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THE WISE BUY AMERICAN PICTURES

FAR-SEEING collectors of American pictures, more and more, are going direct to the painters and buying from them. This is common sense. For the collector knows he has an original picture, not a fraud palmed off on him by some unscrupulous person, but a picture painted by an artist whose work he loves, a picture that is bound to increase in value, if the workman is truly an artist. It would be well for all if this habit were more and more acquired by the public.

We would also suggest that it might be wise for the buyer of a picture to go to an artist and select a *composition* that pleases him from the sketches the artist has made, and then give him a commission

to paint from the sketch a finished picture of the size the buyer wants and can afford to pay for. In some cases the buyer might suggest to the artist certain slight changes in the composition. Most artists are willing to meet such requests from art amateurs because the latter are often capable of making intelligent suggestions. Thus the collector and artist become cooperators in the production of a work of art without loss of individuality on either side.

This would immensely stimulate American art and make it more exactly a reflection of the character and genius of our people.

RATIONAL ART

WE have been asked to explain what we mean by "Rational Art." We will try:

In art a man expresses his *emotions*. He does it either to simply please himself, or with the additional desire to stir his fellows.

If he wishes to stir his fellows, he is compelled to resort to *representation* of those things by means of which he hopes to stir his fellows.

Representation is therefore the foundation of all art that is effective as a social force. Representation is achieved only by *imitating* a thing more or less *truthfully*. Because, next to our hunger for self-expression, our love of truth is our deepest yearning.

But there are two kinds of truth—commonplace, mechanical, realistic truth and exalting, stylistic, idealistic truth. Realistic truth is obtained by following nature *closely*; stylistic truth by *departing* from nature.

But we love the unusual, the mysterious, the artificial enough to prefer stylistic, idealistic truth to commonplace, realistic truth—provided the departure from exact truth is not far enough to offend our deep hunger for truth.

All realistic art—that in which nature is closely followed—is called Impersonal or Universal. All stylistic art—that in which a departure from nature is made—is called Personal or Individualistic.

Again, a photograph of a human figure, which is a mechanical representation and devoid of all style—obtained through a departure from nature—is not art at all. On the other hand, a cubistic representation of a human figure, which has been so stylized—by an overdeparture from nature—that it no longer looks like a human being but like a collection of colored blocks piled up, has ceased to be art, or has become grotesque or insane art.

Now, when a child or an artist, through undevelopment, *represents* a human figure—with not enough truth to satisfy our demand for truth, we call it irrational by *incompetence*. When represented by

an oversophisticated artist without enough truth to satisfy us we call it irrational by *overdeparture* from nature. When an adult or competent artist represents a figure—with enough truth to satisfy us, we call it Rational art.

That is, rational art is such art in which the realistic truth in a representation of a human figure, and an artist's personal style, have been wedded—in harmony with Bacon's remark: "Art is man *added* to nature."

Such a uniting of realism and idealism, or mechanical truth and stylistic truth, gives us satisfaction—in ratio of the degree to which they are *united* in a work of art.

Rational art, therefore, means an *equilibration* in a work of art by the marriage of impersonal truth and personal style in such a way that a harmony is produced; a harmony in which we will never be offended by the lack of *sufficient* truth, and yet be pleased by the *addition* to the truth, of such elements of artistic invention or skill which are new and personal to the artist who made the work. When this equilibrium is reached we have the perfection of craftsmanship in art.

When to this perfect craftsmanship we find added—nobility of subject, beauty of composition, profundity of expression, we have the perfection of rational art.

But such an equilibration is extremely rare. We have works in which there is a little more of the impersonal or a little more of the personal than there should be—when judged by the highest examples of art, but which we must nevertheless still include in the great stream of rational art—because there is in them enough of truth to satisfy us.

Therefore relative truth to nature in Drawing, Color and Expression is fundamentally the final test of the rationality or irrationality of any work of art. And the more beautiful and perfect the types of things in nature represented in a work with relative truth, the more rational the work of art.