



Fernand Lèger stands in front of his "Divers" at the Museum of Modern Art

# Art for Profits Sake

BY HARRY HENDERSON  
AND SAM SHAW

There's a boom on in art; and the leaders of the modern French school, who came here for security, are staying for inspiration

Moïse Kisling, a follower of Modigliani, works on a study of Majorie Milliard, well-known New York model. Kisling paints large luscious nudes and flower still-lives as well as many portraits. One studio corner is covered with obituary notices resulting from the Nazi report of his death. "I do not know why they did it," he says. "Maybe they want to sell the paintings they stole from my Paris home"

IT HAS always been the fond impression of many Americans that artists are an impecunious and romantic lot, who never have a dime and probably would refuse an opportunity to make one. But, brother, things have changed. The art world today is cooking with cash and New York's 57th Street galleries have just gone through the biggest art-buying boom this country has known. The Parke-Bernet galleries, largest of Manhattan's auction houses, slammed up a grand total of six million dollars, more than half of which went for paintings. The John R. Thompson collection, which included several old masters, went for \$262,780, but the biggest jump in prices was in the modern and contemporary field. Six auction sales in this category brought in \$453,572, the most important being the famous modern French collection of Frank Crowninshield which hit the bell at \$131,365. Another \$2,500,000 is estimated as having been spent in other galleries.

An Art News survey of only seventeen galleries found that they had sold 221 paintings for over \$2,000—521 between \$1,000 and \$2,000; 867 between \$500 and \$1,000; and 2,102 under \$500. In the art world, it is no longer vulgar to mention money; it's business.

With things going this way on 57th Street, the leading artists can't help becoming the leading businessmen. With the exception of Picasso and the aging Henri Matisse, virtually all the important leaders of modern French art are here and are very successful. Most of them came here before the war and many are planning to stay on for the rest of their lives. International celebrities in Paris for years, they are getting higher prices for their work than ever before, and more is being sold. They are, most critics concede, going to influence American art profoundly in the future.

A small painting by any one of them will sell for \$500, drawings for \$150 and up. A small portrait by Moïse Kisling costs \$1,000. While a tiny work by an old master may run into five figures, contemporary art seems to be sold on the square-foot basis. Consequently, the larger the painting, the better the price. And the artists are smart enough businessmen to work mainly in the \$1,000-and-up canvas sizes—over three by four feet. For anything larger than just a head, Kisling, the only portraitist among them, gets fabulous prices by American artists' standards. It is not out of the ordinary for him to receive \$6,000 for a large seated figure; he calls the price "comfortable."

Aside from the natural stimulus any artist finds in demand for his work, what other stimuli they find here are difficult to ascertain. J. B. Neumann, well-known 57th Street art dealer who knew these artists abroad, pointed out that most American artists are anxious to get to Paris, while the Parisians are anxious to stay here. "The French artists are looking for security and are finding it here," he said. "The

American artists are still looking for inspiration rather than security."

However, big, bustling Fernand Lèger, who visited America six times before the war to perform such well-paying tasks as decorating the apartment of Nelson Rockefeller, puts it this way: "America is a great stimulus. It excites me. I think of nothing but work, work, work. It all excites me—the buildings, the people, the traffic, the tempo of life, the landscape. What it is I do not know. But I produce much more. What I do in Paris maybe ten times, I do twenty here."

Lèger's prestige outranks all his contemporaries, and his work is eagerly bought up. Nevertheless, he is a headache to dealers, one of them told us, because he is not particularly interested in establishing a set market price. You can pay a few hundred for a Lèger, or you can pay \$3,000. It seems to depend on whether he needs money at the moment.

Kurt Seligmann, a surrealist, has another explanation of the increased production. A short, lively pipe-smoking man, Seligmann says, "I think talking has a great deal to do with it. In Paris we used to 'talk' pictures more than we painted them. Here we do not talk so much and we paint more."

