

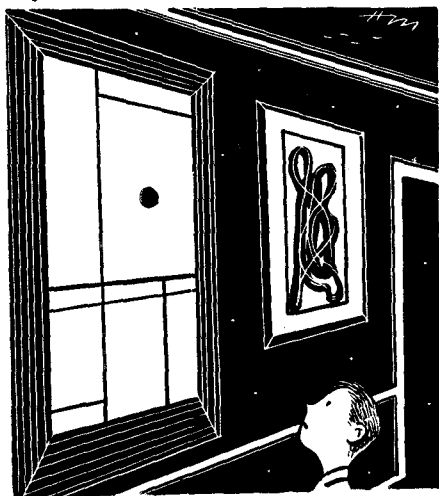
other galleries. He did not handle the School of Paris as an entity, but Juan Gris he championed always, Miro he esteemed, and Picasso he praised on every possible occasion.

For him art transcended questions of nationality. I remember him once shaking his head and asking: "How can anyone buy *only* American or *only* French or *only* Chinese pictures. I like to see what art is, before even asking where it came from."

NOT only did Valentin choose his artists with exceptional perceptivity, but he was courageous in exhibiting work which had temporarily become unfashionable. His Rodin show this past season was a case in point. Many people had come to think of Rodin as outmoded by more recent developments in sculpture. Valentin showed him as a vital precursor of these developments, and selected the exhibition with such acumen that many of us felt we were seeing the great French master for the first time. Similarly, he rescued Lovis Corinth's paintings from semi-oblivion (in America at least). His exhibition of Matisse's sculpture made clear that this world-famous painter has also been one of the most forceful and inventive sculptors of our century.

There is no space here to deal at length with the many art books published by Valentin over the years, often when he could ill afford to invest so much money in the impeccable printing of texts and plates on which he insisted. But these publications are respected and treasured throughout the civilized world. Their existence is one more proof of Valentin's taste, devotion, and energy. And all his many attainments aside, he was in himself an unforgettable human being—loyal, direct, gay, and kind, a man to whom the word "lovable" applies with all its original meaning and force.

—JAMES THRALL SOBY.



The Beauty in Tools

"Art and Industry," by Herbert Read (Horizon Press, 239 pp. \$6), an amply illustrated volume, offers the considered views on the implications of daily art to daily life of a distinguished British critic who has been considering the matter for more than three decades. Here it is reviewed by Martin James, member of the design department of Brooklyn College.

By Martin James

HOW reassuring to be able to quote oneself on as many issues as Sir Herbert Read can after some thirty years of looking at art in its daily implications! In "Art and Industry," published in 1934 and now revised and generously reillustrated, he can flashback to "Art Now," "Education Through Art," "Grassroots of Art," and "The Philosophy of Modern Art." If it remains the classical introduction to the subject, it is that Mr. Read in England, like Lewis Mumford here or Siegfried Giedion in Switzerland, views esthetic events in their historical meaning and in the many-faceted light of our century's quests.

The grandeur and misery of which our worldly goods are susceptible form a problem of human bondage that has lodged with us these several generations past: industrial man is born unto beauty, but dwells everywhere in ugliness. Since 1850, from the eloquent Ruskin to the admonitory William Morris to the explosive Frank Lloyd Wright, a line of "reformers" and "prophets" have tried to set the world aright, until even the middlebrow common man waves the banner of pure design.

Much trouble, Mr. Read finds, comes of two false antinomies: the first, Fine Art versus Applied Art, began with the birth of easel painting in the Renaissance, when the artist came to see himself as a humanist and to lord it over the humble craftsman. The second, Machine Art versus Handicraft, came about with the Industrial Revolution. The difference lies in "one man using a tool with his hands and producing an object that shows at every stage the direction of his will and the impression of his personality; and a machine which is producing, without the intervention of a particular man, objects of a uniformity and precision that show no

individual variation and have no personal charm." Do serially made objects lack the esthetic qualities of the custom made? Mr. Read demonstrates they do not: "every tool is a machine . . . and every machine is a tool."

From the first, however, "Fine Art" was used to veil the mass-produced object's purity and mask its anonymity. The industrial genius Josiah Wedgwood, born as early as 1730, in his own lifetime converted a peasant craft into an industrial manufacture. He was the first potter to "think out forms which would be thoroughly well suited to their purpose and at the same time capable of duplication with precision in unlimited quantities." (Of Goethe, Novalis said: "His works are like the Englishman's wares—extremely simple, neat, convenient, and durable.") Yet Wedgwood was to allow the classicizing painter John Flaxman to design "ornamental" wares in imitation of Greek pottery—which in turn relied somewhat heavily on painters for surface and on costlier examples in metal for its forms.

