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¿Y el Arte?

Priscila Fernandes

Preface

Time travelling has become very popular amongst us. Who can resist the temporal paradox, the landscapes of the future, altering our birth? Before embarking on such a trip, we know the procedures. We collect the tourist guides and marvel at the postcards, we try to initiate ourselves into the cultural and historical context. We open our imaginations and picture ourselves as already being there.

There are a trillion destinations and when a location is not listed, you still have the possibility of creating your own. This book is such a destination. We are now about to travel to the future, or the past—it all depends on when this book arrives in your hands.

I walk quickly through a labyrinth of cobbled streets before a vista opens in front of me in rectilinear precision. I'm at the Eixample, a district surrounding the medieval city of Barcelona that started to develop in the nineteenth century. With houses designed by Modernista architects, like Gaudí, this is the heart of Spanish modernism, and a small sample of the technical, innovative and scientific progress growing in the city. In the distance smoke bellows from the chimneys of textile factories, drawing a line that extends along the railway to the rocky seaside.

At El Quatre Gats I order a drink and look at the drawings of a young artist: Pablo Picasso. In the café I soon recognise that the crowd is mainly made up of artists, I can hear them talking heatedly and words jump from mouth to mouth: Innovation! Modernity! Stop looking at the past! Away with conservatism! Suddenly, outside, a startling sound interrupts us. Groups of workers run through the streets, riots, protests, barricades, in the distance churches are burning.

In the library of La Escuela Moderna [The Modern School] I read the titles of the school's modest red teaching manuals: science, history, literature. An art manual is nowhere to be found. "¿Y El Arte?" [What about Art?] is the latest article published in the *Boletín*, the school's monthly newsletter. I'm left to wonder if Aesthetic Education is not directly implemented in the school program, and, if not, why not. The content of "¿Y El Arte?" and oblique references in other texts provoke fascinating speculation on the role that art and artists could play in the formation of a free and egalitarian society, which is the ultimate goal of La Escuela Moderna. I also read that Francisc Ferrer i Guàrdia (founder of La Escuela Moderna) is commissioning illustrations from the Czech artist František Kupka, to be included in an upcoming publication.

La Escuela Moderna is a school that seeks to abolish all forms of authority and present a rational and scientific program, a free, secular, egalitarian and non-coercive education for children and parents. From a lack of examples, this school set up their own library, publishing their own educational books and newsletters. Looking at the writers, thinkers and artists whom the school choose to promote or commission works from, we soon realise a certain sympathy for the anarchic or anarcho-communist ideology, with Peter Kropotkin, Juan Grave, Paul Robin and Leo Tolstoy.

Tracing the relationship of these authors, I come across *La Revista Blanca*, a Spanish individualist anarchist magazine of art and sociology. In texts by Angel Cunillera, such as "Arte y Libertad" ("Art and Freedom") or "¿Que es el arte?" ("What is Art?"), an idea of how modern art can be situated at this moment in time begins to open up.

There are clear and stark differences between the authors I encounter, but, nevertheless, there is

a commonality in agreeing that art and the artist have a role in the liberation, education and growth of society. Brought together, these voices begin to speak amongst themselves in a conversation about ideals, revolution, freedom, the future of humanity and art education. It seems to me that perhaps La Escuela Moderna's art manual is here after all, just hidden between the lines.

Priscila Fernandes



Destruction of an Artist's Mind

The young art teacher of a nursery class in a large school devised to teach her little pupils to be art critics. After a short lesson, she hung on the wall or got the pupils to hang on the wall using a special strange device, their recently created drawings.

The boys and girls, in the presence of their simple works of art, made observations that were nothing but sincere and often powerfully original.

One day the lesson was particularly lively, the choice of subject was left up to the tiny artists.

“What would you like to draw?” the teacher asked her pupils.

Many hands were raised in response. A quick signal to one child then another and so on, resulted in unwavering, animated responses, some short, others detailed with long descriptions.

The slow, the shy, the indecisive all decided in turn. Everyone had an idea and wanted to explain it, whether it be a well-determined response or a confused one due to a lack of reflection.

“A cow and her calf.” “A chicken and its chicks.” “The huge cherry tree full of singing birds” (the artists likely, just as their primitive ancestors, would draw birds

PREVIOUS PAGES:

Paul Signac

*In Time of Harmony: The Golden Age is not in the Past,
It is in the Future, 1893–1895*

Oil on canvas, 300 × 401 cm

as large as the tree). "A beautiful colour landscape on a paper doily." "The road worker's house with its garden, rabbits and the respectable and gentle mastiff..." (the speaker with the happy attention of the auditorium, launched into a poetic description of what would flow from his pencil). "A fly seen through a magnifying glass." "A train at a station with a hotel." "The avenue in the park where the children play..." Everything is possible; the bold stood firm in the face of difficulty.

The work was commenced with excitement. There were children who were more or less skilful and active, but there were none who were totally clumsy, incapable or lazy. The happy group had fun, they used both their brains and their hands at the same time and without the mandatory *absolute silence* of education, as always lagging behind like an order from a petty bureaucrat prior to recently achieved progress, they talked but very little, only when necessary, as expected of those who have their minds occupied with a purpose.

Under these conditions and with this freedom, there were those who felt the need to communicate with their neighbour, asking for advice or explaining an idea, but always in a calm voice, without disturbing the general concentration, and with the conscious tolerance of the teacher.

Once the lesson had finished the exhibition of the drawings was prepared. Observations were made but the real critique was reserved for the beginning of the following class.

At that moment the caretaker appeared at the other end of the room, a kind and good-natured old man who was always pleasant with the children, the man who, despite his sootiness, was the skilled substitute for the bright sun, the man who, without a show or noise, created warmth whilst the star of heat let the school go cold during the sad days of winter.

The following day the teacher arrived early and was surprised to find the old man contemplating the drawings. The poor man was confounded to have been caught in the act of idleness—oh, poor workers, the slaves! Luckily the teacher was a rebel against all conventionalism and spoke to him warmly.

"Mr. Dubois, please don't apologise, you have done nothing wrong. Take a look at your leisure if you are interested."

"Ah! Ma'am! How fortunate the children are to be able to learn such beautiful things having fun and above all to be able to draw! When I was a child I loved drawing but I wasn't allowed to. I was punished many times for this crime and the last with such cruelty that I never dared pick up another pencil in my life."

"Why?"

"Well you see, a boy had given me a pencil and a notebook and in it I drew many things. One day my father caught me, he tore the notebook out of my hands ripping it up in anger and throwing it to the wind and he beat me saying 'You will not go to school again, where they teach you only nonsense.'"

"How old were you?"

"Nine or 10 years old. I could read well, and write fairly well and I knew how to add, subtract, multiply and divide. My father thought I knew enough, and since then I have worked day and night: digger, cartwright, gardener, labourer, currently caretaker and more blessed than ever, because at least I have a secured livelihood, I am not beaten and I am spoken to with kindness."

"Did you never draw again?"

"Yes, but my rough hands and stiff fingers did not do what my imagination had envisioned. As a man I could not do the same as I had done as a child."

"I would really like to see some of your drawings from that time."

"I can show you the pieces that are left, although dirty and worn, of that notebook, which I gathered up and kept as a reminder of the only glimmer of happiness from my childhood."

"Oh, please do show me!" said the young artist, just as moved as the old martyr of paternal and authoritarian education.

Indeed, those drawings belonged to the spontaneous genre of the primitive and of the children of every era that the pompous of the a priori, of the fictitious, do not understand, as it deviates from ingenious observation.

Could the poor caretaker have become a great artist, without the routine and brutal obstacle of his father, if he had been encouraged and protected or simply if he had been left to do his own thing?

Yes, or no, it hardly matters.

We know little of the past; we completely ignore the future. It is an absurd desire to want to respond to "what if..."

More so as to how our good caretaker could have used the universal language of art to his own advantage and to that of those around him, all the potential scholars, artists and poets whose minds have been destroyed by brutal authority, and could have contributed their ounce of pleasure to their brethren, taking advantage of the scarce happiness that life offers and lessening the intolerable suffering that is currently the fatal lot of the majority of humans.

Paul Robin

Art and Freedom

Plato must have had a terrible temper. As a good hypochondriac, being frivolous and rebellious, he wanted to throw poets out of his *Republic*. Max Nordau and Lombroso must be two very ill-tempered people with an even worse sense of humour; they say that artists are a bunch of maniacs.

All sensible and philosophical people look on those who brighten life with mistrust. I am unaware of the cause of such a phenomenon, I assume it is a fierce aversion to frank laughter felt by those who do not see beauty in the world, or who do not abandon themselves absolutely and with the sincerity of a child to its mother.

In spite of the pernickety people from the fields of science and philosophy, the future belongs to art, because it is joy and life. The art of tears, sighs and melancholy that drives us to the cemetery after having distorted our nervous system with its cardiac affections, its hysteria and its madness is no longer popular, nor does it have any admirers.

Works of thought or of the imagination that do not convey in their essence the flirtatiousness and smile of art are no longer listened to, read or admired. All writers, even scientific writers, strive to give their ex-

positions colour, lightness and pleasantness. And this sows joy and life, eternally beautiful and eternally real, in the field of ideas and of aesthetic emotion. Thank goodness for art that makes us smile and gives us faith! Thank goodness for art that makes us chase after the ideal with the eagerness of a child running after a butterfly! This is living and this is enjoying.

And who are the artists? The philosopher of generous ideas is an artist, the sociologist of fortunate societies is an artist, the educator of healthy humanities is an artist, so too is the hygienist of strong bodies, they are the artist of vital conceptions. The others, the intellectuals that are not like this, represent amongst people what the owl represents amongst birds; it poses in the cemeteries and is frightened by light.

The light of art, the light of sociology, the light of free and fortunate humanities is spreading more and more each day, and the time will come when the owl-man can no longer leave his cavern, and will die there, a victim of his own indifference and his own sorrow.

Let us laugh, always laugh, artists, so that our laughter brings joy to men, women and children. Let us love, always love, artists, so that our love fertilises the earth and fills it with kisses and embraces.

I feel such emotion, and I could almost cry out of pure contentment with myself, for the world I was born in and of the love that this world has inspired in me. I am all love, smiles and joy. My work and my actions give off health, they sow comfort. I have only one cause for sorrow: I do not have enough freedom to extend my life to the lives of others, my love to the love of strangers. The world I hold so dear has enslaved me.

Alas! If only artists were free in the midst of the conventionalism and concerns that currently paralyse their vital and artistic action! But let us not think of sad things.

Let us laugh and let us love, artists, so that our laughter cheers up the men, the women and the children, and so that our love fertilises the earth and fills it with kisses and embraces.

Ángel Cunillera



What is Art?

If we say that the aim of any activity is merely our pleasure, and define it solely by that pleasure, our definition will evidently be a false one. But this is precisely what has occurred in the efforts to define art. Now, if we consider the food question it will not occur to anyone to affirm that the importance of food consists in the pleasure we receive when eating it.

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And in the same way, beauty, or that which pleases us, can in no sense serve as the basis for the definition of art; nor can a series of objects that afford us pleasure serve as the model of what art should be.

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Just as people who conceive the aim and purpose of food to be pleasure cannot recognise the real meaning of eating, so people who consider the aim of art to be pleasure cannot realise its true meaning and purpose because they attribute to an activity the meaning of which lies in its connection with other phenomena of life, the false and exceptional aim of pleasure. People come to understand that the meaning of eating lies in the nourishment of the body only

PREVIOUS PAGES:
Henri Matisse
Joy of Life, 1905–1906
Oil on canvas, 175 × 241 cm

when they cease to consider that the object of that activity is pleasure. And it is the same with regard to art. People will come to understand the meaning of art only when they cease to consider that the aim of that activity is beauty, i.e., pleasure. The acknowledgment of beauty (i.e., of a certain kind of pleasure received from art) as being the aim of art not only fails to assist us in finding a definition of what art is, but, on the contrary, by transferring the question into a region quite foreign to art (into metaphysical, psychological, physiological and even historical discussions as to why such a production pleases one person, and such another displeases or pleases someone else), it renders such definition impossible. And since discussions as to why one person likes pears and another prefers meat do not help towards finding a definition of what is essential in nourishment, so the solution of questions of taste in art (to which the discussions on art involuntarily come) not only does not help to make clear in what this particular human activity that we call art really consists, but renders such elucidation quite impossible until we rid ourselves of a conception which justifies every kind of art at the cost of confusing the whole matter.

To the question, "What is this art, to which is offered up the labour of millions, the very lives of individuals, and even morality itself?" we have extracted replies from the existing aesthetics, which all amount to this: that the aim of art is beauty, that beauty is recognised by the enjoyment it gives and that artistic enjoyment is a good and important thing, because it *is* enjoyment. In a word, that enjoyment is good because it is enjoyment. Thus, what is considered the definition of art is no definition at all, but only a shuffle to justify existing art. Therefore, however strange it may seem to say so, in spite of the mountains of books written about art, no exact definition of art has

been constructed. And the reason of this is that the conception of art has been based on the conception of beauty.

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What is art, if we put aside the conception of beauty, which confuses the whole matter? The latest and most comprehensible definitions of art, apart from the conception of beauty, are the following: (1a) Art is an activity arising even in the animal kingdom, and springing from sexual desire and the propensity to play (Schiller, Darwin, Spencer), and (1b) accompanied by a pleasurable excitement of the nervous system (Grant Allen). This is the physiological-evolutionary definition. (2) Art is the external manifestation, by means of lines, colours, movements, sounds or words, of emotions felt by humanity (Véron). This is the experimental definition. According to the very latest definition (Sully), (3) art is "the production of some permanent object, or passing action, which is fitted not only to supply an active enjoyment to the producer, but to convey a pleasurable impression to a number of spectators or listeners, quite apart from any personal advantage to be derived from it."

Notwithstanding the superiority of these definitions to the metaphysical definitions that depended on the conception of beauty, they are yet far from exact. (1a) The first, the physiological-evolutionary definition, is inexact, because, instead of speaking about the artistic activity itself, which is the real matter in hand, it treats of the derivation of art. The modifications of it (1b), based on the physiological effects of the human organism, is inexact, because within the limits of such definition many other human activities can be included, as has occurred in the neo-aesthetic theories, which reckon as art the preparation of handsome clothes, pleasant scents and even of victuals.

The experimental definition (2), which makes art consist in the expression of emotions, is inexact, because a person may express their emotions by means of lines, colours, sounds or words, and yet may not act on others by such expression; and then the manifestation of their emotions is not art.

The third definition (that of Sully) is inexact, because in the production of objects or actions affording pleasure to the producer and a pleasant emotion to the spectators or hearers apart from personal advantage, may be included the showing of conjuring tricks or gymnastic exercises, and other activities which are not art. And, further, many things, the production of which does not afford pleasure to the producer, and the sensation received from which is unpleasant, such as gloomy, heart-rending scenes in a poetic description or a play, may nevertheless be undoubted works of art.

The inaccuracy of all these definitions arises from the fact that in them all (as also in the metaphysical definitions) the object considered is the pleasure art may give, and not the purpose it may serve in the life of humanity.

In order correctly to define art, it is necessary, first of all, to cease to consider it as a means to pleasure and to consider it as one of the conditions of human life. Viewing it in this way we cannot fail to observe that art is one of the means of intercourse between people.

Every work of art causes the receiver to enter into a certain kind of relationship both with those who produced, or are producing, the art, and with all those who, simultaneously, previously or subsequently, receive the same artistic impression.

Speech, transmitting the thoughts and experiences of individuals, serves as a means of union amongst them, and art acts in a similar manner. The peculiarity of this latter means of intercourse, distinguishing it from intercourse by means of words, consists in this, that whereas

by words a person transmits their thoughts to another, by means of art they transmit their feelings.

The activity of art is based on the fact that a person, receiving through their sense of hearing or sight another person's expression of feeling, is capable of experiencing the emotion that moved the person who expressed it. To take the simplest example; one man laughs, and another who hears becomes merry; or a man weeps, and another who hears feels sorrow. A man is excited or irritated, and another man seeing him comes to a similar state of mind. By their movements or by the sounds of their voice, a person expresses courage and determination or sadness and calmness, and this state of mind passes on to others. A man suffers, expressing his sufferings by groans and spasms, and this suffering transmits itself to other people; a man expresses his feeling of admiration, devotion, fear, respect or love to certain objects, persons or phenomena, and others are infected by the same feelings of admiration, devotion, fear, respect or love to the same objects, persons and phenomena.

And it is upon this capacity of people to receive another person's expression of feeling and experience those feelings themselves, that the activity of art is based.

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The feelings with which the artist infects others may be most various—very strong or very weak, very important or very insignificant, very bad or very good: feelings of love for one's own country, self-devotion and submission to fate or to God expressed in a drama, raptures of lovers described in a novel, feelings of voluptuousness expressed in a picture, courage expressed in a triumphal march, merriment evoked by a dance, humour evoked by a funny story, the feeling of quietness transmitted by an evening landscape or

by a lullaby or the feeling of admiration evoked by a beautiful arabesque—it is all art.

If only the spectators or auditors are infected by the feelings that the author has felt, it is art.

To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art.

Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one person consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings they have lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them.

