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Calendar of Events January 1939

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Eugene Delacroix, the great French Romanticist, wrote in his diary the words: "Perhaps sometime one will find out that Rembrandt is a much greater painter than Raphael, I put down this blasphemy, upon which the hair of all schoolmen will rise, without definitely taking any part." Today, after almost a hundred years have passed, this half apology is no longer necessary. Today, no schoolman's hair would rise. On the contrary, they would all agree; so definitely has the leaf burned. It has even turned so far, that today the advance guard of the new movement, especially in this country, begins to mark the general praise of Rembrandt as the painter as exaggerated. One objective fact is established anyway,—that Rembrandt with the quantity of his production alone was one of the most fertile painters of all times. Even today, after the ravages of two and a half centuries, we have about 700 paintings and about 1000 drawings from his hand. His versatility and creative phantasy is only equalled by Rubens.

The English, who have shown a remarkably good instinct for real quality, have been in the fore in the search for Rembrandt paintings and etchings. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the brilliant head of the Royal Academy, was a warm admirer of his art. During the period of Classicism, about 1800, Rembrandt fell in general esteem, and the impact of Romanticism had come to order in order to put him again on the pedestal, in spite of the "hair-raising of the schoolmen."

Peter Paul Rubens was probably the strongest exponent of that artistic life. He lived in the Spanish Netherlands (the Belgium of today) in the first half of the 17th Century. Here the Catholic Church and the feudal system had maintained their strength, Rubens' life and art were a succession of glamour and glory. Spiritual altar pieces, grandiose allegories, proud portraits bedecked the churches and palaces of those who commissioned him. He lived the life of a "grand seigneur." Like his great competitor at the court of Madrid, Diego Velasquez, he basked in the sun of royal indulgence. Rubens' great pupil and collaborator, Anton van Dyck, nearly overdid it. His popularity was second only to his prices. Nor did any of the other Flemish painters suffer want---even the extravagant Adrian Brouwer.

A few miles farther eastward lay Holland, which had abandoned the Catholic Church and seceded from Spanish rule. The Protestant "burgeoisie" had set up an independent republic. All tradition was disrupted. Pictorial representation was prohibited in Reformed churches and there were no more princely patrons of the finer arts.

This was when the curse of artistic freedom became evident. The artists' living depended on the taste of the middle classes and that is why they were badly off. Rembrandt, the greatest of them all, died poverty-stricken and alone in the Ghetto of Amsterdam. Over the heads of Franz Hals and his family hung the Sword of Damocles in the form of notes due; the life of Hercules Segher, the father of modern landscape painting, was a continuous battle for bare living; Jan Steen, whose pictures are full of laughter, was paid so poorly that he could not support his family despite his great industry; Emanual de Witte, the greatest architectural painter of his day, hanged himself on a bridge one night; Vermeer van Delft and Pieter de Hoogh lived more than modestly. They felt the first cold breath of the modern artist's fate—a suggestion of his economic isolation, but not yet his spiritual isolation.

The spirit of the latter works of Rembrandt is like that of the Gothic. Both glorify a world of a deepened soul that drifts from an everyday life into a dreaming twilight.

The difference is that the Gothic cathedral is an immense symbol of the world in which the individual personality gives itself up; while Rembrandt's art is the expression of an isolated personality. Moreover, the Gothic, turning away from the world, rises to the supernatural, while Rembrandt's art expands into the everyday life and nature and searches for the soul of God in them.

Thus, everything Rembrandt's brush represents is transferred as by enchantment into the supernatural. The eyes in his portraits have a depth of soul expression that no painter before or after knows; his religious scenes are radiant with the holy fire of pure humanity, and his landscapes and still-lifes have a mystical dreamy existence. The most ugly face, the most common object, radiates divinity.

It is not easy to understand Rembrandt, and it will hardly be possible to forget him. If the advance guard in the present trend for practicability (reality to the point) is speaking of his art as of a kind of self exposition, it is understandable because of the present movements and hostile attitude toward all Romanticism. It is a partiality natural to the conflict. But it is not the kind of judgment which should be considered just against one of the greatest artists the world has ever seen.

ALEXANDER DORNER

“Oh, how cold it will be after the sunshine! Here I am a gentleman, at home a parasite,” sighed Dürer when he had to return to Germany from Venice. There is a world of meaning in these words. The Renaissance had brought about freedom from the shackles of the medieval class system, which like the Gothic cathedral—its symbol—represented one gigantic structure wherein each stone was but a small part of the whole and had no individual meaning. In its entirety, however, it reached toward Heaven, away from the earth and from natural life. The peasant, the craftsman, the nobleman, the clergy—all performed but a service to the whole structure. The artist too, namely a craftsman, tradition-bound, whose life and work were anonymous contributions to this cathedral.