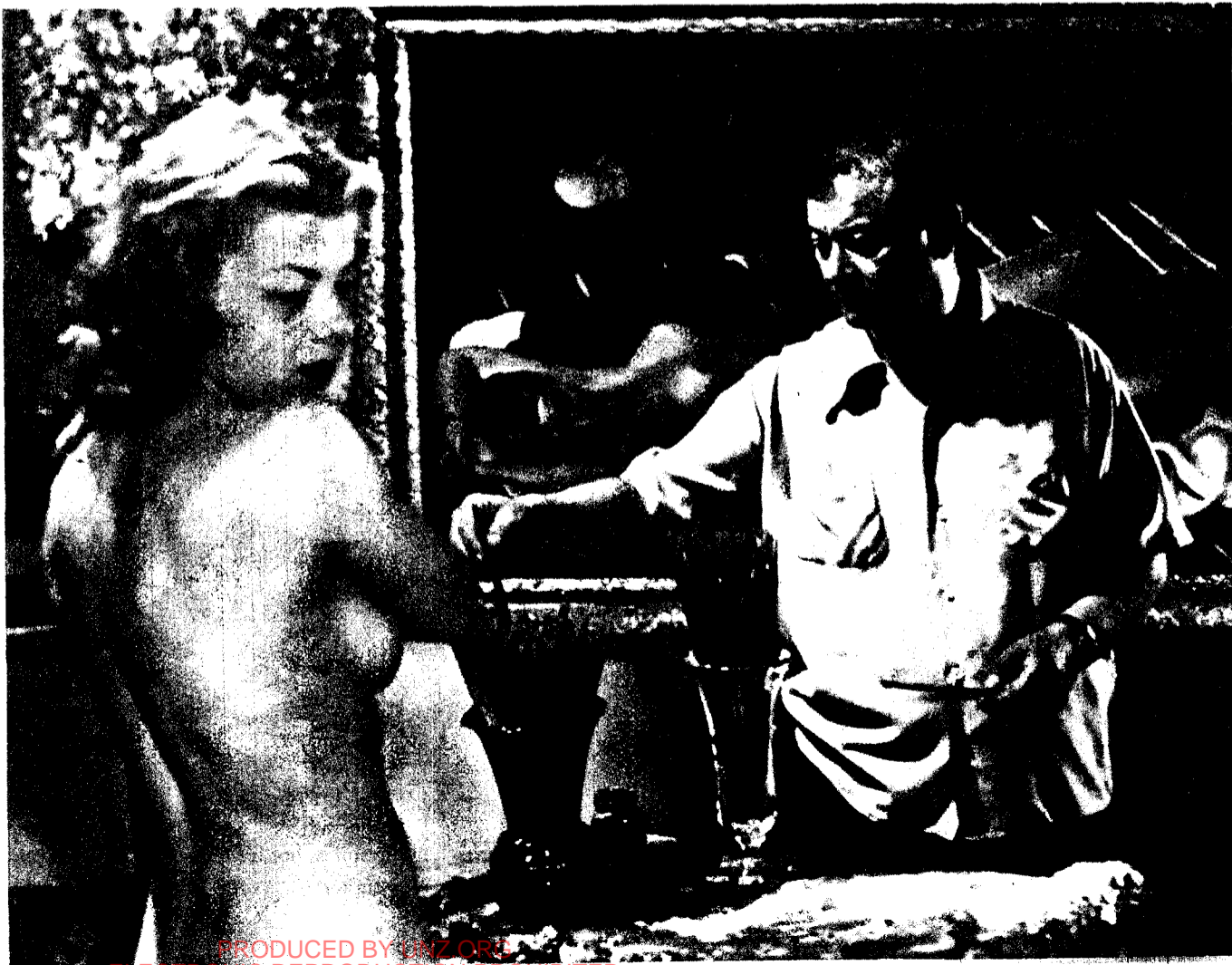
Jacques Lipchitz, whose shyness belies the fact that he is one of the world's greatest sculptors, has his Madison Square studio filled with the plaster forms of a gigantic work for the Brazilian Ministry of Education. It is a powerful statue portraying Man Overcoming Nature and will be, he thinks, his most important work. "Everything is vigorous, powerful, optimistic," he says. "At night I watch that skyscraper, and only halfway up, the lights go on for the cleaning women. The rest is empty—not used. Half the building is not used. In Europe that would not have been built. But America is optimistic. You have the strength, the power, the materials, the people, you do not care if it is not needed. It is wonderful."

Though there are over twenty of these Parisian artists here, no one should think that they have set up their own little Montparnasse in New York. They live just as far away from one another as they possibly can, scattered all over Manhattan from Greenwich Village to Central Park and the East Side. Hélion lives in Virginia, and Max Ernst as far out on Long Island as he can get.

They seldom see one another, with the exception of the Tanguys and Massons, who are neighbors in Connecticut. As for the bistros, it is true that they miss Café Dôme, their favorite hangout in Paris, but they have found no spot in New York to take its place.

Burly, jovial Moïse Kisling, whose two sons were trained here for service with the Fighting French Air Force, plans to remain here after the war. "I am very happy here," he says; "and why should I go back? Many of my friends in France, like Derain, turned out to (Continued on page 30)

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Amedee Ozenfant, already in America, which shook up Paris twenty years ago. The wall mural was painted for the French Republic, but after Munich he kept it abroad because he foresaw the fall. It will now go back to France.