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For the great majority of working people, our art, besides being inaccessible on account of its costliness, is strange in its very nature, transmitting as it does the feelings of people far removed from those conditions of laborious life that are natural to the great body of humanity. That which is enjoyment to a person of the rich classes is incomprehensible as a pleasure to a worker, and evokes in them either no feeling at all or only a feeling quite contrary to that which it evokes in an idle and satiated person. Such feelings as form the chief subjects of present-day art—say, for instance, honour, patriotism and amorousness—evoke in a worker only bewilderment and contempt, or indignation. So that even if a possibility were given to the labouring classes in their free time to see, to read and to hear all that forms the flower of contemporary art (as is done to some extent in towns by means of picture galleries, popular concerts and libraries), the worker (to the extent to which they are a labourer and have not begun to pass into the ranks

of those perverted by idleness) would be able to make nothing of our fine art, and if they did understand it, that which they understood would not elevate their soul but would certainly, in most cases, pervert it. To thoughtful and sincere people there can, therefore, be no doubt that the art of our upper classes never can be the art of the whole people. But if art is an important matter, a spiritual blessing, essential for all people (“like religion”, as the devotees of art are fond of saying), then it should be accessible to everyone. And if, as in our day, it is not accessible to all people, then one of two things: either art is not the vital matter it is represented to be or that art which we call art is not the real thing.

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If a person is infected by the author’s condition of soul, if they feel this emotion and this union with others, then the object which has effected this is art; but if there be no such infection, if there be not this union with the author and with others who are moved by the same work, then it is not art. And not only is infection a sure sign of art, but the degree of infectiousness is also the sole measure of excellence in art.

The stronger the infection, the better is the art as art, speaking now apart from its subject matter, i.e., not considering the quality of the feelings it transmits.

And the degree of the infectiousness of art depends on three conditions:

(1) On the greater or lesser individuality of the feeling transmitted;

(2) on the greater or lesser clearness with which the feeling is transmitted;

(3) on the sincerity of the artist, i.e., on the greater or lesser force with which the artist themselves feels the emotion they transmit.

The more individual the feeling transmitted the more strongly does it act on the receiver; the more individual the state of soul into which they are transferred, the more pleasure does the receiver obtain, and therefore the more readily and strongly do they join in it.

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I have mentioned three conditions of contagiousness in art, but they may be all summed up into one, the last, sincerity, i.e., that the artist should be impelled by an inner need to express their feeling. That condition includes the first; for if the artist is sincere they will express the feeling as they experienced it. And as each person is different from everyone else, their feeling will be individual for everyone else; and the more individual it is—the more the artist has drawn it from the depths of their nature—the more sympathetic and sincere will it be. And this same sincerity will impel the artist to find a clear expression of the feeling that they wish to transmit.

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Thus is art divided from that which is not art, and thus is the quality of art as art decided, independently of its subject matter, i.e., apart from whether the feelings it transmits are good or bad.

But how are we to define good and bad art with reference to its subject matter?

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Art, like speech, is a means of communication, and therefore of progress, i.e., of the movement of humanity forwards towards perfection. Speech renders accessible to people of the latest generations all the knowledge discovered by the experience and reflection, both of preceding generations and of the best

and foremost people of their own times; art renders accessible to people of the latest generations all the feelings experienced by their predecessors, and those also which are being felt by their best and foremost contemporaries. And as the evolution of knowledge proceeds by truer and more necessary knowledge dislodging and replacing what is mistaken and unnecessary, so the evolution of feeling proceeds through art—feelings less kind and less needful for the well-being of humankind are replaced by others kinder and more needful for that end. That is the purpose of art.

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It must be the art, not of some one group of people, nor of one class, nor of one nationality, nor of one religious cult; that is, it must not transmit feelings which are accessible only to a person educated in a certain way, or only to an aristocrat, or a merchant, or only to a Russian, or a native of Japan, or a Roman Catholic, or a Buddhist etc., but it must transmit feelings accessible to everyone. Only art of this kind can be acknowledged in our time to be good art, worthy of being chosen out from all the rest of art and encouraged.

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The art of our time should be appraised differently from former art chiefly in this, that the art of our time, i.e., Christian art (basing itself on a religious perception which demands the union of all), excludes from the domain of art good in subject matter everything transmitting exclusive feelings which do not unite, but divide, people. It relegates such work to the category of art bad in its subject matter, while, on the other hand, it includes in the category of art good in subject matter a section not formerly admitted to de-

serve to be chosen out and respected, namely, universal art, transmitting even the most trifling and simple feelings if only they are accessible to all without exception and therefore unite them. Such art cannot in our time but be esteemed good, for it attains the end which the religious perception of our time, i.e., Christianity, sets before humanity.

Christian art either evokes in people those feelings which, through love of God and of one's neighbour, draw them to greater and ever greater union and make them ready for and capable of such union, or evokes in them those feelings which show them that they are already united in the joys and sorrows of life. And therefore the Christian art of our time can be and is of two kinds: (1) art transmitting feelings flowing from a religious perception of a person's position in the world in relation to God and to their neighbour—religious art in the limited meaning of the term; and (2) art transmitting the simplest feelings of common life, but such, always, as are accessible to all people in the whole world—the art of common life—the art of the people—universal art. Only these two kinds of art can be considered good art in our time.

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The religious perception of our time—which consists in acknowledging that the aim of life (both collective and individual) is the union of humankind—is already so sufficiently distinct that people have now only to reject the false theory of beauty according to which enjoyment is considered to be the purpose of art, and religious perception will naturally take its place as the guide of the art of our time.

And as soon as the religious perception, which already unconsciously directs the life of humanity, is consciously acknowledged, then immediately and nat-

urally the division of art into art for the lower and art for the upper classes will disappear. There will be one common, brotherly, universal art, and first that art will naturally be rejected which transmits feelings incompatible with the religious perception of our time, feelings which do not unite, but divide people, and then that insignificant, exclusive art will be rejected to which an importance is now attached to which it has no right.

And as soon as this occurs, art will immediately cease to be what it has been in recent times, a means of making people coarser and more vicious, and it will become what it always used to be and should be, a means by which humanity progresses towards unity and blessedness.

Leo Tolstoy

What is Art?

Leo Tolstoy asked this question in order to respond to it in a book, and it is perhaps one of the first and last questions that all thinker-artists and artist-thinkers have asked themselves, from time immemorial to our day.

Who reduces art to a simple receiver of physiological functions? Who raises it to the category of the most pure and delicate spiritual emotion? Who considers art solely as an organic commotion, but a commotion that can be aesthetic if it makes us feel depth and greatness, and unsightly if it provokes repulsion and a lack of harmony? Some might say that art is something that is independent of any idea of good or bad, or, better still, being good or bad, it is still art if it provokes profound emotions. These people want a type of art that invigorates and improves the population in its sentiments and in its ideas, but above all in its sentiments. They say that art should have no other purpose than to make us feel beauty and pleasure, without any other transcendental aim than that same pleasure and that same beauty. Some argue that even the word 'purpose' is an assault on art, because it cannot, and should not have any purpose, because it is an emotional product of each individual, whose purpose is held by the artists, in their nerves, of indefinite and

indefinable eternal notes and modulations, rather than in their ideas. Mystics like Tolstoy want an art subject to the censorship of a dogmatic and narrow morality. Naturalists prefer it just as it emerges from the animality of man, with an absolute absence of intellectual and psychological refinement, with love, hatred and fear, without the artist anxiously trying to discover whether or not the human beast has morals and is improvable.

Thus artists are divided into so many names and groups that there is no way to describe them, unless we divide them into two large bands and, widening the net we say: Any artist who subjects art to a moral purpose or ideal is an idealist artist; any artist who places no objective in their art and is only concerned with form, is a decadent artist.

Ultimately, artists are divided into two large groups that can be classified as I have classified them or in some equivalent way, although it is impossible to get them to agree on any point or only on the subject of what is purely emotional.

Why is there such a diversity of opinions? Simply because the world of psychology does not have one single shade or note. Each artist produces colours that are different from the rest, and even the public who receives the emotion from the creator of emotions is divided between those who are more able to comprehend one emotion or another, because if in external organics no one is the same and if so only similar, in internal organics each individual has a different system from the next, if not in essence, then in form: the organ or system of organs that produce and receive feelings, is not the same in any person.

How, therefore, can we be aesthetes if beauty is multiple and varied; or deists of particular or secondary ideas if the idea is infinite in its variety and evolution; or moralists if morality has no defined or same existence

anywhere? Only in offspring of religious dogma can ideal, social dogma and artistic dogma be found.

I cannot be sure what Ruskin and Guyau thought of art, because art, to these masters of intuitive aesthetic, which is the only true aesthetic because in beauty and in taste there is no room for experiment or mathematical calculations, is not presented with absolute or even conclusive definitions; but I have a feeling that they were equally separated from the mystics and deists and naturalists, and that they, perhaps unconsciously, Ruskin more than Guyau, began this powerful trend that aims to unite life with art, in other words, to create an art for the exaltation and possession of life, not a special life of decadent refinements for the academic art of the parties and of the coterie who decree and legislate as if art could be pigeonholed into a specific mould.

Undoubtedly. The more I become involved in these matters regarding art and questions of aesthetics, the more my thoughts are seized by the concept that humanity, sooner rather than later, will have lost the notion of all political and religious ideals, with regard to both art and sociology, to create an ideal of a higher order, common to all. Thus the social need for sects, religions and parties that divide people into casts and classes would disappear; all lower-order ideals would disappear, such as those that aim to suppress life in its multiple manifestations and make some dependent on others, namely gentlemen, priests and soldiers. Nowadays, the variety of parties and religions has no other purpose than the imposition and repression of many by a few, and this social order, inferior in the extreme and which has fed and allowed this mentality, has at the same time produced the organ of subordination, of submission, amongst the crowds who have various names according to race and nation, but who are confined and defined by a particular characteristic called intellectual or physical slavery.

And art has followed the same trend, a victim, like philosophy, of the social and physiological organ that calls with superior might for the existence of chapels, sects and parties, to divide and subjugate: divided into parties and religions; subject to law, leadership or mandate. And in human intellect, slavery and tyranny, the belief in a God and in His priests, is currently so necessary, like an imperative mandate of the times that were, that humankind not only sees freedom as impossible, but feels it is harmful.

However, those who know how to observe well through art and sociology will note immediately that both manifestations of intelligence, the most powerful of our day, are aimed at a higher common ideal that recruits, unites and covers up copious cerebral energy that was previously scattered among the regions of art, philosophy and even science.

That is life.

Today, the joy of living, the intention of magnifying and participating in it, moves many hearts. Physiologists, educators, sociologists, do nothing other than demand a healthy, intense and multiple life. What will we say of art, the ultimate manifestation of human intelligence, the summary of all knowledge, the creator of new emotions, the arouser and discoverer of new sentiments? Art must tend and does tend to beautify and magnify life, to make it more intense, more powerful, more impetuous.

I believe that all ideals, in their day, should unite in life, or, better still, that there should be no other ideal than life; that philosophers, scientists and artists would say when creating: "this must serve to make the existence of my fellows, of humanity as a whole, longer, greater and more beautiful," just as now they say: "this will bring me wealth and comfort," that instead of beautifying the life of an individual they shorten it and make it ill.

Nowadays the philosopher who is an artist, or the artist who is a philosopher, channels their work to turn all personal and inferior ideas of fatherland, religion, ownership, government etc., into the ideal of living well, of enjoying a great deal, of knowing an enormous amount, of feeling with vehemence, of adorning all of our actions with strong and intense feelings and desires, so that people know at all times that they are enjoying life because they are alive, or that they are alive because they are enjoying life.

This is what art should endeavour to do and what art should be, and this is what current generations are seeking.

Art that is religious is false art, particularist; art that is atheist is the art of sects; art that focuses only on the form or on art itself, is the art of parties, and, in general, formed by artists who physically leave a lot to be desired; art called idea art, when these ideas are not, due to their superiority, common to all, is also faction art. Such creations cannot be either artistic or spontaneous because they are subject to a preconceived principle. They are artifices under the orders of a particular concern of the author, or, more precisely, of one of the inferior ideals of the many that have been bequeathed to us by days gone by.

Only vital art, art that is concerned with the intensity, the integrity, the power and the beauty of life in general is true art; only art that beautifies, magnifies and makes us love life, and which is therefore good and which can therefore be better and more intense and varied, is art.

Ángel Cunillera

The Need for Luxury

A person, however, is not a being whose exclusive purpose in life is eating, drinking and providing a shelter for themselves. As soon as their material wants are satisfied, other needs, of an artistic character, will thrust themselves forward the more ardently. Aims of life vary with each and every individual; and the more society is civilised, the more will individuality be developed, and the more will desires be varied.

Even today we see men and women denying themselves necessities to acquire mere trifles, to obtain some particular gratification, or some intellectual or material enjoyment. A Christian or an ascetic may disapprove of these desires for luxury; but it is precisely these trifles that break the monotony of existence and make it agreeable. Would life, with all its inevitable sorrows, be worth living, if besides daily work, people could never obtain a single pleasure according to their individual tastes?

If we wish for a Social Revolution, it is no doubt in the first place to give bread to all; to transform this execrable society, in which we can every day see robust workmen dangling their arms for want of an employer

who will exploit them; women and children wandering shelterless at night; whole families reduced to dry bread; men, women and children dying for want of care and even for want of food. It is to put an end to these iniquities that we rebel.

But we expect more from the Revolution. We see that the worker compelled to struggle painfully for bare existence, is reduced to ignorance of these higher delights, the highest within humanity's reach, of science, and especially of scientific discovery; of art, and especially of artistic creation. It is in order to obtain these joys for all, which are now reserved to a few; in order to give leisure and the possibility of developing intellectual capacities, that the Social Revolution must guarantee daily bread to all. After bread has been secured, leisure is the supreme aim.

No doubt, nowadays, when hundreds and thousands of human beings are in need of bread, coal, clothing and shelter, luxury is a crime; to satisfy it the worker's child must go without bread! But in a society in which all can eat sufficiently the needs which we consider luxuries today will be the more keenly felt. And as all people do not and cannot resemble one another (the variety of tastes and needs is the chief guarantee of human progress) there will always be, and it is desirable that there should always be, men and women whose desire will go beyond those of ordinary individuals in some particular direction.

Everybody does not need a telescope, because, even if learning were general, there are people who prefer examining things through a microscope to studying the starry heavens. Some like statues, some pictures. A particular individual has no other ambition than to possess an excellent piano, while another is pleased with an accordion. The tastes vary, but the artistic needs exist in all. In our present, poor capitalistic society, the

person who has artistic needs cannot satisfy them unless they are heir to a large fortune, or by dint of hard work appropriates to themselves an intellectual capital which will enable them to take up a liberal profession. Still they cherish the *hope* of some day satisfying their tastes more or less, and for this reason they reproach the idealist Communist societies with having the material life of each individual as their sole aim. "In your communal stores you may perhaps have bread for all," he says to us, "but you will not have beautiful pictures, optical instruments, luxurious furniture, artistic jewellery—in short, the many things that minister to the infinite variety of human tastes. And in this way you suppress the possibility of obtaining anything besides the bread and meat which the commune can offer to all, and the grey linen in which all your lady citizens will be dressed."

These are the objections which all Communist systems have to consider, and which the founders of new societies, established in American deserts, never understood. They believed that if the community could procure sufficient cloth to dress all its members, a music hall in which the 'brothers' could strum a piece of music, or act a play from time to time, it was enough. They forgot that the feeling for art existed in the agriculturist as well as in the burgher, and, notwithstanding that the expression of artistic feeling varies according to the difference in culture, in the main it remains the same. In vain did the community guarantee the common necessities of life, in vain did it suppress all education that would tend to develop individuality, in vain did it eliminate all reading save the Bible. Individual tastes broke forth, and caused general discontent; quarrels arose when somebody proposed to buy a piano or scientific instruments; and the elements of progress flagged. The society could only exist on condition that it crushed all individual feeling, all artistic tendency and all development.

Will the anarchist commune be impelled by the same direction? Evidently not, if it understands that while it produces all that is necessary to material life, it must also strive to satisfy all manifestations of the human mind.

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We frankly confess that when we think of the abyss of poverty and suffering that surrounds us, when we hear the heartrending cry of the worker walking the streets begging for work, we are loath to discuss the question: How will people act in a society, whose members are properly fed, to satisfy certain individuals desirous of possessing a piece of Sèvres china or a velvet dress?

We are tempted to answer: Let us make sure of bread to begin with, we shall see to china and velvet later on.

But as we must recognise that individuals have other needs besides food, and as the strength of Anarchy lies precisely in that it understands *all* human faculties and *all* passions, and ignores none, we shall, in a few words, explain how people can contrive to satisfy all their intellectual and artistic needs.

We have already mentioned that by working four or five hours a day till the age of 45 or 50, people could easily produce *all* that is necessary to guarantee comfort to society.

But the day's work of a person accustomed to toil does not consist of five hours; it is a 10-hour day for 300 days a year, and lasts all their life. Of course, when a person is harnessed to a machine, their health is soon undermined and their intelligence is blunted; but when a person has the possibility of varying occupations, and especially of alternating manual with intellectual work, they can remain occupied without fatigue, and even with pleasure, for 10 or 12 hours a day. Consequently the person who will have done four or five hours of manual work necessary for their existence, will have before

them five or six hours which they will seek to employ according to their tastes. And these five or six hours a day will fully enable them to procure for themselves, if they associate with others, all they wish for, in addition to the necessaries guaranteed to all.

They will discharge first their task in the field, the factory and so on, which they owe to society as their contribution to the general production. And they will employ the second half of their day, their week or their year, to satisfy their artistic or scientific needs, or their hobbies.

Thousands of societies will spring up to gratify every taste and every possible fancy.

Some, for example, will give their hours of leisure to literature. They will then form groups comprising authors, composers, printers, engravers, draughtsmen, all pursuing a common aim—the propagation of ideas that are dear to them.

Nowadays an author knows that there is a beast of burden, the worker, to whom, for the sum of a few shillings a day, they can entrust the printing of their books; but they hardly care to know what a printing office is like. If the compositor suffers from lead poisoning, and if the child who sees to the machine dies of anaemia, are there not other poor wretches to replace them?

But when there will be no more starvelings ready to sell their work for a pittance, when the exploited worker of today will be educated and will have their *own* ideas to put down in black and white and to communicate to others, then the authors and scientists will be compelled to combine among themselves and with the printers, in order to bring out their prose and their poetry.