When what Giedion calls "Mechanized Adornment" blossomed in the 1830s Parliament met the challenge of foreign competition by injecting the public with massive doses of Fine Art via museums, schools, and examinations, forming a taste in the humanist tradition, but alien to the abstract character of useful objects.

EVERY well-designed article that leaves a factory, Mr. Read maintains, is designed by an abstract artist, whether its creator thinks of himself as such or not. Rapidly, but informatively, he surveys the industrial arts by materials (inorganic: pottery, glass and metals; organic: wood and leather), by mode of working (molding, casting, blowing, weaving), and by function of the object. Thus when clay or glass are formed into utensils the geometric norm for the vase is a hollow sphere; halved to admit the hand it becomes a bowl; quartered and provided with a horizontal plane it is the dish or plate. Handle and spout, foot and rim are further elements of balance, rhythm, and accent. "Such analysis may seem elementary, but it is only by realizing the essential elements in form that we arrive at the beauty of its variations."

Mr. Read covers briefly the fas-

cinating topic of ornament. From William James comes his "psychological necessity of ornament"—the eye's search for a resting place, the irresistible speck on the blank page. Mr. Read's explanations have an objectivity not found among one-sided friends of abstract art, and he makes up in conciseness what he lacks in completeness.

Education, which by consensus ought to cultivate the whole man, remains today closely bound up with the "intellectual" and the verbal, with listening and writing as against doing and feeling. "Like having tea with a dog," is how one of Margaret Anderson's friends describes the conversation of two-dimensional people—except that the dog's senses are more alert than ours. In art education we have a chance to help the individual explore his sensorium, the external world and living experience. Some children do have contact with free art activity which Mr. Read elsewhere expounds, or the activity he predicates here: play with texture and construction, or discoveries in structure ("the form of a pear and an eighteenth-century coffeepot . . . a flower stem and an architectural column"). How many others sit through classes "in Drawling, Stretching, Fainting in Coils" which "not one boy in a million will ever practise with profit or distinction!"

Let us then, with Mr. Read, "look forward to some division of our human and social activities which should ensure a due proportion of time to manual craftsmanship . . . Creative arts of every kind should be made the basis of our educational system . . . then we need not fear the fate of those children in a wholly mechanized world." Creative arts of every kind were practised at the Bauhaus, which set out to tear down the barrier between the school and the factory, and which Mr. Read correctly calls "the greatest experiment in esthetic education yet undertaken." Its impact is marked on some American campuses which are committed to reconcile general and technical education and give the arts a meaningful place in the curriculum. But its implications transcend the arts. Educators concerned with these problems will do well to acquaint themselves with trends such as Mr. Read voices. For he, and we, know that only a unitary approach will develop the whole man: "In the end we shall find that the fundamental factor in all these problems is a philosophy of life. The problem of good and bad art, of a right and wrong system of education, of a just and an unjust social structure, is in the end one and the same problem."

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The New Pioneers

"The Modern Renaissance in American Art," by Ralph M. Pearson (Harper, 300 pp. \$5.50), is an account of fifty-four artists and their work written by a man who has long been a personal and enthusiastic devotee to modern art. Here it is reviewed by Robert Goldwater, head of the fine arts department at Queens College, New York.

By Robert Goldwater

WITH too few people writing about contemporary painting and sculpture, one must admire Ralph M. Pearson's long devotion to modern art in this country. With so few writers willing to record an enthusiastic, partisan personal taste, one must welcome his combative spirit and defiant exposition of one man's preferences. With too many critics analyzing from a distance, one must approve Mr. Pearson's old acquaintance and frequent friendship and dedication to the artists he presents. He writes as someone who likes artists and enjoys art, and who does his utmost to allow them to speak for themselves. "Everyone gets a hearing," he says, "except the one central authority whose knowledge is based on experience—the artist who produces the art." In his new book, *"The Modern Renaissance in Modern Art,"* he has given fifty-four artists a chance to speak for themselves, with their pictures and their words, and has stepped in only to relieve their reticence.

