Arts in society. Volume 1, Issue 2 Fall 1959

Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Extension Division, Fall 1959

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arts in society

fall
1959

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Cover: *Tree Dancer, II,* from a woodcut by Alfred Sessler.

Fall, 1959

arts in society

a journal of the arts in adult education

sponsored by The University of Wisconsin Extension Division and The Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults

Arts in Society is dedicated to the advancement of education in the arts, particularly in the field of adult education. These publications are to be of interest, therefore, both to professionals and the intelligent lay public. *Arts in Society* discusses, interprets, and illustrates the various roles of the arts in contemporary society. In general, four areas are dealt with: the teaching and learning of the arts; aesthetics and philosophy; social analysis; and significant examples of creative expression in media which may be served by the printing process.

Until *Arts in Society* becomes a quarterly publication, it will not be sold at a yearly subscription rate.

Additional copies of this issue and the two previous issues, *Winter 1958* and *Winter 1959* (available in limited supply), may be purchased for 75 cents a copy.

Order from: The Bookstore, University Extension Division, The University of Wisconsin, Madison 6, Wisconsin.

Manuscripts may be sent to The Editor, *Arts in Society,* The University Extension Division, The University of Wisconsin, Madison 6, Wisconsin.

Produced by Editorial and Communications
Services, University Extension Division

CONTENTS

The Architect 5

Human Cities: Is Art Practical? 7
Richard Neutra

The Mayor 20

Cities of Light 22
Charles Farnsley

Chinese Art and Symbolism 24
Rose Hum Lee

Snow (Poem) 40
Robert Sward

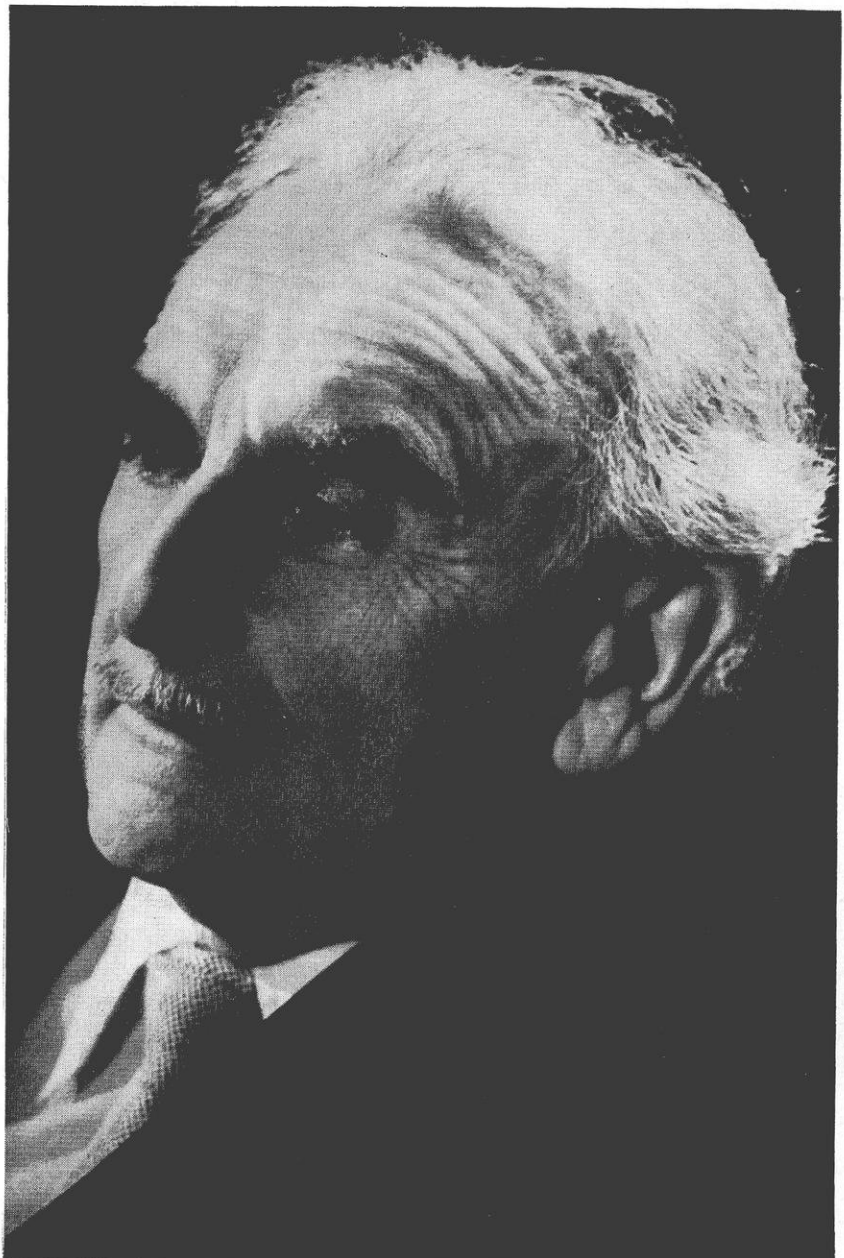
Alienation and the Artist 43
Mason Griff

Negro Art and the Great Transformation 55
Alvin W. Rose

Aftermath; The Goring; Sculpture (Poems) 66
Sylvia Plath

A Visit with the Artist, Alfred Sessler 69

Notes: On A Community Art Program 89
David Ecker



the architect

Richard J. Neutra has been described variously as a creative European and American[1] and as a philosopher of design.[2] He couldn't have escaped either title.

Born in Austria on April 8, 1892, Neutra studied at the Viennese Institute of Technology under the tutelage of Otto Wagner. From these rudiments, and the fertilizing influence of the group of artists gathering at Vienna's Café Museum—Karl Kraus, satirist; Oskar Kokoschka, expressionist painter; Arnold Schönberg, founder of the contemporary in music; and Adolf Loos, architect—he gained mastery of the essentials of his craft and the drive to explore the novelty of ideas. Following his service in the first World War, he worked for a time in Zurich, Switzerland, where he married the daughter of the city engineer, and in Berlin on the Berlin-Zehlendorf settlement (1922). In both of these jobs, Neutra worked in collaboration; and he has never lost respect for working in a team.

Upon his arrival in America in 1923, he moved onward to Chicago, where Louis Sullivan was then banned from architectural practice, and had it not been for the dole of his more financially successful colleagues, would have been living in utter destitution. Neutra's attempts to sell Sullivan's ideas to a publisher ended in failure; and following the funeral cortege which bore the founder of modern American architecture to his grave there were few attendants. Among these were two—F. L. Wright and R. J. Neutra—who merited the name and distinction of the man they were burying—masterbuilder.

Wright introduced Neutra to Taliesin, where he stayed for three months before moving onto the more prolific proving grounds of California. There, within a radius of one hundred miles, one may build in the flat of the desert sands, on the rocky slopes of snow-covered mountains, on hills overlooking the seemingly endless vista of the Pacific Ocean, or on the gently rising and windswept prom-

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[1] S. Giedion, in his Introduction to *Richard Neutra Buildings and Projects,* a tri-lingual publication edited by W. Boesiger, architect. (Zurich: Editions Girsberger, 1951.)

[2] Frederick S. Wight, Director, University of California at Los Angeles Art Galleries in "Richard Neutra—A Philosophy of Design," *Arts and Architecture* (January, 1959).

ontory of the salt and sun scorched beaches. It was there Neutra found greatest pleasure in setting down man, happily adjusted through his artifact, to the inorganic and organic environments. His design was for survival.[3]

The guiding idea of Neutra's later and most distinctive work is called "biorealism." Essentially a humanist, Neutra as architect continues his study and planning where many conventional architects leave off. The most beautiful of formal abstract geometrical patterns may be useless, or even harmful to the man who must live within the field of interacting forces motivated by the intersecting, multi-dimensional planes of a building. For the knowledge necessary to relieve the tension of fatigue for man who must live at the core of the building, Neutra has studied and continues to read the journals of contemporary behavioral science, has pursued his special interest of physiology, and, for the intimate knowledge of each individual client, has endeavored to empathize with the very person who in the final analysis gives meaning to the structures. Call it "empathy," "understanding," or even in its broadest sense, "Christian love"—this principle, when successful, allows the Neutra building to grow from the inner need of the client to experience shape. Thus, the structural is seen as the "sequel to the human."

Profiting greatly from his early collaboration with Gustav Amann, the landscape architect of Zurich, Neutra allows his building to grow from the nucleus of his client's personality through organic nature, disturbing as little as possible even the dry rocks upon which the whole must rest. In Neutra's own words, "The inorganic strata of our landscape, rocks, and water are overlaid by the organic strata of ground covers, shrubs, and trees; and into all this man sets his artifacts. He could do so even on the moon, where only the first stratum exists."

In this issue, *Arts in Society* publishes Neutra's ideas on the architect's job in city planning. Anyone who has lived in a growing urban center can understand the significance of the social and artistic problem involved.

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[3] *Cf.* Neutra's book entitled *Survival Through Design.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954.)

RICHARD NEUTRA | *human cities—is art practical?*

For years America has been proverbially the country of industrial, technological know-how, so much of which applies to city management. Mayors, city managers, councilmen are at least made conscious of this ponderous know-how and may read with some profit the informative articles on so many subjects of utility which *The American City* and other journals lay before them month after month. Utility, economy are stressed in these writings, but sometimes also the beauty of an electrolier and the landscaped setting of a playground. Yet, as a whole, our cities are not a success. Their appeal is mixed. Art remains on their fringe, does not permeate them. My suggestion has long been that the "biologically well bearable" be our guide even in midst of our teeming metropolises. Form and pattern are biological necessities. Nature is the precedent from which man has sprung and, by adaptation and modification, derived the pattern of his existence for tens of thousands of years. Since nature is so pointedly and systematically studied, especially in these last generations, man ought to have had better results. Nature has startling shape in its working: from infusoria to butterflies, there is form.

We really are in a position to know much more about nature than the ancients and our forefathers. The progress of our technique in excavating, tunneling, and constructing outfall sewers may be tremendous and presupposes knowledge of the laws of nature. Yet it is not as great as our recent progress in all branches of physiology, in our understanding of what makes man tick and what stops his ticking. Above all, though, we have learned that utilitarian mechanics don't suffice to explain the needs of man. The increase in cardiac diseases and collapses, for example, has been explained by nervous strain. The brain physiologist observes this strain under the term of "arhythmic innervation" and assumes it will produce biochemical repercussions. He has minutely tabulated proofs for damage and disaster which daily stimuli of urban life hold in store for us. The jamming and occlusion of coronaries and inner circulation seem somehow to relate directly to outer traffic jams and confusion. Chaos

has long been recognized as man's concrete enemy, contrasted to "Kosmos," the Greek word for shapefulness. What is simply called nervous strain is a product of amorphousness in our urban life generally, not only the life of megalopolis. We do little about it for the "good" reason that bond issues threaten to fail, even if more "practical projects" are involved.

Yes, our reasoning must be formidably practical to convince voters. But, I would submit, there is nothing more practical than life itself. There is nothing more impractical and costly than impaired health; and nervous disorders are the most insidious and camouflaged health hazards, at least until the sufferer is spotted, properly isolated, and institutionalized. This is cheaper than leaving him to his own devices, but it is still costly. Perhaps there are many reasons why ten or twelve million Americans a year cool their too-hot heels in psychiatric waiting rooms. One wonders where they parked the car!

The city of today bears undoubtedly its share of blame, thronging, as it does, with screeching turmoil and the synthetic recklessly anorganic color schemes of neon lights, with wires criss-crossing through the smog where once was the blue sky that attracted comers from all parts. (I am writing this in Los Angeles, but it might as well be Sao Paulo or Hong Kong.) What makes these places, like industrialized Calcutta, India, or some miraculously reconstructed German cities, or the new Tokyo of eight millions, so amorphous when the airport limousine carries you through them? Why does amorphousness yield a feeling of hopelessness? Man has lived between organized shapes, has used "Gestalt" and imagery to express himself and give messages, long before he could count to three. Even now some straits-islanders have difficulty with figures but none at all with images. Their village has shape, even if they have no population statistics, even if they can't count their huts.

Unfortunately the word "figure," in English, means two things: number *and* shape. The second is an ancient asset, of long proven but sometimes almost forgotten necessity. It is now often discarded for the impressive big numbers. In ten years Tokyo will have nine millions. There then must be the corresponding kilowatts, tonnages, horsepowers, British Thermal Units, to heat and to cool; billions of dollars. Lots of proud numbers characterize our urban civilization—hard "facts and figures," becoming more impressive from one fiscal year to the next. As a contrast to numerical figures, biology shows

the importance of events and shapes, of morphology, of morphogenetic forms and functions. And economic facts especially seem less hard in this light, rather as resilient as brain tissue.

Perhaps *shape* must again be revalued, *graded up*. The design of our man-made setting cannot and shall not be reduced to a simple utilitarian formula like "form follows function," as if form or shape were something static, a rigid cart behind a dynamically functioning horse.

This is a misleading picture. A firefly zigzagging over the nightly meadows constitutes in its very motion a *shape,* and is not at all static. Like a dance, this is a locomotor shape, enriched by flickering illumination. It is not utilitarian illumination, like head lights shining on the road, but a patterned exciting message received by the she-glowworm. He and she meet and mate, and characteristically, at this point, the light goes out. The shape, the "gestalt," has brought about as vital a function as there can be—the propagation and survival of fireflies.

We must recognize the significance of shape for survival. In our cities we must not have chaotic sensorial litter close in on us. The machine-made setting, the technically feasible, carries no automatic insurance also to be the biologically bearable. If it were, it would be accidental, and more often it is not. That man cannot well exist in shapelessness is provable; and it has been proved by the "large control group" of past human existence in which it is observed through all history and prehistory that comprehensive shape has been given to man's habitat. As a matter of fact, shape in organic nature precedes man by billions of years; it is not just the frilly fashion of a beautician.

In order to convince the "practical man," however, it would be better not to speak of so vague a topic as Beauty. The jurist shrugs his shoulders at framing or enforcing laws to create or protect it in the community. Once man was credited with five senses. In recent decades, modern physiology has been busy ever discovering new sense endowments and receptors; there are millions of them now known, but a "sense of beauty" has yet to be discovered. It is a figure of speech. It does not convince those practical adversaries who substitute telephone poles for trees, or squeeze ever more revenue out of a square foot of real estate.

Physiologically speaking, the separation of mankind into the "tasteful" and the "purposeful" has little meaning. The nature in us

is whole and not split; there are no "departments." And the same holds true for the precedent nature around us. It would be hard to say where a tree stops being "utilitarian," "functional," or "operative," and where it starts to be beautiful. The mere question seems nonsense from a scientific point of view. If we weigh *Beauty versus Utility,* or vice-versa, we weigh something that does not exist. And if we contrast these two abstract ideas, we simply stray precariously away from biological realism and from what there is in natural reality. Any such dualism only brings us into a blind alley.

A special art commission, mayor-appointed as usual, with practically no budget, will mean nothing to the other important departments of municipal management which have to deliver very tangible, prescribed goods. They are by their charter obligated to do so; they are not authorized by any intelligible legal clause to "waste taxpayers' money on any long-hair ideas"; and, above all, they have no one on the payroll who would be qualified to suggest or carry out such ideas with any possible promise of convincing returns. If there is a harbor commission in a seaport town, it is charged with providing facilities for shipping that are commercially needed, bringing up yearly gross tonnage, keeping the longshoremen happy enough not to wreck business, and performing cargo-to-freight and freight-to-cargo conversion and commutation successfully. If anyone would demand of them to pause and see or symbolize a harbor as the gateway of a city or a country and spend money on its "beautification," the commissioners and the port manager would gasp. And taxpayers would justly become irate if port engineers should engage in expensive loveliness. It's not the business they are trained for. They are specialists.

If a city has municipal power and water, its motive is obviously to furnish current and water at a neatly cut rate. The department will have a staff of engineers, who have passed civil service examinations, to design competently transmission lines and water reservoirs. How could such a department permit itself to make the power poles less "ugly," or see in transformer cans hanging in front of bedroom or livingroom windows something else than a good practical item? That a large, open water-body in a dense city means a priceless treasure of free space over a million-dollar mirror reflecting clouds and hills and trees is all rather poppycock for a water department, an agency which keeps on its staff as a chartered obligation a nursery superintendent to plant ground-covers on slopes merely in order to

firm up their surface. A million automobiles pass the "lake," the waters of the reservoir, enjoying a glimpse of it in the daily tedious nerve-wrecking hour of commuting. Commuters would love to refresh themselves a moment by this vista. This would be a rare afterthought of "The Department," while each American automobile on that lake road is designed for a large fee by a swanky industrial designer. The water and power engineers have no legitimate budget item for aesthetics. And if this reservoir is only "a plumbing fixture" right in the heart of the city or of a residential district, a small fraction of compensation is paid for design talent invested, compared with what our plumbing fixture manufacturers pay for the shapeliness of a bathroom lavatory, plus fittings.

We could go down the line and touch on all the municipal departments and agencies for Public Works to the School Board of the district which delivers pupil-hours in big numbers, but cannot well afford murals or tree maintenance, or an increased janitorial expenditure if the black-top is interrupted by ground-cover. Should birds leave their droppings on the teachers' parking area, that problem would readily be taken care of by cutting the trees and branches where birds may perch.

If there is such a dualism and duplicity of "Utility" and "Beauty," beauty surely comes out second best; and no art commission will help it. But to raise children in psychologically satisfactory surroundings and not have them warped by sensorial privation, by confusion and irritation to the eye or the ear or the nose, to have them look out on a green surface, or into green foliage, or play in the shade of trees instead of spending the money on well-advertised aluminum blinds, or awnings, or shades after cutting down the trees—all this is quite practical. "Provability" of it is the problem!

Instead of discussing the practical and the aesthetic, we must enforce the natural and sustaining. Is art sustaining and natural to us? Man has been conditioned and molded by nature for a million years, and city administrations have the job to administer biologically bearable conditions to the citizens, young and old. This in itself is an extremely practical consideration. I have called it Biological Realism or, short, "Biorealism." It is both reasonable and necessary to strive for and profit by design and technique from all current scientific information.

Can a civil austerity program turn into a program of our natural "form necessities" which have been scientifically authenti-

cated? Any walk through the woods, or watching of wildlife establishes preliminary precedents.