So long as people consider fustian and manual labour as a mark of inferiority, it will appear amazing to them to see an author setting up their own book in type, for have they not a gymnasium or games by way of diver-

sion? But when the opprobrium connected with manual labour has disappeared, when all will have to work with their hands, there being no one to do it for them, then the authors as well as their admirers will soon learn the art of handling composing sticks and type; they will know the pleasure of coming together—all admirers of the work to be printed—to set up the type, to shape it into pages, to take it in its virginal purity from the press. These beautiful machines, instruments of torture to the child who attends on them from morn till night, will be a source of enjoyment for those who will make use of them in order to give voice to the thoughts of their favourite author.

Will literature lose by it? Will the poet be less a poet after having worked out of doors or helped with their hands to multiply their work? Will the novelist lose their knowledge of human nature after having rubbed shoulders with other people in the forest or the factory, in the laying out of a road or on a railway line? Can there be two answers to these questions?

Maybe some books will be less voluminous; but then, more will be said on fewer pages. Maybe fewer waste sheets will be published; but the matter printed will be more attentively read and more appreciated. The book will appeal to a larger circle of better-educated readers, who will be more competent to judge.

Moreover, the art of printing, which has so little progressed since Gutenberg, is still in its infancy. It takes two hours to compose in type what is written in 10 minutes, but more expeditious methods of multiplying thought are being sought after and will be discovered.

What a pity every author does not have to take their share in the printing of their works! What progress printing would have already made! We should no longer be using the movable letters, as in the seventeenth century.

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And what about art? From all sides we hear lamentations about the decadence of art. We are, indeed, far behind the great masters of the Renaissance. The technicalities of art have recently made great progress; thousands of people gifted with a certain amount of talent cultivate every branch, but art seems to fly from civilisation! Technicalities make headway, but inspiration frequents artists' studios less than ever.

Where, indeed, should it come from? Only a grand idea can inspire art. Art is in our ideal synonymous with creation, it must look ahead; but save a few rare, very rare exceptions, the professional artist remains too philistine to perceive new horizons.

Moreover, this inspiration cannot come from books; it must be drawn from life, and present society cannot arouse it.

Raphael and Murillo painted at a time when the search of a new ideal could adapt itself to old religious traditions. They painted to decorate great churches which represented the pious work of several generations. The basilica with its mysterious aspect, its grandeur, was connected with the life itself of the city and could inspire a painter. They worked for a popular monument; they spoke to their fellow citizens, and in return they received inspiration; they appealed to the multitude in the same way as did the nave, the pillars, the stained windows, the statues and the carved doors. Nowadays the greatest honour a painter can aspire to is to see their canvas, framed in gilded wood, hung in a museum, a sort of old curiosity shop, where you see, as in the Prado, Murillo's *Ascension* next to a beggar of Velasquez and the dogs of Philip II. Poor Velasquez and poor Murillo! Poor Greek statues which *lived* in the Acropolis of their cities, and are now stifled beneath the red cloth hangings of the Louvre!

When a Greek sculptor chiselled their marble they endeavoured to express the spirit and heart of the city. All its passions, all its traditions of glory, were to live again in the work. But today the *united* city has ceased to exist; there is no more communion of ideas. The town is a chance agglomeration of people who do not know one another, who have no common interest, save that of enriching themselves at the expense of one another. The fatherland does not exist... What fatherland can the international banker and the rag-picker have in common? Only when cities, territories, nations or groups of nations, will have renewed their harmonious life, will art be able to draw its inspiration from *ideals held in common*. Then will the architect conceive the city's monument which will no longer be a temple, a prison or a fortress; then will the painter, the sculptor, the carver, the ornament; workers know where to put their canvases, their statues and their decorations; deriving their power of execution from the same vital source, and gloriously marching all together towards the future.

But till then art can only vegetate. The best canvases of modern artists are those that represent nature, villages, valleys, the sea with its dangers, the mountain with its splendours. But how can the painter express the poetry of work in the fields if they have only contemplated it, imagined it, if they have never delighted in it themselves? If they only know it as a bird of passage knows the country it soars over on its migrations? If, in the vigour of early youth, they have not followed the plough at dawn and enjoyed mowing grass with a large swathe of the scythe next to hardly haymakers vying in energy with lively young girls who fill the air with their songs? The love of the soil and of what grows on it is not acquired by sketching with a paintbrush—it is only in its service; and without loving it, how paint it? This

is why all that the best painters have produced in this direction is still so imperfect, not true to life, nearly always merely sentimental. There is no *strength* in it.

You must have seen a sunset when returning from work. You must have been a peasant among peasants to keep the splendour of it in your eye. You must have been at sea with fishermen at all hours of the day and night, have fished yourself, struggled with the waves, faced the storm, and after rough work experienced the joy of hauling a heavy net, or the disappointment of seeing it empty, to understand the poetry of fishing. You must have spent time in a factory, known the fatigues and the joys of creative work, forged metals by the vivid light of a blast furnace, have felt the life in a machine, to understand the power of humanity and to express it in a work of art. You must in fact, be permeated with popular feelings, to describe them. Besides, the works of future artists who will have lived the life of the people, like the great artists of the past, will not be destined for sale. They will be an integrant part of a living whole that would not be complete without them, any more than they would be complete without it. People will go to the artist's own city to gaze at their work, and the spirited and serene beauty of such creations will produce its beneficial effect on heart and mind.

Art, in order to develop, must be bound up with industry by a thousand intermediate degrees blended, so to say, as Ruskin and the great Socialist poet Morris have proved so often and so well. Everything that surrounds people, in the street, in the interior and exterior of public monuments, must be of a pure artistic form.

But this will only be capable of realisation in a society in which all enjoy comfort and leisure. Then we shall see art associations, in which each can find room for their capacity, for art cannot dispense with an infinity of purely manual and technical supplementary works. These artistic

associations will undertake to embellish the houses of their members, as those kind volunteers, the young painters of Edinburgh, did in decorating the walls and ceilings of the great hospital for the poor in their city.

A painter or sculptor who has produced a work of personal feeling will offer it to the woman he loves, or to a friend. Executed for love's sake, will his work, inspired by love, be inferior to the art that today satisfies the vanity of the philistine because it has cost much money?

The same will be done as regards all pleasure not comprised in the necessities of life. Those who wish for a grand piano will enter the association of musical instrument makers. And by giving the association part of their half-days' leisure, they will soon possess the piano of their dreams. If they are passionately fond of astronomical studies they will join the association of astronomers, with its philosophers, its observers, its calculators, with its artists in astronomical instruments, its scientists and amateurs, and they will have the telescope they desire by taking their share of the associated work, for it is especially the rough work that is needed in an astronomical observatory bricklayer's, carpenter's, founder's, mechanic's work, the last touch being given to the instrument of precision by the artist.

In short, the five or seven hours a day which each will have at their disposal, after having consecrated several hours to the production of necessities, will amply suffice to satisfy all longings for luxury however varied. Thousands of associations would undertake to supply them. What is now the privilege of an insignificant minority would be accessible to all. Luxury, ceasing to be a foolish and ostentatious display of the bourgeois class, would become an artistic pleasure.

Every one would be the happier for it. In collective work, performed with a light heart to attain a desired end, a book, a work of art or an object of luxury, each

will find an incentive, and the necessary relaxation that makes life pleasant.

In working to put an end to the division between master and slave we work for the happiness of both, for the happiness of humanity.

Peter Kropotkin

FOLLOWING PAGES:

Francisco Goya

Thou Who Cannot, 1797–1799

Etching and aquatint, 21.3 × 15.2 cm

Ramon Casas

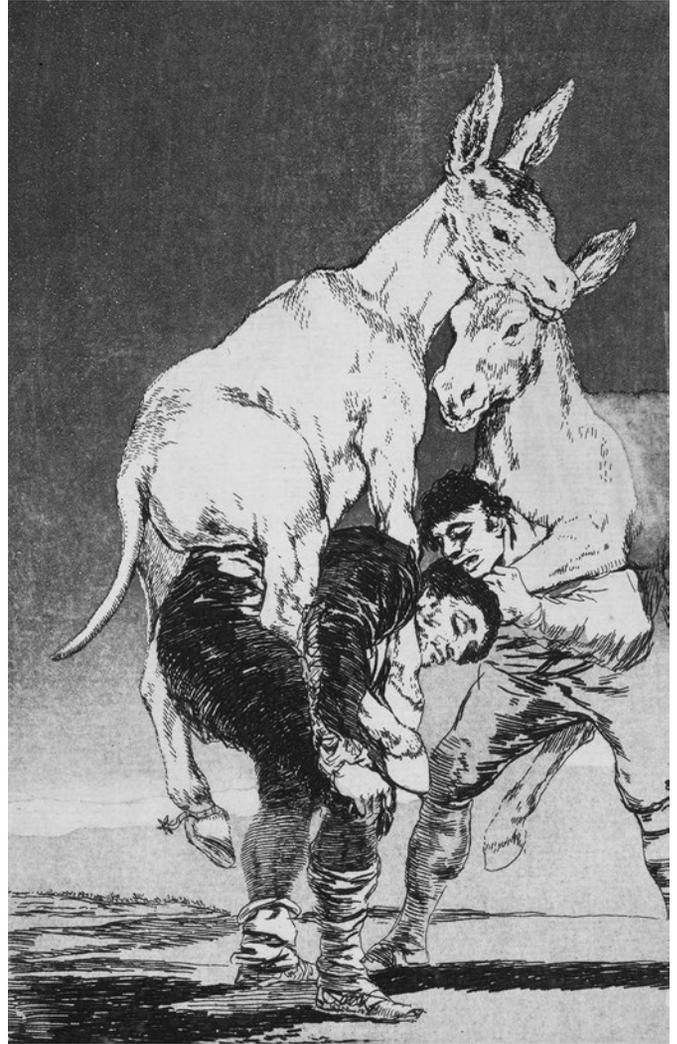
The Charge, 1899

Oil on canvas, 298 × 470.5 cm

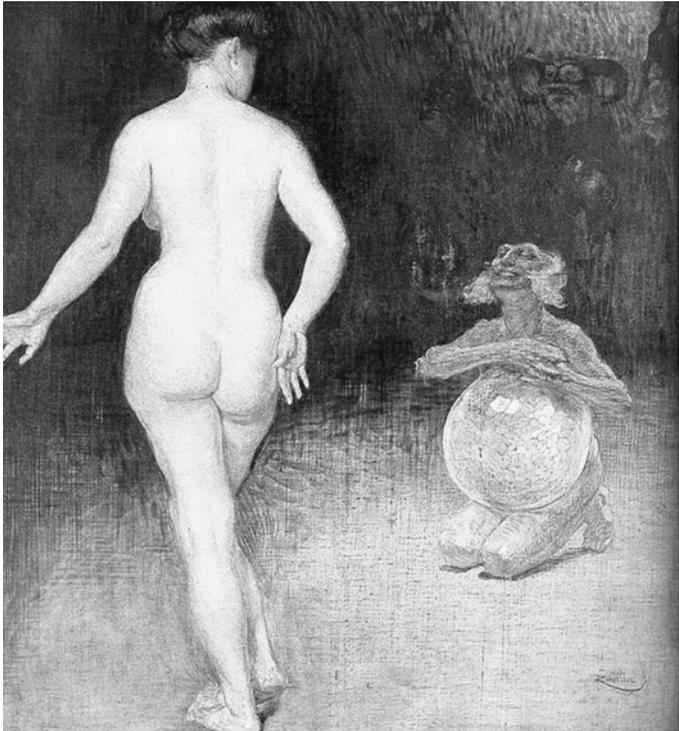
František Kupka

Money, 1899

Oil on canvas, 81 × 81 cm







Definition of the New School

We have said that art is founded on and takes its reason for being from a special faculty of humankind, the aesthetic faculty. It consists, we have stated, in a more or less idealised representation of ourselves and of things, looking towards moral and physical perfection.

From this it follows that art cannot exist apart from truth and justice, that science and morality are its leaders and art can be no more than an auxiliary. In consequence, the first new law of art is a respect for morality and rationality. The old schools, classical as well as romantic, maintained on the contrary—that art is independent of all moral and philosophical conditions, that it exists by itself, as does the faculty to give birth. This opinion must be examined thoroughly, for it has produced all the difficulty existing among the schools.

Does art, then, think? Know? Reason? Form conclusions?

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The human mind is constituted of a kind of polarity: *Conscience* and *Science*, in other words, *Justice* and *Truth*. On this fundamental axis, as on a musical key,

the other faculties are scaled: memory, imagination, judgement, speech, love, politics, industry, commerce, art. What has led artists astray or, more correctly, has furnished them a false aesthetic, is that they have misunderstood this constitution. They envisioned in the human soul a triad in which feeling, the *aesthetic*, figures as a third term equal to the other two, whereas there is actually only a dyad or, as I have already noted, a polarity to which art cannot be considered as more than auxiliary. The proof of this subordination of art with respect to conscience and science is that, in everything that is pure science and law, the idea and the ideal are identical and sufficient. The role of art in no way conforms to this, since art begins to function only when concerned with particular objects or individuals and their actions, of which the specific idea—that is, the particular form, figure or image—necessarily different from the general type or principle, is different, thus, ideal: they are the capacity we have for considering things in accordance with their law and our tendency to make them conform to it. An art that might declare itself independent of science and morality would go against its own principle: it would be a contradiction.

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It is against this degrading theory of art for art's sake that Courbet, and with him the entire school that until now has been called Realism, has boldly set itself and protested with energy. "No," he says (I am translating Courbet's thoughts from his paintings rather than citing from his statements), "No, it is not true that the sole end of art is pleasure, because pleasure is not an end. It is not true that it has no other end than itself, because everything blends, everything is linked, all is of the whole, all has one end in humanity

and nature. The idea of a capacity without purpose, a principle without consequence, a cause without effect, is as absurd as an effect without a cause. The object of art is to lead us to a knowledge of ourselves through the revelation of our thoughts, even the most secret, of all our tendencies, our virtues, our vices, our ridiculousness, and thus contribute to developing our dignity, to perfecting our being. Art was not given to us to nourish chimeras, to intoxicate with illusions, to fool us and lead us astray with mirages, as art is understood by the classics, the romantics and all partisans of a vain ideal. Rather, it frees us from these pernicious illusions by denouncing them.”

It does not follow from this, I will add in my turn, that a work of art should affect an air of roughness, scolding, an unpleasantness, posing as outraged divinity. Beauty and grace are an essential part of its domain; they take precedence over the coarse and ugly. For this reason we have seen that art in early stages of societies tends with all its might to represent things not precisely as they are seen, according to Raphael’s expression, but as one would like them to be, surrounded by an aura of love, more beautiful than nature, in a word, ideal. It is the childhood of art, if you wish, but the child loves and understands beauty. Would you then thrust childhood out of human life? And note this in justification of the older artists: in the measure that humanity extricated itself from vice, tyranny and misery, we see the human figure, I mean the figure of the living, come into prominence. Little by little it approached its earlier image as if pursuing a model, thus realising the antique ideal in modern flesh and blood and bringing to it new creativity as well. This ultimate result is inevitable, unless one denies progress of any kind. Without doubt we are far from this future state; with 30 centuries of false civilisation over our heads, other needs claim our attention.

I conclude, then, as you yourselves can appreciate, that in order to execute a portrait or, even more, a social scene, the intervention of the ideal is absolutely indispensable. Not, I repeat, that an artist must remake, correct and beautify nature or society, in the case of crime, for example, but rather that they must preserve exactly in the characters the truth, life and spirit of their appearance. This is what Courbet, who understands very well what he means even though he often expresses it badly, meant to say when he hurled this defiance at his adversaries: “you who undertake to paint Caesar and Charlemagne, would you know how to paint the portrait of your father?”

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The question of defining the new school and determining the new character of art is thus reduced to the problem of saying just what, in general, is the nature of the idealism to which one must henceforth refer. In the first place, I assert that the artistic idealism of the Egyptians, Greeks, Christians and even the Renaissance corresponds to a religious dogma of which the art is only a translation. It centres on the dogma and associates all its inventions, close and remote, with it. In a general way this might be called *dogmatic idealism*. From the time of the Luther-Dutch reforms, the a priori dogma gave way to free thought, and art has since drawn its ideal from everywhere, from the infinity of nature and humanity and from the contemplation of their splendours and their laws. Art no longer climbed as before towards a supreme ideal, the source of all inspiration and the centre of all ideality, but towards a much higher end, an end that broke away from the sphere of art itself—to the progressive education of humankind. We can thus firmly say that the decentralised, universal, natural and hu-

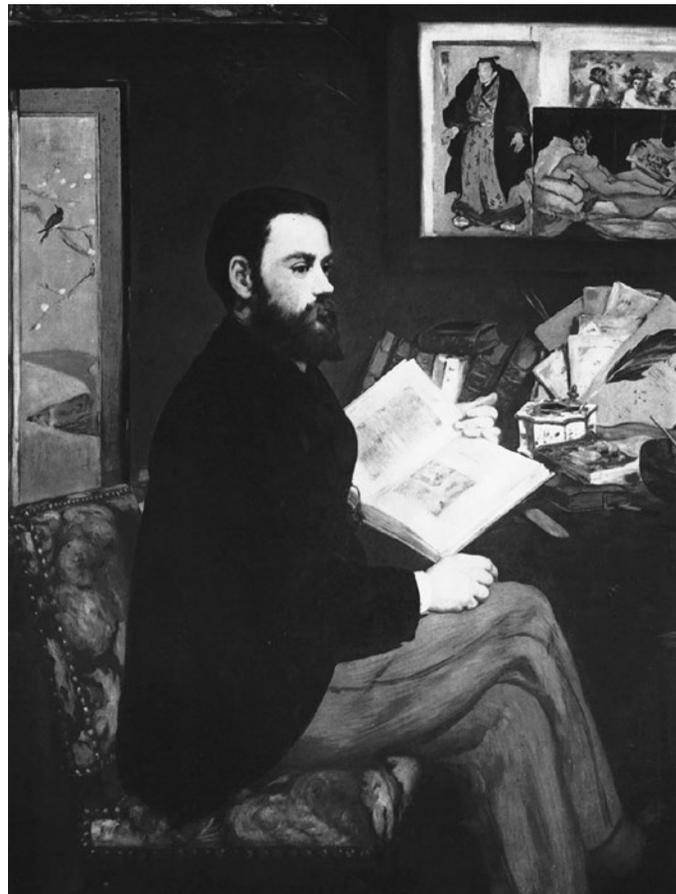
man idealism that rules the new art is *antidogmatic*. This purely negative epithet is translatable into an affirmative equivalent: it can be called *critical idealism* or the *critical school*. Unfortunately, I fear the rather arbitrary susceptibility of our language will not let us say *critical art*. Consequently, to satisfy those of fastidious taste, I propose to join the adjective *rational* to the word *art*, finding sufficient motivation in the *irrationality* of the art produced through the first half of the century. And *rational* means very nearly the same thing as *critical*.

