

291

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291 throws
back its forelock.



HOW VERSUS WHY

The best one can say of American art criticism is that its *CLEVERNESS OFTEN CONCEALS ITS LACK OF PENETRATION*. But no doubt a large part of the public would rather have Mr. Huneker as he is than not have him at all. The amusing has some justification, if only to meet the needs of that baneful American influence the tired business man.

Often—much more often alas—art criticism as it is published in our journals is nothing but the most unintelligent twaddle. Unfortunately it is not as harmless as it is silly for the written word subtly influences even the wary, especially if it is printed in a publication of standing and most people are perfectly willing to think about art in the terms of their favorite newspaper.

Be it clever or be it silly, one thing can be said of all our art criticism to-day: *IT IS OBSOLETE*. It measures a new product with old standards and is therefore insidiously pernicious for it clouds the issues and often befores the mind of the public before the work of art has been able to make its own appeal. When it is too frank to use its antiquated wisdom, it substitutes a jest.

ART HAS ALWAYS PROGRESSED AS THOUGH HAS PROGRESSED, the most revolutionary changes having taken place within the last fifty years as a natural pace-keeping with the tremendous development of thought. But American criticism has again demonstrated that our best brains are devoted to production and not to pure thought for criticism in its methods has lagged lamentably behind the product it presumes to estimate. The scientific influence has at last invaded the field of art but its critics still wander blissfully in the land of romance.

I must explain what I mean by the *SCIENTIFIC INFLUENCE IN ART* for I know that the critics whom you respect the most, such as Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Berenson, do not believe in an evolution of art. Ruskin says quite definitely: "Art must remain what it was two thousand years ago in the age of Phidias... But hear him in the very next paragraph: "For a long time the function of art was a religious one. That function has now passed away and none has taken its place. The painter has no profession, no purpose. He is an idler on the earth, chasing the shadows of our own fancies." And in an effort to give this useless person some reason d'etre Ruskin thinks he ought to devote himself to "the living objects of historical interest or beauty existing in his period." But we all know that since Ruskin's day the photographer has learned to fulfill this mission much better than any painter could. Consequently Mr. Ruskin says that art will always be the same, that it has already undergone several changes, and the slight function which he still attributes to his contemporaries in art has already been taken away from ours. According to the theories of our greatest critic art should have been dead long ago.

BUT ART IS NOT DEAD! It has not only outlived Mr. Ruskin but will continue to outlive all others who prophesy its end by defining its limitations. Having gone through the religious, and what might, broadly speaking, be termed the photographic era, it began to feel the influence of the reasoning and scientific era. The natural result was a constantly increasing emphasis of the new element until we get in Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso a *PERFECTLY CONNECTED CHAIN FROM APPLIED TO PURE REASON*. This does not by any means signify that the emotional side of art is eliminated. On the contrary, just as no scientific discovery was ever made without an *a priori* idea as its point of departure, so no convincing modern work of art no matter how thoroughly reasoned it may be, can come into existence without an emotion as its basis. We have then a *PERFECTLY CLEAR DEVELOPMENT OF THE AESTHETIC EMOTION* over which reason has assumed so increasing a domination that many of its latest products are highly scientific in origin, thus reflecting faithfully man's progress in mental development.

What is more logical than to demand that *SCIENCE IN CRITICISM MUST MEET SCIENCE IN ART*? The critics' reply naturally would be: "What do you mean by scientific criticism?" I can give the clearest answer to this question by turning to pure science for an illustration. When a scientist asserts that H_2O —water, he means that a certain quantity of hydrogen and a certain quantity of oxygen will produce water. He knows HOW water can be made, he does not know WHY. He knows moreover that he can not know WHY, that all the "WHYS" of life belong to another realm than his, namely, that of philosophy. In other words HOW a thing came into existence is usually analysable, WHY it came into existence is invariably a mystery. The WHY of art is its emotional, the HOW its reasoned element. Through all the ages art criticism has quite naturally occupied itself with the WHY of art, with its emotional side, this until now having been its main precipitant. "291" realizing that conditions were changing and that the element of reason was assuming as important, if not more important a rôle than the emotional element, has resolutely devoted its energy to explaining the "HOW" of art, content to let the romantics continue their vague struggle as long as the battle with windmills and the *EXPLANATION OF THEIR OWN PERSONALITIES* might amuse them.