The following resolutions may guide our activity: First, we must agree and educate ourselves to admit that there is nothing more practical than wholesome life, and that its realization will have to exclude a great deal of hardship to senses and nerves. Our intake must be reasonably screened. Drug and Food Acts protect us against dangers in what we swallow. But stimuli work on us, filter into us through many channels. We have a vast multitude of orifices in our sense receptors. Energy transactions and substances enter through our skin, which is not a barrier but a permeable membrane. Surely there is entry through our eyes! Second, we must not just sidestep an essential issue, leave it to a powerless art commission, and let George, who is only superficially informed about the facts of life, do it. Third, it must be understood that each municipal department can and shall gain citizen support for the manifestations of its activity if they are convincing, not only on a balance sheet, but acceptable again to senses and nerves. Intramural public relations are indeed often better furthered this way than by a supreme technical performance, which, unfortunately, is understandable only to a few experts. And the out-of-town, national and cosmopolitan, prestige that can be gained will also benefit a city, as the recently completed, magnificently art-enriched aqueduct terminals attest in Manila and Mexico, municipalities much less wealthy per capita than comparable cities in our own country. Fourth, we must, after an understanding with the mayor and the council, prepare for a detailed talk with the city attorney to determine how the legal obligations, authorizations, and qualifications of all city departments can be revised in order "to hold water"—in the eye of the jurist, the educated voter, and the enlightened taxpayer.

The projected revision will include as a goal, psychological satisfaction from contemplated "physical improvements," and not leave human nature starved as a fully forgotten step-child. Presentation of the issue for municipal legislation must be clear. And the satisfying experience we plan will begin to find credence first in the important, elemental, sensorial matters which can be proven. Later we might develop techniques to check into more complex inner repercussions of outer city planning features. An interesting array of telling physiological factors may be tested from respiration and pulse rate to blood pressure and endocrine discharges while a left-

hand turn is executed, while the search for a parking place is undertaken by a driver in midst of city traffic, or even while a "change of lights" is waited for with impatience and frustration.

People who have squeezed into the subway, a bus, or a peak-load rush-hour elevator, relax measurably in spite of the tactile and respirational discomforts. They turn contemplative for a few moments and become interested in the physiognomies and expressions of their fellow passengers. A face-to-face relationship is noticeably different from a fender-to-fender one. Anthropologically the first has a conditioning period of a hundred thousand years to back it up, and "ontogenetically" it is the earliest social experience emerging for an infant. To search for elemental factors, including social ones, to which a human organism already has an adaptation of long standing, and fit them into our design, and thus to apply the experience of the biologist, is the safest principle and approach. Especially when we face complex and novel situations, we must not, in the enthusiasm for the new and the "logically consistent," disregard the treasure of elemental adaptations which, properly used, could sustain the new design. Once again form and shapely organization are more than frill but have been recognized by the naturalist as aids to survival.

It would be foolish to shoot rocket pilots to the moon or man a space-platform without testing the sensory impacts and new organic adaptation problems of the conditions to be met. But there is all the reason to assume that internal strains and stresses produced within a human being need not be spectacular, and can be subtle, to be most insidious. The sufferings of those daily crowded straphangers in buses, fast curving to the curb for a stop with a high breaking rate, have something to do with the total organic response set off by the acceleration sense of the inner ear, also known as our vestibular gravity organ. Passengers going out for a demanding work-day in the crowded subway have the same sense quite differently affected by the much more gradual deceleration, acceleration, and the reduced centrifugal demands of an electric train on carefully traced tracks. Even the elevator of a 60-story office building affords gentler treatment, provided it does not stop on too many floors. Our visual impacts are surely not less significant or pathogenic!

Now, there are few people starting in the morning on a trip to the moon, but many millions embarking for downtown. It should not be an unfair bother to test their organic situation, and realize

that, even from the point of view of dollar-and-cents realism, fantastic losses must be faced through premature fatigues and most costly irritations. Yet the cumulative effect of ignorantly glorified progresses which bump into each other and bring organic life into a daily jam cannot really be measured in money. The biological wear-and-tear and maintenance costs are staggering in these, our know-how metropolises, whose design often takes in nothing of its essential threats to vitality. There could be vast exemplification for this statement, and, beginning from the elemental, we would have to proceed to a research of the more complicated likes and dislikes of city fathers. The property or tax interests of their constitutents are only a few of the influence factors the shaper of a city has to consider. Microbes had first to be discovered, so that anxiety would appropriate far-flung sewage disposal. We need more spread of such fears to see human biology win in financial and fiscal politics. Art and design can provide focal relaxation and recovery areas in cities. But it will be a long and uphill struggle in the midst of our old-fashioned and grimy—still nineteenth century—mentality. Modern science has recognized many vital needs beyond the grasp of that mechanical brand of materialism.

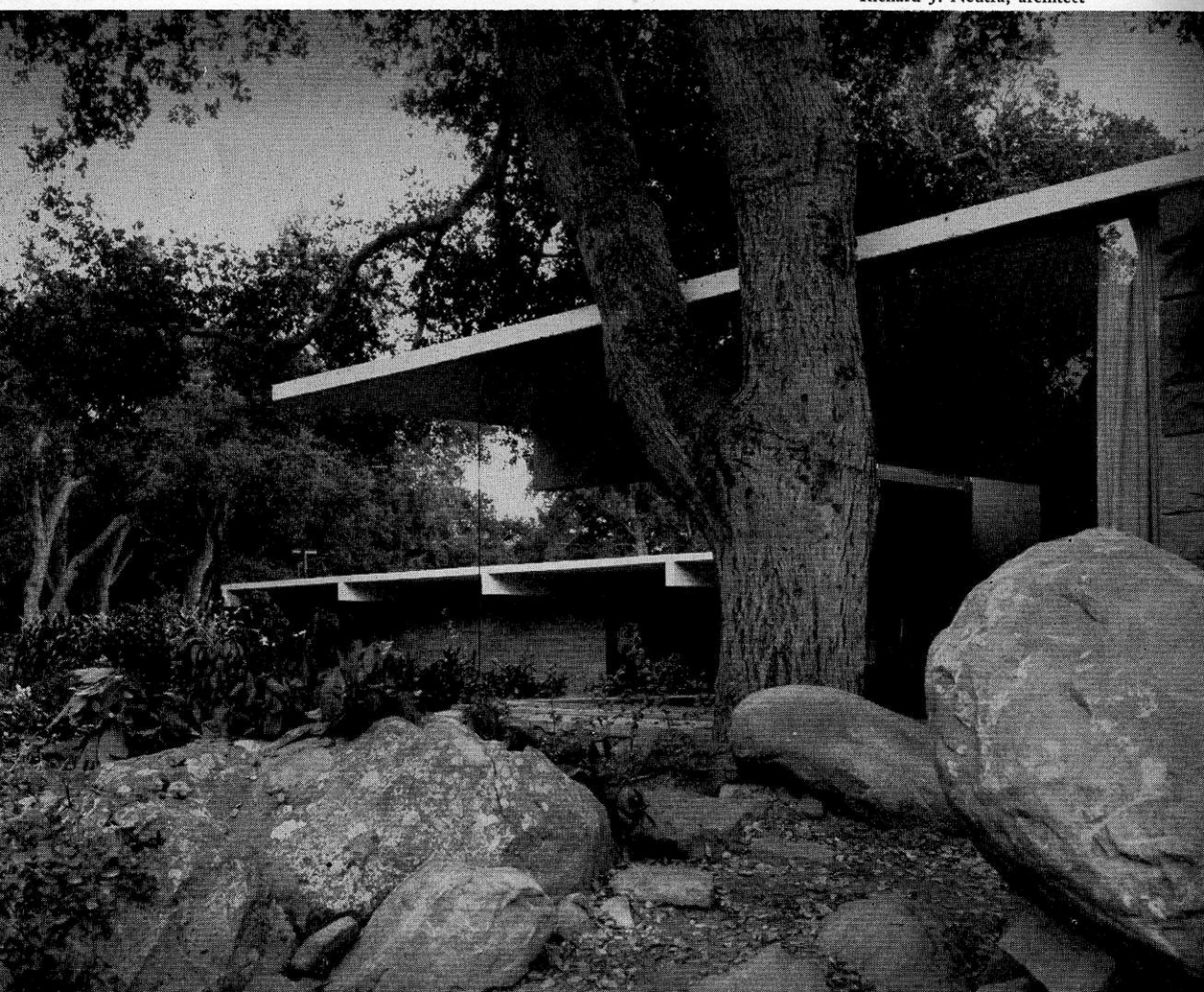
Taking the lead in this struggle, and the initiative to tackle the problem with all expert circumspection, could be a feather in the cap of the mayor and the manager or director of practically every department of the city.

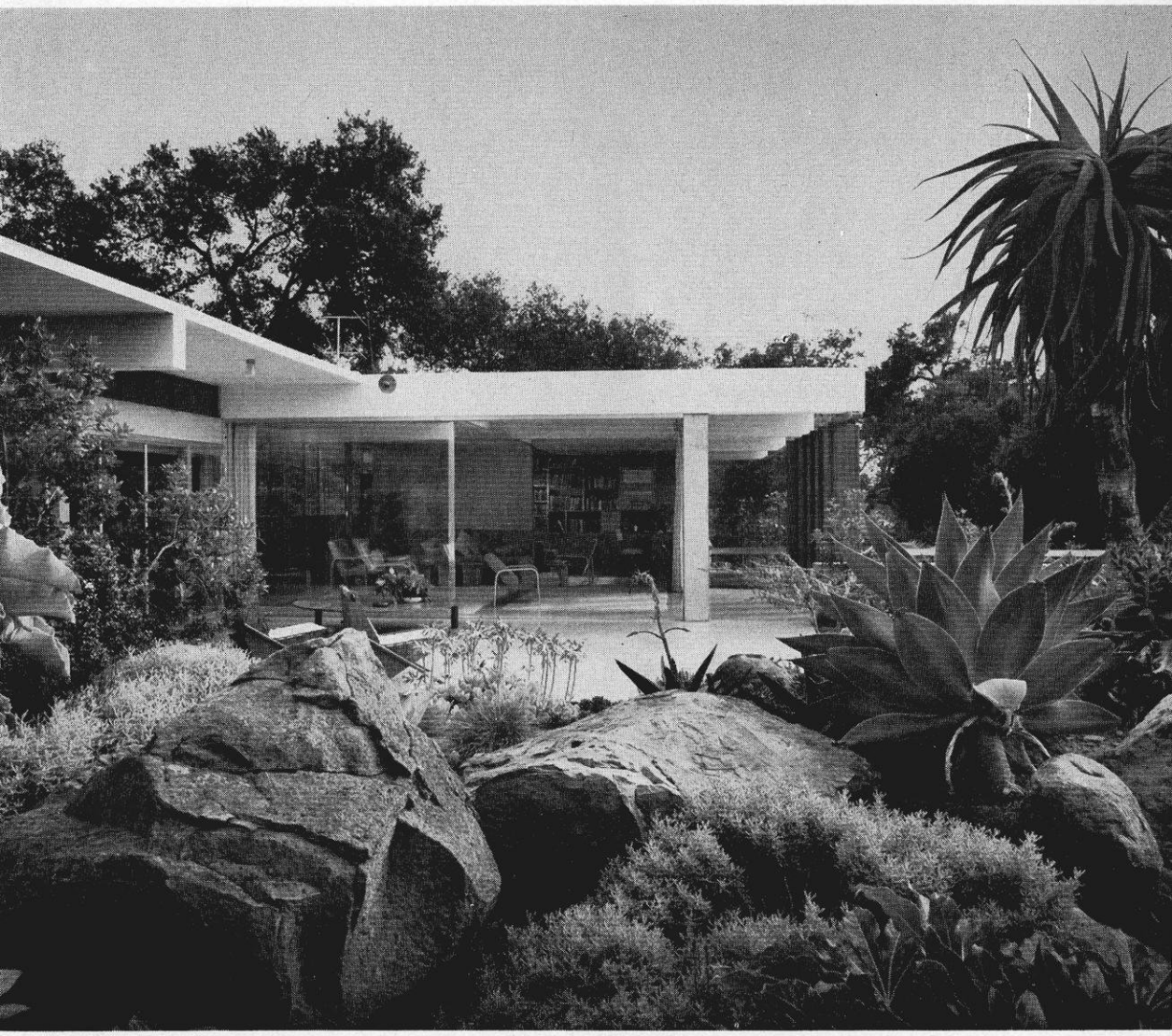
In all this, popular acceptance of an attitude is decisive. Public relations and community support are always necessary and bound up with the soul-satisfaction of voters who have demonstrably human needs for shape and color. Mohammed, a successful, real politician if there ever was one, said: "If I had two coats" (and we have more in America than in Mecca!), "I would sell one and buy white hyacinths for my soul." Mohammed had long hair pending from his chin. His beard has been recorded as auburn-colored, to go well with white blossoms. But it was not a mere color scheme by itself this practical man must have had in mind. In his time he amply demonstrated his knowledge of what makes a human community vibrate in enthusiasm, and, with a fast schedule, go into a wealth of sweeping, constructive cultural action against shallow commercial interests and a status quo which had become impossible even to it. Even the practical people will agree: the best customer is a live one who vigorously survives.

There is no automation which makes citizens survive amidst the din and turmoil of more and more inventive but unassorted progress indifferent to form and art and harmonization. On the contrary, it takes principaled, coordinated artistic attitude and skill to sustain life in the midst of our snowballing artificialities. Our hope is for psychosomatic design: a well-fused, devoted understanding of the subtle organic nature within us, to be implemented, yet not overrun, by the tough technical developments going on around us. That is what is meant by "Biological Realism," a design for survival.

The inorganic strata of our landscape, rocks, and water, are overlaid by the organic strata of ground covers, shrubs, and trees and into all this man sets his artifacts. He could do so even on the moon, where only the first mentioned stratum exists. But man-made constructions on earth are above all inserts into:

A grown tree and a poured reinforced concrete structure.
Richard J. Neutra, architect



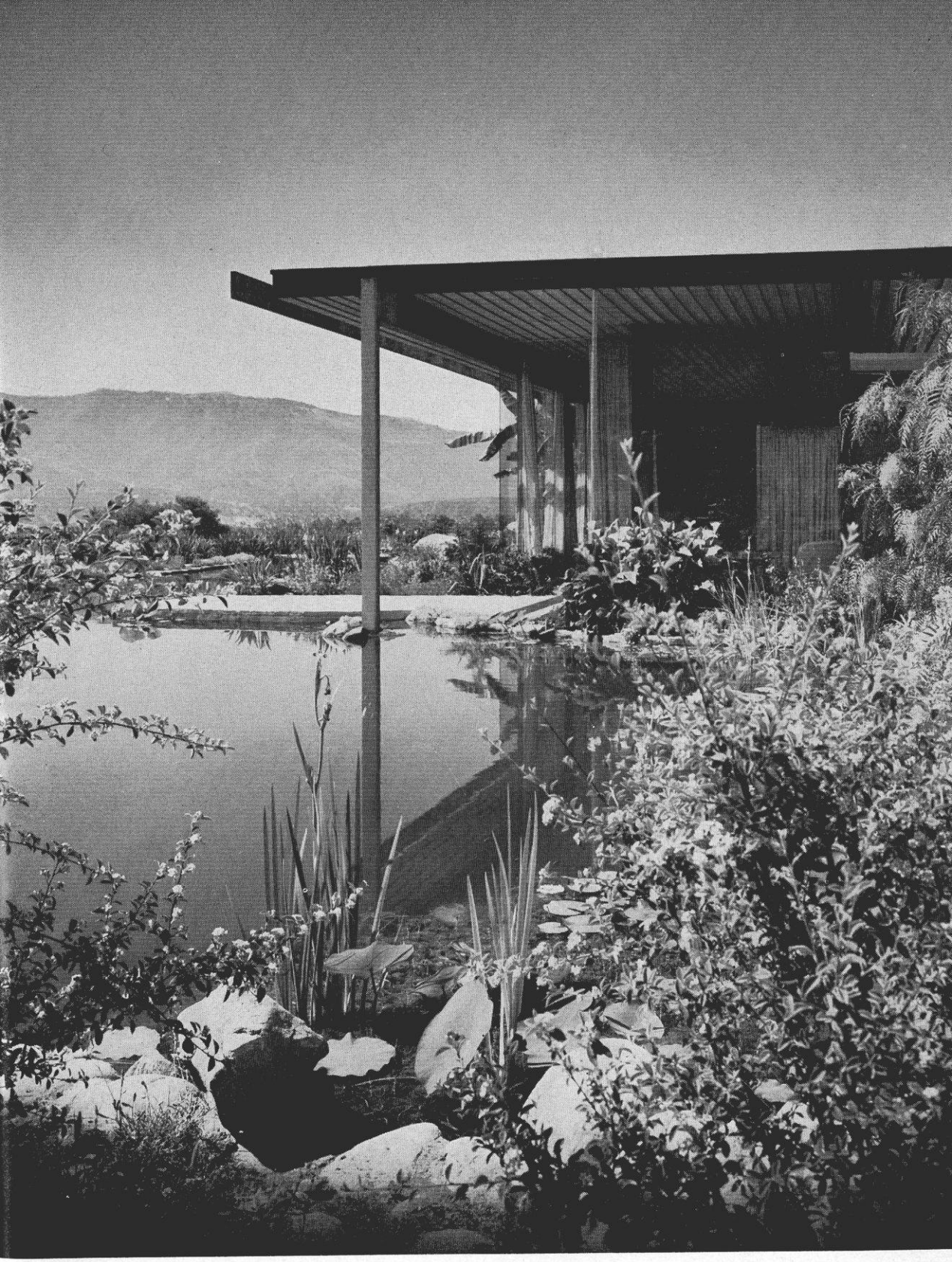


Dry rocks and moisture gathering succulents are the outer scene which extends into humanly designed and used interiors.

Richard J. Neutra, architect

Nature seen from the inside of a domestic space which extends into it.

Richard J. Neutra, architect



Water doubles the space which we take in visually.

Richard J. Neutra, architect

the mayor

American municipalities are on a steady decline. The middle class seems to be fleeing from municipal centers to achieve whatever might be attainable of artful living in the surrounding exurbia. As Richard Neutra pointed out, the result is an ever increasing amorphousness at the heart of urban life. As long as art continues to be too rarefied to be "practical" for the average city-dweller, the only hope of reconstruction seems to lie in the architect's ability to convince the practical men, leaders of civic activity, that art and life and effective living are one and the same thing. The job to be done is therefore an educational one, and the people to be educated are the adults who must make the decisions to save the city as an economic and cultural force of society. *Arts in Society* presents the case of the recent developments in Louisville, Kentucky.[1]

The mayor in question is Charles Rowland Peaslee Farnsley, who headed the municipal government of Louisville from 1948 to 1954, and prefers to be known as "Charley." He is dedicated to the aims of adult education, and, as mayor, led his fellow citizens into a heretofore unheard of cultural consciousness. The leader of a city's administration must work, however, with several collaborating agencies. Once he becomes convinced that art and enlightenment are practical and takes steps to prove it, profound changes may nevertheless be worked into the structure of the city and the lives of its people.