Just as there has existed since Descartes and Kant an antidogmatic or critical philosophy, and literature, following the example of philosophy, has become in its turn principally critical, so art, developing parallel to philosophy, science, industry, politics and literature, must also renew itself through criticism.

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Art—having become rational and reasonable, critical and judicious, marching abreast with *positive philosophy*, *positive politics* and *positive metaphysics*, no longer professing indifference in matters of faith, government or morality, subordinating idealism to reason—art can no longer serve to foster tyranny, prostitution and pauperism. As an art of observation, and no longer simply of inspiration, it would have to lie to itself and deliberately destroy itself, which is impossible. An artist may sell themselves—for a long time still, painting and sculpture, like the novel and the drama, will have their infamies. But art is henceforth incorruptible.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon



Proudhon and Courbet

There are volumes whose title coupled with the author's name suffices, prior to any reading, to give the scope and the entire meaning of the work.

Proudhon's book, published posthumously, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, was there on my table. I had not opened it; however, I thought I knew what it contained, and it happened that my expectations were confirmed.

Proudhon is an honest-minded man with uncommon energy, wanting truth and equity. He is Fourier's grandson; he tends towards the well-being of humanity; he imagines a vast human association in which each person will be the modest and active member. He asks, in a word, that equality and fraternity reign, that society, in the name of reason and conscience, be reconstituted on the basis of shared work and continuous perfecting. He seems impatient with our struggles, our despair and our miseries; he would like to compel us to peace and to an ordered existence. The nation he dreams of is a nation drawing its tranquillity from the silence of heart and passion; this nation of workers lives only on justice.

Throughout his entire work, Proudhon has laboured for the birth of this nation. Night and day he must have

PREVIOUS PAGE:

Édouard Manet

Portrait of Émile Zola, 1868

Oil on canvas, 146.3 × 114 cm

been thinking of how to combine the diverse human elements in a way that would solidly establish the society he was imagining. He wanted each class, each worker to contribute a share towards the communal work; and he formed minds into cadres, he regulated talents, desiring to waste nothing and fearing to introduce any element of discord. I can see him at the gates of his future city inspecting each person who presents themselves, probing their mind and body, then labelling them, assigning them a number instead of a name, a task for life and for hope. Humankind is no longer anything but an inconsequential lackey.

One day, a band of artists come to the gate. Now Proudhon is puzzled. What in the world are these people? For what are they suited? What the devil can one have them do? Proudhon does not dare to simply send them away, because, after all, he does not disdain any group and because he hopes, with patience, to make something of them. He begins to ponder and reason. He does not want to fail ignominiously and he finishes by finding them a tiny place in his society; he delivers them a long sermon, advising them to behave, and then lets them enter, still hesitating and saying to himself: "I will keep an eye on them for they have spiteful faces and bright eyes that promise me no good."

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His definition of art, cleverly developed and deftly exploited, is the following: "An idealistic representation of nature and of ourselves, whose goal is the physical and moral perfecting of our species."

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The definition would be banal in the hands of any other, but Proudhon does not laugh when it's a question of the physical and moral perfecting of the species.

He uses the definition to deny the past and to dream up an awesome future. Art perfects, I agree, but it perfects in its own way, by satisfying the spirit not by preaching, by addressing itself to reason.

Besides, the definition disturbs me little. It is only the very innocent summing up of a doctrine far more dangerous. I cannot accept it uniquely of a sincere man who judges art as one judges gymnastics or Greek verb roots.

Proudhon poses this as his general thesis. I public, I humanity, I have the right to guide the artist and to require of them what pleases me; they are not to be themselves, they must be me, they must think only as I do and work only for me. The artist in themselves is nothing, they are everything through humanity and for humanity. In a word, individual feeling, the free expression of a personality, is forbidden. It is necessary to be only the interpreter of general taste, to work only in everyone's name in order to please everyone. Art attains its degree of perfection when the artist effaces themselves, when the work no longer has a name, when it is a product of an entire era, of a nation, as is Egyptian statuary and that of our Gothic cathedrals.

As for me, I pose in principle that a work of art exists only through its originality. I must discover a person in each work or the work leaves me cold. I sacrifice humanity straight out to the artist. Were I to formulate it, my definition of a work of art would be: "A work of art is a fragment of creation seen through a temperament." What does the rest matter to me. I am an artist; I offer you my flesh and my blood, my mind and my heart. I place myself naked in front of you, and, good or bad, I give myself up to you. If you want to learn, look at me, applaud or hiss, but let my example be an encouragement or a lesson. What more can you ask of me? I cannot give you anything else, since I give myself completely, violently or gently, exactly as God created me. It would be ludicrous that you come to have me change and to have me lie,

you, the apostle of truth! Have you not understood that art is the free expression of a heart and an intelligence, and that you come to have me change and to have me lie, you, the apostle of truth! Have you not understood that art is the free expression of a heart and an intelligence, and that it is all the greater for being more personal? If there is an art of nations, the expression of eras, there is also the expression of individuals, the art of souls. A people succeeded in creating architectural styles, but how much more I feel myself stirred confronting a poem or a painting, individual works in which I rediscover myself with all my joys and sorrows. Moreover, I do not deny the influence of the milieu and the times on the artist, but I do not have to be concerned about it. I accept the artist such as they come to me.

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One understands, now, what Proudhon's book is all about. He examines the various periods in the history of art, and his system, which he applies with a blind brutality, obliges him to put forward the strangest blasphemies. He studies in turn Egyptian art, Greek and Roman art, Christian art, the Renaissance and contemporary art. All of these manifestations of human thought displease him; but he shows a marked preference for the works, the schools in which the artist disappears and their name is legion. Egyptian art, this hieratic, generalised art, which is reduced to a type and a stance; Greek art, this idealisation of form, this pure and exact cliché, this divine and impersonal beauty; Christian art, these pale and emaciated figures that people our cathedrals, all of them seeming to come from the same workshop: such are the artistic periods that find favour in his eyes because they seem to be the product of the common herd.

With regards to the Renaissance and to our age, he

sees only anarchy and decadence. I ask you honestly, what do you think of those who dare to express genius without consulting humanity: Michelangelos, Titians, Ver-noeses, Delacroix, those who have the audacity to think for themselves and not for their contemporaries, who tell what they have in their guts and not what the imbeciles of their times have in theirs.

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I like the free expression of individual thought—contrary to Proudhon for whom this is anarchy—I like the Renaissance and our age, the struggles between artists, these people who all come to say a word that was still unknown only yesterday. If the work is not created of blood and nerves, if it is not the complete and poignant expression of a creature, I reject the work, be it the *Vénus de Milo*. In a word, I am diametrically opposed to Proudhon: he wants art to be a nation's product, I require that it be the product of an individual.

However, he is frank. "What is the great man?" he asks. "Are there great men? Can one admit that they exist given the principles of the French Revolution and in a republic founded on the rights of man?" These are serious words, however ridiculous they may appear. You who dream of freedom, will you not grant us the freedom of thought? He states further on, in a note: "Ten thousand citizens, who have learned to draw, form a powerful artistic collectivity, a wellhead of ideas, a vigor of aspiration which is far superior to that of an individual, and which, finding its expression one day, will surpass the masterpiece." That is why, according to Proudhon, the Middle Ages outreach the Renaissance in matters of art. Great people being inexistent, the great person is the masses.

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Having trampled down the past, Proudhon dreams of a

future, an artistic school for his future city. He makes Courbet the guiding light of his school, and lays the thankless task at the master's feet.

Above all, I must declare candidly that I deeply regret seeing Courbet mixed up in this business. I would have preferred that Proudhon chose another artist as an example, some painter void of talent.

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I must distinguish between Proudhon's ideas and the artist to whom he applies his ideas. Besides, Courbet has been so disguised by the philosopher, all I need to do to remain consistent while admiring the painter is to boldly declare that I do not bow before Proudhon's humanitarian Courbet, but before the powerful master-painter who has given us some broad and truthful canvases.

Proudhon's Courbet is a strange man, who uses the paintbrush as a village schoolmaster uses their cane. The least significant of his canvases, it seems, is laden with irony and instruction. This particular Courbet regards us from the heights of his pulpit, searches our hearts, lays bare our vices, then, summing up our ugliness, he paints us in our naked truth in order to make us blush. Are you not tempted to throw yourselves to your knees, to beat your breast and ask forgiveness? It may be that the flesh and blood Courbet vaguely resembles is the one created by the publicist; overzealous disciples and crystal ball gazers may have misled the master; moreover, there are always idiosyncrasies and a puzzling inability to see clearly in people of headstrong temperament; but you must admit that if Courbet preaches, he preaches in the desert, and that if he merits our admiration, he merits it solely through the forceful manner in which he grasped and rendered nature.

I would like to be fair and not let myself be tempted by a truly too facile derision. I agree that certain of the

painter's canvases may appear to have satiric intentions. The artist paints scenes of everyday life, and, by that very fact, if you wish, he makes us reflect on ourselves and on our epoch. This is simply a result of his aptitude which is inclined to search for and to portray truth. But to make his whole worth consist of the single fact that he has treated contemporary subjects, is to bestow a strange idea of art on the young artists whom we wish to form for the benefit of humankind.

You want to make painting useful and to employ it in perfecting the species. I agree that Courbet perfects, but then I wonder in what respect and with what effectiveness he does so. Frankly, even if he were to pile his paintings one on top of the other, and were you to fill the world with his and his pupils' canvases, humanity would be just as vice-ridden 10 years from now as it is today. A thousand years of painting, of painting suited to your taste, would not be worth one of the clearly-penned thoughts which is retained by the mind forever, such as: *Know thyself, Love thy neighbour* etc. See here! You have writing, you have speech, you can say whatever you want to say, and you go address yourself to the art of lines and colours in order to teach and to educate. Well! For pity's sake, keep in mind that we are not pure reason. If you are practical, leave the philosopher the right to give us lessons, and leave the painter the right to give us emotions. I do not believe you can require the painter to teach, and, in any case, I flatly deny that a painting can influence the mores of the masses.

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I fell that Proudhon would like to draw me to him and that I would like to draw him to me. We are not from the same world, each of us believes the other is a blasphemer. He wants to make a citizen of me, I want to make him an artist. Therein lies the whole dispute.

His *rational art*, his own realism is, to tell the truth, but a negation of art, a dull illustration of philosophical platitudes. My art, my own art, on the contrary, is a negation of society, an affirmation of the individual, independent of all rules and all social obligations. I understand how much I annoy him if I do not want to take employment in his humanitarian city; I set myself apart, I make myself greater in rising above the others, I disdain his justice and his laws. While acting in this way, I know in my heart that I am right, that I am following my nature, and I believe that my work will be beautiful. A single fear remains; I accept being useless, but I would not want to hinder my fellows. When I question myself, I realise, on the contrary, that it is they who thank me, and that I often console them for the philosopher's harshness. Henceforth, I will enjoy untroubled sleep.

Proudhon reproaches us, novelists and poets, for living in isolation and indifference, for not caring about progress. I will have Proudhon take note that our ideas are absolute, while his can only be relative. As a practical man, he works towards the well-being of humanity; he does not aspire to perfection, he seeks the best possible state, then bends all his efforts towards improving this state little by little. As for us, on the contrary, we achieve perfection in a single bound; in our imagination, we arrive at the ideal state. Consequently, it can be understood that we have little care for the world. We are fully in heaven and we are not coming down. And that is why the downtrodden of his world reach out to us, throw themselves at us while distancing themselves from the moralist.

Émile Zola



Anarchism in Art

History of Aesthetic Ideas, by Menéndez Pelayo, reveals that taste has evolved over time, and that each age has its aesthetic fauna, for want of a better way to put it, that typifies it. Examining the differences that separate creations of art in different countries one is convinced that a sense of beauty is something that depends on latitude, on the conditions of the land, on the way in which the evolution of each people has been verified; in a word, on all the conditions that determine national identity. In time and space, a sense of beauty is revealed with the characteristics of contingency that organic species also have. It is a product of the conditions of the medium, as is everything in the world, even ideas. But this analysis is still very superficial; it does not correspond to dissecting beauty, rather it corresponds to what is called the inspection of the cadaver in an autopsy, the examination of the exterior habitat.

In one same era, in one same people, several ideals of beauty coexist, as is shown by the diversity of the public's taste, and by the diversity of schools of art. Therefore, it cannot be said that each era has its art, but that it arbitrarily chooses the school of art that satisfies

PREVIOUS PAGE:
Alexander Archipenko
Suzanne, 1909
Limestone, 39 × 25.4 × 21.9 cm

the aspirations of a, more or less, numerous group and completely ignores the rest.

✱

The first effect of an anarchistic conception of aesthetics, is to inspire the courage to express the impression that works of art have on us, because it convinces us that there is no authority, nor can there be, that defines what is beautiful, and that art criticism is one of many fetishes with no value whatsoever, and that these works of art truly cannot resist criticism. Criticism is nothing more than a work of art whose subject is another work of art, just as the direct subject of the latter is nature. Art criticism is a second hypothesis on nature: authors reveal their temperament by reacting to a work of art, just as artists reveal theirs by reacting to something natural. Critics express how they feel about the piece they are referring to, just as artists demonstrate how they feel about the nature they are contemplating.

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Scientific criticism does not aim to define what is beautiful, but to study which conditions of a given piece produce aesthetic emotion in certain people. This is how Taine understood it. It would be ridiculous for naturalists to say in the name of science that they don't like deer or ostriches; their role is to study which conditions determine the existence of these organic forms.

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No, let us not subordinate our artistic criteria to anyone. We are as we are, and how we feel, and we each feel somehow different from everyone else. We proclaim before this sort of artistic socialism that de-

livering ourselves tied hand and foot to the tyranny of the masses cancels out our personality; we proclaim before this socialism a saintly and saving anarchy that strengthens the personality, invigorates it and intensifies it. Ultimately our way of feeling is something so personal, so intimate, so ours, that to deny it or to be unaware of it is not unlike suicide. Of all our faculties, feeling is the one that particularly *makes* a person. Intelligence is something detachable, susceptible to development through study, just like a muscle develops through exercise. But feeling is a sort of essence of ourselves, of our entire being and appears to lie in the actual entrails of life.

José Verdes Montenegro

Vital Art

In order to estimate the value of any movement, whether social, economic, ethical or esthetic, it must be studied in its relation and attitude to general progress. Its effectiveness should be judged by what it contributes to the growth of the universal conscience. That "no man liveth unto himself alone" is never so true as now, because now it is more generally realised. Therefore, any expression which concerns itself solely with its own special field of action finds itself soon set aside, and presently becoming divorced from reality, ends as a sporadic type. Any expression, however, which responds to the larger life gains a vitality which insures its continuance.

Thus, the effort to apply certain truths not new in themselves, is a tendency to work in harmony with progress. The effort to apply principle, however imperfectly expressed, is important, not because of its results, but because of the desire to relate theory and action in a conduct of life. Almost every type of expression is undergoing its phase of application. Esthetics have somewhat aligned themselves to the others, but at last there is a movement, known as the arts and crafts movement, more properly called applied esthetics, which is the ef-

fort to relate art to life. The old banality, "Art for Art's sake", is obsolete, and the vital meaning of art is in a more rational and beautiful expression of life, as it were, the continent art of living well.

This is the ideal and educational aspect of applied esthetics. Within the limits of its exclusive circle and within the radius of its special activities there is a trend to contentment with the production of objects of 'worth' and 'virtue.' The object of luxury, which in fact has no vital meaning to either the producer or consumer. Were the production of such things to be its only aim, it would soon defeat its own end. But this movement has in reality wider and more democratic ideals. Because of its power to stimulate self-expression and the creative impulses, its greatest and most vital influence is more social than artistic. It principally concerns itself with the desire of the worker to express in their work whatever impulse for beauty may be theirs. There is no surer way of feeling the pressure of present economic conditions. The value of applied esthetics is as a medicine to stir up social unrest and discontent. Its keynote is self-expression, and it is when men and women begin to think and act for themselves that they most keenly feel social and economic restrictions, and are made to suffer under them. But if suffering is necessary to growth, let us have it and have it over with by all means. No sane being will stand much of it without making an effort to get at its cause. It has been said that the most important part of progress is to make people think; it is vastly more important that they should feel. The average individual is not discontented with their surroundings, else they would go to work to change them. As a product of them they are benumbed by their mechanical influence, and consequently expresses themselves within their limits. They are the mouthpiece of existing conditions, and, accordingly, act in a law-abiding fashion.

