cascades in the parks were all touched by a fascination for the sensuous movement of rippling, cascading water.

But only in the eighteenth century were equivalent sculptural means created on all artistic levels to express this fascination: ranging from literal representation through the symbolically conceived *rocaille* ornament to the complete artistic translation into sinuous line and undulating movement. *Rocaille*, this curious abstraction of rock, shell and water, was frequently incorporated in sculptural compositions, whether free-standing or in architectural context. And flowing curves and sinuous movement in three dimensions became the quintessence of Rococo sculpture, whether large or small, secular or religious.

Embodying the moment between repose and action, this movement is equilibrium and momentum at once, harmonious interplay of planes and lines, of space filled and space encircled. Inside these freely drawn outlines