After taking office, Charley Farnsley engaged a professional consultant to conduct the everyday affairs of government, thereby permitting his own time to be spent on the bigger, deeper problems of the city of Louisville without becoming lost himself, in endless detail. He proceeded immediately to organize the "Louisville Fund," a community chest for the arts which helped finance a children's theater, a dance council, a philharmonic orchestra and chorus, an opera association, an art center, and a junior art gallery. He approached the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Education Board for help in establishing a police school to teach policemen new methods of handling racial tensions.

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[1] For a more complete account of Louisville's great development and the role of Mr. Farnsley in the growth, see: William Manchester, "Louisville Cashes in on Culture," *Harper's Magazine*, August, 1955.

Another of his accomplishments, perhaps the most extraordinary, was the launching, with the support of the *Louisville Courier-Journal,* a "government-in-culture" program. In administering it, he worked in close collaboration with the appointee of a previous mayor. Clarence R. "Skip" Graham, public library director, was encouraged to institute" neighborhood colleges," with University of Louisville instructors teaching adult classes. The library and its branches, which lend everything from books, records, and movies to the umbrellas they may be protected with in inclement weather, thus became true cultural centers. Thousands of transcribed educational programs of music, documentaries, dramas, and forums—such as the University of Chicago Round Table—became the nucleus of an audio-visual department. Television sets, then new to Louisville, were installed in the branch libraries. And in 1950 Graham established a ten-watt FM station capable of reaching all city elementary schools with carefully constructed programs for educational purposes. All these projects were given impetus by Mayor Farnsley's office. For after-school hours, the new station, which soon grew to a 20,000-watt powerhouse, played fine music, BBC rebroadcasts, and a story hour for children. The station was named WFPL—"World's Finest Public Library."

These are but a hint of the many attainments possible under proper guidance. And the more practical men were led to see the advantages. Largely because of the vitality of Louisville's cultural atmosphere, General Electric built a thousand-acre, $300,000,000 "Appliance Park" on the city's outskirts, joining scores of other industries swarming to the land—as the wags used to say—of beautiful horses and fast women. The new industries contributed to the swelling of the town being educated as it grew. In answer to the question "How can this be?" Charley Farnsley insists upon the community spirit. His movement was no one-man show. To start it he had only his faith in education for all, and the courage to put into practice what less "practical" men have long suspected, that culture, industry, and retail business are inseparable, *i.e.,* that the progress or the decline of the one affects the progress or decline of the others. Charley knew how to make the aesthetic necessities of life appear, as indeed they are, simply a matter of practical business with survival as its reward; and he convinced many others of the power of his vision.

In the following article Mr. Farnsley sketches his plan for renewing "Human Cities." It is given in the spirit of a mayor's response to an architect's challenge.

CHARLES FARNSLEY | *cities of light*

It is well known that the American middle class is fleeing from our cities and that the cities are becoming in consequence the homes of the very rich and the very poor. If we could take advantage of the rush for higher education to help fill the vacuum in our cities caused by the rush to the suburbs, we might accomplish two things at once.

In most European cities, for example, there is a university situated in or near the downtown area. I believe this arrangement, if carried out in the United States, would make our cities not only more wonderful places to live, but would also provide the most economical additions to our already crowded facilities for higher education. There are approximately three million students in our colleges and universities. This number will probably double in the next decade, so that in the near future we will have six million youths enrolled in institutions of higher learning. If half of the three million could be quartered in the older houses and buildings along with a goodly proportion of the professors, it is my considered opinion that there would no longer be either a problem of the desertion of the cities or a problem of housing students. Students and professors would not only help fill in the vaccum, but would attract other families that prefer to live in the atmosphere of a university quarter.

Another lesson our cities may learn from the European practice is that it pays to assist in the development of a cultural center in and near the downtown area. They should support, or partially support, orchestras, museums, libraries, and the like in order to avail themselves of the additional magnet afforded by culture to draw people to visit the area continually, to study there for a period of years, and even to live there permanently.

It will be argued that the automobile has caused our cities to explode, and this is undoubtedly true; but I am convinced that more important than the automobile in the development of suburbia has been the desire of families to gain status for themselves and their children. We are rapidly becoming a nation of "status-seekers." A university or college is one of the few places in which an American can have a position and still retain stylishness in living nearby his job.

Along with any intellectual light that would result from the program I have outlined, and it is becoming more and more imperative that such light be produced, it is absolutely essential that there be instituted a crash program for physical light in the alleys, streets, playgrounds, parks, and public squares of the cities; and they should be equipped immediately with the most modern color-corrected mercury vapor or fluorescent lights. Police chiefs know that good street and alley lights greatly reduce crimes of violence; and traffic engineers know that a dividend of such a program would be a reduction in automobile accidents and pedestrian injuries, of which around half occur at night.

The problems of our cities are essentially social and economic, but most of the planning for their improvement is done by "physical planners" so that, sad to relate, many of the present grandiose projects are doing more harm than good. Cases in point are the small businesses—restaurants, delicatessens, groceries, repair shops, and the like—which draw their customers from a limited circle. Whenever a redevelopment project clears perhaps a ten-block area, the little businesses nearby tend to wither and die. Not only do the small businesses suffer in this way, but the churches are affected in like manner. In addition, many of the families who live near the area being torn down live there because friends and relatives are nearby. As these friends and relatives are uprooted by the "project," they will be more apt to move; and their removal hastens the decline of the whole area. On the other hand, urban renewal which tries to restore sound old houses and buildings, destroying only those which are beyond any hope, tends to re-invigorate and support an area. Urban renewal could be a major tool in providing housing for students and professors as well as classrooms for them to pursue their activities in the area.

If our cities continue to die at the heart not only will we continue to suffer a great economic loss, but our cultural agencies—orchestras, libraries, and museums—will almost certainly be destroyed, as almost none of these has ever been really successful in a suburban situation. If our cities become all suburbs with no core, as many think they will, our people will be forced to depend on radio, TV, and pulp magazines for their enlightenment as well as for entertainment. And at the present time these media offer more entertainment than enlightenment. Our cities may still be made to give off light.

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ROSE HUM LEE | *chinese art and symbolism: resistance and change*

Chinese art calls to mind varying images: scrolls, calligraphy, prints, jade figurines, exquisite designs on luxurious fabrics, delicate porcelains, polished lacquerware, teakwood screens studded with mother-of-pearl and precious stones, thick and velvety rugs, ivory ware, and exotic ornaments. Chinese art is noted for its delicate workmanship, for its practical quality, and for stylized symbolic designs. These characteristics—especially the last—set Chinese art apart from that of the Western world, whose artists strive to anticipate as well as to reflect change in their societies.

Why are Chinese art and its symbolism so resistant to change and how did they become almost static? Did the impact of Western influence affect Chinese art and symbolism? And has the recent political, social, and economic upheaval in China, following the advent of the People's Government, affected Chinese artistic expression? These and many other questions come to mind as one reflects upon the drastic social changes occurring in China during the past century, and more especially within the last decade.

Art and Symbolism

A discussion of Chinese art and symbolism must take into account the relationship among calligraphy, painting, and symbolic designs that adorn most of the works of art; for the three are almost inseparable and have for centuries constituted both a system of communication and a means of separation among the various social classes in China. Early men from most cultures, dating back five thousand or more years, felt a desire to record the mysteries of the universe as they saw them: they drew pictures, or ideographs, of what they wanted to record as memorable and exciting events in their physical and social environment. The Chinese were no exception. They used strong stalks of grass, then strings and ropes, to

fashion ideographs resembling the sun, moon, earth, water, fire, grass, trees, rocks, mountains. Later, these simple ideographs were combined into more complicated images that represented as complete a syndrome of action as possible.

At first, the ideographs (often called characters) were faithful reproductions of animate and inanimate objects as well as of men's actions and reactions. For example, the ideograph for sun was a round circle, but when the Chinese became aware of the fact that there was a spot in the sun which prevented them from penetrating its inner mysteries with the naked eye, a stroke was added inside the circle to apprise others of the discovery.

old ideograph for sun

stylized ideograph for sun (current)

The ideograph for the moon could not also be a round object, if the two planets were to be readily distinguishable; the crescent moon was adopted because this orbit changed its shape every seven days. The moon had light and dark spots, so two lines representing light and dark shades were placed inside the crescent.

old ideograph for moon

stylized ideograph for moon (current)

ideograph combining sun and moon (means light, bright, clear, brightness, translucent)

Both planets gave forth rays, but of a different kind, so the ideographs for sun and moon were combined to designate light, which, depending upon context, can mean bright or brightness, glory or gloriousness, or reversion to happiness (enlightenment) after a period of despair (oppressiveness). The regime following the tyrannical and harsh rule of the Monguls was named the Ming Dynasty (bright and glorious dynasty).

In this manner, ideographs were devised, combined, recombined, defined, redefined, and refined in execution. A complicated symbolic system of communication evolved, ambitiously attempting to encompass the entire range of man's activities and to describe minutely all animate and inanimate objects as to shapes, colors, designs, texture, feel, and weight.

From the basic radical, man (1), the three other ideographs are formed to designate: (2) man is great or big if he can carry a yoke (the bar across the shoulders); (3) only the sky or heavens are above man; (4) man has virtue or should have it—note the man radical is inverted to indicate a "nice-looking character."

The earlier simple ideographs became prefixes or suffixes, too, so that a categorical system known as radicals ensued, and a given action or object carried the proper radical; for example, a traveler going by boat would be represented by the "water" prefix to indicate his mode of transportation; travel by railroad was signified by the "fire" ideograph, because the locomotive is a "fire wagon." Airplanes are "flying crafts" and had the "bird" ideograph combined with "crafts."

tree
1

forest
2

huge forest
3

(1) The broad stroke across is the surface of the earth. The stroke above this broad line is above the earth's surface. The three strokes below are roots that anchor the surface of the earth.
(2) Forest is composed of two or more trees.
(3) Huge forest is composed of three or more trees, with the third tree topping the mass of trees below.

woman, female
1

peace
2

home
3

pig
4

many women
(adultery)
1a

(1) The basic radical.
(1a) This symbol also stands for licentiousness.
(2) Woman inside home means peace and contentment; radical above is roof, used in all ideographs for home or family ideas.
(3) The symbol is a roof over a pig, pig being the agricultural symbol for home.
(4) Without the roof radical, this stands for the pig itself.

These basic ideographs became the classificatory system under which words are found in dictionaries; they are listed according to the number of strokes, lines, or dots—or combinations—which each contains.

The Chinese have never successfully devised an alphabet or a phonetic system. Northerners pronounce the same ideographs in a tone so vastly strange to southern ears that inhabitants of the different sections of the country frequently cannot understand each other. But the written characters are the same; and ideographs, rather than national loyalties, unify China into a cultural entity. Hence, it is a common sight today to see northerners and southerners write out the ideographs on the palms of their hands, when their spoken words are unintelligible. The educated converse in English!

Since ideographs are words portraying as complete a picture as possible of what occurred when they were devised—and since the innovator did not leave notes indicating his mental processes—woe to the person who forgets what caused the word-pictures to be formed—he cannot reproduce them nor look them up in the dictionary! Hence, Chinese students must write and memorize an endless number of characters; a true scholar must somehow master as many of the 40,000 characters as he can.

The need to concentrate upon what happened in the past and to master countless word-pictures resulted in the educated person's reverence for the old and conservative; he ignored changes occurring in the social and physical milieu, almost in self-defense. All a contemporary scholar could hope for was credit for recombining a more complicated ideograph so that it represented change as he saw it; he had then to trust that others would accept the character for the meaning he intended.

So much emphasis was placed upon the faithful reproduction of ideographs that scholars had to expend hour after hour after hour in practicing calligraphy with a brush. No matter how simple or complicated an ideograph was, the final product had to resemble a word as it appeared in block print. Crude pictures gave way to stylized, box-like characters, and the difficult-to-execute ones with twenty-five strokes, lines, and dots could be no larger than one with a single stroke.

The skill with which scholars handled their brushes and created unique effects with freshly made black ink varying from light grey to pitch carbon, resulted in calligraphers' preempting painting in black

ordinary	classical	commercial	arabic
一	壹	1	1
二	貳	11	2
五	伍	8	5
四	肆	X	4

(1) In each row, the numerals denoted from top to bottom are: 1, 2, 5, 4.
(2) Ordinary is the system used in printing and also the most widely used form.
(3) Classical is the method of scholars and learned men, especially for the number 2.
(4) Commercial is a space saver, especially as numerals grow more complicated (see bottom two rows).
(5) Arabic numerals came in about 1917, following the introduction of modern education.

and white as their medium of artistic expression; in time, the classical scholars became renowned for their twin accomplishments: calligraphy and painting. Later, they added poetry to their realm of achievements, about which more will be said later.

The common man had no effective medium for expressing his mundane thoughts; he had little claim to painting, calligraphy, and poetry, because he did not have the time, the finances, or the access to the world of the educated. The lesser educated devised a simpler form of Chinese, a movement primarily initiated by businessmen—a set of numerals easily written in a short time and not requiring much space or paper.

Later, there developed what was called "newspaper Chinese," a simplified but more dynamic form of expression of every day occurrences.

Whether or not scholars felt challenged by the foregoing innovations, they devised a system of shorthand, known as "grass" characters.

word or speech (stylized)	word or speech ("grass")	beautiful or fine (stylized)	beautiful or fine ("grass")
			

This system obscured lines, strokes, and dots by blending them together; and the final product was even more difficult to decipher than the stylized ideographs. So again the lesser educated were excluded from the educated persons' communication system. And although there is considerable overlapping of the four ideographic systems, whether a Chinese was highly educated was evidenced by how many of these systems came readily within his command and how easily he could decipher the meanings of each system.

The educated elite was greatly revered for its accomplishments, but it grew increasingly distant from the masses upon whose goodwill and support it depended. This distance led to a concerted effort to paint subject matter which the common man understood: flora, fauna, and religious themes, those largely unchanging phenomena

which reflected the static conception which educated men had of life around them. The common man might wander into the hills and guiltlessly enjoy a cup of tea, but the scholar felt compelled to record the experience. He took in the natural scenery—returning to it to absorb every detail; then he repaired to his study and reproduced it, in fine brush strokes and with unique ink effects. The Chinese artist, then, does not set up an easel or paint from real life; he paints from subjective impressions drawn from long and deep contemplation. As a result, note the myriad details in a landscape painting, as if the artist were looking down upon a scene from an airplane instead of facing it. Because the artist-scholar's paintings are subjective, intended to portray his own mood and to interpret what he sees, he writes a few lines of poetry on the left hand side of the finished painting, for painting is believed to be poetry translated into another form. "A beautiful painting is like a lovely poem," the Chinese are fond of saying. So calligraphy, painting, and poetry are interwoven.

Poetry becomes stylized, too, because there is little room on the painting for long lines and many stanzas. Hence, the artist cultivates a condensation of ecstatic or brooding emotions, and the admirer of a painting—if he cannot read the calligraphy—is left to fill in the details. He can admire the perfection of strokes used in writing the poem, however, and he can gain comfort or satisfaction from the theme of the painting. It should be noted that Chinese artists do not paint controversial themes.

A set of flora was adopted to represent the four seasons: the prunus blossom for spring; the orchids for summer; chrysanthemums for fall; and bamboo or pine for winter. Outstanding among the fauna were fish for marital felicity; lion for strength; dragon for aristocracy, fertility, wealth, power, prestige, or fame; fox for conniving cunningness and duplicity; peacock for glory and splendor; and bats for happiness. By the same token, Confucian themes centered around the family: ancestor portraits signified long life and filial piety; many children romping happily in a court yard denoted several generations living harmoniously under one roof; the wan face of a beautiful woman seen through a round window symbolized the faithful and lonely wife waiting years for her husband's return from war or imperial examinations held in Peking. These themes are found in books read by school children, calendars used by merchants to advertise their wares, and plots for operas. Thus, a set of

symbolic values united the various social classes and elicited appropriate responses.

On the other hand, a symbol came to have different connotations according to the socio-economic stratum of the population. To the farming classes, the chrysanthemum means that the larder is filled with fruits of toil—the harvest season has ended, festivals and feasts are near. If the harvest season has been particularly plentiful, a new person (bride) may be added to the household. While these same meanings are stirred in the minds of wealthier groups, these people also envision fragrant tea brewed from chrysanthemum buds, plucked before the first drop of spring rain; they vicariously recall the pungent taste of freshly picked chrysanthemum leaves as they are dropped into soup, or added to fish. All of these are invoked at the sight of beautifully executed chrysanthemums on delicate rice paper, silk, or advertisements. The artist is pleased because he can stir the emotions of the literate as well as the illiterate, drawing both into a common identification.

The scholars disdained manual labor, but they strove to minimize this by reproducing faithfully the leading occupational groups, especially the farmers and fishermen. The farmers are painted as content with their lot, relaxed and smoking their bamboo pipes, instead of toiling, sweaty, in the rice fields. Seldom do human features exhibit anger, ecstasy, grief, horror, astonishment, hatred, and contempt; facial expressions are serene, unsmiling, serious, accepting. For scholar-artists are inclined to depict life idealistically rather than realistically, but this flight from reality is for them perhaps less disturbing than acknowledging the ever-changing nature of the universe. For since the ideographic system became crystallized, attempts to mirror alterations in ideographs would break down the symbolic system of communication and weaken symbolic values cherished by many people.

Whereas in Western societies the artists and intellectuals are prime movers in experimentation, freedom of inquiry, controversy, and daring innovations, their Chinese counterparts exhibit opposite tendencies. It is true that reverence for the past rather than for the present provides respectful stability, but this reverence also stifles the creative spirit, withers the imagination, and quiets anxieties. It may explain why the Chinese—once so inventive and the acknowledged creators of the compass, abacus, gunpowder, block printing,

sericulture, and other arts—now lag behind other peoples in innovations.

Other arts, too—what few novels or operas there were—emphasized the ritualistic and the stylized, giving rise to the oft heard claim that China was a "sleeping giant," permitting strong feelings of ethnocentrism to suffice for centuries, instead of encouraging the acceptance and understanding of social change. But when the Chinese came in contact with Westerners and saw themselves as they were reflected in the eyes of strangers, they began to reorient their perspectives. The more daring youths led the revolt against traditionalism, conservatism, and self-satisfaction, culminating in the Renaissance.

Renaissance

The Renaissance in China began as a literary revolution about 1916-1917, and was led by western-educated disciples of the late John Dewey and professors of Columbia University's department of education. The most renowned alumnus of this institution is Dr. Hu Shih, the father of the Renaissance, who advocated simplifying the literary style and rewriting of age-old classics into "plain language." He urged every man, woman, and child to express naturally his emotions and thoughts, to refrain from using mystical phraseology, and to resist temptations to moralize.