The larger emotional life, or inner social impulse emanates from those pioneers who, living beyond existing conditions, are the dynamics of society. Through them life pushes onwards. The inner impulse becomes public opinion, public opinion becomes custom, custom crystallises into law. Now the fresh impulse is needed for new growth; where shall it be sought if not in the expression of the emotional life? What form shall the expression take unless it be the purest and most spontaneous form of art, which is without purpose other than the expression of an impulse? This alone fosters the growth of the emotions.

Art, like justice, has many crimes committed in its name, and much called so that is merely a methodical and imitative performance. It is in no wise that spontaneous expression of life that, coming simply and directly as an impulse, takes a decorative or applied form. All the beginnings of art grew up in this way. In primitive peoples it is the first expression of emotional life, which comes after the material need is satisfied. They make their spade or fish spear from the necessity of physical preservation. Thus from the joy of living they apply to it their feeling for beauty.

The earliest forms of art were all applied. Stone carving was applied to architecture, thus coloured stones, called mosaics, as wall decorations; from these to the fresco; from the fresco to the pictorial form of painting. Today the final degeneration of art is in the easel picture, which as an object detached and disassociated from its surroundings, takes refuge in the story-telling phase to justify its *raison d'être*. But, alas for the easel picture! Alas, also, for the usual illustration, without which most literature would be so difficult to understand. In each case the one is there to help out the other's deficiency. Two important expressions of art, in a state of insubordination. It is the opera over again, where music

and drama keep up an undignified race for prominence. Supposing an illustration were decorative in character echoing in a minor manner the suggested theme, would that not be a fitting background for the storytelling art? The Greeks knew very well what they were about when they introduced the relatively subordinate but decoratively important chorus into their dramas. This as well expresses their sense of relative proportion as does their sculpture and architecture.

What is decorative art, if not a sense of beauty applied to objects of use? That these need the emotional element as well as their element of service is as essential as the life breath in the body. It is the spark of divine fire, which relates the actual to the ideal, resulting in the reality. It removes from our surroundings any influence that is solely mechanical. Applied art is alike because of its association with that which is necessary to life.

The test is necessity, not alone the physical, but likewise the emotional necessity, for all sides of our nature must be developed if life is to have full meaning and come to its maturity. The influence of applied esthetics is more vital because it is unconsciously absorbed through constant association. Imagine surroundings where everything that did not have a distinct use was eliminated and where everything else was distinctly fitted to its use. If this were put into practice in the usual household, a certain simplicity would be the result, to say the least. Most things with which we surround ourselves are neither useful nor beautiful. They are either so absurdly over-ornamented as to have their usefulness completely impaired, or else they are the usual mechanical device equally complicated and hideous. Ornament is usually an anomaly, added to cover structural defect. If the relation of the parts to the whole is perfect, beauty is there. But being accustomed to the over-ornamented and wholly mechanical, we do not resent their pres-

ence. For what, indeed, is habit not responsible? Even such innocent objects as pictures hang on our walls until they are scarcely noticed by us. Why not change them to suit our moods? Why not, indeed? There are so many of them, in the first place—and one remembers the time and trouble, even the family dissension that it took to hang them. But no one cares much, no one is alive enough to care much—the economic struggle that deadens our other senses is responsible for this also.

No unit of the social body can disentangle itself from existing conditions. Each is affected by all its influences. Some are more, some less, some are so much a part that they are not conscious. These last also suffer, but without knowing why. Vital education would show them. But the factory system pervades the school and art school as well as the factory.

What if the underlying force of education were spontaneous expression, instead of the limited method or system? The cry of the teacher is always, "It is very well to be spontaneous, but we must deal with the child *en masse*." The remedy for that is simple, because there is no real necessity to deal with children *en masse*. It is so much easier to apply the same system to each varied unit of a mass than to discover and help the individual expression of each. The basis of vital art, of vital education, is self-expression; from it and through it comes self-control. Self-repression is as socially uneconomic as jails and standing armies. If, instead of building prisons where human life is entombed, libraries where literature moulds, museums where art becomes archaic, why not establish centres of education, where spontaneous expression is encouraged, and where the soul, mind and hand are simultaneously developed.

Think of a state where each individual working out from its own standpoint, truly without hypocrisy, would contribute their quota of individual life to the life of the

whole. Pleasing themselves in their work without fear. Then would come the true democracy, possible only under just economic conditions, where each has equal opportunity for self-expression. Then can the higher emotional life develop necessary to all human growth.

Anny Mali Hicks



Notes of a Painter

A painter who addresses the public not just in order to present their works, but to reveal some of their ideas on the art of painting, exposes themselves to several dangers.

In the first place, knowing that many people like to think of painting as an appendage of literature and therefore want it to express not general ideas suited to pictorial means, but specifically literary ideas, I fear that the painter who ventures to invade the domain of the literary figure will be looked at with astonishment. As a matter of fact, I am fully aware that a painter's best spokesperson is their work.

However, such painters as Signac, Desvallières, Denis, Blanche, Guéris and Bernard have written on such matters and been welcomed by various periodicals. Personally, I shall simply try to state my feelings and aspirations as a painter without worrying about the writing.

But now I foresee the danger of appearing to contradict myself. I feel very strongly the tie between my earlier and my recent works. But I do not think exactly the way I thought yesterday. Or rather, my basic thought has not changed, but it has evolved, and my means of expression have followed. I do not repudiate any of my paintings but

PREVIOUS PAGES:
Ramon Casas
Studio Interior After a Party, 1883
Oil on canvas, 72.5 × 92.5 cm

there is not one of them that I would not redo differently, if I had to redo. My destination is always the same, but I work out a different route to get there.

Finally, if I mention the name of this or that artist it will doubtless be to point out how our manners differ, and it may seem that I am belittling their work. Thus I risk being accused of injustice towards painters whose aims and results I best understand, or whose accomplishments I most appreciate, whereas I will have used them as examples, not to establish my superiority over them, but to show more clearly, through what they have done, what I am attempting to do.

What I am after, above all, is expression. Sometimes it has been conceded that I have a certain technical ability but that all the same my ambition is limited and does not go beyond the purely visual satisfaction that can be obtained from looking at a picture. But the thought of a painter must not be considered as separate from their pictorial means, for the thought is worth no more than its expression by those means, which must be more complete (and by complete I do not mean complicated) the deeper is their thought. I am unable to distinguish between the feeling I have about life and my way of translating it.

Expression, for me, does not reside in passion bursting from a human face or manifested by violent movement. The entire arrangement of my picture is expressive: the place occupied by the figures, the empty spaces around them, the proportions, all of that has its share. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the diverse elements at the painter's command to express their feelings. In a picture every part will be visible and will play its appointed role, whether it be principal or secondary. Everything that is not useful in the picture is, it follows, harmful. A work of art must be

harmonious in its entirety: any superfluous detail would replace some other essential detail in the mind of the spectator.

Composition, the aim of which should be expression, is modified according to the surface to be covered. If I take a sheet of paper of a given size, my drawing will have a necessary relationship to its format. I would not repeat this drawing on another sheet of different proportions, for example, rectangular instead of square. Nor should I be satisfied with a mere enlargement, had I to transfer the drawing to a sheet the same shape, but 10 times larger. A drawing must have an expansive force, which gives life to the things around it. An artist who wants to transpose a composition from one canvas to another larger one must conceive it anew in order to preserve its expression; they must alter its character and not just square it up onto the larger canvas.

Both harmonies and dissonances of colour can produce agreeable effects. Often, when I start to work, I record fresh and superficial sensations during the first sessions. A few years ago I was sometimes satisfied with the result. But today if I were satisfied with this, now that I think I can see further, my picture would have a vagueness in it: I should have recorded the fugitive sensations of a moment which could not completely define my feelings and which I should barely recognise the next day.

I want to reach that state of condensation of sensations which constitutes a picture. I might be satisfied with a work done at one sitting, but I would soon tire of it; thus I prefer to rework it so that later I may recognise it as representative of my state of mind. There was a time when I never left my paintings hanging on the wall because they reminded me of moments of over-excitement and I did not like to see them again when I was calm.

Nowadays I try to put serenity into my pictures and re-work them as long as I have not succeeded in doing so.

Suppose I want to paint a woman's body: first of all, I imbue it with grace and charm, but I know that I must give it something more. I will condense the meaning of this body by seeking its essential lines. The charm will be less apparent at first glance, but it must eventually emerge from the new image I have obtained, which will have a broader meaning, one more fully human. The charm will be less striking since it will not be the sole quality of the painting, but it will not exist less for its being contained within the general conception of my figure.

Charm, lightness, freshness—such fleeting sensations. I have a canvas on which the colours are still fresh and I begin to work on it again. The tone will no doubt become duller. I will replace my original tone with one of greater density, an improvement, but less seductive to the eye.

The impressionist painters, especially Monet and Sisley, had delicate sensations, quite close to each other: as a result their canvases all look alike. The word impressionism perfectly characterises their style, for they register fleeting impressions. It is not an appropriate designation for certain more recent painters who avoid the first impression, and consider it almost dishonest. A rapid rendering of a landscape represents only one moment of its existence. I prefer, by insisting upon its essential character, to risk losing charm in order to obtain greater stability.

Underlying this succession of moments which constitutes the superficial existence of beings and things, and which is continually modifying and transforming them, one can search for a truer, more essential character, which the artist will seize so that they may give to reality a more lasting interpretation. When we go into the

seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sculpture rooms in the Louvre and look, for example, at a Puget, we can see that the expression is forced and exaggerated to the point of being disquieting. It is quite a different matter if we go to the Luxembourg; the attitude in which the sculptors catch their models is always the one in which the development of the limbs and tensions of the muscles will be shown to greatest advantage. And yet, movement thus understood corresponds to nothing in nature: when we capture it by surprise in a snapshot, the resulting image reminds us of nothings that we have ever seen. Movement seized while it is going on is meaningful to us only if we do not isolate the present sensation either from that which precedes it or that which follows it.

There are two ways of expressing things; one is to show them crudely, the other is to evoke them with art. By removing oneself from the literal *representation* of movement one attains greater beauty and grandeur. Look at an Egyptian statue: it looks rigid to us, yet we sense in it the image of a body capable of movement and which, despite its rigidity, is animated. The ancient Greeks too are calm: a man hurling a discus will be caught at the moment in which he gathers his strength; or at least, if he is shown in the most strained and precarious position implied by his action, the sculptor will have epitomised and condensed it so that equilibrium is re-established, thereby suggesting the idea of duration. Movement is in itself unstable and is not suited to something durable like a statue, unless the artist is aware of the entire action of which they represent only a moment.

It is necessary that I precisely define the character of the object or of the body that I wish to paint. To do so, I study my means very closely: if I put a black dot on a sheet of white paper, the dot will be visible no matter how far away I hold it: it is a clear notation. But

beside this dot I place another one, and then a third, and already there is confusion. In order for the first dot to maintain its value I must enlarge it as I add another mark to the paper.

If upon a white canvas I set down some sensations of blue, of green, of red, each new stroke diminishes the importance of the preceding ones. Suppose I have to paint an interior; I have before me a cupboard; it gives me a sensation of vivid red, and I put down a red that satisfies me. A relation is established between this red and the white of the canvas. Let me put a green near the red, and make the floor yellow; and again there will be relationships between the green or yellow and the white of the canvas which will satisfy me. But these different tones mutually weaken one another. It is necessary that the diverse marks I use be balanced so that they do not destroy each other. To do this I must organise my ideas; the relationship between the tones must be such that it will sustain and not destroy them. A new combination of colours will succeed the first and render the totality of my representation. I am forced to transpose until finally my picture may seem completely changed when, after successive modifications, the red has succeeded the green as the dominant colour. It is not possible for me to copy nature in a servile way; I am forced to interpret nature and submit it to the spirit of the picture. From the relationships I have found in all the tones there must result a living harmony of colours, a harmony analogous to that of a musical composition.

For me, all is in the conception. It is thus necessary to have a clear vision of the whole right from the beginning. I could mention a great sculptor who gives us some admirable pieces: but for him a composition is merely a grouping of fragments, which results in a confusion of expression. Look instead at one of Cézanne's pictures: all is so well arranged that no matter at what distance

you stand or how many figures are represented you will always be able to distinguish each figure clearly and to know which limb belongs to which body. If there is order and clarity in the picture, it means that from the outset this same order and clarity existed in the mind of the painter, or that the painter was conscious of their necessity. Limbs may cross and intertwine, but in the eyes of the spectator they will nevertheless remain attached to and help to articulate the right body: all confusion has disappeared.

The chief function of colour should be to serve expression as well as possible. I put down my tones without a preconceived plan. If at first, and perhaps without my having been conscious of it, one tone has particularly seduced or caught me, more often than not when the picture is finished I will notice that I have respected this tone while I progressively altered and transformed all the others. The expressive aspect of colours imposes itself on me in a purely instinctive way. To paint an autumn landscape I will not try to remember what colours suit this season, I will be inspired only by the sensation that the season arouses in me: the icy purity of the sour blue sky will express the season just as well as the nuances of foliage. My sensation itself may vary, the autumn may be soft and warm like a continuation of summer, or quite cool with a cold sky and lemon-yellow trees that give a chilly impression and already announce winter.

My choice of colours does not rest on any scientific theory; it is based on observation, on feeling, on the experience of my sensibility. Inspired by certain pages of Delacroix, an artist like Signac is preoccupied with complementary colours, and the theoretical knowledge of them will lead him to use a certain tone in a certain place. But I simply try to pin down colours which render

my sensation. There is an impelling proportion of tones that may lead me to change the shape of a figure or to transform my composition. Until I have achieved this proportion in all the parts of the composition, I strive towards it and keep on working. Then a moment comes when all the parts have found their definite relationships, and from then on it would be impossible for me to add a stroke to my picture without having to repaint it entirely.

In reality, I think that the very theory of complementary colours is not absolute. In studying the paintings of artists whose knowledge of colours depends upon instinct and feeling, and on a constant analogy with their sensations, one could define certain laws of colour and so broaden the limits of colour theory as it now.

What interests me most is neither still life nor landscape, but the human figure. It is that which best permits me to express my so-to-speak religious feeling towards life. I do not insist upon all the details of the face, on setting them down one-by-one with anatomical exactitude. If I have an Italian model who at first appearance suggests nothing but a purely animal existence, I nevertheless discover their essential qualities, I discover amid the lines of the face those which suggest the deep gravity that persists in every human being. A work of art must carry within itself its complete significance and impose that upon the beholder even before they recognise the subject matter. When I see the Giotto frescoes at Padua I do not trouble myself to recognise which scene of the life of Christ I have before me, but I immediately understand the feeling that emerges from it, for it is in the lines, the composition, the colour. The title will only serve to confirm my impression.

What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity, devoid of troubling or expressing subject mat-

ter, an art that could be for every mental worker, for the businessman as well as the man of letters, for example, a soothing, calming influence on the mind, something like a good armchair that provides relaxation from fatigue.

Often a discussion arises as to the value of different processes, and their relationship to different temperaments. A distinction is made between painters who work directly from nature and those who work purely from imagination. Personally, I think neither of these methods must be preferred to the exclusion of the other. Both may be used in turn by the same individual, either because they need contact with objects in order to receive sensations that will excite their creative faculty, or because their sensations are already organised. In either case they will be able to arrive at that totality which constitutes a picture. In any event, I think that one can judge the vitality and power of an artist who, after having received impressions directly from the spectacle of nature, is able to organise their sensations to continue their work in the same frame of mind on different days, and to develop these sensations; this power proves they are sufficiently master of themselves to subject themselves to discipline.

The simplest means are those which best enable an artist to express themselves. If they fear the banal they cannot avoid it by appearing strange, or going in for bizarre drawing and eccentric colour. Their means of expression must derive almost of necessity from their temperament. They must have the humility of mind to believe that they have painted only what they have seen. I like Chardin's way of expressing it: "I apply colour until there is a resemblance." Or Cézanne's: "I want to secure likeness." Or Rodin's: "Copy nature." Leonardo said: "He who can copy can create." Those who work in a preconceived style, deliberately turning their backs on nature, miss the truth. An artist must recognise, when

they are reasoning, that their picture is an artifice; but when they are painting, they should feel that they have copied nature. And even when they depart from nature, they must do it with the conviction that it is only to interpret her more fully.

Some may say that other views on painting were expected from a painter, and that I have only come out with platitudes. To this I shall reply that there are no new truths. The role of the artist, like that of the scholar, consists of seizing current truths often repeated to them, but which will take on new meaning for them and which they will make their own when they have grasped their deepest significance. If aviators had to explain to us the research that led to their leaving earth and rising in the air, they would merely confirm very elementary principles of physics neglected by less successful inventors.

An artist always profits from information about themselves, and I am glad to have learned what is my weak point. Mr Péladan in the *Revue Hébdomadaire* reproaches a certain number of painters, amongst whom I think I should place myself, for calling themselves "Fauves", and yet dressing like everyone else, so that they are no more noticeable than the floor-walkers in a department store. Does genius count for so little? If it were only a question of myself that would set Mr Péladan's mind at ease, tomorrow I would call myself Sar [Péladan] and dress like a necromancer.

In the same article this excellent writer claims that I do not paint honestly, and I would be justifiably angry if he had not qualified his statement by saying, "I mean honestly with respect to the ideal and the rules." The trouble is that he does not mention where these rules are. I am willing to have them exist, but were it possible to learn them what sublime artists we would have!

