

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES CRITIQUES D'ART  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ART CRITICS

R e p o r t

OF THE Vith INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF ART CRITICS

NAPLES and PALERMO, 16-22 SEPTEMBER 1957

O p e n i n g      S e s s i o n

PALAZZO REALE, NAPLES - MONDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER, 11 a.m.

Acting President : Mr. James Johnson SWEENEY (United States)

Vice-Presidents : Messrs. Raymond COGNIAT (France)  
H.L.C. JAPPE (Netherlands)  
Sir Herbert READ (United Kingdom)  
Juliusz STARZYNSKI (Poland)  
Lionello VENTURI (Italy)

Secretary-General : Mme S. GILLE-DELAFON (France)

Regional Secretary : Mr. Otto BENESCH (Austria)

Treasurer : Mr. Walter KERN (Switzerland)

Chairman of the Host Section : Mr. Giulio Carlo ARGAN (Italy)

Chairman of the Organizing Committee : Miss Palma BUCARELLI (Italy)

Rapporteur-General of the Congress : Mr. Rosario ASSUNTO (Italy)

Secretary-General of the Congress : Mr. Giovanni CARANDENTE (Italy)

UNESCO Representative : Mr. Michel DARD, Head of the Division of  
International Exchanges.

Mr. Achille LAURO, the Mayor, welcomed the distinguished  
visitors and art critics from all over the world, on behalf of the  
City of Naples.



He said that an international gathering of this nature was a tribute to a city which not only put one in mind of such great names as Vergil, Statius, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Goethe, Shelley and d'Annunzio, and others, but was the possessor of a great artistic, cultural and monumental heritage, in addition to its natural beauty and colour, and should thus exercise a very special attraction for the delegates to the Congress. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the sixth International Congress of Art Critics would be crowned with success.

Mr. Giulio Carlo ARGAN, Chairman of the Italian Section, began with a tribute to the memory of Paul FIERENS, who had, from its inception, presided over AICA with exemplary devotion and efficiency. He has striven to promote among art critics and historians the consciousness of their mutual responsibility and the will to co-operate, through which fact they were holding periodic meetings in order to discuss their common problems, draw up working directives and formulate their aims. He expressed his thanks to Mme. Pierens for her kindness in attending the VIth Congress.

He then stressed the importance of the subjects to be discussed by the Congress. Their examination would take up the major time available, although delegates would have the opportunity of visiting Naples, Palermo and their surroundings. On behalf of the delegates, he thanked the distinguished personalities who had been good enough to patronise the Congress and all those who had contributed, either directly or indirectly, to its success.

In closing, he read a telegram from the President of the Italian Republic, expressing his regret at being unable to attend the opening session, and wishing the Congress every success in its labours.

Mrs. Maria HIERVOLINO, Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Education, welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Italian Government and paid tribute to the memory of Paul FIERENS, first President of AICA. She observed that, in spite of a good many difficulties, AICA had been able to carry out a number of valuable tasks since its foundation, among the most important of which had been the establishment of prizes for art critics and artists, the Archives of Contemporary Art which were on the point of publication, etc. She then referred to the importance of the topics to be considered, which demonstrated the extreme difficulty of the art critic's vocation, and emphasized particularly the social function of art, too often under-estimated, and the need of paying attention to the vital contributions of art to life and of life to art, rather than to striving for standardization.

After observing that the atmosphere of Naples and Palermo could only favour its labours, she declared the VIth International Congress of Art Critics open.

Mr. James Johnson SWEENEY, Acting President of the International Association of Art Critics, said that the three words - Italy, Naples and Palermo - conjured up a magic vision of beauty, art and tradition. While the members of AICA were more particularly concerned



with contemporary art, they did not forget that a form of contemporary art that ignored tradition would be built on sand. The Congress could only congratulate itself on the fact that it was taking place in a perfect setting for the consideration of the problems of living art - a setting of natural charm, artistic beauty, tradition, and respect for tradition.

He expressed the gratitude of the Bureau and all the members of AICA to all those who had made the meeting possible and had worked to ensure its success. Deriving the benefit of the warmth of Italian hospitality, the Congress particularly wanted to thank Mr. Giulio Carlo ARGAN, Chairman of the Italian Section, Miss Palma BUCARELLI and Mr. CARANDENTE, while not forgetting Professor VENTURI who had certainly - as members knew - had the final word on the measures taken to enable the Congress to be held. Delegates were also aware that the Paris Secretariat headed by Mme. GILLE-DELAFFON had actively assisted in the preparations for the Congress. As the guests of Italy, delegates were particularly honoured by the presence at the opening session of Mme. HIERVOLINO, Secretary of State for Education, whom he thanked for her gracious words of welcome. A mere glimpse at the programme was sufficient to show how much thanks AICA owed to the Naples Provincial Tourist Agency.

