

Translation

Commissioner O'Brien, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

Art critics are not reputed to be the kindest of human beings. We hear ad nauseam how art can be counted on as the most efficacious means towards breaking down national barriers, towards bringing peoples closer together. We hear the statement so often that our boredom leads us to suspect it. But there is no question of the fact that an annual meeting of art critics such as our Association has arranged over the past eleven years in various centers of Europe (and now in America) does break down barriers and bring these professionally unkind creatures closer together in a spirit of good will - for at least a week. More, and I can say it from an experience of all these meetings from the beginning, the souvenir which each has left is a warm one which conduces to a closer material sympathy among us as colleagues, a fuller understanding of each other and of each others problems.

That is why, speaking on behalf of the International Association as President, I am particularly grateful to the United States section for having invited us here to New York for our XIth General Assembly. In the ten years since the Association held its first meeting in Paris in 1948 we have enjoyed the hospitality of as many countries: France, Italy, Switzerland, England, Ireland, Turkey, Greece, the Netherlands, Belgium and Yugoslavia. This is our first opportunity as a body to move from the base of our nativity in Europe to another continent. And we come, for the most part, with fresh eyes to the United States and New York.

This is a particularly rich opportunity our American colleagues have afforded by their invitation and the plans they have made to introduce us in our brief visit to the architecture, painting, sculpture and

humanity of New York and its close environs. Today such an opportunity to leave one world for a view of another with which we are only acquainted at second hand or at best slightly, is particularly valuable to us as critics. In too many quarters of the world today art is primarily seen and esteemed on chauvinist grounds. One of the bases of our organization is its internationalism, or I might even risk saying supranationalism. Each member, as we know, is elected to the central body from candidates proposed by the national sections, as an individual not as a representative of that section. From the outset this supranational ideal was set as a foundation stone of our edifice - a tacit declaration against chauvinism in the critical approach to art. And today our United States colleagues have opened a way to us for a still fuller breakdown of chauvinist and regional limitations of view by their invitation of the XIth General Assembly to New York and through the introductions to contemporary American painting, sculpture and architecture they have planned for us.

That our introduction to the western continents should take place in New York is reasonable enough. This city has served as the gateway for so many who have found their way as visitors from the Old World to the New. But that His Honor Mayor Wagner should wish personally to proffer us the City's official welcome through Commissioner O'Brien is a distinctive favor of which we are most deeply appreciative. And once again from the warmth of Commissioner O'Brien's welcome on Mayor Wagner's part and the manner in which it was proposed, we have a further encouragement to a breakdown of barriers - at least among ourselves - representatives of so many art centers in so many quarters of the world. The official languages of the International Association are of course French and English

and Commissioner O'Brien graciously recognized the fact. But a more fundamental medium of exchange for our common understanding than either of these linguistic vehicles is a warm humanity; and this Commissioner O'Brien thoroughly exemplified for us in his words of greeting.

As guests of the City we are deeply honored by His Honor Mayor Wagner's welcome and by the presence of Commissioner O'Brien with us here this morning: And particularly to him for making us feel so much at home in the very moment of our General Assembly of inauguration.

Then it is to our colleagues of the American Section we turn in gratitude for all the energy, ingenuity and hospitality on which they have drawn to provide us the Assembly program which is so rich in promise of pleasure and esthetic reward. It is evident to what an extent so many of the American Section have gone to insure us a full six days on this brief visit. And not only such member critics of the American section who also carry museum burdens such as Mr. Robert Goldwater, provisional president of the American Section and Director of the Museum of Primitive Art; Mr. Lloyd Goodrich, Director of the Whitney Museum; Mr. Alfred Barr of the Museum of Modern Art; Mr. James Thrall Soby - but also our hosts Mr. Franklin Biebel, the Director of this handsome Frick Collection; the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mr. Rorimer and his Director of Education, Mr. Callisen; the Director of the Brooklyn Museum, Mr. Scheff; Mr. Holland, Director of the Institute of International Education; Mr. Guggenheim, president of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, and all the hosts and hostesses who have planned so thoroughly for our creature needs as well as the artists, architects and speakers who are to cater for our more spiritual appetites.

There is behind all this, however, one person without whose long known, deeply appreciated and universally admired loyalty and persistent, generous care, this assembly in New York would never have taken place, no more than would the ten previous assemblies and six congresses of A.I.C.A. - I speak naturally and simply of the Secretary-General of the Art Critics Association, Madame S. Gille-Delafon, to whom we all have owed so much through the eleven years of A.I.C.A's existence.

Again the most encouraging collaboration and the most effective moral and material aid which we have continued to enjoy since the inception of the Art Critics Association has of course come from UNESCO, which has consistently favored the constitution and upheld the initiation of A.I.C.A over these eleven years. We are proud of the confidence which UNESCO places in us and are happy in every opportunity it gives us to collaborate in its work. We are honored to have with us here today at our New York inaugural session Mr. Arthur Gagliotti, Representative of UNESCO to the United Nations. His presence is a token of friendship and of the continued confidence of UNESCO in our collaboration and of UNESCO's interest in the Association's work. And I hope Mr. Gagliotti will convey on our behalf to the General Director of UNESCO the assurance of A.I.C.A's deep regard for the ideals UNESCO represents - peace, intellectual progress and international collaboration.

My only regret at the opening of this general assembly is that more of our colleagues could not have been with us here in New York. [^] Our friends of the American Section have prepared such a tempting program I regret that any of our number should miss it. But since this is a general assembly - not a Congress - and as a consequence more a work session than a festive gathering - I regret we have not more workers present.