And yet this is a difficult book to understand. Publisher's hyperbole may perhaps explain its title. *"The Modern Renaissance in American Art"* implies a coherent, considered account of the tremendous expansion of, and interest in, our own painting and sculpture during the last decades. Qualitatively and quantitatively, esthetically and sociologically, from the points of view of both artist and audience, this is a fascinating occurrence. And its history, written by someone like Mr. Pearson, who has for years been a part of it (and written as personally and unobjectively as he likes), would make wonderful reading. Instead, we get a selection of what the jacket describes as "fifty-four distinguished artists," whose "work and philosophy" is recounted in a series of short sketches, grouped under three main headings: Expressionists; Abstraction—Non-Objective; Realism—Surrealism. Even with the author's introductions, conclusions, and comments, his prefatory remarks upon the importance of plastic values and cre-

ative design, this is no story of a renaissance.

Avowedly uninterested in the connected historical approach, Mr. Pearson has written another kind of book, and with this can there be no quarrel. His personal and intimate presentation has great advantages in warmth and directions, and it admirably conveys Mr. Pearson's real concern for art, besides allowing some of the artists to say interesting things about themselves and their work. But such a book must, as he says, stand or fall upon the author's personal taste and judgment and his ability to convince us of the coherence and quality of the standards upon which they rest. Here is the difficulty. Mr. Pearson's tastes are catholic, and this is all to the good, provided quality is always observed. So too are personal discoveries, if they can be justified. But after noting the wide variety of his inclusions, how explain his omission of figures who are at least as distinguished members of our "renaissance" as many whom he cites. Mr. Pearson likes realism, but among many lesser lights, forgets Edward Hopper. He mentions imaginative naturalism but omits Loren MacIver. He heartily approves of cubism and its offshoots, including Stuart Davis and McFee, but omits Niles Spencer, Tomlin, Vytlačil, and Gatch. He endorses expressionism with such outstanding artists as Beckmann and George Grosz, but leaves out Hyman Bloom, Roszak, and Jacques Lipschitz. Though he has little sympathy for pure abstraction, he does admit Albers, Rice Pereira, and Calder, but fails to mention Glarner, Noguchi, or Gorky.

In short, the author's standards of judgment are difficult, if not impossible, to follow. He puts much emphasis on "created design" as a touchstone, but includes artists whose main interest is in anecdotal narrative; he stresses "meaning" but gives his blessing to many a mannered exercise in a derivative style. Given his shifting grounds of judgment, given the title of his book, and given his desire to let each artist have his say, Mr. Pearson's wholesale dismissal of the tendencies of the last decade is incomprehensible. His almost uncontrolled hatred for the movement that has come to be known as "abstract expressionism" is in direct contradiction to his great indulgence for all other directions. De Kooning, Pollock, and many others less famous have constituted the vital movement of the last ten years, and are surely essential in any discussion of a renaissance in our art. It is, besides, unfair, on Mr. Pearson's own premises, to use the words of critics to condemn these artists, instead of allowing them to speak for themselves.

My Thanks

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First and then again during the Second World War taught me, as a temporary civil servant, two lessons that I have found invaluable for an historian.

The first lesson is that the acquisition of information is, not an end in itself, but only a means to the end of taking action. In the service of a government or any other institution the action which is the purpose of the acquisition of information is, of course, action of the "practical" kind; but the golden rule which I had learnt in the Foreign Office from the business of acquiring information for use in such "practical" action proved to apply with equal force to an historian's work. Action taken on any plane will be in danger of going wrong if it is not taken in the light of the truth and of nothing but the truth; but it will be in equal danger of getting nowhere if it is not also taken in the light of no more of the truth than the minimum that is relevant to the particular piece of action that is on the current agenda.

JOHN STUART MILL, in his *"Autobiography,"* taught me to keep my mind fresh by alternating, on some regular rhythm, between different kinds of intellectual work. Between the wars I used to write the Chatham House Survey of International Affairs in the winter and spring in London and *"A Study of History"* in the summer and autumn in Yorkshire. In writing Parts VI-XIII of *"A Study of History"* since July 1, 1947 I have been able—thanks to the generosity of the Rockefeller Foundation of New York in making it possible for Chatham House to release my time to the necessary extent—to follow a daily cycle in London, working at home in the mornings and at Chatham House in the afternoons. The shorter the wave of this alternating rhythm of intellectual work, the longer, in my experience, is the time for which it is possible to go on working continuously on a long task without the mental engine's "seizing."

PLATO TAUGHT me not to be ashamed of using my imagination as well as my intellect. He taught me, when, in a mental voyage, I found myself at the upper limit of the atmosphere accessible to the Reason, not to hesitate to let my imagination carry me on up into the stratosphere on the wings of a myth. In never being either too proud or too timid to take to a myth for the sake of reconnoitring regions of the Spiritual Universe beyond the Reason's range, Plato was showing