Recognizing that absolute knowledge is possible in no field of human endeavor and that reason in serving as a corrective to the emotions by no means does away with them, we have deemed it of infinitely greater value to *STRIVE FOR THE KNOWABLE* than to join the ranks of those who

continue to seek the unknowable. In other words we maintain that *SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM IS POSSIBLE*. Science is nothing but a systematizing of the knowable and we insist that this is just as possible in art as in any other field of phenomena. Our first attempts may be just as crude as all first attempts along scientific lines, but we are convinced that the direction being right and in accord with modern needs, our method of judging modern works of art is temporarily at least the only one that can have results of any value. At the same time we do not presume to establish permanent dogmatic rules for criticism. On the contrary, just as the scientist must change his ideas as science progresses so we shall be ready to give up all theories of "Scientific" criticism as soon as art changes its rôle in our lives and begins to interpret a different mental state.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM? In what manner can the "HOW" and the "WHY" of art, the knowable and the unknowable elements be distinguished? Once it is granted that there is such a thing as an evolution in art, immediately two points of view are established from which all works of art must be judged, first from the point of view of the producer, and secondly from the point of view of the evolutionary development. Under the first aspect we must determine what the artist wishes to express and how adequately he succeeds in that expression; under the second aspect we must decide upon the value of that expression as an addition to what has already been said. Criticism of the artist must analyze the thought-process of the artist's mind, the way in which he thinks, how adequately he translated his thoughts into the symbols of his trade and what his relationship is to his fellow artists. *IT MUST DETERMINE THE VALUE OF THE ARTIST'S CONCEPTION PER SE AND ALSO ITS VALUE IN THE EVOLUTIONAL CHAIN.*

Such a point of view inevitably does away with the old emotional attitude of "Why I like it and why I don't." Likes and dislikes are completely swept aside by the scientific critic not as unimportant but because he will not permit the intrusion of more personal bias in view of the fact that modern psychology has made it impossible for him to believe in objective beauty in art. Since it is extremely unlikely that any two persons get the same impression of the commonest article of daily use, how can they possibly get the same emotional reaction from so complex a thing as a work of art? And even if such a thing were thinkable, how can any one hope to translate the beauty of painting into the totally unrelated beauty of words? The most that the emotional school of critics has ever accomplished, even in its very distinguished exponents, has been the revelation of a great and sensitive personality or the creation of literature sometimes of rare loveliness, sometimes of deep moral and philosophic import. This may be infinitely more valuable than a *COLD DISSECTION OF AN ARTISTIC MENTALITY* and a weighing of its relative worth in the onward march of human development, but the latter method has the advantage of sticking to the business at hand, of accomplishing a well defined task, of understanding and frankly admitting its limitations, thereby rendering the double service of helping where help can be given and then pointing out the regions where all who enter must win each his own salvation.

With so impersonal and reasoned a basis for his criticisms the modern critic has every right to assume a constructive attitude towards art and *WORK CONSCIOUSLY TO HELP BUILD UP THE FUTURE*. I personally believe that we are at present in what may be called the *SCHOLASTIC PERIOD OF ART*. I believe that exactly the same thing has happened in the aesthetically emotional world of to-day that happened to thought in the middle ages when reason, rediscovered, took the religiously emotional world by storm. The result now as in the age of scholasticism is a *PERIOD OF SYSTEMS*, impressionism, cubism, futurism, what you will, but such a state of things can be helped or combated, the point of view matters little, only by a constructive or destructive analysis along the lines indicated and not by a uncritical admiration or unintelligent abuse. The human mind has had three stages of development, the emotional, the rational and the experimental. Art has arrived at the rational stage, the overrational stage perhaps, but the critic must go one step further and *BECOME AN EXPERIMENTALIST* for an impersonal consideration of all the products of scholasticism is the only method by which its spell can be broken, the only way in which its artificial products can be discovered and eliminated and its truth pointed out and retained. *HE MUST WELCOME ALL THE NEW SYSTEMS* in turn no matter how mad they may seem, but after a careful analysis of each, he should state with adequate reasons just what has been accomplished and what has not or cannot be done. With such an attitude the critic will have as clearly defined a right to carry his *EXPERIMENTALLY OBTAINED DEDUCTIONS* into the future as has the scientist who, having confirmed the working of a law after observing sufficiently great a number of phenomena, gains the world's acceptance of his discovery until new phenomena prove him to be wrong. And let us hope that experiment in art as in science will tend to throw all systems overboard leaving the artist free once more to find his own truths with an untrammeled mind. Who knows, with such intelligent cooperation on the part of the critic, art may even discover, not its future, but at least its present limitations which now it certainly does not know. Literary painting, musical color and form interpretations, mathematical and fourth-dimensional somersaults may all be relegated to the scrap heap but from it would arise a new art that would be *NOT THE PRODUCT OF FOREIGN LAWS BUT A LAW UNTO ITSELF.*