The Renaissance could not have succeeded without Columbia-educated Dr. James Yen. He selected a thousand of the most commonly used ideographs from among the 40,000, and introduced a nationwide adult education program to combat illiteracy. He decried the prevailing tendency to memorize classics and reproduce countless ideographs which, in the final analysis, resulted in an educated man's being unable to write a simple letter when seeking employment or recounting facts—so that even the educated needed to learn the thousand characters and how to use them.

The classical scholars did not retire gracefully without a struggle. In tutoring their charges, they capitalized on the fear which many parents had of the "plain language" system and the suspiciously new fads introduced by the Renaissance. But their efforts were futile, because there were no more new recruits to bolster their ranks. The imperial examination system, sponsored by the royal throne, was abolished in 1905, and holders of imperial degrees lacked the daring initiative and money necessary to maintain the old educational system. Today the holder of a Manchu imperial degree is a rarity.

Even though there was great admiration for "plain language," time was needed to simplify the communication system: verbs had to have tenses denoting a precise time element; prepositions, formerly omitted, had to be employed; new words were required to explain contemporary changes. The introduction of scientific inquiry, as well as the natural and social sciences, required a search for ideographs conveying proper meanings—the search resulted in a language of Chinese characters widely interspersed with, for example, English words, formulae, and proper nouns. A pertinent illustration of why this mingling of languages became necessary was the word "modern," an unnecessary word in the Chinese classical system. So two ideographs that sounded most like the English pronunciation were adopted, and sound, rather than symbolic meaning, became the basis for many ideographs—like "social dancing," "cream," "steak."

Painting and artistic expression resisted change, because older artists did not succumb to popular pressure to depart from traditional themes. They did experiment with water colors and freer selection of subject matter and materials, but the finished products were often bizarre, since artists did not paint from live models. Whereas we know that Western artists glorified the human individual, his physical form, his moods, and his social situation, the Chinese minimized the human's place in a painting—in landscapes the man is hardly perceptible, being dwarfed by lofty mountains, scraggy boulders, tall pine trees, and colorful temples.

Humanistic qualities were attributed instead to Buddhistic, Taoistic, or Confucian personages, but their forms were covered by long, flowing garments reaching to the floor, obviating the necessity to study and paint the human anatomy. Moreover, the faces of these symbolic figures always showed contentment, serenity, and benignness. So that since painters lacked the skill to reproduce both the human physique and varying moods, existing conventional themes still predominated.

What really transformed the popular taste in artistic expression and appreciation was the introduction of photography. At first, subjects posed in rigid, stiff positions—reminiscent of ancestral portraits. Later, there was concentration on one subject, instead of a conglomeration of many. Photographic artists caught the beauty of pagodas nestled at dusk in the peaceful hillside, others focused on the sampan, junk, cargo boats, wheelbarrows filled with squirming pigs going to market, and passengers riding in the rickshaw. As these

stills found their place on covers of magazines and in newspaper columns, there came a trend toward depicting life as it is.

Accompanying this trend was the development of the cinema, with movie heroes and heroines introducing many behavior patterns, fads and fashions, and folkways. Their fame spread throughout China.

Traditional operas gave way to the "plain language plays." Instead of magnificently gowned male stars singing in high falsetto to mimic the female voice, performers sang naturally and spoke lines which the audience understood. Modern plays were shorter and true to life, and since they were often performed by amateurs, they attracted enthusiastic audiences in rural areas, where professional troupes seldom ventured. Moreover, rural dwellers—farmers, laborers, landlords, and village elders—became natural subjects for plots. Finally, the traditional heroes of past dynasties gave way to young soldiers and pilots in modern military uniforms.

War, so often said to be a great leveler, hastened the popular taste; synchronization of rich and poor, commingling in "Free China," so that they were forced to communicate and understand each other, and gradually dialect barriers were broken. Whereas before the war, Mandarin was taught in schools or to adults who were ambitious to learn the national dialect, war provided a natural opportunity for the widespread use of it and northerners and southerners could now begin to understand each other.

A common communication system could not have succeeded without printing presses pouring out books for a population striving to catch up with centuries-old literature, always before denied to the masses. Simpler versions of these works stimulated the appetites of many who had learned the thousand basic ideographs to learn more on their own.

Calligraphy declined in popularity.[1] Students, business people, and the general citizenry seized upon the fountain pen and lead pencil as writing equipment; though revered, the brush pen and ink pot were not so frequently used. In time, many educators decried the poor penmanship of their charges, but they recognized the

[1] Regretfully, many of the older generation of calligraphers and painters are dying off. Many escaped to this country after World War II began, while others fled after the Communist regime gained control of the China mainland. To remain there would have meant to face ridicule as "bourgeois feudalists," if they had been permitted to live long enough to hear public derision.

utility of modern writing equipment. Calligraphy was given a place in modern curricula but was considered no more important than arithmetic or science. So, the educated are no longer equated with poets, calligraphers, painters, and students of the classics.

Novels were rare, because this mode of expression was considered "vulgar" by the educated. Although most educated people stealthily read *The Dream of the Red Chamber, The Three Kingdoms,* and others that corresponded to *Decameron,* they disdained writing novels, and preoccupied themselves with poetry, essays, and treatises on esoteric subjects. The uneducated, as we have seen, had no way of recording their life style, thoughts, and reactions; the fortunate few who succeeded in lifting themselves out of the lower classes by winning an imperial degree did not write about the stratum from whence they came.

The last war at least introduced the writing of novels about "lo pai sing," the common man, although it was not until the various social classes mingled together in "Free China" that writers of fiction began using the lower strata's struggles, hopes, ambitions, and behaviors. Sexual themes became popular and were avidly read. Lau Shaw's *Rickshaw Boy* has become a classic, and it is reputed to be the first authentic account of life in this segment of Chinese population.

Accompanying these beginnings was the desire of many artists to depict the common man in wood carvings, instead of executing the antiquated symbols of the "contented farmer and fisherman." Many of the earlier works were crude and stilted—too stylized—but their themes were earthy and revealed farmers tilling the earth in natural postures. Lack of training in reproducing the human physique and emotions undoubtedly contributed to the rigidity and unnaturalness of the finished products, but they heralded the beginning of naturalism.

Thus, the literary Renaissance brought with it many other changes mirrored in photography, the cinema, the novel, and short stories, "plain language plays," and wood carvings, and mirrored as well in free verse and in essays. Then for the first time the Chinese learned to sing together, since earlier singing had been considered the prerogative of operatic stars.

However, more important than these changes in themselves, the Renaissance charted the way toward liberating the human spirit, mind, and emotions, encased for centuries in a mold hardened by

custom and public opinion. These manifestations of greater individual freedom of expression had scarcely become entrenched when another gigantic upheaval shook China to her very depths.

"People's Art"

A decade ago, after the Nationalist Government transplanted itself to Taiwan (Formosa), the People's Government began a persistent propagandist barrage to woo and win the masses. Now, two systems of artistic expression more appropriately describe present-day Chinese art and symbolism, with the characteristics we have already described being more applicable to "Free China" than to the present mainland China—for symbolism, rather than art, is being used by the People's Government; it is being used to remold the masses and rally them to a new society based on Communistic ideology, and ultimately to obliterate age-old imageries.

The new leaders began a mass system of education to overcome illiteracy by selecting five hundred ideographs of the former thousand, so successfully launched by Dr. Yen, as a *modus operandi* for currying favor with the masses. The lower classes have always wanted to be educated and to identify with the elite; hence, the new leaders took advantage of a hidden longing and converted it into a weapon of control and indoctrination. The teachers of the new five hundred character system began remolding the thinking of their charges and rooting out "bourgeois, feudalistic ideologies"; the young male and female cadres are effectively trained as "hidden persuaders."

Along with the teaching of characters are banners depicting the accomplishments of the new regime. The symbols, cliches, and slogans which the banners use are carry-overs from China's ancient heritage, but they were carefully screened to elicit the desired emotional responses—lions and tigers denote strength, courage, and virility; the masses must be the lions and tigers if the new society is to succeed. The intellectuals are the regime's enemies, so symbols of them as they were formerly clothed—in long flowing gowns or in Western business suits—have been publicly derided. The "reformed" ones are dressed in the uniform advocated by the Communist: a straight jacket buttoned down the front and a pair of narrow straight trousers. Pictures of peasants toiling long and hard in the rice fields and on collective farms are prominently featured—they symbolize industry, thrift, manpower, and production. Families with their

young represent the future of China and the perpetuation of Communist ideology.

Instead of the images of Confucius, Buddha, Lao Tze (founder of Taoism), deities, philosophers, and former important personages, the full-blown likenesses of the new Communist leaders are everywhere. These are drawn on cloth banners and displayed prominently in public squares, business and governmental buildings, walls of homes, parks and recreational areas, and village compounds. And there is a persistent barrage of propaganda from loudspeakers, extolling the masses to conform, to revolutionize (not reform) their thinking, and to achieve greater internal unity.

Modern symbols reveal the accomplishments of the new government and her citizenry: factories; blast furnaces manned by trained workers producing pig iron by the millions of tons; bridges spanning China's major rivers, the Yangtze, the Yellow, and the Pearl; railroads connecting the country with a unified transportation system (a feat never accomplished before); and youth everywhere attending institutions of higher learning, working side by side in the rice fields or on the farms with peasants, or lecturing on Marxism to the masses. Vying for prominence are the symbols of China's "degradation" in the past, perpetrated by foreign powers who held the country in a semicolonial state. At the slightest provocation, mass parades are staged. Marchers carry aloft the banners exhibiting hate symbols and slogans, especially against the United States of America, the foremost capitalistic society of the world.

Occasionally the floral symbols are brought out of hiding, as exemplified by subtle attempts to woo recalcitrant intellectuals when Mao postulated that there was room for "a thousand fragrant flowers to bloom in China." Flowers meant new ideas and the intellectuals took the words at face value, exposed themselves, and were subsequently purged. After they were enticed to make "public confessions," they were doomed. The thought remolding of intellectuals is a *fait accompli.* Persons who were spared liquidation had to demonstrate, through "thought-remolding sessions," that they were willing to accept and teach the new symbols espoused by the People's Government.

Profiting by the spread of the Mandarin dialect during the last war, a phonetic system has now been devised and is being taught in provinces, cities, villages, and communes where Mandarin is not spoken. To hasten the learning process are simple folk songs

extolling the masses; plays glorifying the people are staged; folk dances showing the movements of the peasants as they toil in the fields are popular and effective. Even though some of the old operatic themes remain, they are selected now for their patriotic messages, rather than for their themes of filial piety, marital fidelity, or reverence for the aged in family and society. Performers wear the simple cotton garb of the peasants, rather than the elaborate finery of former dynasties. A new group of playwrights has won public acclaim for its plays adhering to the Party line, but these men are clever propagandists rather than exponents of creative genius and insight. Loyalty to country must supersede all other forms of identification.

It is probable, too, that the objects of art which almost every Chinese home had as legacies from ancestors—a scroll, vase, jade carving, jewelry, or brocade—have been systematically turned over to the new regime. Many priceless pieces were undeniably destroyed during the last war, when China suffered eight years of protracted warfare and her population was uprooted from homes and villages. Possessions were left behind. What remained or was recovered had to be destroyed to demonstrate preference for the new ideology. Moreover, now that families are herded together into communes, personal property is reduced to a minimum.

A new generation of youth is growing up without sentiments and memories of "old China," some of the parents have few deep memories of the past. It must be remembered that the "new Society" did not occur suddenly on October 1, 1949; it had been forming since the Russian revolution, when Russian leaders came to China to create a new society. Therefore, two or more generations of Chinese had experienced some contact with Communism and the seepage of its new symbols into Chinese life and thought. So until such time as the leaders no longer fear the revolt of the masses against the new social order, the masses will be remolded by symbols —taken from the past—but clothed with new meanings and responses.

A lesson can be learned from China. The fortunate members of a free society where artistic expression is an avenue of challenge and response should cherish this privilege as never before. Although Chinese artists and intellectuals were bound by traditions and age-old images to a degree that decimated dynamic innovation, there was nevertheless room for the release of the human spirt in a stylized, conventional form. Today, there is no room for free expression unless

this meets with the concept of "remolded change," or revolution.

The artist's first responsibility is to himself, secondly to society. Citizens who cannot paint, compose, or create new media of expression look to the artists of their times to anticipate change as well as reflect modifications in the social milieu. Artists must be willing to suffer criticism because, as controversial figures, they dare to challenge the outmoded. When the creative spirit is stifled and controlled by fear, it becomes the instrument for symbols of hate and contempt for cherished values. The artists in such instances can be destroyed or kept alive by the caprices and whims of their masters, the autocratic rulers. Artists and intellectuals, in the final analysis, can only flower in a free society.

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ROBERT SWARD | *snow*

The snow began to fall and, pleased
With its falling, and the thick
Light effect of itself, blackwhite
Against the summer, frozen
Town, it gathered in momentum
Independent of the wind
And let itself tumble, with a
Quick, sensual uncontrol . . .

Like some unmiraculous *white*
Of a woman, stripped & tumbled
Into the lightest freezings
Of herself:

—pleased by her being
And the thick of herself, as such,
Upon the dead spread of streets, steeples
And the noon hour of the night.

the artist and his society

Out of the welter of neologisms foisted by contemporary developments in the social sciences upon the vocabulary of the academy and as a consequence upon that of the leaders of educated lay opinion, perhaps the most barbaric is "the sociology of art." Originally coined for the purpose of naming the study of groups and group behavior, "sociology" begins to function like "philosophy"—a term denoting second-level study which scrutinizes a more primary human activity, in this case, art. When we consider that an artist must live in some relation to the general social whole, must sell his work, accept or reject the values of his community in the search for something to say, and say this to somebody, "the sociology of art" may well refer to the effect of art and artists on society and of society on the artist and his art. In this issue, *Arts in Society* presents two essays illustrating this theme.

Prof. Mason Griff of Montana State University gives an historical analysis of causes of the artist's alienation from the social whole. Stressing Western art from the time of the French Revolution, which gave the *coup de grace* to the old patronage system and produced the still continuing development of alternating artistic schools and ideologies, Professor Griff concludes with a survey of the facts he takes to indicate a trend back to incorporation of the artist in the society of our own time.

Prof. Alvin W. Rose of Wayne State University likewise surveys the facts of the contemporary scene; but he is using the eyes of a Negro and speaks primarily of Negro artists to a Negro audience. Although there is now no great revolution of the stature of the French, our times, he feels, are to be read as undergoing a "great transformation." Following World War II, human society has undergone a great upheaval in value standards; as a result, the human condition is being presently defined in social conflict. It is not only the artist who has undergone estrangement, but all intellectuals, all individuals devoted to the task of finding an identity in the face of these changing value standards. Emphasizing the loneliness and nonconformity of the creative person, Professor Rose argues for self-identification on the part of the artist with the more universal ideals, those which transcend the limits of a narrow nationalistic or region-

alistic scope. The Negro artist, undergoing the same pressures as his white fellows—with the added factor of his color working for greater estrangement—is said to need buttressing by a growing Negro audience, if he is to fulfill his dual role as Negro and artist.

Professor Rose's essay was delivered recently as a speech before the annual banquet of the Patrons of the Arts at Wayne State University.

Mason Griff, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Montana State University

MASON GRIFF | *alienation and the artist*

Artists are frequently referred to as alienated from society, with the small number of artists who are living from the sale of their paintings being cited as evidence to support this contention. Yet the sale of art is only one symptom of alienation, a condition which also includes a number of fundamental socio-psychological variables. For an artist not to share the values embodied in his art, not to experience a sense of belonging, not to create a response to, sympathy with, or understanding of his art are variables symbolic of his alienation.

That many artists of recent times, although rebelling against society, nonetheless desired to be incorporated within it (though perhaps only on their own terms) cannot be denied.[1] Biographies of artists reflect this fact,[2] as do autobiographies and writings of most artists. Van Gogh,[3] Cézanne,[4] and Rivera[5] are only a few of the more prominent painters who expressed this wish. Cézanne, for example, never ceased trying to have his paintings accepted by the salon, while Van Gogh lived with the hope that his painting would be sold, his style and the values implicit in it understood and accepted. Franz Kafka's[6] personal life as well as his novels (for example, *The Trial*),[7] and Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kröger*[8] are only a few cases of

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[1] Charles Gorham, *The Gold of Their Bodies.* (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1955.) This book is an account of the life of Gauguin and reflects his desire for understanding by his society. See especially the descriptions of his relationships with his first wife.

[2] Bertram D. Wolfe, *Diego Rivera.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939), especially pp. 126–130.

[3] Irving Stone (ed.), *Dear Theo.* (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1937.)

[4] Mack Gersthe. *Paul Cézanne.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935.)

[5] Wolfe. *op. cit.*

[6] Franz Kafka, *Selected Stories of Franz Kafka,* translated by Willa and Edwin Muir. (New York: Random House, Inc., 1952.) See especially the introduction by Philip Rahv.

[7] Franz Kafka, *The Trial.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944.) Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir.

[8] Thomas Mann, *Tonio Kröger,* in *The German Classics,* (Albany, New York: J. B. Lyon Company, 1914), Vol. XIX, translated by Bayard Q. Morgan.

the hundreds one may cite from the literary field to illustrate a similar desire for incorporation into society.

In the past, artists did not feel "alien": they felt that they were part of society and were pursuing an occupation defined as legitimate by the other members of their society. What, then, caused the rise of the feeling of alienation? And are there signs pointing to reincorporation of the artist into his society?

I

The general causes for alienation are difficult to determine. Some, like Emile Durkheim, believe that as society becomes more complex, the division of labor specializes men to such a degree that they cease to know where they fit into their society.[9] And we do know that alienation takes place when a group no longer shares the same values and traditions with other members of its society—that interaction fundamental to understanding and to acceptable social behavior ceases; with the breakdown in communications, bitter misunderstandings may arise, and create a crisis leading to eventual alienation for the differing group. If this isolation is severe or prolonged, the group constructs a new set of institutions and a new or borrowed philosophy of life; the end result of this process is a subculture located beyond the periphery of the established social order.[10] Where alienation continues for a century and a half, as has been the case for the artist, these new institutions become formalized into both the accepted pattern of life for the alienated and also the stereotyped conception of them by the nonalienated members of the society. One precipitating factor held responsible for the beginning of the alienation of the artist and his establishment of a unique culture has been the French Revolution.

II

A revolution, from the perspective of the sociologist, is a complete change in the social order. No revolution, however, completely changes a society, which usually retains the family, the economic,

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[9] Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society.* (Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1947.)