Rules have no existence outside of individuals: otherwise a good professor would be as great a genius

as Racine. Any one of us is capable of repeating fine maxims, but few can also penetrate their meaning. I am ready to admit that from a study of the works of Raphael or Titian a more complete set of rules can be drawn than from the works of Manet or Renoir, but the rules followed by Manet and Renoir were those which suited their temperaments and I prefer the most minor of their paintings to all the work of those who are content to imitate the *Venus of Urbino* or the *Madonna of the Goldfinch*. These latter are of no value to anyone, for whether we want to or not, we belong to our time and we share in its opinions, its feelings, even its delusions. All artists bear the imprint of their time, but the great artists are those in whom this is most profoundly marked. Our epoch for instance is better represented by Courbet than by Flandrin, by Rodin better than by Frémiet. Whether we like it or not, however insistently we call ourselves exiles from it, between our period and ourselves an indissoluble bond is established, and Mr Péladan himself cannot escape this. The aestheticians of the future may perhaps use his books as evidence if they get it in their heads to prove that no one of our time understood anything about the art of Leonardo da Vinci.

Henri Matisse

Multiple Viewpoints

Well, I must tell you that I am becoming, as a painter, more lucid in the presence of nature, but with me to realise my sensations is always painful. I cannot achieve the intensity that manifests itself to my senses; I do not have the magnificent richness of colouration that animates nature. Here on the bank of the river the motifs multiply; the same thing from a different angle offers a subject of study of great interest, and so varied that I could keep busy for months without changing places, simply by leaning sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left.

Paul Cézanne

Suggestive Force

I don't know if anyone before me has talked about suggestive colour.

*

Because instead of trying to render exactly what I have before my eyes, I use colour more arbitrarily in order to express myself forcefully. Well, let's let that lie as far as theory goes, but I'm going to give you an example of what I mean.

I'd like to do the portrait of an artist friend who dreams great dreams, who works as the nightingale sings, because that's his nature.

This man will be blond. I'd like to put in the painting my appreciation, my love that I have for him.

I'll paint him, then, just as he is, as faithfully as I can—to begin with.

But the painting isn't finished like that. To finish it, I'm now going to be an arbitrary colourist.

I exaggerate the blond of the hair, I come to orange tones, chromes, pale lemon. Behind the head—instead of painting the dull wall of the mean room, I paint the infinite.

I make a simple background of the richest, most

intense blue that I can prepare, and with this simple combination, the brightly lit blond head, against this rich blue background achieves a mysterious effect, like a star in the deep azure.

Similarly, I've proceeded in this way in the peasant's portrait.

However, without wishing to evoke the mysterious brilliance of a pale star in the infinite blue in this case.

But imagining the terrific man I had to do, in the very furnace of harvest time, deep in the south. Hence the oranges, blazing like red-hot iron, hence the old gold tones, glowing in the darkness. Ah, my dear brother—and the good folk will see only caricature in this exaggeration. But what does that do to us, we've read *La terre* and *Germinal*, and if we paint a peasant we'd like to show that this reading has in some way become part of us

*

I want to paint humanity, humanity and again humanity.

I love nothing better than this series of bipeds, from the smallest baby in long clothes to Socrates, from the woman with black hair and a white skin to the one with golden hair and a brick-red sunburnt face. Meanwhile I am painting other things.

But amongst my studies I have one of a figure that is a perfect continuation of my Dutch pictures. On one occasion I showed these to you, together with various other pictures of my Dutch days, the *Potato-Eaters* etc., and I should like you to see these as well. They are all studies in which colour plays such an important part that the black and white of a drawing could not give you any idea of them. I had actually thought of sending you a very large and careful drawing of the one in question. But, however accurate it might be, it would result in something totally different; for colour is the only



thing that can suggest the effect of the hot parched air of a midsummer's day at noon, in the midst of harvest making; and if this effect is lacking, the whole picture is altered.

*

The painting [*Le Café de nuit*] is one of the ugliest I've done. It's the equivalent, though different, of the potato eaters.

I've tried to express the terrible human passions with the red and the green.

The room is blood-red and dull yellow, a green billiard table in the centre, four lemon yellow lamps with an orange and green glow. Everywhere it's a battle and an antithesis of the most different greens and reds; in the characters of the sleeping ruffians, small in the empty, high room, some purple and blue. The blood-red and the yellow-green of the billiard table, for example, contrast with the little bit of delicate Louis XV green of the counter, where there's a pink bouquet.

The white clothes of the owner, watching over things from a corner in this furnace, become lemon yellow, pale luminous green.

*

Had I had the strength to continue, I'd have done portraits of saints and of holy women from life, and who would have appeared to be from another century and they would be citizens of the present day, and yet would have had something in common with very primitive Christians.

The emotions that that causes are too strong though, I wouldn't survive it—but later, later, I don't say that I won't mount a fresh attack.

*

PREVIOUS PAGE:
Vincent van Gogh
*Portrait of a Woman. Head of a peasant woman
with bonnet*, c. 1885
Chalk on paper, 29.5 × 20 cm

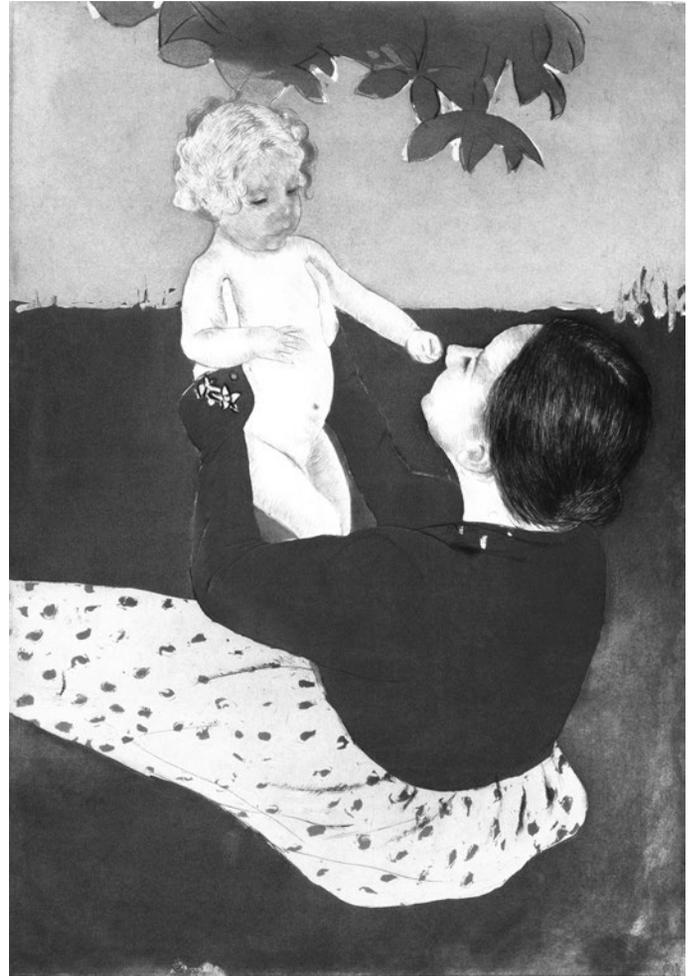
You're right a thousand times over—one mustn't think about all that—one must do—even if it's studies of cabbages and salad to calm oneself down, and after being calmed then—what one is capable of.

*

We'll certainly *not* experience the better times of clear air and refreshment of the whole of society *after* those great storms. All the same, it's *something* not to be taken in by the falseness of one's time, in so far as one detects in it the unhealthy closeness and mugginess of the hours that precede the thunderstorm.

And says—it's oppressive for us—but the next generations will be able to breathe more freely. Men like Zola and the De Goncourts believe in it with the simplicity of overgrown children. They, the most rigorous analysts—whose diagnosis is both so merciless and so accurate.

Vincent van Gogh





The Studio of a Pointillist

Winter has arrived. Peace on earth and snow on the heights of Montmartre!

His Majesty the Cold, that white-bearded gentleman, scarecrow of thermometers and hoarder of ice, has thrown insolence in everyone's face, and in one barrage has covered trees and streets, rooftops and balconies and everything exposed to the elements with snow.



PREVIOUS PAGES:

Mary Cassatt

Under the Horse Chestnut Tree, 1896–1897

Drypoint and aquatint on paper, 52.1 × 38.6 cm

Édouard Vuillard

Four Ladies with Fancy Hats, 1892–1893

Watercolor over graphite on paper, 21.3 × 29.5 cm

A note of white is what dominates the current bad weather we are subjected to. The streets stand out like ribbons of matt whiteness on an ashen white: the sky is a dark white; white are the cornices that outline the houses and fall away with a rugged perspective; white the breath of the horses, which blends into a vapour over another white that is even whiter; the branches and posts, white are they; and the Moulin, the Moulin itself, turns round and round again like a sick bird that tremors with cold.

But it is, after all, made of wood, and good wood, whilst we are flesh and blood and tremble much more, despite our overcoats, when, wrapped up in them, we head out to visit the studio of a friend and walk down the twisted streets of the hill of Montmartre.

The few passers-by who dared to cross those sheets of ice, stood out with their dark, dark silhouettes like shadows; their steps were imprinted from time to time in the snow, leaving the shape of their feet in that snowy mould, and in the lined grooves you could make out the people who had crossed before. Large prints revealed the step of a man, other, smaller ones the sign of a child, and two very close together, some tiny and the others like large nails, showing the path of a couple who, in the terrible cold, had cuddled up and come together in that solitary place.

Walking carefully, or rather slipping, we went sliding down that long hill.

We reached the corner of the street, of Clinencourt, where our friend had his studio, and with resignation we walked up the stairs, which, seemingly never-ending, must have led on up very close to the perpetual snow.

On reaching the terrace roof, and before entering the studio through the small door, we stopped to contemplate the immense and dominating scene.

The great city of Paris lay before us, clear and trans-

lucent as if submerged in an enormous bath of silver. The chimney pots gave out faint smoke that swept along and mixed with the fog, and in this melding of vapours the great domes and high church towers stood out in pale colours; the back of the Opera as a colossal triangle; the towers of Notre Dame with the spire rising up like a Gothic minaret; the golden dome of the Invalides, in a dull ochre; the famous Eiffel Tower, like a lightning conductor penetrating the clouds; the Arc de Triomphe, half hidden by a world of trees and houses; and, further away, the mass of Saint-Sulpice and the round dome of the Pantheon swimming in tones of blue, and the Latin



Quarter lost in that immaculate whiteness.

The cold did not allow us to contemplate the vast panorama for very long and we knocked on the studio door. It opened.

Our friend came to welcome us into the only room in that artist's interior.

"Do you arrive well?" he asked. "Today there is a fire in the wood burner—something that doesn't always happen—because I have a model here, as you can see for yourselves, and considerations must be shown to the fairer sex. If this is an advantage for you," he added, "it is also a disadvantage because not a moment ago I threw the last chair onto the fire that is now warming you, so you will have to remain standing. So, come closer to the fireside where your seats burn away. I had two others, made of pretty good wood, but I lent them to a neighbour artist one day, who had some good people visiting his studio interested in buying and still today those pieces of furniture have not again set foot in this house."

We did not sit, therefore, and whilst he continued working we took in the room.

Light flooded in from all sides; a white, monotonous light, which reminded us of the outdoors, with the dominant grey tone. The objects were bathed in the pale and sad coldness of an amphitheatre. There was a table full of paper and ash, two clay pipes were hanging on the wall, Japanese paper hung, damp, from a door full of colours scrapped from the palette, and a book, pink in colour, lay abandoned in a corner.

"What book is this?" we asked.

"I don't know. I bought it on the quay by the institute because of the tone of colour on the cover."

We looked at the studies.

In them we could see the soul and the school of our friend. They were all painted in minute, single-coloured dots: blue was created by dots of cobalt with others of pale yellow, to achieve the intermediate green; the sky was dots of violet alternated with minute touches of red next to Veronese green, as a complementary colour; and the sunlit paths, the midday heated patches, dots of yellow with ultramarine in the shadows.

The first impression of these studies of such a strange

theory was unpleasant, like a complex piece of music heard for the first time. It was a feeling similar to that produced on the retina by light when opening a window, but once your eyes adjusted whilst contemplating that shower of glowing dots, the colours seemed to come together in brilliant harmony, clarity emerged from the canvases, which acquired vigorous relief, and the air, the open air, circled around them with those subtle and fleeting evolutions of the atmosphere that are so difficult to capture on canvas.

"Don't look at those," he said. "They are nothing more than experiments, and I have achieved nothing with them. The battle, the eternal battle I and we have to bear, is perhaps reckless. The silhouette is always the stumbling block that the artist encounters when they wish to copy the aura of colour and the intimacy of the air. The line does not exist, no, it does not exist, and we encounter it everywhere, like a phantom that pursues us. The tradition of so many artists, who have filled museums with their work, makes us hesitate and doubt the convictions we glimpse at the back of our minds. What did Raphael do? He drew the form and forgot colour. Yes, don't deny it: he forgot colour, which should be the soul of the painting. And Titian? He moulded the silhouette, as Rubens exaggerated it and as Michelangelo preserved it. My friends, the form always drifts in the air, and this air is the keynote, and this keynote is one of the major torments of modern painting. Look at the model. This woman is nothing more than a series of tones that drift like shadows and reflections in the light of the studio."

We did not like to contradict him and looked at the model. She was seated on a stool, for want of another piece of furniture, and shivers of cold ran across her skin, in spite of the wood burner fed by the furniture. Her hair was loose, hair almost red in colour, her arms were up, head inclined, and one leg was down, supporting her,

with the other knee bent. Her face reflected the indifference of the professional model, of a poor woman who goes from painting to painting like a decorative object, whose value is weighed up by the shape of her body or the colour of her hair, and who is left forgotten in the



studio like the book with its pink cover.

The artist looked at her with half-closed eyes, he moved away from the painting to look at it from a distance, moved back to it to add a few strokes, and searched and searched in vain on the palette for the intimate gentleness of colour that trembled on that dull yellowish-coloured skin.

In the end he threw down his brush, saying:

“I don’t know, today this woman is just all blue.”

The model, without moving, lowered her eyes anxiously to make sure that she had not turned blue like he said.

“This bluish white is, of course, the reflection of the snow,” we told him to try and cheer him up.

“Perhaps that is it, but, whatever it is, I have been battling with this painting for six months, six months, which would be the ruin of me if I wasn’t already ruined since my tender youth. Every day I undo what I painted the day before, because this woman has the most variable tones I have ever seen in my career of disappointments. As you can see, the painting should represent a woman submerged simultaneously in two baths, one of clear water and the other of unclear air. When I started the painting, I flooded the studio and made her stand in the water so that I could study certain contrasts, but the neighbours complained about my studies, and as I don’t pay the rent particularly promptly, I had to renounce my convictions. My greatest dream is to paint a nude on white snow, but the human body does not tolerate or withstand these visions of the spirit. How beautiful, don’t you think? How beautiful a canvas of immense white, highlighting the pink colour of a body, would have been! How the line would have been erased in that splendid whiteness, with the colour of the thankless silhouette as victor! And, what delicate effects the intense cold would have had on the skin, freezing the blood and painting it with gentle shades!”

The model, meanwhile, on hearing this enthusiastic account, imagining herself in the solitude of the snow or no longer feeling the effects of the wood burner, which was going out little by little, began to tremble from head to toe so much that the artist, pitying her, said:

“Get dressed and I’ll see you tomorrow.”

She put on her clothes and before leaving asked:

“At what time?”

“At eight on the dot.”

“And if it’s snowing?”

“Even if icebergs are falling.”

She departed and we were left alone.

The studio was getting darker by the minute, leaving

the background of the door, where patches of the Japanese figures could be seen, in the shadows. The smoke from our cigarettes moved gently in the emptiness and blew in front of the skylight, the steamed up window panes were covered in tendrils of ice, and sitting on the table we observed the artist who, gaunt-faced, rested his head on the easel and looked at the painting sadly.

He looked at the painting and saw that in that ill-defined and indecisive light the dots of colour of his work mixed together, the trace of the brush was lost in the folds of the model and the figure rose from the green background like a yellow flower hanging from ivy growing on a wall.

"This piece is destined for the coming Salon Exhibition. We will try our fortune once again, and once again I will be rejected, as usual. Only one painting have I had accepted in my life and do you know why they accepted it? Because it was black like a nightmare and painted with the formula administered by the wise Academy. When they returned it to the studio I thought a coffin had been brought in, and I felt overwhelmed with bitter regret. It was then I who did not wish to accept it, and I told them to take it to the house of Bonnat or to Paul Laurent, that I didn't use such coals, and for proof they should look at my palette. However, here they left it and I have it in there. Only on All Souls' Day do I exhibit it, in the middle of the room, with two lit candles. Where I do exhibit my work and I don't look too bad among my contemporaries, is at the independent artists' exhibition, in the Pavillon de la Ville de Paris. Signac, Pissarro, Cross, Seurat and other talented 'pointillists' exhibit there. These include a number of impressionists, people who began the battle well, but who are falling behind; the *chercheurs* also wield their power, painters whose motto is to seek, to seek constantly and to never be happy with their work. This happens to me. I am always struck by

the fear of putting something that isn't sincere into my art! Always the idea, which makes me lose sleep, that one day I will become tired of painting what I feel and will succumb to the treacherous demands of money! It is so terribly bitter, my friends, to follow a vocation and not to bow down before the one who pays when hunger and cold call at the door of the studio! Imagine my mother, my poor mother, who lives in a corner of the provinces, there on the coast of the Atlantic, sending me what money she can, and God knows what hardships she goes through and the tears that arrive with it. My relations don't, and never did, want me to be an artist and they insist on deserting me, and she goes against them all and their ignorance, and without even knowing what I do, what I seek or what it is that I desire, she has blind faith in my work and cheers me up with her letters, always full of smiles and sweet comfort. Once I sent the best paintings I have ever done to my village. Not one person there understood them, nor did they know from which angle to look at them or what they were or what



they wanted to be. Only my mother judged them to be superior and kept them in a room, like a glorious relic.”

On saying this we did not know if he was crying, because he turned his back to us, looking out at Paris, which was getting darker, and he remained so for a while, quiet and thoughtful.

