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" ORGANIZATION OF TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS "

Report of René Huyghe :

The extraordinary extension of Art Exhibitions, during the last quarter of a century, gives us sufficient perspective and experience to-day to judge their advantages and drawbacks . So, we may be now at a time when it is important to adopt a line of conduct, in full knowledge of the circumstances .

The development of Art Exhibitions answers at the same time the present increasing requirement for visual culture, of which the main beneficiary is Art, and the travelling difficulties which make works of art easier to transport than the public. No doubt the resounding success of several big manifestations of this kind has developed both curiosity and a true love of works of art .

But such benefits risk being endangered by the increased fervour of the crowds ; the training thus provoked could well bring about a result, quite opposite to the one which is sought . By wishing to better spread the work of art in Society, we succeed in hastening its destruction . The unconsidered multiplication of exhibitions has allowed specialists to come to certain disquieting conclusions : first of all, the spirit of competition makes the organizers limit themselves to the presentation of the most famous or most popular "stars". The public, becoming more and more "blasé", therefore more and more exacting, seeks less to increase its knowledge than to rediscover its favorite "headline names". Although the museums give it a constant possibility of expending its knowledge and its likes, exhibitions, bound to please for material reasons, often apply themselves to flatter more than to instruct . It is the proof of its success . The failure of exhibitions which courageously tried to cultivate curiosity anew has been noticeable.

Yet, the main problem is not there . It lies in the greatly increasing risk of destruction run by the artistic patrimony . Transport, Customs difficulties, where incidents are more frequent than is supposed, are fraught with risk . Above all, changes of climate and hygrometric regime accelerate the processes of destruction of the works; in the case of pictures, particularly, the cohesion of the different coats which compose the painting is endangered by the successive dilatations and contractions provoked by those variations .

Therefore, apart from the direct causes of accident, a more or less rapid degradation brings about the lesion of the panels and, above all the scaling of the pictorial coat . The transport of whole museums from country to country, from continent to continent, seriously threaten the treasures of our civilisation, already so grievously injured by wars .

It is, therefore, very desirable that a spirit of proportion and organization be brought into so important domain . An international agreement, brought by a competent commission, certainly ought to be practicable . A general and reasoned arrangement ought to limit their number, to coordinate their efforts to avoid overlapping, to control the observance of indispensable safety measures which tend to be slackened as a result of repeated application . Such measures could only give increased prestige to big, but less numerous manifestations, which therefore would afford more complete collections; we must, indeed, consider the present indifference of the lenders who limit the choice offered to the public . Moreover they would avoid this wasting of works of art which we are witnessing; we must not forget that, if they are made for our enjoyment, we have, in exchange, to ensure their safe-keeping and their preservation, for themselves and for their future role with our successors .