[10] For an excellent description and analysis of a subculture, see: Albert Cohen, *The Delinquent Sub-Culture.* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1955.)

religious, and educational institutions, as well as most of the cultural artifacts such as language, dress, folkways, and the arts, and simply alters them to coincide with the new value orientation arising from the revolution: for example, although after the Russian Revolution the family was changed and many of its functions taken away, as an institution it remained in its essential form.

With the French Revolution, an old social order died and a new one replaced it; one institution not retained was the patronage system which had previously supported most of the artists.[11] The demise of the patronage system impoverished a large body of artists and cast them economically adrift—a crisis which some have held to be directly responsible for the alienation of the artist.

Other political upheavals have not had this effect. Following the revolutions in Mexico and Russia, artists were given specific roles to perform and were supported by the state:[12] in Mexico, artists were commissioned to paint murals; an aesthetician naturally sympathetic to artists, José Vasconcelos, was made minister of education;[13] and Diego Rivera was appointed director of the San Carlos Academy of Fine Arts.[14] Rivera's popularity as "the people's artist" was so great, in fact, that the president of Mexico offered to create a cabinet post for him;[15] and both his directorship of the Academy and the serious consideration of him as a cabinet member reflect the general incorporation of the artist into Mexican society.

But the relationship of the artist to his own society after the French Revolution was quite different, and since the center of painting and most of the other arts had by that time shifted from Italy to France,[16] the experiences of French artists had greater significance for art and artists than had revolutions in other countries at other times.

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[11] David L. Dowd, "Pageant-Master of the Republic," The University of Nebraska Studies, June, 1948. New Series No. 3. This describes the revolution as it pertains to artists, especially the various attempts to substitute state support for the former system of patronage. Also, it details the part played in the revolution by Jacques-Louis David.

[12] Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–130.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 147–156 and p. 282.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 282.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 282.

[16] Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art.* (New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1958), Vol. 3, p. 159.

It is true that artists in Europe had become separated from their society long before the outbreak of the revolution. There were some exceptions, and during the period immediately following the revolution it appeared that the artist was to be given a respected role in the new republic, especially if one considered the prominence and influence exerted by Jacques-Louis David, the most famous and influential painter of the era.[17] But though there were many artists in sympathy with the revolution, many who were sensitive to the conditions of the middle and lower classes, most had been supported exclusively by the nobility; many had actively participated in the social activities of court life and accepted its value orientation.[18] Like the aristocracy, these artists became increasingly insensitive to the needs and values of the middle- and lower-classes; nor would one expect that a group preoccupied with the cult of *bon mots* and *médisances,*[19] or with proving themselves qualified for admittance to the *noblesse de race*[20] rather than to a lesser social category, would have much sympathy for the dirt farmer or the tradesman.

Further, the influence of court life went far beyond its immediate effects on the artist, since the underlying basis for an artist's relationship to court society was the patronage system, which imposed limitations to free-flowing social intercourse; "patronage" suggested a negative relationship, implying that human beings were not meeting as equals. Instead, the first, the patron, was in a superior position; the second, the painter, was in an inferior position. The continuance of the relationship was dependent upon the caprice of the patron, and were his tastes to change or the artist unwittingly to offend him, the relationship could be arbitrarily terminated with little consequences for the patron, but with severe ones for the artist, since he was, in all probability, completely dependent upon his patron.[21] Except under the aegis of an extremely sagacious pa-

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[17] Dowd, *op. cit.,* pp. 24–44.

[18] Lady Dilke, *French Painters of the 18th Century.* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1899.) See especially chapter 1.

[19] Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art.* (New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1958), Vol. 2, p. 203.

[20] Goodwin (ed.), *The European Nobility in the 18th Century.* (London: Adam and Charles Black, Ltd., 1953), pp. 22–23.

[21] Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action.* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1949), pp. 655–658. This discussion of Max Weber by Parsons centers on inequality of power in social and economic situations.

tron, therefore, the artist was frequently tempted to compromise, thereby restricting his creativity to the acknowledged tastes of the patron. Where patronage predominated as the major system of support, the situation became aggravated by the competition among artists, since an artist had to restrict himself not only to cater to his patron's tastes, but also to insure that other artists would not usurp the patron's support. Under these circumstances free aesthetic expression became the exception rather than the rule; and the group, taken collectively, reflected an effort to flatter the vanity of patrons.

After the collapse of the French monarchy and throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, artists were faced with different problems, since their major support came from a different group, the middle classes. Most of the latter neither understood nor sympathized with the artists, since bourgeois life and values were radically different from those of the artists. The bourgeois were men of commerce who had attained their eminence through a competitive system based largely on laissez faire; the outgrowth of this system was a psychological orientation which viewed all forms of human action instrumentally, with objects, things, and persons becoming utilitarian in nature. Dealing in all matters from this perspective habituates people to perceive in terms of categories instead of personal attributes, for to allow sentiment or personal qualities to control one's relationships in a highly competitive system is tantamount to financial suicide. Realism and its counterparts, utilitarianism and practicality, become basic norms affecting not only business relationships but personal ones as well. As time and new experiences confirm the wisdom of acting on the basis of these norms, other individuals of society acquire a comparable orientation and thereby legitimize these beliefs in self-perpetuating cycles.[22]

Flowing from and adding to the basic antagonism between bourgeois and artist was the fact that their meeting had to be face-to-face, since art dealers and art galleries had not yet made their appearance as accepted institutional forms through which one bought and sold paintings. Since the salons were controlled by entrenched academicians, anyone not a part of the favorite coterie had no means for the sale of his paintings;[23] this meant, in effect, that there was

[22] Parsons, *op. cit.*, pp. 503–516.

[23] Hauser, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 159, or Dowd, *op. cit.*, pp. 27–34. Even when and where they make their appearances they must cater to the tastes of their clients or lose their business.

no mediating force to prevent much of the antagonism which developed between artists and client. In the absence of such a mediator, artist and client interacted on a personal level, from radically different orientations: the artist, by his outward appearance, by his philosophical idealism and as often as not by his bohemian life, was antithetical to the respectable moral and rational values of the would-be-purchaser of his art, the bourgeois realist. The businessman, experienced in commercial dealings, received the better of the transactions, since he was dealing with a group oriented toward idealism, without commercial experience, and repelled by business transactions; the idealistic artist wished to assume that these transactions were based on equality of action in the competition of "true" values, while realism (or rationality), on the other hand, called a successful transaction that which was based on shrewd bargaining of the cleverest individual.[24] Furthermore, the artist was usually impoverished, and in many cases on the edge of starvation; this meant that in his bargaining he was always limited to the extent and vigor with which he could carry on his negotiations since he always knew in the back of his mind that over-zealousness might result in the loss of a sale, which would have immediate effects not only on his living conditions but on those of his dependents as well. And one final point may be made: bargaining may be a matter for extreme objectivity if one has no personal attachment to the objects to be sold; but where it revolves around the price to be received for a product reflecting one's own creative efforts, each maneuver on the purchaser's part is construed as a personal evaluation and personal attack. Where such "attack" occurs frequently, as in open-air exhibits, by both passerbys and *bona fide* purchasers, increasing enmity toward the purchaser confirms the artist's stereotype of the buyer.[25] Prolonged financial distress naturally produces anxiety in any group, and this frustration may result in resentment directed at symbols of authority which are attacked either openly or covertly. Clearly, those individuals who are obviously most successful are most easily

[24] See Parsons, *op. cit.*, p. 657, for an interesting comment on this form of interaction.

[25] Insightful comments concerning the effects on the ego of bargaining or "haggling" may be found in Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 193. Or Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class.* (New York: The Modern Library, Inc., 1934), pp. 381–385, 390–400. My own research confirms the prevalence of this attitude among contemporary artists.

attacked;[26] so that as the alienation of the artist intensified, and as his living conditions deteriorated, the bourgeois rapidly emerged as the collective symbol believed by the artist to be responsible for his impoverishment.[27]

Under such conditions any group will react in a number of different ways: some will join new religions; others will form new versions of old ones; still others will try to rationalize their impoverishment by adhering to an ideology which will justify and give meaning to their suffering.[28] As a group the artists chose the ideological alternative.

III

An ideology answers the distresses, wishes, and hopes of a group; it provides it with criticism and condemnation of the existing structure; it gives a set of values, a set of convictions, a set of arguments, and a set of defenses; it gives a group of ideas related in rational, logical form. An ideology fulfilling these requirements was romanticism, which had gained prominence after the French Revolution.[29]

Romanticism represented an artistic and literary movement as well as a revolution in social outlook and thought. As an artistic and literary movement, it sanctioned direct and free expression, which had been restricted before the revolution by rigid impositions of the academies and the aristocratic system of patronage. But now, the financial chaos of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic

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[26] See: Everett C. Hughes, *French Canada In Transition,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), for an interesting comentary on the relationships between stress, scapegoating, visibility, and vulnerability. For an abbreviated version of this study, see: "Scapegoating and Urbanization" in Broom and Zelznick, *Sociology* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson and Company, 1955), pp. 443–446.

[27] Perhaps the most devastating expression symbolic of the enmity between artist and bourgeois can be found in Cézanne's explanation to Vollard, the art dealer, of the reason for his breaking up his long friendship with Emile Zola. "No harsh words were passed between us. It was I who stopped going to see Zola. I was not at my ease any longer with the fine rugs on the floor, the servants, and Emile enthroned behind a carved wooden desk. It all gave me the feeling that I was paying a visit to a minister of state. He had become (excuse me, Monsieur Vollard—I don't say it in bad part) a dirty bourgeois." As quoted in *The Grass Roots of Art;* Herbert Read, (Faber and Faber, Limited; London: 1955), p. 125.

[28] Edward Shils, "Ideology and Civility," *The Sewanee Review* LXVI, Summer, 1958, p. 463.

[29] John Macmurray, *The Self As Agent* (London: Faber and Faber, Limited, n.d.), p. 40.

Wars had abolished the patronage system, and freed the artist from the necessity of catering to clients' tastes, so that no longer were there penalties for unrestricted experimentation (a fact which had the long range effect of producing the extreme forms of modern nonobjective art).

Romanticism as a revolution in social outlook and thought gained wide acceptance by artists because it attacked existing society as a system of arbitrary repression of both individual and community potential, and this society had relegated the artist to the status of pariahs. By synchronizing with the needs of disenfranchised artists, romanticism gave them the needed justification for their vocation. Artists were also strongly influenced by bohemianism, especially as the nineteenth century progressed and as artists' social and economic conditions deteriorated. Bohemianism, which even today is associated with the artist, is in its spiritual genealogy closely allied to the traditions of romanticism, for like the romantics, bohemians were at war with society. Although there were bohemias in most of the major cities of Europe and in the United States, Paris became the center of bohemianism, and antinomianism—moral, aesthetic, and practical—found a home there with doctrinal and practical anarchism, which gave added impetus to the romantic movement. Yet the two philosophies diverged, especially in direction and emphasis. Although romanticism condemned society it wished to substitute an idealized society; bohemianism aimed to destroy society, but was not greatly concerned with the aftermath of this destruction. Of more interest to bohemians was justification of their behavior, which was not only freed from the routine and responsibilities of that of more conventional members of civil society, but was also a concentrated attack upon traditions and constituted authorities.[30]

The passage of time brought competing ideologies, one of which was naturalism, frequently referred to as the ultimate opposite of romanticism, in its reflection of the empiricism of the natural sciences. Naturalism further reflected the disillusionment of the 1848 revolution, for with the failure of utopia came naturalism's tendency to stay with the facts, and with reality.[31] But despite the strong influence of naturalism in the subject-matter of painting, the guide to an artist's behavior and social outlook continued to be a mixture of

[30] Shils, *op. cit.*, pp. 467–468.

[31] Arnold Hauser. *The Social History of Art* (New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1958), Vol. 3, p. 159.

romanticism and bohemianism; for while various *isms* could and did influence the style and subject matter of the painter, they could not alleviate his distress, or alter the realities of his economic existence. Naturalism, for example, with Courbet as its fountainhead, marked a stylistic turning point, while as a philosophy it necessitated a close examination of reality; and a group socially, psychologically, and economically disenfranchised has had enough of reality, which only reminds it of chronic suffering and desertion. So that even in naturalistic paintings, romanticism is not completely absent: Millet, for example, paints the naturalistic apotheosis of physical work and makes the peasant the hero of a new epic,[32] while at the same time glorifying that pastoral sentiment inherent in romantic ideology.[33]

But whatever the ideology, paintings were still unsold; the artist was denied his legitimate mandate to influence the aesthetic direction of society; only the past was aesthetically acceptable.

As artists became progressively alienated they tended to drift into bohemias which housed other aliens from society, whether for professional or ideological reasons: among these were writers, politicians, journalists and philosophers,[34] whose medium was the verbal or written symbol. Since the major concern of the painter is with plastic expression, verbal tools were sometimes awkward for him; but contact with linguistic specialists meant that an artist might learn to use verbal forms as well as plastic ones to justify his art and way of life against attack.[35]

But perhaps the artist by the very nature of his work cannot be

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[32] Arnold Hauser. *The Social History of Art* (New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1958), Vol. 4, pp. 68–69.

[33] Irving Babbitt. *Rousseau and Romanticism.* (Meridian Books: New York, 1957.) Especially Chapter 8, "Romanticism and Nature," pp. 209–235. Also compare American Populism as expressed in the paintings of Grant Wood or the writings of Longfellow *(The Blacksmith* and *Evangeline)* with this phase of naturalism. In addition, note its existence in contemporary literary circles. See: for example, Leslie Fiedler, "Montana or the End of Jean–Jacques Rousseau," *An End To Innocence* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1957), pp. 131–141.

[34] Shils, *op. cit.* p. 467.

[35] However, note the excesses to which this accomplishment led. "Bohemianism is and remains an heir of aestheticizing romanticism. It often ascribes a significance to art which it did not have even in the most exalted theories of the romantics and makes a prophet out of a confusedly chattering painter, and a historical event out of the exhibition of an unsaleable picture." Arnold Hauser, *op. cit.,* p. 67.

as fully incorporated into society as other members can.[36] For to be creative means to produce new ideas, and newness is often suspect simply because of its newness, which threatens established and accustomed traditions. Where there is a group of artists constantly producing something new and trying to rationalize the novelty of their expression, they of course experience new ideas which are not yet fully communicated to the other members of society and the artist becomes "different," eccentric—and suspect. Furthermore, creativity itself may predispose *the artist* to alienation because of his inability to communicate his new ideas verbally, especially when he may not yet have formulated them verbally in his own mind.

It is of course true that some artists would prefer alienation despite its social, psychological, and economic penalities, but this is a topic of considerable polemic discussion, with no empirical evidence either for or against it.[37]

IV

The foregoing discussion has been concerned with the alienation of the artist, specifically with the conditions under which it developed and the characteristics of the alienated group. Is there any evidence to suggest that a countertrend is taking place and that the artist is being re-incorporated into society, that society understands him and accepts what he creates?

There seems to be a present trend toward the artist's incorporation. For one thing, many people are painting because it is fashionable; but there are possibly a few genuine connoisseurs among the dilettantes, and whatever the particular orientation, these people are

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[36] Ortega y Gasset. *The Dehumanization of Art.* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1956.) For example "Far from going more or less clumsily toward reality, the artist is seen going against it. He is brazenly set on deforming reality, shattering its human aspect, dehumanizing it . . . He leaves us locked up in an abstruse universe, surrounded by objects with which human dealings are inconceivable, and thus compels us to improvise other forms of intercourse completely distinct from our ordinary ways with things . . . This new way of life which presupposes the annulment of spontaneous life is precisely what we call understanding and enjoyment of art. Not that this life lacks sentiments and passions which evidently belong to a flora other than that which covers the hills and dales of primary and human life . . ." (p. 30). Also see: Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music.* Translated by Arthur Knosel and Ingolf Dahl. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), pp. 78–82.

[37] As a matter of fact, little empirical evidence concerning the feelings of the contemporary artist is available on the central theme of this paper—we do not really know whether the contemporary artist considers himself alienated from or reconciled to his society.

doing the same thing as the painter, and thus share with him a common experience, however different the levels of that experience may be. In addition, world opinion leaders like Churchill and Eisenhower are painting and from their positions of influence they serve as models for approval of the painter and his work.

Community art fairs which are becoming popular throughout the country are other indications that the artist is ending his alienation. While many of the exhibitors are bored housewives and/or hobbyists, many are serious amateurs wishing confirmation of, rather than economic remuneration from, their work. It is true that sometimes the professional artist has been reluctant to exhibit in this type of company, and that a certain amount of money is channeled away from the professional painter because of these nonprofessionals; but the exhibitions do bring people together to look at paintings and no matter how trivial their comments or their reasons for buying paintings, the fact that they do comment and do buy can only result in a positive orientation toward the painter and his work.

Art departments in schools are larger and better equipped: the curricula now include not only lettering but fine arts and art appreciation; and the teachers are more apt than formerly and have been trained specifically in art, rather than in another discipline. Many age groups are painting, attending art classes in adult education programs, and purchasing paintings. The television medium enables wider discussion and critical analysis of visual objects.

In addition to these factors, there are wider opportunities for artists in educational and economic fields: universities, for example, in establishing the position of "artist in residence," have thereby relieved the painter of much of his financial burden but at the same time allow him time to paint and aid the students of the school (or the members of the community, where there are adult education offerings). And while the artist still distrusts the commercial world and the effects which it may have either on him or on his work, the fact remains that there are now opportunities in industry for those who can accommodate to its demands.[38] Even in commercial art, the trend is toward better illustrations, and an increasing number of advertisements include fine arts symbols: note, for example, the ad-

[38] Mason Griff. *The Career Development and Role Conflict of the Commercial Artist.* (Chicago: Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Chicago Press: 1958.)

vertisements of the Container Corporation of America, the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company, the John Hancock Life Insurance Company.

Supplementing these trends was the development of ideas like those of the Bauhaus in Germany, which instituted a deliberate movement to counter the belief that the artist should be outside of his society with the conviction that an artist's legitimate function is to contribute to the aesthetic nature of the industrial world.[39] The effect of this conviction in some quarters was to convince corporation managers that good design for products was as important as efficiency techniques.

There may indeed still be a great deal of opposition to the artist, even from within those groups which artists most need to sustain determination and creativity[40]—families and friends. But the positive trends are nonetheless there, as we have seen.

[39] For an elaborate statement of this movement, see: Laszlo Moholoy-Nagy. *The New Vision.* Translated by Daphne M. Hoffman. (New York: Wittenborn and Co., 1946.)

[40] Mason Griff. *The Recruitment of the Art Student,* 1955. Unpublished manuscript.