Surrealist Kurt Seligmann seats his models on a stool with four plaster human legs. The somber picture of armored skeletons behind the models is typical of his European work, but since coming here in 1939 his work is like the canvas on right. An admirer of Eskimo art, he once shipped a 60-foot totem pole to Paris.



Hard-working, modest Jacques Lipchitz, whose sculpture is exciting and provocative, never rests. His big difficulty has been to find models to help him cast his gigantic statue for Brazil's Ministry of Education.



Marc Chagall sketches on the shore of an Adirondack lake. His summer studio is over a hotel's saloon and its blaring juke box. Chagall uses all the English at his command to describe it as "Fantastique—good!"

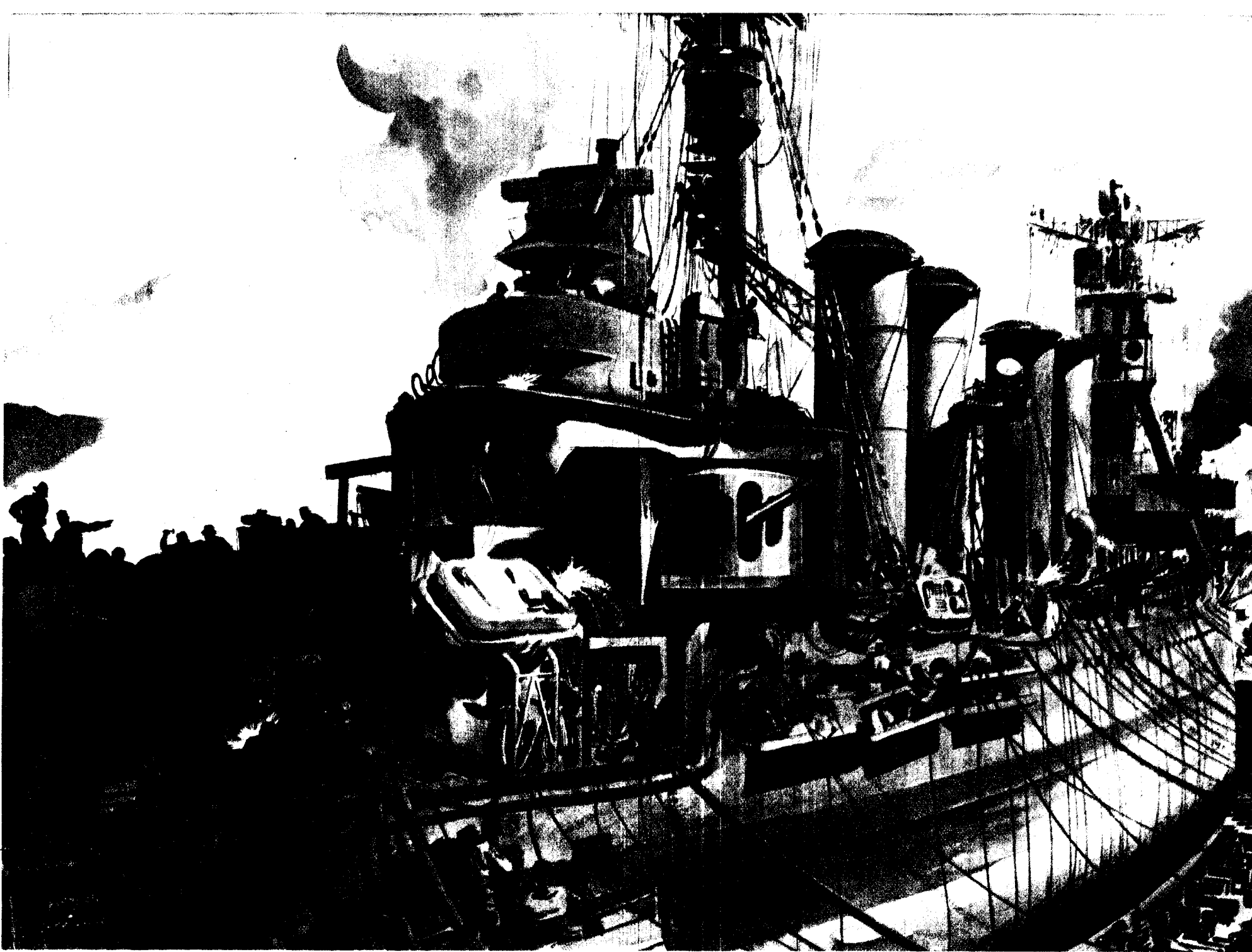


André Masson does many studies in pastels. He says: "Years ago Henri Matisse told me the light here was wonderful. It is true... magnificent!"