AGNES ERNST MEYER

VOYAGE E

A Mile Paula Valmont



À DIEU AMOUR NUAGE QUI
FUDS REFAIS LE VOYAGE DE DANTE
ET N'A PAS PLUIE PÉCON
CHU

TELEGRAPHIE
QUI TOMBER
LAISSE
SES ALLES PARTOUT

? E L A

OU VA DONC CE TRAIN QUI MEURT AU LOIN
DANS LES VALS ET LES BEAUX BOIS FRAIS DU

TENDRE ÉTÉ SI P



Guillaume Apollinaire

Idéogramme

ONE HOUR'S SLEEP —————
THREE DREAMS

I.

I was to be buried. The whole family stood about. Also hundreds of friends. My wish was carried out. Not a word was uttered. There was not a single tear. All was silence and all seemed blackness. A door opened and a woman came in. As the woman came in I stood up; my eyes opened. But I was dead. All screamed and rushed away. There was a general panic. Some jumped out of the windows. Only the Woman remained. Her gaze was fixed upon me. Eye to Eye. She said: "Friend are you really dead?" The voice was firm and clear. No answer. The Woman asked three times. No answer. As she asked the third time I returned to my original position and was ready to be buried. — I heard one great sob. I awoke.

II.

I was very ill and everyone asked me to take a rest. No one succeeded to induce me. Finally a Woman said: "I will go with you. Will

you go?" We went. We tramped together day and night. In the mountains. Over snow. In the moonlight. In the glaring sun. We had no food. Not a word was said. The Woman grew paler and paler as the days and nights passed by. She could hardly walk. I helped her. And still not a word was uttered. Finally the Woman collapsed and she said, in a voice hardly audible: "Food—Food—I must have food." And I answered: "Food—Food—, Child, we are in a world where there is no Food—just Spirit—Will." — And the Woman looked piteously at me and said, half dead: "Food—Food" — and I kissed the Woman, and as I did that there stood before the Woman all sorts of wonderful food—on a simple wooden table, and it was Springtime. And as the Woman began to eat ravenously—conscious of nothing but Nature's Cry for Food, I slipped away. And I continued walking onward. — I heard a distant cry. I awoke.

III.

The Woman and I were alone in a room. She told me a Love Story. I knew it was her own. I understood why she could not love me. And as the Woman told me the story—she suddenly became mad—she kissed me in her ravings—she tore her clothes and mine—she tore her

hair. Her eyes were wild—and nearly blank. I saw them looking into mine. She kissed me passionately and cried: "Why are you not He?" "Why not?" And I tried to calm her. But did not succeed. And finally she cried: "What makes me kiss you—it is He I want, not you. And yet I kissed you. Kissed you as if it were He." — I didn't dare to move. It was not fear that made me stand still. It was all much too terrible for Fear. I stood there spell-bound. Suddenly the woman moved away—it was ghastly. Her look. Her eyes. — The Woman stood immovable, her eyes glued on mine; when suddenly she screeched: "Tell me you are He—tell me—you are He. And if you are not He I will kill you. For I kissed you." She stood there and calmly said, what I really did not want to say, for I knew it. What she was irresistible and mad. I said: "I am not He." And as I said that the Woman took a knife from the folds of her dress and rushed at me. She struck the heart. The blood spurted straight ahead, as if it had been waiting for an outlet. And as the Woman saw the blood and saw me drop dead she became perfectly sane. She stood motionless. With no expression. She turned around. Upon the immaculate white wall she saw written in Blood Red letters: "He killed himself. He understood the kisses." — There was a scream. I awoke.

ALFRED STIEGLITZ

When I arrived at 291 the Spirit of 291 was manifesting itself at its best; 291 himself was at the height of an animated discussion with the Professor.

291 is a trinity; a place, a person and a symbol, so be not surprised if I refer without transition to its separate entities.

Professor What I wonder at, is why *you* did not tell the world what 291 is.
291 I wanted the other people to tell me.

Prof. Have they done so?

291 Each one of the sixty odd contributors has said what 291 was to him; the sum total of what it is to each individual makes up the spirit of 291.

Prof. Very well, they have given you the spirit of 291 but they have not told you what definite thing 291 represents.

291 It represents nothing definite; it is ever growing, constantly changing and developing.
Prof. And how is it going to develop?

