

THE TRUTH ABOUT

modern art

by Wheeler Williams

LEST too many readers be inveigled into speculating in so-called "modern art" by the "Boom" article in October issue, let's be sure they do so with their eyes open.

How did "modern art" start? Its founders were mediocre artists, seeking an audience, employing shock treatment methods of deformity, color discord, and other tricks to attract attention, however loaded with ridicule or scorn the reaction might be. That made their names notorious as "Fauves" (wild beasts).

Old masterpieces were getting harder and harder to find and living artists of real talent were never numerous. Wily dealers with a sense of side-showmanship (including some unscrupulous enough to relish selling copies as masterpieces to any nouveau collector) soon found delight and profit in trading upon the notoriety—pseudo-renown—of these self proclaimed masters,

and in promoting their works to gullible foreigners.

The label, "School of Paris" was pinned on this motley array of characters, for the most part denizens of Paris, but neither Parisian nor even French, whose works showed no vestige of France's great tradition of Beauty.

The Communists, who early realized the importance of art as a weapon, soon muscled in on the scene. It is not surprising that the heroes (living and dead) of the "modern" movement with its sundry schools of the radical "isms" which sprouted over Europe, much as commie fronts of all kinds sprouted here in the 30's and 40's, are largely identified Reds.

Following the Communist plan to destroy all existing religion, government, economy, liberty, self-confidence, morality and ethics, even in Russia, Kandinsky was called back from Germany to head official art in

Wheeler Williams, NA sculptor, President of American Artists, although busy working on the statue of Senator Robert A. Taft for the base of the Memorial Tower in Washington, took time out to write this "rebuttal" to the article, "The Boom in Modern Art," in the October issue of AMERICAN MERCURY.

Russia until Capitalism was destroyed. Then the "isms" were tabooed and Kandinsky sent back as missionary of nonobjective art to Germany. If, after killing and exiling so many artists of talent, Russia had difficulty in redeveloping a real national art of much importance, it is not surprising. However, judging by works at the Paris Exhibition in 1937 and New York Worlds Fair, and by reports on their art at Brussels (despite all the time and talent devoted to busts of Stalin) they are better represented artistically than some countries outside the iron curtain where they have been assiduously backing the destructive "isms."

THE self-styled art historians of the Modern and the Whitney Museums, to defend their acquisitions, always scream that to link modern art to Communism is ridiculous because it isn't allowed in Russia. Of course Russia is developing atomic energy for power at home but making atomic bombs for export. The kind of art they approve for home and foreign consumption have very different purposes.

Congressman Dondero, who retired two years ago after 50 years of dedicated elected service, showed himself a keener and more accurate historian in his many speeches on art in the Congress as "Modern Art Shackled to Communism," printed in the Congressional Record of

August 16, 1949, bears witness.

Of course, as he pointed out, their use of art as a weapon in the class struggle ("Not only a weapon, but a very potent one as well," wrote William Z. Foster in *The New Masses*—1946) is a many-headed one: social realism, to paint the dirty linen of other lands; captured artists of real talent as door openers to art organizations (their influences, treasuries and grants) and third, but far from least, the cancerous "isms" to disturb and debase.

A lot of people have been taken in by snob appeal and think they see beauty and form which actually is nonexistent. Would-be artists have joined the paint dribblers and bent-wire welders. Any one can do it and, since there are no standards, anything can be called a masterpiece. Many "museum boys" who should know better have become sideshow barkers for the freaks with which they are littering up gallery space. A lot of critics have written reams of nonsense about idiotic doodles. They are building paper foundations for alleged genius which will collapse and be forgotten, even by the current readers. Dealers buy and sell the works of each other's current pets at fantastic prices in the auction rooms to rig the values. New would-be connoisseurs have poured out a lot of money to acquire works by the manufactured major and minor masters. Others have poured out fabulous sums for museums.

books, and articles to promote the "isms" or to protect their dubious investments.

Certainly the great majority in all these categories are loyal pro-American anti-communists. You can be certain, however, there are key figures in the picture who are Communist Party members, agents or front-ers, chuckling as they lead the suckers on.