“Once they suggested I go and bury myself alive in my village, offering me the position of art teacher. Me, an art teacher, the eternal enemy of the front line! I laughed and I cried, and I was weak and wrote to them with my theories, of which they didn’t understand a single word. What were they to understand! How could I make them understand my longing to seek the line through tone, dismissing the silhouette? How could I tell them that for me drawing does not exist anywhere other than in this confusion of vibrations of space? How could I explain this vague mystery to them, this cloud of subtleties that moves in the air and that our school battles to surprise, to surprise with all the spontaneous strength of what is natural? These things are felt and cannot be explained,” he said, clutching his forehead with his hand.

Then, looking at snow-covered Paris, he added:

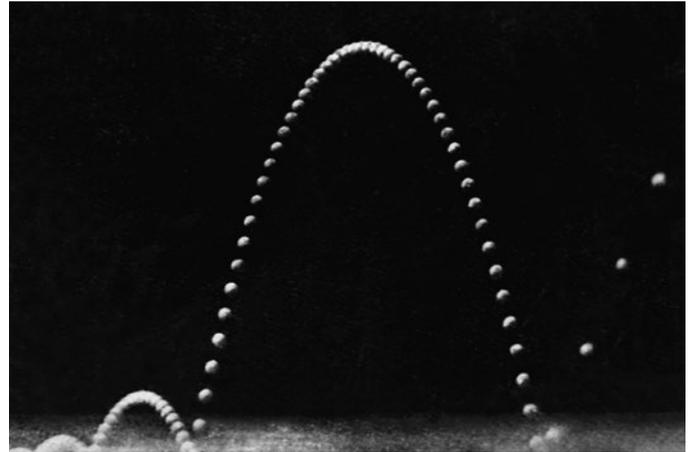
“Look at this background right now and tell me where one line ends and another begins.”

We looked, and we saw the pale sun which, behind a curtain of mist, seemed to rest its lips on the mountain tops, kissing the earth before saying farewell to it, we saw the plain that reflected the sky in white waves like foam, and we saw the colours that rose from the ground and others that came down from the clouds to embrace the space and to die with the day.

“This is the sublime hour,” said our friend. “This is the hour when the line dies and only colour prevails. My greatest dream is to live always in this hour of agony, and to paint in a hot air balloon, where I would be far away, very far away from earth.”

“What an enormous variety of madness there is in it! And, what an enormous repertoire of suffering it has for its children!” we thought as we walked away, leaving the poor artist alone in that freezing room, where only one thought was ablaze. The idea of the line was on our minds throughout the walk home, and passing a never-ending wall and seeing our shadow drawn on it by the light of the streetlamps, growing at intervals and disappearing to then reappear even bigger, we believed that this eternal silhouette that our friend spoke of pursued us, and we quickened our pace to reach the Moulin as soon as possible.

Santiago Rusiñol



FOLLOWING PAGE:
Étienne-Jules Marey
Bouncing Ball, a Study of Trajectory, 1886
Chronophotography

From Eugène Delacroix to Neo-Impressionism

The Neo-Impressionist painters are the artists who established and, after 1886, developed the technique called *divisionism* by using as their mode of expression the optical mixture of tones and hues.

Obedient to art's enduring laws of rhythm, measure and contrast, these painters came to their technique because of their desire to achieve a maximum of brightness, colour and harmony, which seemed to them unattainable by any other mode of expression.

Like all innovators, they astonished and aroused the public and the critics, who reproached them for using an irregular technique that would dissipate any talent they might have.

Our purpose, in these pages, will not be to defend the merits of these painters, but to show their much-decried method as traditional and normal, as a technique fully anticipated by Eugène Delacroix and one which he all but formulated, and which was bound to follow upon that of the Impressionists.

Must we here disclaim any intention of comparing the Neo-Impressionists with their illustrious predecessors? All we seek to prove is that they may rightly invoke the teachings of these masters and take their

place in the line of champions of colour and light.

It might seem pointless to expound a technique of painting. Painters should be judged solely by their works and not by their theories. But it is for their technique in particular that the Neo-Impressionists are attacked: it is apparently regretted that they should lose their way in futile experiments; there are many who condemn them in advance for the method they use, without making any serious study of their canvases; in their case, the examination stops short at the *means* and ignores the benefits of the *ends*. We therefore find it legitimate to come to the defence of their mode of expression and to demonstrate its logic and richness.

We may then allow ourselves the hope that the works of these artists will be examined without prejudice, for even though a technique which is accepted as sound does not endow its users with talent, why should it diminish the talent of those who find in it the best means of expressing their thought and their desire?

*

There is a widely held, erroneous belief that the Neo-Impressionists are painters who cover their canvases with multicoloured *petits points* [dots]. We shall later prove what we affirm at the outset, namely that the trivial procedure of *dotting* has nothing in common with the aesthetic of the painters defended in these pages, or with the technique of *division* used by them.

The Neo-Impressionist does not paint with *dots*, they *divide*.

This *dividing* is a way of securing all the benefits of brightness, colour and harmony by:

1. *The optical mixture of uniquely pure pigments (all the hues of the prism and all their tones);*
2. *The separation of the diverse elements (local*

colour, colour of lighting, their reactions etc...);

3. *The balance and proportion of these elements (in accordance with the laws of contrast, gradation and irradiation);*

4. *The choice of a brushstroke that fits to the size of the painting.*

The method formulated in these four paragraphs was, therefore, to govern colour for the Neo-Impressionists, most of whom have applied, in addition, the more mysterious laws that control lines and directions and ensure that they will be harmonious and beautifully ordered.

Armed with their knowledge of line and colour, the painter will make a firm choice with respect to the linear and chromatic composition of their paintings, selecting for it dominant directions, tones and hues that are appropriate to their subject.

*

We have already said that the aim of the Neo-Impressionists' technique is to achieve a maximum of colour and light. Is not this aim clearly signified in the noble cry of Eugène Delacroix:

"The enemy of all painting is grey!"

To obtain this luminous, coloured brilliance, the Neo-Impressionists use only pure colours, which, insofar as matter can come close to light, approximate the colours of the prism. Do they not here also follow the counsel of the person who writes:

"Banish all the earth colours."

They will always use these pure colours with the full-

est respect for their purity, taking good care not to sully them by mixing them on the palette (except, of course, with white and with neighbouring colours, for all the hues of the prism and all their tones). They will juxtapose them, using small, precise strokes, and will obtain, through the interplay of optical mixtures, the outcome they seek, with the advantage that, whereas all mixtures of pigment tend to discolour as well as to darken, all optical mixtures tend towards clarity and brilliance. Delacroix indeed divided the supreme merits of his method:

"Hues, of green and of violet, applied crudely, here and there, in the light areas, without mixing them."

"Green and violet: it is essential to apply these tones one after another; and not to mix them on the palette."

These colours of green and violet are, in fact, almost complementary and would, if they had been mixed as pigments, have produced a drab and dirty hue, one of those greys that is the *enemy of all painting*; whereas juxtaposed, they will recreate optically a fine, pearly grey.

The Neo-Impressionists have done nothing more than generalise logically from the treatment Delacroix imposed on green and on violet, and apply that treatment to the other colours.

Alerted by the experiments of the master and enlightened by the research of Chevreul, they have established this unique and sure method of achieving both light and colour: Replace all pigmentary mixtures of antagonistic hues by their optical mixture.

Since all uniform colour appears to them devoid of life or lustre, they strive to make the smallest area of

their canvases shimmer through the optical mixture of touches of colour, juxtaposed and gradated.

Now Delacroix has clearly enunciated the principle and the advantages of this method:

“It is good that the touches should not be blended materially. They blend naturally with one another at a distance required by the law of sympathy which has associated them together. The colour thus obtained has greater energy and freshness.”

And farther on:

“Constable says that the green of his meadows is of a superior quality because it is composed of a multitude of different greens. The greenery of the common flock of landscape painters lacks intensity and life because they ordinarily give it a uniform hue. What he says here of the green of meadows can be said of all tones.”

This last sentence proves clearly that the decomposition of hues into shaded touches, which is so important a part of *divisionism*, was anticipated by the great painter, who was inevitably led by his passion for colour to realise the benefits of optical mixture.

But to achieve optical mixture, the Neo-Impressionists have been obliged to use small strokes, so that the diverse elements, observed at the proper distance, will recreate the desired hues, and no longer be perceived in isolation.

*

According to the Neo-Impressionist technique, light—yellow, orange or red—is, according to the time of the day and the effect, added to the local hue, making it warm or more golden where the illumination is

stronger. Shadow, the faithful complement of light, its regulator, is violet, blue or bluish green, and these elements modify and cool down the darker portions of the local colour. These cool shadows and warm lights, whose strife and interplay, both with one another and with the local colour, create the contour and modelling of the painting, are diffused, blended or contrasted over the entire surface of the painting, illuminating it here, dimming it there, their place and proportion being determined by the *chiaroscuro*.

*

The Neo-Impressionists have often been taxed with exaggeration of their colour and with loud, gaudy painting.

They will disregard these criticisms, coming as they do from people of whom one can say, along with Delacroix, that:

“Earth colours and olive have dominated their colour to such an extent that nature, with its bold, lively tones, is, in their eyes, a discord.”

The painter who is truly a colourist—that is to say, one who, like the Neo-Impressionists, submits colour to the rules of harmony—will never have to fear that an excess of colour will make their work appear gaudy. They will leave it to more timorous souls to wish for “not colour, but just a nuance” and will not fear to seek brilliance and power by all possible means. For Delacroix warns them that:

“A painting will always appear greyer than it is, because of its oblique position under the light..”

*

This means of expression, the optical mixture of small, coloured touches, placed methodically one beside the other, leaves but little room for skill or virtuosity; the hand is of very little importance; only the brain and the eye of the painter have a part to play. By resisting the charms of the brushstroke, by choosing a technique that is not showy, but conscientious and precise, the Neo-Impressionists paid heed to the stern reproof of Eugène Delacroix:

Art is Harmony

“The most important thing is to avoid the infernal convenience of the brush.”

“Young people are infatuated solely by the skill of the hand. Perhaps there is no greater obstacle to any sort of real progress than this universal mania to which we have sacrificed everything.”

Paul Signac

Art is harmony.

Harmony is the analogy of contrary elements and the analogy of similar elements of tone, colour and line, considered according to their dominants and under the influence of light, in gay, calm or sad combinations.

The contraries are:

For tone, one more (luminous/clear) against a darker one;

For colour, the complementaries, that is to say a certain red opposed to its complementary, etc.

red-green
orange-blue
yellow-violet

For line, those forming a right angle.

Gaiety of tone is given by the luminous dominant: of colour, by the warm dominant; of line, by lines above the horizontal.

Calm of tone is equality between dark and light; of

colour, equality between warm and cold; in line, it is given by the horizontal.

Sad tone is given by the dark tone dominant; in colour by the cold dominant; in line by descending directions.

Technique:

Taking for granted the phenomena of the duration of the impression of light on the retina—

Synthesis necessarily follows a result. The means of expression is the optical mingling of the tones and the tints (local colour and that resulting from illumination by the sun, an oil-lamp, gas etc.), that is to say, of the lights and their reactions (the shadows), following the laws of *contrast*, of gradation and of irradiation.

The frame is in the harmony opposed to that of the tones, the colours and the lines of the picture.

George Seurat

Ceramics

Take a little piece of clay. As it stands, it is not very interesting. Place it in a kiln and it will cook like a lobster and change colour. A low fire will transform it slightly. Only with a very high temperature will the metal it contains reach a state of fusion. I do not pretend to offer a scientific course on this topic, but a quick exposé will help explain that in ceramics, quality depends in large measure on the firing. A connoisseur will say this is poorly or well fired.

Indeed, the material coming out of the kiln is marked by the character of the fire. It becomes graver, more serious to the extent that it goes through hell.

Ceramics and sculpture as well as drawing require modelling “in harmony with the raw material.”

I beg sculptors to study carefully this question of adaptation. Plaster, wood, marble, bronze and clay must not be modelled in the same way, since every one of these materials has different characteristics of solidity, hardness and appearance.

One might call these subtleties excessive; but in art, they are necessities. Otherwise art is no longer complete; it is no longer art.

Paul Gauguin

The Lesser Arts

Until something or other is done to give all people some pleasure for the eyes and rest for the mind in the aspect of their own and their neighbours' houses, until the contrast is less disgraceful between the fields where beasts live and the streets where people live, I suppose that the practice of the arts must be mainly kept in the hands of a few highly cultivated people, who can go often to beautiful places, whose education enables them, in the contemplation of the past glories of the world, to shut out from their view the everyday squalors that the most of people move in. Sirs, I believe that art has such sympathy with cheerful freedom, openheartedness and reality, so much she sickens under selfishness and luxury, that she will not live thus isolated and exclusive. I will go further than this, and say that on such terms I do not wish her to live. I protest that it would be a shame to an honest artist to enjoy what they have huddled up to themselves of such art, as it would be for a rich person to sit and eat dainty food amongst starving soldiers in a beleaguered fort.

I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.

No, rather than art should live this poor thin life amongst a few exceptional people, despising those beneath them for an ignorance for which they themselves are responsible, for a brutality that they will not struggle with—rather than this, I would that the world should indeed sweep away all art for a while, as I said before I thought it possible she might do: rather than the wheat should rot in the miser's granary, I would that the earth had it, that it might yet have a chance to quicken in the dark.

I have a sort of faith, though, that this clearing away of all art will not happen, that people will get wiser, as well as more learned; that many of the intricacies of life, on which we now pride ourselves more than enough, partly because they are new, partly because they have come with the gain of better things, will be cast aside as having played their part, and being useful no longer. I hope that we shall have leisure from war—war commercial, as well as war of the bullet and the bayonet; leisure from the knowledge that darkens counsel; leisure above all from the greed of money, and the craving for that overwhelming distinction that money now brings: I believe that as we have even now partly achieved LIBERTY, so we shall one day achieve EQUALITY, which, and which only, means FRATERNITY, and so have leisure from poverty and all its griping, sordid cares.

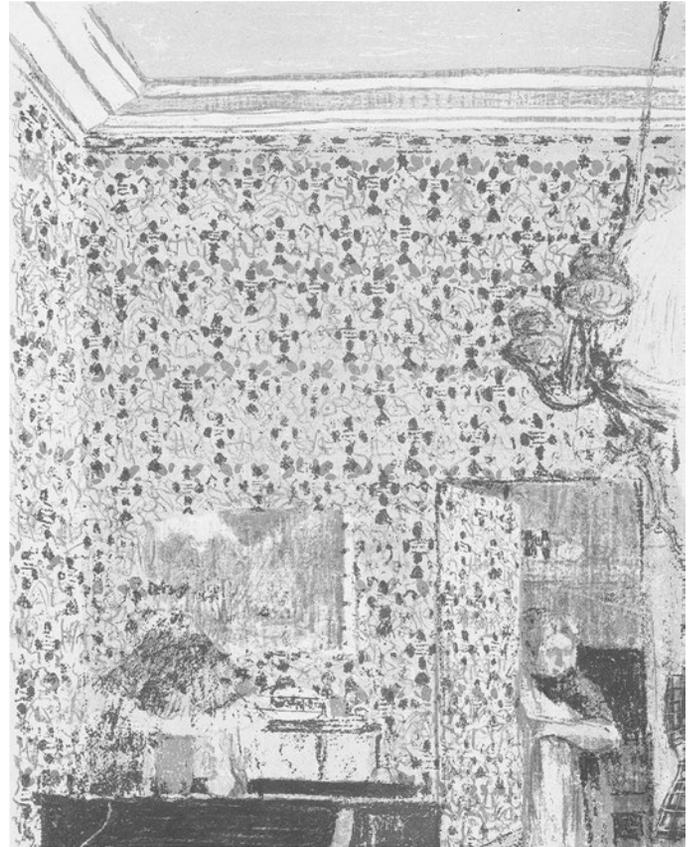
Then, having leisure from all these things, amidst renewed simplicity of life we shall have leisure to think about our work, that faithful daily companion, which no person any longer will venture to call the Curse of labour: for surely then we shall be happy in it, each in their place, no person grudging at another; no one bidden to be any person's *servant*, every one scorning to be any person's *master*: people will then assuredly be happy in their work, and that happiness will assuredly bring forth decorative, noble, *popular* art.

That art will make our streets as beautiful as the woods, as elevating as the mountainsides: it will be a pleasure and a rest, and not a weight upon the spirits to come from the open country into a town; every person's house will be fair and decent, soothing to their mind and helpful to their work: all the works of humankind that we live amongst and handle will be in harmony with nature, will be reasonable and beautiful: yet all will be simple and inspiring, not childish nor enervating; for as nothing of beauty and splendour that mind and hand may compass shall be wanted from our public buildings, so in no private dwelling will there be any signs of waste, pomp or insolence, and every person will have their share of the *best*.

It is a dream, you may say, of what has never been and never will be: true, it has never been, and therefore, since the world is alive and moving yet, my hope is the greater that it one day will be: true, it is a dream; but dreams have before now come about of things so good and necessary to us, that we scarcely think of them more than of the daylight, though once people had to live without them, without even the hope of them.

Anyhow, dream as it is, I pray you to pardon my setting it before you, for it lies at the bottom of all my work in the Decorative Arts, nor will it ever be out of my thoughts: and I am here with you tonight to ask you to help me in realising this dream, this *hope*.

William Morris



Ornament in Architecture

I take it as self-evident that a building, quite devoid of ornament, may convey a noble and dignified sentiment by virtue of mass and proportion. It is not evident to me that ornament can intrinsically heighten these elemental qualities. Why, then, should we use ornament? Is not a noble and simple dignity sufficient? Why should we ask more?