Alvin W. Rose, Associate Professor of Sociology, Wayne State University

ALVIN W. ROSE | *negro art and the great transformation*

I

The abiding passion of a university, it has been said, is the pursuit of universal truths. And we pursue these ultimate propositions of reality, in the university, in two ways: through the sciences and through the arts. Perhaps we should always remember that, in spite of the strong science emphases which we in the West recently may have been sputniked into, there is yet a strong current in the wide river of ideas which argues that, as a pathway to the summit where truths reside, art is the master of science. Through the media of the arts, whether literature, sculpture, music, painting, drama, or the dance, one can see the sunset be it in a prison or a palace. It is through the blessedness of art that hostile objects and attitudes become sublime, tragedy turned into victory, concern for the immediate and transitory circumstance transformed into the larger, cosmic view This ultimate supremacy of the arts, I am trying to say, is cultivated, nourished, and brought to maturity in the university.

As a Negro writing for Negroes and others, I shall discuss the *great transformation* of our time taking place over the earth at large and in the arts in particular. It is being significantly influenced by the revolution of rising expectations, as Mr. Bowles put it, of Negroes of Africa and America. It appears moreover, that the intepretation of this socio-political saga will be rendered by sensitive Negroes in most of the arts the world over.

The enjoyment of art—whether we are creators and/or performers or, as with most of us, patrons—has never been as broad, as widespread, as the general society. Until recent years it has been a privilege of the few, a limited experience of the elite. In Periclean Athens it was the prerogative only of the male citizenry—not for women and slaves; in imperial Rome, for the leisured aristocracy—not for serfs and the industrial populace; in medieval Europe, for the love-making nobility—not for the peasantry; in China, for the

bureaucratic intelligentsia and royal family—not for the teeming masses. The arts of America have been similarly circumscribed and, accordingly, their cultivation has been sparse. Thus it was almost a hundred years ago, when Walt Whitman admonished America that "to have great poets there must be great audiences, too." And just twenty-five years ago James Weldon Johnson wrote these sober words to American Negroes:

> "A New York publisher once said to me, 'I would publish any good book touching on the Negro that came to me, if I felt that I could count on three thousand colored people buying it.' I had to tell him that he could *not* count on three thousand; no, not on two thousand; not even on a thousand—not on one thousand out of twelve million!
>
> "We are not book buyers. We are not book readers. We lack intelligence about books . . . We have many cultured homes with elegant appointment, with grand pianos, grand victrolas, and grand radios, but not a bookshelf. If we had only twelve thousand Negro American book buyers—and I mean by 'book buyers' persons who go regularly into a bookstore looking for a good book or who make up their minds about it from reading the literary reviews—the publishers of the United States would take notice, and as a consequence there would come into being a corps of Negro writers to set themselves to the task of changing and forming public opinion."[1]

Well, it is true that while the Jew, for instance, is being blended into American life at that middle-class level which gives him immediate access to the arts, the Negro's assimilation in America predominantly has been at the lower socio-economic level.[2] This has meant an almost total isolation from the arts and, produced instead an accentuation, as Mr. Johnson and Professor Frazier recently maintained, on the acquisition of things materialistic.[3] But Mr. Johnson would be pleased if he were living in our time. For the presence of a predominantly Negro audience before a Negro speaker discussing the patronship of the arts recently at Wayne State University is testimony to a part of that *great transformation* about which I wish to discourse—the drawing of a progressively larger section of the productive masses, including Negroes, into a vital concern with the arts.[4]

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[1] James Weldon Johnson, *Negro Americans, What Now?* (New York, The Viking Press, 1935), pp. 93–94.

[2] Steven Marcus, "The American Negro In Search of Identity," *Commentary,* Vol. 16, 1953, pp. 456–463.

[3] E. Franklin Frazier, *The Black Bourgeoisie.* (Glencoe, The Free Press, 1956.)

[4] Max Lerner and Edwin Mims, Jr., "Literature," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* Alvin Johnson, Editor, Vol. 9, pp. 523–541.

It is gratifying indeed to find evidence of community sympathy for the arts—an area of such fundamental interest to our universities and, since I am a Negro, (a) to be a part of such a large segment of the world's population which so measurably is shaping the course of things to come, (b) to be able to claim identity with the emerging corps of Negro artists the world over who are interpreting imaginatively this human scene and finally (c) to be able to predict the emergence of what James Weldon Johnson hoped for in America—a growing community of Negro patrons of the arts.

II

It has been argued that there is a sense in which art and the artist remain unshaken by the ebb and flow of life, a measure in which they transcend the boundaries of a particular culture, living beyond even the intercultural political, economic, and social crises, the never-ending disputations of the human dialogue. In this sense, regardless of the temporary and localized human condition, all the arts, over and over, do play basically with the same fundamental themes; they speak the universal language of the human heart—birth and death, love and jealousy, conflict and contention, triumph and defeat. Perhaps this is true. Nevertheless, however universal the human theme, the socio-political concerns of a given era and a given place do seem measurably to influence the technique, the form and design, and the social and metaphysical content of all the arts. If this is so, there arise two very real questions: what is the nature of the relationship between the sweeping social changes of this century to art in general? And what significance has all this for the Negro, both artist and patron, in particular? I would like, then, to begin by describing the nature of what I have called "the great transformation."

What is this great transformation? It can be characterized in several ways. In the first place, we have moved from the small society to the large society—communities of millions of people; then, we have transformed our way of life from the isolated society to a life of intimate communication—to a kind of whispering gallery in which whatever happens in Little Rock, Poplarville, or Tallahassee is immediately echoed around the world and is the stuff of discussion on the street corners of Paris, London, Moscow, Kenya, Calcutta, Chung King, Cairo, and Chicago. From a simple technology

we have now moved to an elaborate technology; where once one's status was ascribed, predetermined on the basis of his sex, his family status, religion, or color, we are now beginning to evaluate one another on the basis of ability and achievement. Not long ago mankind was for the most part nonliterate; now more of the world's population has learned to read and write.

In a similar fashion this great transformation has witnessed a movement from the sacred to the secular, from immobility to mobility, from a retrospective outlook to the prospective mood, from lore-holding to law-making, from ceremony to function, from relationships of family and kinship to politics, from tradition to innovation, from constraint to non-normality, and finally from the earlier condition when the values of the society were well-understood, well-integrated, and well-accepted by the people, to our own time when the conceptions of man, of government, of the economy, of family life, of sex, of law, indeed of God—all our values are in a state of disintegration, of decay, decimation, and fractionalization; ours, in short, is a time of disbelief and disillusionment. The great transformation has brought us four-square into an era in which we are estranged, lonesome, and without moorings. It is a condition in which we are bored. We do not believe the things we are doing are morally right, nor do we want to do the things others think are morally right. Social scientists suggest that we are moving through a period of disorganization and disintegration from an old order into a new social organization with what is hoped will comprise a more orderly, meaningful existence.

Indeed the social sciences and philosophy *are* preoccupied with the nature of this great transformation.[5] Within the past few years, for instance, Daniel Lerner has written *The Passing of Traditional Society;* Allen Wheelis, *The Quest for Identity;* Helen Lynd, *The Search for Identity;* Paul Halnos, *Solitude and Privacy;* Eric Fromm, *Escape From Freedom* and *Man for Himself;* David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* and *Individualism Reconsidered;* Margaret Wood, *Paths of Loneliness;* Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time;* Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man in an Immoral Society;* Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals* and *The Public Philosophy;* Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition;* and so on one could but need not go, for the concern is the same—the great transformation of the mid-

[5] See, for instance, Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and its Transformations.*

twentieth century. The problem now is to state the significance of this transformation for the arts, and, particularly, for the Negro artist and the patrons of the arts.

III

I should state at the outset that the mastery of technique which is required of the artist and the pressures toward refinement in the artistic process predispose the arts toward a conservative orientation and resistence to change. Artistic style and form all too easily become a vested interest. "The prestige of the tried pattern" in music and painting, sculpture, literature, and dance—all tend to become sanctified, especially by the powerful art critic; and the artist is in consequence hard pressed to conform, dissuaded from search for new technique and novel style.[6]

Now the significance of these broad socio-cultural changes has been the breaking through of some of the cultural compulsions, conservatisms, and orthodoxies in which the arts threaten to be encased; there has been a general throwing open of these encasements, and artists have been permitted freshness in style and technique as well as in content and experience. This period of estrangement provided the fresh stuff for some splendid artistic interpretation. In literature, for instance, there developed J. D. Salinger, Saul Bellow, James Jones, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, Mary McCarthy, and Jean Stafford. And certainly alongside these must be placed Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man,* James Baldwin's *Go Tell It To The Mountains,* and perhaps Richard Wright's *The Outsider.* All these have confronted effectively that dominant theme of the great transformation —estrangement and the quest for identity.

One may further make mention of three significant sub-dimensions of this great transformation, each having stimulated the arts in its own way: (a) the emergence of nationalism in Africa, (b) the enlargement of the middle class, and (c) the new artistic frontiers derived from science, particularly psychoanalysis. Steven Marcus

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[6] Lerner and Mims, *op. cit.,* pp. 528–529. See also Stephen Spender, "The New Orthodoxies" in *The Arts at Mid-Century,* Robert Richman, Editor. (New York, The Horizon Press, 1954), pp. 3–23. And *Through the Glass of Soviet Literature,* Ernest J. Simmons, Ed. (New York, Columbia University Press, 1953.) Perhaps the two most detached of the American orthodoxies in the arts are the "Avant-Garde" and "Academician" frames of reference—perspectives which, in terms of anthropology and sociology, are shockingly naive, supercilious, ethnocentric conceptions of artistic preferences among the varieties of cultures and sub-cultures.

makes the interesting point that, while there developed much good British literature and art about India—as, for instance, the works of Kipling, Forster, and Orwell—the British developed essentially no artistic interpretation of Africa. This has been so because, for the Europeans, Africa represented no culture that was recognizable and worthy of interpretation.[7] A great measure of African culture—its rhymes, rhythms, and assonance; its symbolism, thought-patterns, imagery, and dreams—has largely remained unperceived by the artists of colonial powers.

All this is being changed in our time. With the rise of nationalism in Africa the beauty of blackness is being made accessible, the very struggle for nationhood itself offers rich artistic material; and, above all, there is emerging in Africa a native elite of artists, sensitive, genteel and vigorous, western-educated and Africa-oriented, to interpret these souls of black folk through all the media of art. I am in the process of making a study of the presentations recently made in Rome at the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists; and there is no little evidence that great art is coming out of Africa.

But there is a sense in which one might worry about the influence of the great transformation of Africa, the rise of nationalism there, on the arts and the Negro artist. Indeed, one may harbor the same anxiety with reference to Jewish artists as a consequence of the rise of the state of Israel. The strongest resource of the Jewish artist and the Negro artist has been that they have been perforce unattached, strangers. And as with Jesus and Marx they have therefore been able, accordingly, to hold fast to a universal view. What happens to his art, then, when the Jew becomes identified and attached to a particular state—Israel—and when the Negro becomes identified and attached to a particular nation—Ghana or Guinea or Kenya? Since the great transformation is moving toward the transcending or national boundaries, the artist who so restricts his allegiance may be expressing a kind of myopic parochialism which may not portray the dominant mood of his time.

Certainly there would seem to be some danger for the artist who would identify himself with a segmented perspective. The Negro novelist in America is a good example of what I have in mind. The record for the individual novelist in America has been "one of bright

[7] Stevens Marcus, *op cit.*, p. 456. See also, E. R. Leach, "Aesthetics" in *The Institutions of Primitive Society*, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Editor. (Glencoe, The Free Press, 1954), pp. 25–38.

promise, followed by dismal failure, a lapse into premature silence. Of sixty-two Negro novelists writing between 1853 and 1952, forty, or two-thirds, have published only one novel. Eleven more have published only two novels, while another eleven have published more than two. Perhaps this poverty of accomplishment is due to the fact that so many Negroes in the past turned to art mainly to protest the Negro's assigned role in American life; once the protest was made, they had little else to say."[8]

In a letter to me last April 27, Dr. Horace Mann Bond, Dean of the School of Education at Atlanta University and President of the American Society of African Culture, expressed the view that the recent Rome conference to which I have referred (and which he—Professor Bond—attended) "served the invaluable purpose for all artists of African descent, in giving them that indispensability for creative expression—what I can best call roots. All of us know what happens to the writer who has made his mark by growing from and through his own native, cultural roots; and we know what happens to the creative artist when he absents himself too long from his own native soil, from his roots."

Some, perhaps most, of our finest art works surely have been interpretations by artists who have roots and whose reference group was a particular society to which they swore allegiance. But what I wish to submit is that the great transformation about which I am concerned seems to indicate for the artist a more universal and less parochial reference group, an orientation not centered and grounded in roots, but a kind of rootlessness, an existence at the frontier, the rim of life, a reference group of the future, of posterity, committed only to the universality of mankind. It may be that as patrons of the arts you and I will see the Negro artist in America and in Africa troubled by this issue of "to belong or not to belong"—an issue that will doubtlessly bifurcate and sear his conscience. This has been a perennial question for art, and it seems to me that the decision not to belong has been the more productive. As against the parochialism of Faulkner, for instance, the theme of so much of American literature has been the uncommitted, the quest for a new experience; such was the ethic of Whitman, Melville, Twain, Wolfe, Henry James, and Hemingway. Rootlessness, not roots, seems to have spurred them all.

Patriotism and national pride are powerful creative urgings, to

[8] Richard Gibson, "The Color of Experience," a review of *The Negro Novel in America* by Robert A. Bone, *The Nation,* February 7, 1959, p. 123.

be sure; but where the dominant socio-cultural theme is universalism, it may be that the arts which are to affect the international tradition may require a more expanded cosmology. At any rate, the rise of nationalism in Africa augurs exciting developments for Negro art. Doubtlessly, an interesting stewardship by the Negro artist there will be recorded.

Moving to our second dimension, the enlargement of the middle class, we may call attention to the interest in recent years, given to the bearing of the class structure on the arts. This interest was greatly stimulated in 1949 when Eliot's *Notes Toward The Definition of Culture* appeared.[9] Briefly the argument is made that the middle-brow culture is cutting the ground from under high-brow culture. The enlargement of the middle class, it is said, has meant that high-brow culture, once synonymous with culture as such, is now set apart as something special, artificial, and largely regarded as mere pretension. Middle-brow art then becomes, by dint of the transformation, the highest form to which the patron can aspire.

Although this is an argument which has merit, still other factors may be more fruitfully considered here. The relative prestige decline of business and industry and the expansion of government and organized labor have provided channels of upward mobility for Negroes to middle-class status, and have given the Negro accessibility to middle-brow art. But it also means, I think, that the Negro will have to share the responsibility for the strong middle-class support of lower-class, low-brow art—the popular arts—which influence the general tone of art in society.

The social-class realignments which have been a part of the great transformation created roughly three spheres of culture, three styles of art—"avant-garde" culture, mass culture, and folk culture—or what we in anthropology and sociology sometimes refer to as the great or high tradition, the little or low tradition, and the simple tradition. Correspondingly we have come to think of the arts as (a) "high-brow" or "upper-class," (b) "popular" or "mass," and (c) "folk."

There is now being reported in current literature almost no empirical studies of the dynamic relations between these three spheres of art. There is a wide awareness of "mass culture" and the

[9] Clement Greenberg, "The Plight of Our Culture," *Commentary,* Vol. 15, 1953, pp. 558–566. See also, "Work and Leisure Under Industrialism," *Commentary,* Vol. 16, 1953, pp. 54–62.

popular arts.[10] But art critics, apparently with little training in anthropology and still less of a sense of history, tend to do little more than denigrate mass culture and the popular arts—and to do this, it is important to note, in terms of the retrospective artistic standards either of the avant-garde or the folk. Thus, the notion that mass culture and its popular arts are brutish, while upper-class culture and its "pure" arts are genteel and beneficent, permeates much of the literature on the arts and social class; and this so soon after a time when the upper-class representatives of one of this civilization's most advanced cultures were "listening to Brandenburg Concertos while tanning human skins of unfortunate Jews who were placed in Belsen . . . making lampshades of the skins or perhaps book covers to rebind the collected works of Nietzsche."[11]

Negroes of America and Africa are presently moving from folk cultures to mass culture, conforming to the forces of the great transformation that has engulfed the world. It is precisely this theme of mass culture which the arts of the *avant-garde* disdainfully avoid and regard as meretricious; it is this theme, the substance, intensity, and significance of which the Negro artist of Africa and America must experience and re-create. And he is admirably situated to do so. It is especially this manner in which the great transformation has strategically situated the Negro artist (and the fact that it has made Negroes in general the major constituents of the broadening mass base of lay participants in the arts) that the dynamics of social class are, in part, influencing the status of the arts.

Finally there are the new frontiers for the arts provided by science. It is already widely known, of course, that psychoanalysis has opened new vistas for the arts. The discovery of the unconscious, depth therapy, and the preservative mechanisms of the personality—repression, regression, projection, sublimation, substitution, and rationalization—have presented the artist with a fifth dimension of the human spirit. And the peculiar circumstance of the Negro who remains, for the most part, still locked inside his own world, looking toward the white world outside, and longing to be there, is rich psychoanalytic material for the creative artist. It has only begun to be tapped.

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[10] *Mass Culture, The Popular Arts In America,* Bernard Rosenberg and David White, Editors. (Glencoe, The Free Press, 1957.)

[11] David White, "Mass Culture in America: Another Point of View" in Rosenberg and White, *op. cit.,* pp. 15–16. Mr. White goes on to say: "To equate sane and beneficent government with *haute culture* is to open a magic casement upon a scene that has no real basis in man's experience."

IV

In summary, then, the objective of this paper has been to reflect on some of the interrelations of the arts and the larger society. We have considered the impact of what was called "the great transformation" on the arts, indicating that in such ways as the rise of nationalism in Africa, the expansion of the middle class and the advancement of science, new forms, new styles, new techniques, and above all, new experiences have come to the arts. In all these the Negro is at the very center of activity in developing the arts. The dominant themes of the great transformation of the twentieth century are those with which the aspirations of Negroes are most congenial. And this is why we are having a renaissance of the spirit of the Negro. There is in Negro art a new freshness, a new hope, a new expectancy. Instead of patience and "gradualism" and humility and resignation, there is organized skepticism about the old way and a vigorous self-assertion for the new. The great transformation has touched the Negro also, and Negro artists now boldly affirm the new creed with which this great transformation of the twentieth century is suffused—the credo of the enlightenment. This new spirit is boldly expressed in the words of a Negro artist:

Credo

I am an iconoclast.
I break the limbs of idols
and smash the traditions of men.
I am an Anarchist
I believe in war and destruction.
Not in the killing of men
But in the killing of creed and custom.
I am an agnostic
I accept nothing without questioning.
It is my inherent right and duty
To ask the reason why.
To accept without a reason
Is to debase one's humanity
And destroy the fundamental process
In the ascertainment of truth
I believe in justice and freedom.
To me liberty is priestly and kingly;
Freedom is my bride,
Liberty my angel of light.
Justice my God.