THE curator quoted, in the "Boom" article, as saying "No one can declare what is and what isn't art" was unique. The curators of the modern movement, as for example the just retired director of the Whitney Museum, claim that only those educated by the (self styled) art experts (i.e. themselves) can appreciate art. They hold up to scorn the modest layman's view: "I don't know much about art but I know what I like when I see it."

Art is not international. Art is national, racial and of its time. But art is universal and real art carries its message and inspiration to anyone, anywhere, today and tomorrow's morrow without written or vocal aid. So, buy what you like, *really like*, by all means, not just what Mrs. Jones or the modern art pusher tells you. You won't go far wrong. But if you really are sold on buying unknown moderns for quick profit, pick out one whose boosters know all the Hotel Druot and 57th Street tricks. After all, since in modern art there are no cri-

teria or standards, anything goes. The next discovery is whatever one they decide to build up as a straw genius. All too likely ten per cent of what you pay will go to the Party just as it does if you buy a Picasso. He's the character who wrote: "Art is not to decorate apartments, art is a weapon of revolution and my art is revolutionary art." And, despite all the praise that's been heaped upon his earlier Pink and Blue Periods, there was very little evidence of genius then and certainly none in his Red "ism" periods since.

As for the final questions in "Boom": "It's crazy art? Perhaps. Will it live? Who knows?" My answers are: "Yes, it's crazy, but sometimes crazy like a fox!" and "No! because if Russia, God forbid, should conquer, all "modern works" will be destroyed and "modern" artists put in the salt mines, while if our beloved Republic and the Free World survive as we pray they will, time will winnow the wheat from the chaff in art as in life. You can't even fool "some of the people" forever.

If you really want to get into the picture-collecting swim, even on a small scale, *look* before you read or listen. Buy what gives you joy and understanding fellowship with the artist, that which rings true of sincerity, beauty and craftsmanship. Shun what shows dirty linen and garbage or veils pornography or sacrilege with clumsy abstraction.

BUY THE work of the young unknown who shows promise and, yes, write to the editor of your favorite newspaper, if it has an art column devoted to Left Wing art, and urge that similar space be given a critic sympathetic to American art, faithful to time-honored tenets of form and color and true to classic verities.

I was lucky to get recognition before the paper curtain was so thoroughly installed to keep the public from knowing that real American art, modern as today, as varied as men are varied, one from another, and true to all the traditions, is being created. Those of my generation or older have no complaint.

When people want to honor our heroes, have a picture of their loved ones, a painting for the living room, a mural or a frieze for a public building, a figure for their garden or a flower piece for their dining room, they usually find us out. However, no man of real talent with the soul of a creative artist, loving God and his creations, could descend to manufacturing the mockeries of lower case modern art for a livelihood.

Hunt out new talent among the young and encourage it so that these men will not be diverted to more remunerative—if spiritually less rewarding—fields. Then we will have a real “Boom” in American Art.

In the quest for happiness one could not do better than to put into practice the precepts of a great Persian: “Taking the first step with a good thought, the second with a good word, and the third step with a good deed, I can enter paradise.”—REELTOPICS

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MADAME DE STAEL

Do You Know?

- Professor Harold Laski of England was used by the Conspirators to strengthen Russia and to weaken the U.S. At Cardiff on May 12, 1946, Laski stated that if he and the British Labour Movement, of which he was Chairman, had to choose between America and Russia, they would “stand four-square behind the Soviet Union.”

- The “international leaders” of Soviet Russia and the United States have agreed openly on only one issue—Israel, whom they armed, financed, and ahead of many previous applicants, brought into “their United Nations.”

- It was no mere coincidence that the United Nations flag is pale blue and white—the identical colors of the state of Israel.

- The UN Charter was drawn up by the Zionist, Leo Pasvolksky.

- The first act of the first Roosevelt government in 1933 was the recognition of Red Russia. This was done over the advice and protests of our best citizens.

- In Japan, a strong Communist Party now exists where Communism previously had been virtually unknown. Traitors in the U.S. had all Nationalist parties and societies banned by order of the U.S. government in 1946.

- Truman himself told the American Booksellers Association that his favorite reading is the Talmud. (See *Los Angeles Daily News*, Nov. 19, 1949.) Before being “advanced” into politics, Truman was assistant in the drapery shop of Eli Jacobson, at Independence, Missouri.

- In the 1948 World Jewish Congress, the Jews again affirmed their Unity in Dispersion.