Papa Masson demonstrates a puzzle to his sons Diego and Luis (standing) on lake shore near their home in Connecticut. The boys like America—and slang.

Mealtime at the studio of Bernard Lamotte (center), whose work is often reproduced in advertisements, usually means several celebrities, such as bearded sculptor Jo Davidson, Jules Glaenzer and Charlie Chaplin (right). Six of Lamotte's landscapes hang in Marlene Dietrich's living room in Hollywood.



At Simonstown, Africa, the Marblehead was finally brought into drydock. Captain Robinson and the crew breathed their first sigh of relief

# THE SHIP THAT WOULDN'T SINK

by GEORGE SESSIONS PERRY and ISABEL LEIGHTON

## The Story:

THE cruiser MARBLEHEAD was one of a tiny band of American warships in the Pacific when the war opened. The men aboard her, CAPT. ROBINSON, BULL ASCHENBRENNER, and COMMANDERS GOGGINS and VAN BERGEN, knew that the odds were terrific. But they fought their cruiser quietly and efficiently until she was bombed, north of Java. Then everything happened. Her fantail was hanging in shreds and her rudder jammed hard right. A near-miss buckled her plates under the bows. Her decks were cluttered with wreckage. No one aboard would have bet a nickel that she'd stay afloat five minutes. She was down by the head and steering by engines only when CAPTAIN ROBINSON ordered her taken through Lombok Strait.

## Conclusion

BY THE time the Marblehead neared the northern entrance of Lombok Strait, sound-powered phones had been strung between the bridge and the engine rooms. Through these phones the officer on the bridge could give steering orders to the engine rooms.

Her foredecks were almost awash, but her

people were gaining practice in steering by engines alone. Now she was yawing only from forty-five to sixty degrees off course.

Then, as she was almost inside the mouth of the strait, a crosscurrent caught her, made her sheer so that a series of waves slammed into her almost broadside and set her turning. The only recourse was to let her circle completely. To try to back her down was out of the question. After the circle was complete, Captain (now Rear Admiral) Robinson once more headed her into the strait. The late afternoon faded into night.

Even though the ship was sometimes crosswise in the strait, the struggle to keep her afloat and a few of her most vital functions in operation never slackened. Men in the bucket brigades worked without pause. Dale Johnson and Martin Moran undertook a huge and seemingly impossible job. Johnson had discovered a steam line forward which, with some repairs, might carry enough steam to drive a pump. He knew, moreover, that there was a huge pump in the engine rooms which was, at the moment, serving no vital purpose. He got permission from Mr. Camp to undertake the Herculean job of raising this three-and-a-half-ton piece of machinery to the main deck and to try to move it along

the broken, oil-covered passageways to a position up forward where it could work against the flooding.

There were only the stars, the vague, shadowy shore lines outlined on each side, the subdued wink of lights from the accompanying destroyers to warn the Marblehead when she was careening into danger. In the pilothouse, Commander (now Captain) Van Bergen, who was giving the steering orders to the engine room, had much the feeling of trying to negotiate a rapids in a canoe, using a billiard cue for a paddle.

Suddenly something huge and ominously dark loomed up ahead in the strait. Very soon it was upon them—a blinding tropical squall that brought all visibility to absolute zero. The Marblehead was lost in the rushing currents of Lombok Strait. Except for the totally unreliable compass, which now swung crazily beneath the screened light that rimmed its binnacle, there was no earthly way to tell whether the ship was headed for the shore, for the reefs, or whether she would plow into the depth-bomb-laden stern of one of the destroyers. A messenger approached the captain and said, "Dr. Ryan wishes to report, sir, that two more of our men have died."

"Very well," the captain said and walked

to the other side of the bridge and looked out into the encompassing blackness. And at this moment, although the men on the Marblehead's bridge had no way of knowing it, a sharp crosscurrent, running in from the right, was taking hold of her stern and beginning, inexorably, to turn her battered stem straight in toward the near-by shore.

Then the squall passed, just as suddenly as it had enveloped them. The light of the stars revealed the vaguely silhouetted shore toward which she was heading. The captain said, "Bring her right to 130 degrees."

After she'd begun to swing back on course, Van Bergen called over the phones: "All engines ahead standard. . . . We know we're asking a lot. We need a lot. You're doing a great job down there."

A messenger brought a lookout's report to the bridge. Very quietly he said, "Another black squall ahead, sir."

"Very well," the captain said.

The Marblehead was approaching the narrowest part of the strait. The seas began to grow abruptly higher. Again they were engulfed by a driving rain. Through pitch-black darkness the Marblehead plowed on.

After five minutes that seemed interminable to Captain Robinson as he went from

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