If I answer the question in entire candour, I should say that it would be greatly for our aesthetic good if we should refrain entirely from the use of ornament for a period of years, in order that our thought might concentrate acutely upon the production of buildings well formed and comely in the nude. We should thus perforce eschew many undesirable things, and learn by contrast how effective it is to think in a natural, vigorous and wholesome way. This step taken, we might safely inquire to what extent a decorative application of ornament would enhance the beauty of our structures—what new charm it would give them.

If we have then become well grounded in pure and simple forms we will reverse them; we will refrain instinctively from vandalism; we will be loath to do aught that may make these forms less pure, less noble. We shall have

PREVIOUS PAGE:

Édouard Vuillard

Interior with Pink Wallpaper I, 1899

Colour lithograph, 39.2 × 30.7 cm

learnt, however, that ornament is mentally a luxury, not a necessity, for we shall have discerned the limitations as well as the great value of unadorned masses. We have in us romanticism, and feel a craving to express it. We feel intuitively that our strong, athletic and simple forms will carry with natural ease the raiment of which we dream, and that our buildings thus clad in a garment of poetic imagery, half hid as it were in choice products of loom and mine, will appeal with redoubled power, like a sonorous melody overlaid with harmonious voices.

I conceive that a true artist will reason substantially in this way; and that, at the culmination of their powers, they may realise this ideal. I believe that architectural ornament brought forth in this spirit is desirable, because beautiful and inspiring; that ornament brought forth in any other spirit is lacking in the higher possibilities.

That is to say, a building that is truly a work of art (and I consider none other) is in its nature, essence and physical being an emotional expression. This being so, and I feel deeply that it is so, it must have, almost literally, a life. It follows from this living principle that an ornamented structure should be characterised by this quality, namely, that the same emotional impulse shall flow throughout harmoniously into its varied forms of expression—of which, while the mass-composition is the more profound, the decorative ornamentation is the more intense. Yet both must spring from the same source of feeling.

I am aware that a decorated building, designed upon this principle, will require in its creator a high and sustained emotional tension, an organic singleness of idea and purpose maintained to the last. The completed work will tell of this; and if it be designed with sufficient depth of feeling and simplicity of mind, the more intense the heat in which it was conceived, the more serene and noble will it remain forever as a monument of humankind's eloquence. It is this quality that characterises the great

monuments of the past. It is this certainly that opens a vista towards the future.

To my thinking, however, the mass-composition and the decorative system of a structure such as I have hinted at should be separable from each other only in theory and for purposes of analytical study. I believe, as I have said, that an excellent and beautiful building may be designed that shall bear no ornament whatever; but I believe just as firmly that a decorated structure, harmoniously conceived, well considered, cannot be stripped of its system of ornament without destroying its individuality.

It has been hitherto somewhat the fashion to speak of ornament, without perhaps too much levity of thought, as a thing to be put on or omitted, as the case might be. I hold to the contrary—that the presence or absence of ornament should, certainly in serious work, be determined at the very beginnings of the design. This is perhaps strenuous insistence, yet I justify and urge it on the grounds that creative architecture is an art so fine that its power is manifest in rhythms of great subtlety, as much so indeed as those of musical art, its nearest relative.

If, therefore, our artistic rhythms—a result—are to be significant, our prior meditations—the cause—must be so. It matters then greatly what is the prior inclination of the mind, as much so indeed as it matters what is the inclination of a cannon when the shot is fired.

If we assume that our contemplated building need not be a work of living art, or at least a striving for it, that our civilisation does not yet demand such, my plea is useless. I can proceed only on the supposition that our culture has progressed to the stage wherein an imitative or reminiscient art does not wholly satisfy, and that there exists an actual desire for spontaneous expression. I assume, too, that we are to begin, not by shutting our eyes and ears to the unspeakable past, but rather by opening our hearts, in enlightened sympathy and filial

regard, to the voice of our times.

Nor do I consider this the place or the time to inquire if after all there is really such a thing as creative art—whether a final analysis does not reveal the great artist, not as creator, but rather as interpreter and prophet. When the time does come that the luxury of this inquiry becomes a momentous necessity, our architecture shall have neared its final development. It will suffice then to say that I conceive a work of fine art to be really this: a made thing, more or less attractive, regarding which the casual observer may see a part, but no observer all, that is in it.

It must be manifest that an ornamental design will be more beautiful if it seems a part of the surface or substance that receives it than if it looks 'stuck on,' so to speak. A little observation will lead one to see that in the former case there exists a peculiar sympathy between the ornament and the structure, which is absent in the latter. Both structure and ornament obviously benefit by this sympathy; each enhancing the value of the other. And this, I take it, is the preparatory basis of what may be called an organic system of ornamentation.

The ornament, as a matter of fact, is applied in the sense of being cut in or cut on, or otherwise done: yet it should appear, when completed, as though by the outworking of some beneficent agency it had come forth from the very substance of the material and was there by the same right that a flower appears amid the leaves of its parent plant.

Here by this method we make a species of contact, and the spirit that animates the mass is free to flow into the ornament—they are no longer two things but one thing.

If now we bring ourselves to close and reflective observation, how evident it becomes that if we wish to insure an actual, poetic unity, the ornament should appear, not as

something receiving the spirit of the structure, but as a thing expressing that spirit by virtue of differential growth.

It follows then, by the logic of growth, that a certain kind of ornament should appear on a certain kind of structure, just as a certain kind of leaf must appear on a certain kind of tree. An elm leaf would not 'look well' on a pine tree—a pine needle seems more 'in keeping.' So, an ornament or scheme of organic decoration befitting a structure composed on broad and massive lines would not be in sympathy with a delicate and dainty one. Nor should the ornamental systems of buildings of any various sorts be interchangeable as between these buildings. For buildings should possess an individuality as marked as that which exists among human beings, making them distinctly separable from each other, however strong the racial or family resemblance may be.

Everyone knows and feels how strongly individual is each person's voice, but few pause to consider that a voice, though of another kind, speaks from every existing building. What is the character of these voices? Are they harsh or smooth, noble or ignoble? Is the speech they utter prose or poetry?

Mere difference in outward form does not constitute individuality. For this a harmonious inner character is necessary; and as we speak of human nature, we may by analogy apply a similar phrase to buildings.

A little study will enable one soon to discern and appreciate the more obvious individualities of buildings; further study, and comparison of impressions, will bring to view forms and qualities that were at first hidden; a deeper analysis will yield a host of new sensations, developed by the discovery of qualities hitherto unsuspected—we have found evidences of the gift of expression, and have felt the significance of it; the mental and emotional gratification caused by these discoveries leads on to deeper and deeper searching, until, in great works, we

fully learn that what was obvious was least, and what was hidden, nearly all.

Few works can stand the test of close, business-like analysis—they are soon emptied. But no analysis, however sympathetic, persistent or profound, can exhaust a truly great work of art. For the qualities that make it thus great are not mental only, but psychic, and therefore signify the highest expression and embodiment of individuality.

Now, if this spiritual and emotional quality is a noble attribute when it resides in the mass of a building, it must, when applied to a virile and synthetic scheme of ornamentation, raise this at once from the level of triviality to the heights of dramatic expression.

The possibilities of ornamentation, so considered, are marvellous; and before us open, as a vista, conceptions so rich, so varied, so poetic, so inexhaustible, that the mind pauses in its flight and life indeed seems but a span.

Reflect now the light of this conception full and free upon joint considerations of mass-composition, and how serious, how eloquent, how inspiring is the imagery, how noble the dramatic force that shall make sublime our future architecture.

America is the only land in the whole earth wherein a dream like this may be realised; for here alone tradition is without shackles, and the soul of humanity free to grow, to mature, to seek its own.

But for this we must turn again to Nature, and hearkening to her melodious voice, learn, as children learn, the accent of its rhythmic cadences. We must view the sunrise with ambition, the twilight wistfully; then, when our eyes have learnt to see, we shall know how great is the simplicity of nature, that it brings forth in serenity such endless variation. We shall learn from this to consider people and their ways, to the end that we behold

the unfolding of the soul in all its beauty, and know that the fragrance of a living art shall float again in the garden of our world.

Louis H. Sullivan



The Futurist Manifesto

We have been up all night, my friends and I, beneath mosque lamps whose brass cupolas are as bright as our souls, because like them they were illuminated by the internal glow of electric hearts. And trampling underfoot our native sloth on opulent Persian carpets, we have been discussing right up to the limits of logic and scrawling the paper with demented writing.

Our hearts were filled with an immense pride at feeling ourselves standing quite alone, like lighthouses or like the sentinels in an outpost, facing the army of enemy stars encamped in their celestial bivouacs. Alone with the engineers in the infernal stokeholes of great ships, alone with the black spirits which rage in the belly of rogue locomotives, alone with the drunkards beating their wings against the walls.

Then we were suddenly distracted by the rumbling of huge double-decker trams that went leaping by, streaked with light like the villages celebrating their festivals, which the Po in flood suddenly knocks down and uproots, and, in the rapids and eddies of a deluge, drags down to the sea.

PREVIOUS PAGES:
Unknown photographer
Untitled, 1904
Gelatin silver print, 8.6 × 13.7 cm

Then the silence increased. As we listened to the last faint prayer of the old canal and the crumbling of the bones of moribund palaces with their green growth of beard, suddenly the hungry automobiles roared beneath our windows.

“Come, my friends!” I said. “Let us go! At last Mythology and the mystic cult of the ideal have been left behind. We are going to be present at the birth of the centaur and we shall soon see the first angels fly! We must break down the gates of life to test the bolts and the padlocks! Let us go! Here is the very first sunrise on earth! Nothing equals the splendour of its red sword which strikes for the first time in our millennial darkness.”

We went up to the three snorting machines to caress their breasts. I lay along mine like a corpse on its bier, but I suddenly revived again beneath the steering wheel a guillotine knife that threatened my stomach. A great sweep of madness brought us sharply back to ourselves and drove us through the streets, steep and deep, like dried up torrents. Here and there unhappy lamps in the windows taught us to despise our mathematical eyes. “Smell,” I exclaimed, “smell is good enough for wild beasts!”

And we hunted, like young lions, death with its black fur dappled with pale crosses, who ran before us in the vast violet sky, palpable and living.

And yet we had no ideal Mistress stretching her form up to the clouds, nor yet a cruel Queen to whom to offer our corpses twisted into the shape of Byzantine rings! No reason to die unless it is the desire to be rid of the too great weight of our courage!

We drove on, crushing beneath our burning wheels, like shirt collars under the iron, the watchdogs on the steps of the houses.

Death, tamed, went in front of me at each corner offering me his hand nicely, and sometimes lay on the

ground with a noise of creaking jaws giving me velvet glances from the bottom of puddles.

“Let us leave good sense behind like a hideous husk and let us hurl ourselves, like fruit spiced with pride, into the immense mouth and breast of the wind! Let us feed the unknown, not from despair, but simply to enrich the unfathomable reservoirs of the Absurd!”

As soon as I had said these words, I turned sharply back on my tracks with the mad intoxication of puppies biting their tails, and suddenly there were two cyclists disapproving of me and tottering in front of me like two persuasive but contradictory reasons. Their stupid swaying got in my way. What a bore! Pouah! I stopped short, and in disgust I hurled myself—vlan!—head over heels in a ditch.

Oh, maternal ditch, half full of muddy water! A factory gutter! I savoured a mouthful of strengthening muck which recalled the black teat of my Sudanese nurse!

As I raised my body, mud splattered and smelly, I felt the red-hot poker of joy deliciously pierce my heart. A crowd of fishermen and gouty naturalists crowded terrified around this marvel. With patient and tentative care they raised high enormous grappling irons to fish up my car, like a vast shark that had run aground. It rose slowly leaving in the ditch, like scales, its heavy coachwork of good sense and its upholstery of comfort.

We thought it was dead, my good shark, but I woke it with a single caress of its powerful back, and it was revived, running as fast as it could on its fins.

Then with my face covered in good factory mud, covered with metal scratches, useless sweat and celestial grime, amidst the complaint of the staid fishermen and the angry naturalists, we dictated our first will and testament to all the living people on earth.

MANIFESTO OF FUTURISM

1. We want to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and rashness.
2. The essential elements of our poetry will be courage, audacity and revolt.
3. Literature has up to now magnified pensive immobility, ecstasy and slumber. We want to exalt movements of aggression, feverish sleeplessness, the double march, the perilous leap, the slap and the blow with the fist.
4. We declare that the splendour of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing automobile with its bonnet adorned with great tubes like serpents with explosive breath... a roaring motorcar that seems to run on machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*.
5. We want to sing the person at the wheel, the ideal axis of which crosses the earth, itself hurled along its orbit.
6. The poet must spend themselves with warmth, glamour and prodigality to increase the enthusiastic fervour of the primordial elements.
7. Beauty exists only in struggle. There is no masterpiece that has not an aggressive character. Poetry must be a violent assault on the forces of the unknown, to force them to bow before humanity.
8. We are on the extreme promontory of the centuries! What is the use of looking behind at the moment when we must open the mysterious shutters of the impossible?

Time and Space died yesterday. We are already living in the absolute, since we have already created eternal, omnipresent speed.

9. We want to glorify war—the only cure for the world—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchists, the beautiful ideas that kill and contempt for woman.
10. We want to demolish museums and libraries, fight morality, feminism and all opportunist and utilitarian cowardice.
11. We will sing of great crowds agitated by work, pleasure and revolt; the multi-coloured and polyphonic surf of revolutions in modern capitals: the nocturnal vibration of the arsenals and the workshops beneath their violent electric moons: the gluttonous railway stations devouring smoking serpents; factories suspended from the clouds by the thread of their smoke; bridges with the leap of gymnasts flung across the diabolic cutlery of sunny rivers: adventurous steamers sniffing the horizon; great-breasted locomotives, puffing on the rails like enormous steel horses with long tubes for bridle, and the gliding flight of aeroplanes whose propeller sounds like the flapping of a flag and the applause of enthusiastic crowds.

It is in Italy that we are issuing this manifesto of ruinous and incendiary violence, by which we today are founding Futurism, because we want to deliver Italy from its gangrene of professors, archaeologists, tourist guides and antiquaries.

Italy has been too long the great second-hand market. We want to get rid of the innumerable museums that cover it with innumerable cemeteries.

Museums, cemeteries! Truly identical in their sinister juxtaposition of bodies that do not know each other. Public dormitories where you sleep side-by-side forever with beings you hate or do not know. Reciprocal ferocity of the painters and sculptors who murder each other in the same museum with blows of line and colour. To make a visit once a year, as one goes to see the graves of our dead once a year, that we could allow! We can even imagine placing flowers once a year at the feet of *La Gioconda*! But to take our sadness, our fragile courage and our anxiety to the museum every day, that we cannot admit! Do you want to poison yourselves? Do you want to rot?

What can you find in an old picture except the painful contortions of the artist trying to break uncrossable barriers that obstruct the full expression of their dream?

To admire an old picture is to pour our sensibility into a funeral urn instead of casting it forwards with violent spurts of creation and action. Do you want to waste the best part of your strength in a useless admiration of the past, from which you will emerge exhausted, diminished, trampled on?

Indeed daily visits to museums, libraries and academies (those cemeteries of wasted effort, calvaries of crucified dreams, registers of false starts!) is for artists what prolonged supervision by the parents is for intelligent young people, drunk with their own talent and ambition.

For the dying, for invalids and for prisoners it may be all right. It is, perhaps, some sort of balm for their wounds, the admirable past, at a moment when the future is denied them. But we will have none of it, we, the young, strong and living Futurists!

Let the good incendiaries with charred fingers come! Here they are! Heap up the fire to the shelves of the libraries! Divert the canals to flood the cellars of the

museums! Let the glorious canvases swim ashore! Take the picks and hammers! Undermine the foundation of venerable towns!

The oldest amongst us are not yet 30 years old: we have therefore at least 10 years to accomplish our task. When we are 40 let younger and stronger men than we throw us in the wastepaper basket like useless manuscripts! They will come against us from afar, leaping on the light cadence of their first poems, clutching the air with their predatory fingers and sniffing at the gates of the academies the good scent of our decaying spirits, already promised to the catacombs of the libraries.

But we shall not be there. They will find us at last one winter's night in the depths of the country in a sad hangar echoing with the notes of the monotonous rain, crouched near our trembling aeroplanes, warming our hands at the wretched fire that our books of today will make when they flame gaily beneath the glittering flight of their pictures.

They will crowd around us, panting with anguish and disappointment, and exasperated by our proud indefatigable courage, will hurl themselves forwards to kill us, with all the more hatred as their hearts will be drunk with love and admiration for us. And strong healthy Injustice will shine radiantly from their eyes. For art can only be violence, cruelty and injustice.

The oldest amongst us are not yet 30, and yet we have already wasted treasures, treasures of strength, love, courage and keen will, hastily, deliriously, without thinking, with all our might, till we are out of breath.

Look at us! We are not out of breath, our hearts are not in the least tired. For they are nourished by fire, hatred and speed! Does this surprise you? It is because you do not even remember having been alive! Standing on the world's summit, we launch once more our challenge to the stars!

Your objections? All right! I know them! Of course!
We know just what our beautiful false intelligence affirms:
“We are only the sum and the prolongation of our ancestors,” it says. Perhaps! All right! What does it matter? But we will not listen! Take care not to repeat those infamous words! Instead, lift up your head!

Standing on the world’s summit we launch once again
our insolent challenge to the stars!

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti

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Image on cover: Ink on paper, Priscila Fernandes, 2014.

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Espai 13

¿Y EL ARTE?

The Book of Aesthetic Education of
the Modern School

This book is presented as one of the
artworks in *The Book of Aesthetic
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AZOTEA is a curatorial duo
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Zinaida Serebriakova
At the Dressing Table, Self-Portrait, 1909
Oil on canvas, 75 × 65 cm