Finally, it should be noted that the Negro artist needs Negro patrons of the arts—perhaps far more than is ordinarily imagined. For the Negro artist is two things; he is an intellectual and he is a Negro. As a consequence he may suffer doubly the feeling of inferiority and inadequacy. As an intellectual he may portray the lack of self-confidence indigenous to all intellectuals. He may accept the popular conception of himself as being snobbish, not mixing with the people, not being approachable, and because of these widespread stereotypes about the intellectual, he may grow to hate himself.

But in addition to being an intellectual, the Negro artist remains, of course, a Negro. What this means is well expressed in the now classic words of another Negro artist: "A Negro in America is constantly reminded of his twoness: an American, a Negro—two warring souls within one body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

This double handicap, then, of being both an intellectual and a Negro may cause the Negro artist to be shy, insecure, withdrawn, and without confidence. The emergence of Negro patrons of the arts becomes therefore a double necessity. An appreciative audience is needed to supply the psychological support for artists in the throes of creative labor.

Sylvia Plath, Boston, previously published in Atlantic, The New Yorker, Mademoiselle, Harper's

SYLVIA PLATH| *three poems*

Aftermath

Compelled by calamity's magnet
They loiter and stare as if the house
Burnt-out were theirs, or as if they thought
Some scandal might any minute ooze
From a smoke-choked closet into light;
No deaths, no prodigious injuries
Glut these hunters after an old meat,
Blood-spoor of the austere tragedies.

Mother Medea in a green smock
Moves humbly as any housewife through
Her ruined apartments, taking stock
Of charred shoes, the sodden upholstery:
Cheated of the pyre and the rack,
The crowd sucks her last tear and turns away.

The Goring

Arena dust rusted by four bulls' blood to a dull redness,
The afternoon at a bad end under the crowd's truculence,
The ritual death each time botched among dropped capes, ill-judged stabs,
The strongest will seemed a will toward ceremony. Obese, dark-
Faced in his rich yellows, tassels, pompons, braid, and picador

Rode out against the fifth bull to brace his pike and slowly bear
Down deep into the bent bull-neck. Cumbrous routine, not artwork.
Instinct for art began with the bull's lofting in the mob's
Hush a lumped man-shape. The whole act formal, fluent as a dance.
Blood faultlessly broached redeemed the sullied air, the earth's grossness.

Sculptor
(to Leonard Baskin)

To his house the bodiless
Come, to barter endlessly
Vision, wisdom, for bodies
Palpable as his, and weighty.

Hands moving move priestlier
Than priests' hands, invoke no vain
Images of light and air
But sure stations in bronze, wood, stone.

Obdurate, in dense-grained wood,
A bald angel blocks and shapes
The flimsy light; arms folded,
Watches his cumbrous world eclipse

Inane worlds of wind and cloud.
Bronze dead dominate the floor,
Resistive, ruddy-bodied,
Dwarfing us. Our bodies flicker

Toward extinction in those eyes
Which, without him, were beggared
Of place, time, and their bodies.
Emulous spirits make discord,

Try entry, enter nightmares
Until his chisel bequeaths
Them life livelier than ours,
A solider repose than death's.

68 Look Heavenward Tree, I

a visit with the artist

. . . an illustrated dialogue between the Wisconsin Printmaker, Alfred Sessler, and an editor of *Arts in Society.*

Mr. Sessler was educated at Layton School of Art, Milwaukee State Teachers College (now University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee), and at The University of Wisconsin. His work has achieved more than a regional renown, and may be found in the print collections of the Library of Congress, and those of various colleges and universities of the United States. A consistent prize-winner in state-wide art shows, he recently won three prizes at national shows in one month: at the Print Shows of DePauw and Bradley Universities and in the Library of Congress Annual Exhibition of Current Prints. He is currently Professor of Art and Art Education at The University of Wisconsin.

Our dialogue begins with an examination of an oil painting in progress.

Sessler: That piece of work reveals an idea I'm intrigued with now: it's this business of death and regeneration. The crucifixion is in it, and the resurrection, and so on. Representationally, those are dead forms, but I think you get a feeling of . . .

Visitor: You've got a very subtle green on this right hand side that suggests . . .

Sessler: Vegetation?

Visitor: Yes, the regeneration.

Sessler: I didn't think of that when I did it, though.

Visitor: Well, that's what is so interesting about the way a painter thinks while working. You get ideas that fit without actually intending them at the beginning; you recognize them when you've got them; you recognize them once they're done.

Sessler: No, I've only done two paintings that I was satisfied with; because when I'm working on a painting I have an idea and get very enthusiastic about it. An ideal is set up, and as I'm painting I try to reach it. Try it—as you're reaching

the ideal, you're already pushing out the frontiers, as it were.

Visitor: Do you have a title for this one yet?

Sessler: No, but I do have a definite idea. I'll fit a title for it within the context of that idea—possibly a biblical quotation.

Visitor: You're not one of those who thinks the title is a necessary part of the painting, anyway, are you—don't you feel that one should be able to look at the work to understand the idea?

Sessler: Titles are for art historians, or museum directors who have to catalogue the stuff.

Visitor: A convenient way of referring to the thing when you can't look at it.

Sessler: Well, Rembrandt, you know, was a painter who didn't put titles on many of his things; this was done later. I've done one or two things where that happened—started out with a title, but they weren't too successful.

Visitor: That so? But I think I can understand that. With the title first, you're trying to force the work through that title, and then the technique has to be found; a kind of afterthought.

Sessler: And this business of a title takes form as you're working. You begin with a problem and with what you're doing, and it works itself out—as for example this work on the easel. You'll notice on that right hand side I have those branches embracing the other form. I did that consciously. I mean that was the idea I had before I even put it down; I've got it up there, too; and that's going to lead to another subject.

Visitor: Another idea out of this one already?

Sessler: Oh, yes. I think an artist that sets out to invent something just for the sake of invention is dead wrong. Development has to come out of the work.

Visitor: He does think with each stroke; that is to say, he thinks with the end of his brush. He sees what's developing there, and he can make his judgment: he can incorporate; add a little; take off a little.

Sessler: Art is a language in itself; form language, I mean; a visual form language, not poetry. That's another kind of form

language. And if you have to use another art to explain this art, then this particular art form is a secondary art form, isn't it? But getting the idea in visual form does not necessarily mean reproducing the objective world for the spectator. It has to be done in terms of values, colors, shapes . . .

Visitor: That's what I should think. The reason for any distortion should become apparent in the visual impression, and there's no formula I know of by which this can be gained.

Sessler: No, as soon as there is a formula, there's no art.

Visitor: To change the subject a little, could you tell me how you ever got tied up with the universities? It's been said the universities have replaced the patronage system of the arts. It's been said a long time, but I think it may be a lot of hocum. Do you have any ideas on the subject?

Sessler: I've been talked to about that before; it's the attitude that universities were doing the artist a favor by giving him an opportunity to paint and still make a living, but I don't see any difference between the artist and the scholar, who, from the point of view of patronage, is supported the same way.

Visitor: I think you're right. Do you find that the time spent with students cuts so much into the time you'd be using to do your own work that it is unprofitable? That teaching is unprofitable for the amount of time you are forced to spend on it?

Sessler: Well, that's true in a sense. Teaching does cut into time; but what's more important, it cuts into the continuity of a feeling or a thought that a current expression may be causing. You do give a lot to the student; that, I think, does dry one up once in a while. Not completely, but it takes something out of the expression to be doing something else. Time I don't mind. You can just paint so many hours a day anyway. But teaching is a creative thing—but not in the same sense as art work.

Visitor: So it would seem. But that's the next thing I wanted to ask you. Why should anyone think there is a hard and fast distinction between the art work itself and the teaching? Both of them can be very rewarding experiences.

Sessler: They're both rewarding, but the two media are so different.

Visitor: Well, you have a very good reputation with your students. They tell me you spend a great deal of time with them, a lot of time you could use in your own work. You seem to have a quite sincere interest in developing them, and this hasn't hurt the excellent reputation you enjoy amongst the gallery-goers. But you evidently feel that teaching others is a necessary complement to the mere chore value of the classes. Throughout history it has been supposed that great painters have had their schools merely for the slave labor; they put the students to work on paintings they didn't have time to finish themselves.

Sessler: I don't look at teaching that way. That was the student-apprentice idea, where the student echoes the master. My whole approach is to get at individuality. Let the student express his own individuality. I think a teacher is successful when he can do this sort of thing. You learn a lot from students, too. You know, some problem you're wrestling with . . . why, you've got twenty in the class to take up the same problem.

Visitor: And you've been getting the students to talk about their own work, breaking down this idea that they're all misunderstood geniuses, convincing them that if they're looking at the same work, they can talk about it and learn from each other.

Sessler: Misunderstood genius is a Victorian concept. It's romantic. I read a very good book on Gauguin, for instance, by John Rewald. It was documented with letters and studio talk. These men, who are so romanticized by the students, certainly did not enjoy the straits they were in. They didn't care about being bohemian; they wanted to be independent, but didn't especially care to be characters.

Visitor: Then, too, one can be a character without affecting the aura of the independent genius, no matter how misunderstood.

Sessler: That's right. There have been some geniuses that have lived very normal, middle-class lives, like Corot.

Visitor: How does a student cartoonist become a middle-class genius? I'm kidding, of course.

Sessler: One thing about cartooning I've always remembered from my earlier interests is that I never was satisfied with the

way American cartoonists did anything. I suppose this had some kind of basis in an incipient aesthetic feeling. I couldn't tell then whether it, or I, was too flighty, too superficial. And this has led me to become interested in Daumier and others of that stature. I became interested in men like Fitzpatrick of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch because he, so it seemed to me, was among the top American cartoonists; and not the Happy Hooligan, Mutt and Jeff, you know . . . the Bud Fisher type. In fact, today I never even look at a comic strip. They bore me. They're not comic strips anymore. Adventure, horror; sick, sick, sick.

Visitor: A lot of people find difficulty painting an idea, but this is something you've been tremendously successful with.

Sessler: I've always been interested in ideas, and certainly art has its own form, its own language; but subject matter has always been of great interest to me. And I think it always will. I can appreciate what the cubists have done, what the impressionists have done, what the abstract expressionists are doing today, because they're showing me, or giving me lessons in form language. I'm very sympathetic with their experiments, but I don't feel that I want to do this myself. I don't have time for it. I have other things to say, and they're in terms of subject matter.

Visitor: Subject matter adds another element in the total composition, and makes the job of creating a unified structure more difficult than that of creating an object without subject matter . . . merely for decorative purposes.

Sessler: Well, I like to delude myself into feeling that way, because when you eliminate the objective that's one problem eliminated. At least that's what I think—how do you feel about that?

Visitor: I think it's true. Some nonobjective pieces are quite difficult to judge. You run into another problem, however, with subject matter. Sometimes the painter becomes so interested in his idea or subject that his "form language," as you called it, slips and it hurts to look at that sort of thing.

Sessler: There are some very excellent, top-notch abstract expressionists and just like the subject-matter painters, the top ones, those who really get it, are few.

Visitor: What about the sources of your ideas . . . any particular thing which may have inspired you at a given time?

Sessler: Oh, I suppose the idea of the underdog. It's something that appeals to me, and I get a feeling about these people, especially in this wash-woman series. I used to work in a drugstore in down-town Milwaukee. I worked my way through school, and I became acquainted with . . . felt sympathetic towards the wash-women. You know, the wash ladies in the place; I'd listen to their troubles. They weren't all noble; they were just like other human beings. And I might say this, the subject matter I was interested in has determined to a great extent what my form is; and my form is, so I've been told, and I believe it myself, quite different.

Cold World, II

Visitor: Well, that's the ideal. Whenever there is subject matter there has to be this embodiment, mutual adequacy of subject and form. The manipulation of the plastic elements, the form, is merely a technique devised to solve the problems which your subject presents, isn't it?

Sessler: Of course. I have an idea about art. I think that the truly great art expressions are those in which there is a synthesis between form and subject, whatever it might be.

Visitor: But what about your interest in the underdog, and the sympathy you have for the wash-women? How does it jibe with the satirical treatment you've given the female physiognomy in some of your recent things?

Sessler: That's pretty hard. I distort for the sake of statement. You know, my distortions aren't done too consciously; they just come that way. I suppose this is a result of a number of years of thinking about it, and making trial marks on paper and coming up with something that tells me this is it.

Visitor: Then you don't have the satirical intent before you start your drawing?

Sessler: Not as such, although I've always been interested in satire.

Visitor: I suppose your cartooning helped.

Sessler: No; it was more than that. The first time I became aware

Flowered Hat

of it was when I studied *Gulliver's Travels* in college. This has always been a tremendous book to me. I'll tell you another thing that may be of help here. I could read pretty well at the age of seven or eight and I remember finding a Bible in an attic in the place where we lived; I read Genesis and this frightened me. Actually frightened me, and I never read anything else in the Bible until much later. This too was a tremendous thing for me, and I think it has stayed with me all my life.

Visitor: Have you done anything explicit on the theme?

Sessler: Some of the things I'm doing now. This unfinished painting on the easel, for instance. You'll notice that these are not the cut-and-dried symbols. They're my own, related to things I've seen in nature. There's one thing I try to do. One of the things that give some distinction to my work, if there is any, is that I treat these very homely things. You might even call it a terrible subject-matter sometimes. Then I try to get as beautiful a surface as I can on the work itself, the object itself, so you have a kind of paradox working there. And I think paradox is one of the things in art that gives some life to it.

Visitor: That's right. Some literary critics call it the essence of poetic language, but that is a slightly different sense of the word. It is interesting to note, however, that Santayana approaches the "grotesque," from his aesthetic point of view, in a similar way. He claims you can overcome the repulsion of the terrible through the delight of the sensuous surface constructed to present the shock with. Very interesting. Aestheticians and artists don't always agree.

Sessler: I've been able to do that in my oil paintings, and now I'm beginning to get it in prints.

Visitor: Then you really don't paint for the purpose of exploiting techniques?

Sessler: Technique in the sense of manipulation is basic, inherent in everybody, the manipulation of the paint, the way the brush feels. In this sense, technique is very important to me.

Visitor: How does your oil painting relate to your interest in graphics?

Sessler: Oil painting was my first interest; and the experience I've

had with graphics has influenced my oil painting for the better, and vice-versa.

Visitor: I've heard some painters who likewise make prints claim that they become their own best collectors of their oil paintings. They can't get the money out of the painting for the time they put into it, and spend practically all their time making prints.

Sessler: That's too bad, because that shouldn't be the drive for creative work.

Visitor: What about the claim that the graphics are the more democratic medium?

Sessler: Oh, it's democratic just from this point of view: it can get wider circulation. People can afford to buy prints, where they couldn't afford to buy an oil painting because an artist can make an edition of, let's say, twenty prints and sell them for a lot less than his oil paintings; but if he sells the complete edition, the amount of money in dollars amounts sometimes to more. It's democratic because it can be—the print—I don't want to say "reproduced," because a print is an original work of art—but it can be multiplied.

Visitor: Could we mention now your interest in the reduction block technique? Do you know of anyone else at present who has the same interest?

Sessler: No, I don't know of anyone else doing this . . . in the sense of using this technique with the end in view I happen to have, that is, not completely. Reduction has been used in graphics for a long, long time, but intuitively. I've worked out a system here as a result of a summer grant. I had to focus on a problem to get the grant. When you're doing some kind of study you naturally focus on something, and I worked out this reduction system where I use just one block for all the colors. I print the block without cutting into it, and then I cut a little bit away and print another color over what I have just printed. What I've cut away will allow the color underneath to come through, and I keep cutting away gradually until I resolve the form.
(For illustration, *cf.* cover design)

Visitor: You always print from the virgin block, before you start cutting?

Sessler: Usually I do because I like to start with a dark color. This enriches the others. And, to me, it's more creative, too. In-

stead of the old way, where you make a key block, and then transfer this impression to other blocks, and find yourself bound within a certain outline. This way I can go in any direction I want, and I keep reducing the block to fit what has already been printed, with each cutting suggesting different forms. This is what makes the reduction technique more exciting.

Visitor: And the suggestion comes out of the immediately prior print?

Sessler: While I'm cutting, I'm thinking of the next block to suggest something. While I'm printing, as I'm printing the edition, I keep thinking about it; and this suggests things. Then, when I cut, my mind is changed sometimes. I find it a very exciting way to do wood cut, and students who have done it also find it so.

Visitor: You have many students who are beginning to develop the idea as you've done the research on it?

Sessler: Yes, I've been teaching them.

Visitor: Good. There's no notion, then, of having any complete idea in mind before you start, especially in these reduced wood blocks?

Sessler: Oh, I have a general idea, but the picture itself is not completed, ever. I don't know of an artist that does.

Visitor: I've heard a lot of people say they use the intuitive approach to art. Many of them claim they know everything they're going to do before they put a stroke on canvas.

Sessler: I doubt this, because you put down a color . . . well, you watch these people work. You'll find they put down a color, they look at it, and they may have to change it.

Visitor: I've always attributed my misunderstanding of this particular idea to not having the right kind of color imagination. I'm sensitive enough to color perception, but I can't hear the word, the name for a color, and imagine it in my mind —whatever that would be. Now, I can't do this; and you can't be a painter, they always say, unless you can. But it seems to me that you can perceive the full value of the colors when you work with them off the brush.

Sessler: Names of colors mean nothing to me, either. I have to see. Because I mix up a color on the palette—a nice color . . . I put it next to another color I may have down, the rela-

tionship between the two may not be right. You know, the value, or the hue, or the tone may not be right; so it doesn't work.

Visitor: For a cartoonist, you've gone far over into problems of form. Let's go back to the content. I once heard one of your students coming fresh from one of your lectures saying, "This is a man who hates humanity." Now, I don't know if you were speaking on the subject, or whether he was

Three Ladies

looking at some of your satirical prints and this was a comment on what he had seen.

Sessler: He may have resented the distortion, or maybe the truth. But, I have a great regard for humanity. In fact, I'm one of them.

Visitor: Who said it, "God must have loved the common man; He made so many of them"?

Sessler: Sure. If I can use a figure of speech, perfume only makes the ladies *seem* more lovely. Well, this isn't the way I see it.

Visitor: What about your interest in the dead tree form? This likewise may have suggested the idea to someone that you're interested in the morbid.