291 That, I do not know; nobody knows.

Prof. But somebody should know; somebody should at least know what it should accomplish. If 291 is nothing definite but only a spirit, how can it do its work? We know now, what the spirit of 291 is, as nearly as a spirit can be known. What we should know for the future is 291 the machine which will provide the channels through which this wonderful spirit can accomplish useful work.

291 That will come of itself, in the course of events.

Prof. Precisely; but there is a logical sequence in the course of events. The past history of 291 shows it. . . You started with a fight for photography; you wanted your problem answered: "What is photography?"; you got the photographers together, you held exhibitions, you published reproductions of meritorious work; writers came who wrote about photography and out of all these efforts came an answer. We all know now what photography is, what it can accomplish; we have standards by which we can judge new work. What was 291 while all this was going on?

291 Nothing but a laboratory, a place for experiments.

Prof. And is it not still a laboratory, only with new problems to solve?

291 That is what it is.

Prof. And what is the object of a laboratory?

291 To experiment.

Prof. And what do experiments lead to?

291 To finding out.

Prof. Now, at last, we have a definition of what 291 is; a laboratory where experiments are conducted in order to find out something. Now, the inevitable sequence which man follows in experimental science is:

1st. *To establish facts or phenomena by observation and experimentation.*

2d. *To arrive through induction from these facts or phenomena to their general relationship or laws.*

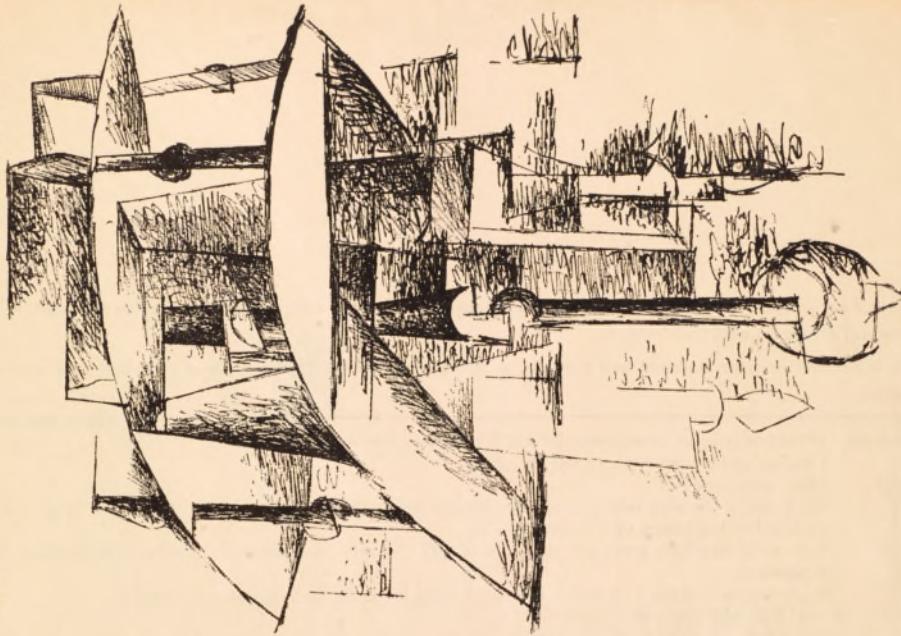
3d. *To start from these laws to arrive by logical deductive reasoning to the discovery of other facts which may in turn be included in the general law.*

Now, I have noticed of late that you, 291, have been, so to speak, marking time. You are waiting for the "*WHAT NEXT?*" For me, who have been watching you closely for many years the "*WHAT NEXT?*" is clear. You are at the end of your first period; you have gathered your data, you have made your observations. You are about to enter your second period in which you will arrive at the laws which govern the phenomena you have observed. This may be a long period, for new data will constantly be coming up which may cause you to modify or abandon the theories you will evolve before you strike the answer that will satisfy you. That must be your next step if all your experimenting is not to remain sterile, and when that is done, then we will talk about the last period.

But laws are the very things I have been fighting against all my life.

Prof. Let us not quarrel about words. You have been fighting against *FIXED* laws which impede progress and development. The laws I mean are but our conception of the relationship of phenomena which we use as guides in making new discoveries. That, I believe is what you have always sought to discover. If 291 sees clearly the path which is traced for it, great things may be expected from it for its preliminary work has been well done.

PAUL B. HAVILAND



SIMULTANISM:

The idea of Simultanism is expressed in painting by the simultaneous representation of the different figures of a form seen from different points of view, as Picasso and Braque did some time ago; or by the simultaneous representation of the figure of several forms as the futurists are doing.

