

character of a Balthus, a Miro, a Tanguy, a Giacometti. The newer painters seem to produce isolated pictures rather than to expand a recognizably settled style. Among these pictures, from time to time, are images of astonishing brilliance or even of impressive emotional depth. But the spectator seldom carries away from the current exhibitions an impression of totality; he remembers spasms of talent instead of the convulsion of will and longing which has rent the man and produced the artist. The situation is aggravated, I think, by a certain semi-official eagerness to assert and prove a continuing vitality in the Paris school. No nation's art moves easily forward under too many banners, and culture itself can become a dictatorship if it falls into the habit of daily ceremonial robes.

A far more serious handicap to the young in France is the unsettled economic condition of that country. Before the war, the Left Bank was a place where artists managed *not* to starve on starvation funds, with tragic exceptions. Given today's inflated franc, any sort of workable Bohemia is virtually impossible, and many of the younger artists work at their profession only in their spare time, supporting themselves as bakers, clerks, and so on. The price of pictures by unestablished painters has gone up, of course, but not in full relation to such essentials as food, clothing, and shelter. The reason is simple: the poor will pay inflationary prices for what they need, the rich for what they crave. In neither case does the unheralded work of art qualify for many people, and the Paris market is not active, except for occasional speculative runs on the art of a few men.

"Why," I was asked by a number of Paris dealers; "does not America do something to help us promote the young generation?" I frankly do not see that we have a duty in this matter unless we can believe in this generation's talents, as I thus far cannot. Nevertheless, it is still too early to judge fairly what the postwar art of France will be like, and certainly we should not expect a new crop of masters every ten years. We must wait a little, I think, until the present eclectic confusion has settled. Meanwhile there is Paris itself, more beautiful than ever. If I felt there an uneasy disappointment beneath a great admiration for this magnificent city and its people, it may have been for the reason that Gertrude Stein once gave: "Paris is never quite itself unless painting is its subject." By this she meant new and authoritative painting, and that kind of painting is not the subject of Paris just now.

JAMES THRALL SOBY.

Genius Sans Gossip



—Photograph by Sima from the book "*Picasso à Antibes*," published by René Drouin, Paris.

Sabartés and Picasso . . . "punctuation marks are the loincloth concealing the pudenda of literature."

PICASSO, An Intimate Portrait. By Jaime Sabartés. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1948. 230 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by JOHN REWALD

JAIME SABARTÉS emerges from this book as a pleasant and modest companion, intelligent and sensitive, an amiable fellow always nice to have around. It seems easy to understand that Picasso should value his presence and find in his self-effacing devotion a certain support and a stable element in his apparently erratic but at times also quite indolent life. But while Sabartés traces—unintentionally, it must be emphasized—a sympathetic likeness of himself, he fails strangely to give us that "intimate portrait" of his celebrated friend which one should have expected from one who knew the painter in his early years and who, since 1935, has seen him almost daily.

There are several reasons for this failure. First, Sabartés has limited himself strictly to what he saw and heard; or would it be more correct to say: to what particularly struck him? This accounts for an incompleteness and oneness that appears at times incomprehensible. There is, for example, not a single mention of Picasso's mural "*Guernica*," although it was executed while Sabartés acted as the painter's secretary. Second, Sabartés has systematically refrained from any

allusions to his friend's sentimental life, although Dora Maar's role, for instance, is attested by numerous paintings, and he would not have violated any secret had he supplied his readers with some dates and facts. Such information, after all, is not necessarily gossip. Third, Sabartés has built his text around the portraits which Picasso drew and painted of him, and these are by no means among the painter's most important works. But fourth, and this is the most decisive factor, Sabartés worships Picasso with a naive tenderness that sees in his least gestures a deep significance, if not a manifestation of genius.

It is difficult to share Sabartés's emotion when he relates how in 1901 Picasso came to the station in Paris to meet him upon his arrival from Spain. Sabartés was surprised to find the painter there at 10 A.M., well knowing that he usually got up much later, and he reports the event:

"Why did you get up so early?"
"To come to meet you."

Perhaps I was expecting some banality, but his only reply, which left me stupefied, was the simple truth: "To come to meet you."

There is indeed very little among Sabartés's direct quotations of Picasso that sounds interesting or particularly original, unless one considers important such utterances as "punctuation marks are the loincloth concealing the pudenda of literature." The reader

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may actually wonder whether the painter, during his many years of association with the author, has ever said or written anything more revealing than what Sabartés quotes. If it were not obvious that Sabartés has a very perceptive mind and is able both to observe things well and to transcribe his observations poetically, one might be tempted to conclude that most of what Picasso had to say escaped his "Boswell."

In his eagerness to enlarge Picasso's stature, Sabartés occasionally leaves his territory of chronicler and ventures into explanations which are far from convincing. Thus he declares that "before Picasso, the artist aspired to be a photographer in the absence of a camera," or that, when the impressionist paints, "it is as if he were doing so only in order to demonstrate his theory."

Yet, in spite of all these shortcomings, Sabartés's book has a very pleasant flavor and is by no means dull. There are many facts about Picasso's early years in Spain, rather confusingly narrated but neatly assembled in a useful chronological summary at the end. There is a profusion of details on Picasso's daily life, there is an interesting chapter on a book planned by the painter, and there are also some conversations on portraiture and some remarks on esthetics.

With publications on Picasso increasing almost by the hour, probably nobody will attempt to approach the painter through this book alone. There is no denying that it supplements the existing literature with some sensitive pages, several new aspects of the man, and a certain amount of trivia reverently recorded.

Kite-Weather

By Helen Curry

IN this kite-weather I let fly
my long and fluid hair;
at bottom of the children's day
the ground was green fire;
and when a small boy called me:
"Long legs!" and "Wild witch!"
and "No shape what-so-ever!"
I knew I carried flame
(silver that had no name).

O, all the trees were bleeding
unthinkable gold light;
the wind was like blue liquor
poured at the night!

I did not mind the grown men
nor take my kite down,
but flew it for the silvered boys:
long and gold-brown.

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