The Renaissance, rooted in Italy for centuries, had broken with this tremendous system. Nicolas of Cusa declared nature to be entirely God's creation, and no longer just an evil temptation to retard complete spiritualization. It became as worthy of study as was salvation. It was then that our modern freedom of science, of economics and of profession was born. The artist was no longer merely a craftsman, but a free man full of creative genius, and his work a new, free form of worship. As Dürer sensed, the artist was considered a "gentleman," whereas north of the Alps he was still a servant craftsman, a "parasite."

The word implies harsh criticism, but is comprehensible in times that looked forward toward the rising sun of freedom, and when tradition must have seemed repressive. He could not know that this new freedom for the artist was to prove a doubting blessing. This did not develop until about one and a half centuries later, when the ecclesiastic and caste system had finally been destroyed, and that happened in Holland in the 17th century.

As long as the Church and the secular princes were in power, the artist was comparatively secure, although he had become freer since the Renaissance and was a "gentleman," he still "served." It was his job to decorate the churches and monasteries, the residences and palaces. His security was spiritual as well, for both Church and feudal tradition largely determined the subject matter of his pictures.

Rembrandt

Portait of a Lady
(Petronella Bury)
To be seen in the Exhibition
MASTERS PIECES OF DUTCH PAINTING
in The Exhibitio
ART MUSEUM, Rhode Island School of Design
Dec. 11-Jan. 25

Dutch Painting
in the Seventeenth Century

The spirit of Dutch painting was born on the strong wave of sweeping liberation from medieval tradition. If Nicolas of Cusa looked upon nature as God's creature, along with man, Baruch Spinoza, the great Dutch philosopher of that period, considered nature to be God. God could be reached from nature, directing it as it were, but was inherent in everything. Therefore, Dutch painting now centered around daily life. Religious scenes were no longer pompous and glowing in the brilliance of the invisible and solely redeeming Church, but depicted as everyday activities with great spiritual depth. Landscape painting was "representation" any more, but emphasized the simple people, and everyday life—or "genre"—became a favored field. The still life of the art of the last few decades. At the same time, grandiose backdrops for dramatic actions, as it was with Rubens, who was still driven by medieval aspirations. They now breathed peaceful eternity of God-in-Nature. Thus the Dutch school fathered modern painting. With it the art of the 19th Century is unimaginable—not Romanticism, not Impressionism. Without Ruysdael there would have been no C. D. Friedrich and no Rousseau, without Hobbema no Constable, without Hals no Manet, without Vermeer no Monet and without Rembrandt no van Gogh. Romanticism and Impressionism are predicated upon the assumption that the artist is spiritually free and responsible only to himself, and nature an unlimited object of artistic interpretation. They are based upon the questionable "art for art's sake" with its brightness and its shadow.

The Dutch painters were the first really to develop their artistic powers freely and to appreciate the latent possibilities in nature, thereby opening a vast new field. However, they also launched the dark side of artistic freedom—economic and spiritual isolation. This isolation has today reached a point which will swing the pendulum back to the opposite, and the artist will again be an integral part of society. With the exception of a very few works of the greatest painters, Dutch art was still generally comprehensible: this is hardly true of modern art, and the artist will again be an integral part of society. With the exception of a very few works of the greatest painters, Dutch art was still generally comprehensible: this is hardly true of modern art, and the artist will again be...
EXHIBITIONS IN RHODE ISLAND

Faunce House Art Gallery, Brown University
Jan. 2-Jan. 19—Technique of Chinese Painting
Jan. 23-Feb. 4—Reproductions of Wall Paper found in Old American Houses.

Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design
Jan. 4-Jan. 29—Swedish Prints.
Jan. 6-Feb. 19—Persian Arts

Rhode Island School of Design School Gallery, 14 College Street
Jan. 4-Jan. 18—Exhibition of work from the Interior Design Department.
Jan. 18-Feb. 4—Junior School Exhibition.

Rhode Island School of Design Research Laboratory, 11 Waterman Street

Providence Public Library

Providence Art Club
Jan. 3-Jan. 15—Jewelry and Enamed Pictures by Mabel Luther.
Jan. 3-Jan. 15—Book Bindings and Hand Marbled Papers by Dorothy Moulton.

Armour Gallery

Tilden Thurber Gallery

EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE OF RHODE ISLAND

Andover, Mass., Addison Gallery, Phillips Academy
Jan. 3-Jan. 15—Drawings by Herman Webster.
Jan. 7-Feb. 12—Technique and Design.