Sessler: I *am* interested in the morbid. Many artists go to still life; and they do apples, pears, crockery, and so on. But my still life objects are these dead trees, where I can see a wealth of form, and grotesqueries which have always intrigued me.

Visitor: There's something about the grotesque. People looking at it illustrate Aristotle's idea. Catharsis takes place; something is purged. It's certainly not a morbid interest to contemplate morbidity unless, of course, you're creating a human subject in such a way as to depress rather than to enlighten. What about the reception of your work. How do they react to your satire?

Sessler: It has always been received pretty well. Maybe partly because I always try to get some humor into my side characters. Satire without humor is worthless.

Visitor: It's not really satire, if you don't have that humorous element, only social comment. None of your subjects has been directly political, although you did pass through a political stage.

Sessler: Oh, yes; I passed through, like most artists did at the time. The depression, you know. I'm not interested in politics, as such, any more. I'm interested in the . . . in just man.

Visitor: Is it understanding of the human situation a person is to gain from your art?

Sessler: Sympathy. *Simpatico.* And by "sympathy" I don't mean saccharine sweetness, just identification.

Visitor: I understand that you were in the painting division of the

W.P.A. That was an interesting social experiment. Without that government program, a lot of the arts would have disappeared from the American scene.

Sessler: I don't think art will ever disappear. There will always be this urge for creativity.

Visitor: But something has to be done to create the environment.

Sessler: That's true—you have to create an atmosphere or climate for it. And this can be done; look at *Life,* the magazine . . . whatever you might think of it as a magazine, they were one of the first to print color reproductions regularly. I remember when the first issue came out; we take these things for granted today; but, boy, then it was really something!

Visitor: You seem to have achieved in the visual arts what Sartre has been talking about in literature. Before he went off the deep end, he insisted on a political subject in order to meet an audience, but not at the price of making a pure propaganda piece out of the work. But he calls the literary arts, at least, a political act.

Sessler: That's right. I think propaganda is death to art.

Visitor: We've said it before. The propaganda idea you may have before you start working is another way of killing off any interest you might have of letting the form . . .

Sessler: You have a recipe. The message gets in the way of the form problem.

Visitor: It's good to hear you say that. When you come to making a judgment, you see a lot of paintings where . . . it's obvious that the man has been interested primarily in the idea.

Sessler: There are all kinds of propaganda. For instance, today there is propaganda for a certain *way of doing* art . . . like abstract expressionism . . . that nothing else is right. Well, this is propaganda too, I think; and it can be harmful.

Visitor: A kind of propaganda aided and abetted by some of the galleries which won't accept anything but the prevailing vogue.

Sessler: And critics, and museums.

Visitor: Well, this is unfortunate, I think. It's not even a . . . it's a nonaesthetic judgment: judging what is in fashion at the present day, without even looking at what is there to be seen.

Major Domo

Sessler: These critics and magazines can create a fad, too. I think a magazine or critic can make an artist, or break him, even today. And that's not good.

Visitor: The dehumanization of art, you know. The human subject has become unfashionable in our time. But I suspect a lack of sincerity, or what's worse, of perception, in this subject-matter—abstract-form controversy.

Sessler: I think you're right. Take these clowns. The clown is an easy . . . I suppose I shouldn't use the word "easy," but it's a convenient way of introducing distortion, and emphasizing a more complex form. This has been an accepted symbol in the mind of the public. Distortion is expected. You distort, and the distortion adds meaning to the symbol. I've often used the clown as a means of satire.

Visitor: It is a rich thing; besides the comic action of the clown himself, his outward appearance, you've got the identification or sympathy with the clown as a person. Two levels of meaning you can develop within your form language.

Sessler: That's what makes . . . what made Charlie Chaplin so great.

Visitor: You're sympathizing with the clown, and some of the humor wears off into pathos.

Sessler: Well, there's another thing about the clown. You'll notice that the clowns I do are not the . . . oh, would you say, "the usual prototype"? The clown himself is a creative person . . . in terms of his make-up. So instead of looking at some clown that has already made himself up, I do the same thing . . . for him, as it were. I make up my own clown characters, and I'm creating the character along with the portrayal. I don't think you'll ever see a clown like those I've made. He has the long nose, and all that sort of thing; but I try to put some invention in the costume.

Visitor: That's an interesting blend. We've selected some of your works showing the distortion of the human figure. You're using the grotesque quality of the human symbol, and do produce sympathy that way. But some of the organic forms, where there seems to be no obvious human subject-matter, become almost human in suggestion. That's what is so apparent in that piece on the easel. Do you distinguish the organic forms from the strictly human?

Still-life

Sessler: No, I'm thinking in terms of the human element . . .

Visitor: Even where you're doing the dead trees?

Sessler: They're not so dead. You'll notice that all the lines I use are moving; you know, they're all writhing to express . . . oh, some emotion I'm trying to get.

Visitor: The very oddly distorted nature of the form itself indicates the movement of life . . . the death and regeneration theme, of course.

Sessler: Now, one of the rules in design is that you ought to have some inert spaces, so that you can complement the active ones; but in this painting the whole thing is active, because that is what I wanted to get. The old saw, you know, rules are made to be broken.

Visitor: The forms do writhe.

Sessler: That red you see there isn't quite right yet; it isn't right at all. I have to introduce some cool . . .

Visitor: Simple . . . like the greenish-blue there at the top of that Christ-like tree. Christ and his cross as one dead, dying but reviving tree.

Sessler: Yes . . . that's a complement to the yellow . . .

Visitor: Cool on warm . . . brings it out. Two figures in one, both dying but both reviving.

Sessler: That's what adds up to the total composition. This red harmonizes with the one over there. Now I have to get some cool colors working.

Visitor: Yes, to make the whole thing come alive. But you've got the symbolic value of the organic forms to suggest the human, or at least the living; and in some of your work it becomes more than symbolic, it approaches an actual explicit statement. There seem to be these two extremes.

Sessler: I'm trying to control empathy in both. I've tried to get empathy . . . a feeling given in terms of the visual statement I'm making. This is where a lot of people fail. In the cold, dehumanized, abstract forms it never comes in. A still life is a *nature morte.* Instead of killing nature we

Geggo's Tree

have to put life into the dead. The viewer has to be able to feel into the situation.

Visitor: Some viewers don't experience painting to that extent; even some painters.

Sessler: I wonder, can we try an experiment? Explain what empathy is sometime. Do aestheticians still discuss it?

Visitor: I've heard the obvious explanation: the uncouth westerner watching a filmed melodrama suddenly pulls out his six-shooter and lets fly at the screen, the movie. You know, this is proof that empathy has taken place, but doesn't describe empathy, or show how one could produce it.

Sessler: Well, can you produce it? Can you?

Visitor: Isn't this what the artist does? He has the controls. After all, the artist is the keyman in this communicative process.

Sessler: Yes, but I mean, as soon as you describe it, or as soon as you define it, isn't the atmosphere, the climate for empathy destroyed?

Visitor: I think . . . I should think so, yes. But there's one thing in talking about empathy as a psychological process which is undergone, and another in the experience of empathy when looking at a painting. I think that if I were a painter I wouldn't take the trouble to explain the idea of my paintings.

Sessler: No, the painting should do it.

October Tree, I


NEW MAIN BUILDING FOR JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF DETROIT

David Ecker, Director, Art Department,
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DAVID ECKER | *notes: on a community art program*

This spring the opening of a new $3 million Main Building of the Detroit Jewish Community Center, now the largest institution of its kind in the United States, will help supply the creative and artistic demand of the community and call attention to a bold experiment in family service and adult education.

If education is correctly defined as the gaining of control of the means to all ends, the Center program has a wider educational goal than any existing institution except perhaps the family itself. Since groups varying as to income, age, and interests of their members are encouraged to participate in its activities, the Detroit J.C.C. with its three branches, affiliated with the nationwide Center movement, has become a unique social agency for enriching the lives of Jews and American society as a whole.

The realization of noble aims, however, does not follow immediately upon their conception: the new building required years of planning by dedicated lay people and professional staff workers, and to some extent, reflects the more general drive of a city which is becoming aware of the role the arts may play in modern industrial society.

As for the general context, Detroit may well be one of the fastest growing cultural centers in the country. Between the two world wars Detroit was a factory town whose inhabitants had only a sporadic interest in the arts. At the close of World War II, it had four art galleries; it now has twelve. In May of this year, the Metropolitan Opera Company made a three-day appearance, its first visit to Detroit in a half-century. In the 1958-1959 season the Detroit Institute of Arts presented a symposium of scholars and an exhibition on the ancient Maya, the first great survey of Mayan art to be held in America; a pioneering exhibition called "Decorative Arts of the

Italian Renaissance,"[1] a monumental display of works from European and American museums; the Hirshhorn collection, the largest exhibition of contemporary sculpture ever to be shown in America—over two-hundred pieces; and, in collaboration with the Detroit Public Library and Wayne State University, an experimental educational and cultural program named "Detroit Adventure, 1959," with the first series of events called "Conversations in the Arts."[2] Artists, scholars, and educators held seminars with small groups throughout the city. The Archives of American Art is now established with national headquarters in the Detroit Institute of Arts and is already attracting wide attention from scholars.

Other indications of Detroit's aesthetic growth are its architectural advances: the Civic Center; Northland, with the first large-scale integration of fine art into a shopping center; McGregor Conference Hall on the Wayne campus and the building for the Society of Arts and Crafts, and the General Motors Tech Center, designed by Saarinen.

In the Michigan Artists Exhibition, 1959, the entries were predominantly abstract for the first time in the show's history.

Finally, one should note the formation of the Detroit Council of Arts in the fall of 1958 with representatives from the Allied Arts Committee, Cranbrook Academy of Arts, Artists Market, Detroit Handweavers, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Public Library, Society of Arts and Crafts, Ecclesiastical Arts Guild, Jewish Community Center, Michigan Potters Association, Michigan Silversmiths Guild, Michigan Watercolor Society, Michigan Weavers Guild, University of Michigan Extension Department, and Wayne State University, Departments of Art Education and Fine Arts, and the Art Education Alumni Association. The purpose of this Council is to exchange information on the various art activities of the member societies.

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[1] Creighton Gilbert, "Rediscovering the Renaissance," *Arts,* January, 1959, pp. 24–29. An article on the "pioneering exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts makes clear that the Renaissance *was* inventive in crafts and design—with an inventiveness that speaks of human respect, skill, and cultivation."

[2] *(Detroit Adventure* is) . . . "an idea of boundless possibilities, incalculable potential. In New York no one has ever attempted such a program. If none of our museums has the staff, money, or time for it, perhaps some Foundation can provide these. In the meantime, can't one of New York's museums take its cue from Detroit and keep open just *one* night of the week until ten?"
Emily Genauer, *New York Herald Tribune,* Sunday, March 29, 1959, article entitled "An Adventure in Detroit."

If we count the specific educational institutions as at least partially responsible for Detroit's new-found enthusiasm, along with the effect of artists and collectors on public taste, then the teacher of adult art education may have as his major social contribution the advancement of mass reception to good taste while pursuing the more immediate task of providing for leisure-time enjoyment through art activities.

The Detroit Institute of Arts, in particular, is making an impressive contribution to adult education with formal seminars, gallery tours of collections, study courses, and amateur night workshops. All this in addtion to making available a consistently high standard of excellence in its regular exhibitions.

The Society of Arts and Crafts had an earlier influence on Detroit with its exhibitions and sales of handcraft objects. The society organized a Gallery of Modern Art and brought the first exhibitions of Picasso, Klee, and other contemporary artists to Detroit.[3] Its school, begun in 1926, now has an expanding program and is a vital part of art education in Detroit.

Some of the other educational institutions contributing to Detroit's aesthetic development are: The University of Michigan, the Wayne State University Adult Education Center (which offers classes in art history and art appreciation to nonmatriculated students), Cass Technical High School (offering art courses for adults), and other public schools throughout the city. The nearby Cranbrook Academy of Art, producing some of the finest artists and designers in the area, has always exerted a strong influence.

The Jewish Community Center, which was formally organized in 1933, has evolved within this general context as an agency to provide for leisure-time recreational, educational, and cultural needs of its members. It has operated at several locations, but its present sites are: the Davison Branch opened in 1950; the D. W. Simon's Branch (1952), primarily serving older adults; the Ten Mile Branch (1956), and now, the new Main Building. Present membership is well over 10,000, with many more thousands participating as guests of the Center.

A long tradition of cultural activities has already been established. This year the Center will celebrate its twentieth music season, with the Center Choral Society and the Center Symphony which fea-

[3] Joy Hakanson Colby, *Art and a City*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1956.) An interesting account of the arts and crafts movement as it developed in Detroit.

tures sell-out series of performances with renowned guest artists. Each of the branches supports a wide variety of programs: the annual Jewish Book Fair, dramatics, dance, educational institutes, arts and crafts, and many others. Cashwan is one of the nationally established artists having received his first art training in early Center programs.

Upon entering the scene a year ago with many other new staff members, I became impressed with what had been done and excited about the possibilities of expanding the Center's unique role in promoting arts in society. Trained as an experimentalist in philosophy and art education, I accepted the challenge to participate in what is essentially an experimental educational program. Other members were just as eager to push the experiment. What first struck the observer was the comprehensive planning and programming—past, present, and future—in the music, drama, physical education, and adult services departments. The Aaron DeRoy Theatre, the Fisher gymnasiums, the pool, auditorium, and other facilities were evidence of this planning. As the new Art Director, I was called upon to organize the future program in art.

THE EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM

It might be helpful, first, to relate the planned activities to the physical plant where they are expected to take place. The Art Department has at its disposal more than five thousand square feet of floor space, including three photography rooms, a woodworking shop, a sculpture and ceramic studio, graphics and crafts areas, and a painting studio.

Courses currently being offered at the Main Building are: adult painting classes, beginning and advanced enameling, ceramics, sculpture, "Father and Son" woodworking, and classes for children in two age groups. In the fall, more courses are to be added. Some of these are photography, frame-making, and art appreciation, with topics such as "Meet the Arts" and "Getting to Know the Arts."

It would be misleading, however, for anyone to assume that formal classes are the only way, or even the best way, to incorporate art into the total program of the Center. We find it as important to supervise open studio time, to allow professional artists space and special equipment, and to provide facilities for "teen" clubs whose interest in art is peripheral, *e.g.*, the making of decorations and

signs for a dance. Our exhibitions, seminars, and lectures are, of course, staple fare. A spring (1959) exhibition contained paintings and sculptures from Detroit collections including some Chagalls, Shahns, and an Epstein. Nathaniel Kaz, sculptor and first prize winner of the United Nations sculpture competition, lectured.

Adult students present the same sort of problems to be found in most university extension divisions. Possessing a wide range of sensibilities, and coming to the community art program with wide divergence in academic education and even wider in what may be called qualitative intelligence, they must be met with expectations not necessarily appropriate to a single chronological age grouping. Contrary to the popular notion of the amateur dabbler in painting—and painting is now assuming the role of a participation sport in America—it is not unrealistic to expect that a few individuals may turn out to be professional artists.

Adults come to our classes simply because they desire the artistic and social experiences to be had in the studio. They earn no credits toward degrees, and consequently the quality of the program is being constantly evaluated by the student as an end in itself. This is no "captive audience"; the art program must continually hold the attention of the student. This is not to say the program should reflect mere popular likes and dislikes or cater to whims. There is nothing that destroys interest and motivation quicker than short-range "projects." It does mean, however, that a progressive program must be diversified, flexible, and challenging enough to carry its students through *years* of art activity rather than semesters.

Our problem was to decide the kind of planning necessary to achieve a measure of success in a community art program over a longer range of time, with "success" being measured here in terms of the qualitative experience had by the individual in the studio. These decisions were taken following strictly democratic procedure. The Art Committee, with its chairman, now numbers sixteen people. It is responsible to the Board of Directors of the Center and advises the Board regarding the art program and recommends changes in the nature and scope of Art Department services. The Committee is now composed of architects, art teachers, and people prominent in the arts in one capacity or another. Subcommittees have been formed to cope with specific problems, *e.g.,* building decor and the first art exhibition. The staff of the Center is responsible for implementing

the recommendations of the Art Committee by developing the program, providing services, hiring staff, etc.

As a consequence of the democratic procedures employed, it is practically impossible to determine where all ideas originated or exactly which decisions accomplished what. Because of the close interaction that has been possible among all persons concerned—and this is the essence of a democratic society—the project has become that of the entire community. *The Prospectus,* one of the documents submitted by the Art Director to the committee, when approved, established the aims, objectives, and basic assumptions of the department.

A look at these statements may be revealing:

1. The aims and objectives are to
   a. provide opportunities for art activities for all members of the family ages six to eighty.
   b. offer a range of art activities which cover major areas of interests with supervision and instruction keyed to individuals and groups of different age levels and abilities.
   c. encourage participation in the plastic arts as a creative use of leisure time through films, demonstrations, talks, and art exhibitions.
   d. maintain a high degree of awareness concerning the interests of Center members, so that some basic needs of clubs and other groups are met.
   e. relate the resources of the Art Department and the Center to cultural developments in the Jewish and general communities.
2. The basic assumptions are
   a. the development of creative abilities and aesthetic awareness through art experience will make the individual's life more meaningful whether he is young or old.
   b. without meaning, there is no experience, and meaning comes in the arts when there is a sharing of qualities, a communication of thought.
   c. the qualities with which we work *via* the various media—for example, line, color, texture, volumes, and planes—are to be found in all experiences; in the home, community, and civilization; these are singled out for our attention in enriching life.
   d. whenever qualities of experience are sought, pointed out to others, altered and modified, or prized as goods, then and there we have art and art education.
   e. children and youth should be grouped according to age

rather than ability as their total qualitative experience—their social adjustment as well as the creative process—is of more value than the art product.

f. advanced classes of instruction are vital to maintain long-range interest in the art program and to insure the individual's continued creative growth.

g. a tradition of excellence in our advanced art activities should be developed and encouraged in various ways.

h. the uniqueness of our Center as a community social agency offers opportunities

(1) to develop an art program for all ages, for family participation, for making art experiences available to clubs, groups, and other Center departments.

(2) as an avenue of expression of Jewishness so that the individual and/or group can be helped to realize identity.

i. standards for staff should provide means for bringing to our membership outstanding artist-teachers to help in the fulfillment of our objectives.

Though I was primarily responsible for drafting these aims, objectives, and assumptions, it is readily apparent that the ideas involved have been generated from many sources: established principles in art education, social group work theory, psychology, philosophical experimentation, and, of course, the policy of the Center as reflected throughout. And while I believe that some of these ideas pull more freight than others, I think they are logically compatible. It is hoped that other communities may reap some benefit from the experiment being developed at the Detroit Jewish Community Center.