In literature the idea is expressed by the polyphony of simultaneous voices which say different things. Of course, printing is not an adequate medium, for succession in this medium is unavoidable and a phonograph is more suitable.

That the idea of simultanism is essentially naturalistic is obvious; that the polyphony of interwoven sounds and meanings has a decided effect upon our senses is unquestionable, and that we can get at the spirit of things through this system is demonstrable.

EXAMPLE:

At the Arden Gallery, 599 Fifth Avenue

"OH, COME ON, LET'S GO TO MAILLARDS."

"I SAT NEXT REV. — AT GLADYS' LUNCHEON."

"NOBODY COULD LOOK HUMAN IN THESE FULL SKIRTS."

"DO YOU THINK HER HUSBAND KNOWS IT?"

"SHE SAYS SHE'S A NEUTRAL BUT—"

"WHY DON'T THEY SERVE TEA HERE?"

(All these phrases must be uttered simultaneously.)

N. B. The object of the Arden Gallery, opened recently, is to encourage the Arts and Crafts in New York. Paintings, sculptures, furniture, tapestries and textiles from the seventh to the seventeenth century are on exhibition.

SINCERISM:

Just before the war a new tendency in art was initiated in Paris by the Italian musician Albert Savinio. He called it "Sincerism." Most of the music of Savinio is based essentially on music, his source of inspiration is music, music that has been written, and music that he hears. Instead of trying to translate life into music, he translates music into music. The sincerism consists in frankly acknowledging the musical motives which served as points of departure of his own compositions.

Nothing more natural for an artist than to have for his objectivity the art that he practices. Mr. Max Weber finds himself in this position.

No painter in America, that I know of, has a deeper knowledge of technique and greater skill in the métier than Mr. Max Weber. Possibly this is the reason why he has made painting his objectivity. The exhibition of his pictures in the Print Gallery showed how remarkable Mr. Weber can develop and carry to a greater degree both of intention and technique the paintings of many of the modern masters.

For the superficial critic this attitude is a crime. For any one who knows the mechanism of Art, what Mr. Weber has accomplished is of great merit.

I sincerely believe that Mr. Weber is the man to found the school of "Sincerism" in New York.

UNILATERALS:

The unilaterals in art matters were very much perplexed to see that in the Galleries of "291" there were on exhibition paintings of a naturalistic character following the exhibitions of negro savage art, of the paintings by Picasso and Braque and of Picabia. They thought that the sanctuary of the mystery of abstract art was profaned by the work of Miss Beckett and Miss Rhoades which certainly has no mystery, and they saw no problem where there really is a great one: the development of the individual by the action of his work on the public.

The public of "291" has been accustomed to receive and never before has been asked to give. It has taken for granted that we owed it all our efforts to present to New York the principal tentatives of modern art for its own amusement, merely as a form of social function.

No, the efforts of "291" in placing its public in contact with the principal achievements of modern art has not had as its objective to amuse, but to further the progress of both the artist and the community through a commerce of ideas. When "291" thought that its public had been introduced to the most important productions of modern art, it put the public on exhibition. And the contribution of the public consisted of making Miss Beckett and Miss Rhoades realize the communal value of their work.

SATIRISM AND SATYRISM:

It is to be lamented that the editors of the satirical papers of New York did not get for their publications the drawings of Pascin exhibited at the Berlin Photographic Galleries. Perhaps by giving them a wide publicity other artists might have followed in his footsteps and a true record of New York life would have been started.

MATISSE AND NEW YORK:

Montrouze sold almost all his Matisses but he says the masses only laughed at them.

Stieglitz has had two exhibitions of Matisse's work and he also says "The Masses laughed." And he adds that Masses = M asses = 1000 asses.

Other sociologists have asserted "Vox populi vox Dei."

IDIOTISM:

N. Y. Herald, March 1, 1915.

"JUST ORDINARY NEW ART."

John Marin, one of the first of American extremists, is showing forty-seven of his works in the Photo-Secession Gallery, No. 291 Fifth Avenue. Some of them are disjointed dabs of pure color on white ground, designed to be suggestions of landscapes, and some are views of skyscrapers, their sides bent in impossible directions and their skies apparently full of the suspended debris of dynamite explosions.

The exhibition makes good for the new art cult, but only the initiated and the faithful can get anything out of it except a bored feeling. This style of art is now about the most common thing in the world. Its novelty is gone.

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WHAT IS ROTTEN IN THE STATE OF DENMARK?