Boston, Mass., Museum of Fine Arts

Boston, Mass., Guild of Boston Artists
Jan. 3-Jan. 14—Paintings of Flowers by Sally Cross Bill.
Jan. 16-Jan. 28—Water Colors by Harry Sutton, Jr.

Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum
Jan. 1-Jan. 31—Graphic Art of the Fifteenth Century.

Northampton, Mass., Smith College Museum of Art

Springfield, Mass., Springfield Museum of Fine Arts
Jan. 10-Jan. 30—Contemporary German Art.

Wellesley, Mass., Farnsworth Museum, Wellesley College
Jan. 4-Jan. 16—Photographs by George Kidder Smith.

New York, N. Y., The Museum of Modern Art

CALENDAR

Monday, January 2
Basement Studio Group: Dramatic reading of "Henceforth Ye Shall Be Called Paul," by Mr. J. Henry MacDuff, assisted by the Eureka Quartette. Tea. 80 Benefit Street, 8:10 P. M.

Tuesday, January 3
Providence Community Concert Association presents Joseph Srzegi, violinist. Metropolitan Theatre, 8:30 P. M.
Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. W. J. A. R., 7:30 P. M.

Sunday, January 8
*Providence Festival Chorus, Mr. John B. Archer, conductor, Metropolitan Theatre, 3:00 P. M.

*Gallery talk by Mr. Kall Kahn, "A Survey of Persian Art," Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M., Miss Phyllis Bentley, author, will speak at Alumnae Hall, 4:00 P. M.
*Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. Hope Street High School, 8:30 P. M.

Monday, January 9
Basement Studio Group: Julia Marlowe evening: dramatic reading of scenes from the ten Shakespearean plays in which Julia Marlowe has appeared. Tea. 80 Benefit Street, 8:10 P. M.

Tuesday, January 10
*Pawtucket Civic Music Association presents the Boston Sinfonietta, Arthur Fiedler, conductor, Mr. Richard Burgin, soloist. Pawtucket High School, 8:30 P. M.
*Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. W. J. A. R., 7:30 P. M.

Wednesday, January 11
Exhibition of Mexican Hand Crafts loaned by Mr. Robert K. Stephens, Providence Plantations Club. Open from 2:00 to 5:00 P. M.

Thursday, January 12
Talk by Dr. Alexander Dorner on the present exhibition of Dutch Masterpieces at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Museum Gallery, Rhode Island School of Design, 8:30 P. M.

Sunday, January 15
Gallery talk, "Minoan Art," by Professor C. A. Robinson. Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.
*Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. Mr. Ralph Einstein, soloist. Hope Street High School, 8:30 P. M.

Monday, January 16
Basement Studio Group: Dramatic readings of modern one act plays. Tea. 80 Benefit Street, 8:10 P. M.

Tuesday, January 17
Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. W. J. A. R., 7:30 P. M.

*Admission charged

Sunday, January 22

Lecture by Mr. John B. Archer on the Boston Symphony Orchestra program, Providence Public Library, 4:00 P. M.

*Auspices of the Monday Morning Musical Club.
*Sock and Buskin presents "Salam," by Oscar Wilde. Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M. Tickets may be obtained through members.
*Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. Hope Street High School, 8:30 P. M.

Monday, January 23
*The Players present "Autumn Crocus," by L. H. Anthony. The Barker Playhouse, 8:15 P. M. Tickets may be obtained through members.

Tuesday, January 24
*Concert by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Serge Kousievsky, conductor, Metropolitan Theatre, 8:15 P. M.

Tuesday, January 24
*The Players present "Autumn Crocus," by L. H. Anthony. The Barker Playhouse, 8:15 P. M. Tickets may be obtained through members.

Wednesday, January 25
*The Players present "Autumn Crocus," by L. H. Anthony. The Barker Playhouse, 8:15 P. M. Tickets may be obtained through members.

Thursday, January 26
*The Players present "Autumn Crocus," by L. H. Anthony. The Barker Playhouse, 8:15 P. M. Tickets may be obtained through members.

Friday, January 27
*The Players present "Autumn Crocus," by L. H. Anthony. The Barker Playhouse, 8:15 P. M. Tickets may be obtained through members.

Sunday, January 29
Gallery talk by Miss Dorothea Daly, "French Paintings in the Museum Collection." Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.
*Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. Hope Street High School, 8:30 P. M.

Tuesday, January 31
Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. W. J. A. R., 7:30 P. M.

*Providence Community Concert Association presents Rose Brompton and Richard Bonelli, Metropolitan Theatre, 8:30 P. M.