He referred to the encouraging co-operation and the effective moral and material aid that AICA had received from UNESCO since its foundation. AICA could only be proud of the confidence shown it by that Organization and congratulate itself on every opportunity it was given to co-operate. Mr. Michel DARD, Head of the Division of Arts and Letters, was more than a mere ally of the Association; he was a friend, and the Acting President was happy to be able to welcome him to the Congress, as his presence was a further proof of the importance he attached to the Association's work. He requested Mr. DARD to assure his Director-General of AICA's great respect for UNESCO's ideals. For UNESCO was a synonym for peace, intellectual progress, international understanding and co-operation.

As the printed programme of the Congress had been distributed to members, he would not go into it in detail. Its evident fullness compelled him to reiterate the thanks that were due to the Italian hosts of the Congress, who had taken on their shoulders the bulk of the labour of organization. The extensive programme of visits and receptions and the large number of participants were due to the fact that the gathering was not merely a general assembly but a congress in the true sense.

Adding his tribute to the memory of Paul FIERENS, he said that all who had known and worked with the latter knew that he would have regretted to see the Congress shrouded in gloom because of his absence. His tolerance, his kindly disposition, and chiefly, his gaiety and sense of humour should be the symbols under which the



Congress should carry out its impending tasks under the warm Mediterranean sun of Naples and Palermo.

After addressing a few words of thanks in Italian to those Italian members responsible for the organization of the Congress, Mr. SWEENEY pointed out that the delegates to the Congress, as writers on contemporary art, were aware of the heartening importance attached to XXth Century art in Italy. As historians, the word "Italy" immediately suggested to them tradition; as critics of present-day creative art, the members of AICA understood the need of fusing tradition and exploration in the effort of creation.

He concluded by once more thanking his Italian colleagues. He was convinced that a meeting held under such happy and favourable auspices could not but add a successful chapter to the history of AICA meetings which had already included the cities of Paris, Venice, Amsterdam, Zurich, Dublin, Istanbul, Oxford and Dubrovnik.



F i r s t   W o r k i n g   S e s s i o n

PALAZZO REALE, NAPLES

Monday, 16 September 1957, 4 p.m.

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The Acting President, Mr. James Johnson SWEENEY (U.S.A.), opening the meeting, reminded members of the two subjects to be studied by the Congress. The first of these was the following : "The Methods and Terminology of Art Criticism", discussion of which would be begun at the current meeting. The rapporteurs were Professor Venturi, Mrs. Nicco-Fasola, Mrs. Van Emde Boas and Mr. Hofmann.

The debate would be introduced by Prof. Venturi, to whom Mr. Sweeney handed over the Chair.

Mr. Lionello VENTURI (Italy) began by pointing out that "method" and "terminology" implied two different problems and that the rapporteurs were therefore free to discuss only one of them. He himself proposed to consider the connection between the two terms.

He said that the critical method was based on a conception of perfection in every field of art. While perfection had formerly been considered as above history, change, periods and different ideas, it was not recognized that every period of art had its own perfection, which might be entirely different from that of other periods. Assuming that every period had produced masterpieces and mediocre works, art terminology should be able to contribute to the understanding of the changing tastes conditioning the various concepts of artistic perfection.

In ancient times the word "art" meant "to make something in accordance with a plan" and, although Socrates may have grasped the significance of the spiritual value beyond the artistic object, the man of antiquity did not appear to have raised the question of unity in the arts. The idea of unity was still more lacking in the Middle Ages than it was in antiquity and, in that connection, the speaker gave as an example the "Stedula Artium" of Theophilus. But in the fourteenth century, the idea of unity began to emerge out of its obscurity in Florence, where Secenini, the pupil of Giotto, had referred to the unity of design and colour, implying, naturally, their material aspect, line and shading. In the fifteenth century Ghiberti had contributed a new factor by stating that design was the foundation and the theory of painting and sculpture; that idea could only be expressed in English which was the only language to possess two distinct terms : "drawing" and "design", while the Latin languages



could only express the difference by speaking of "la ligne" (material design) and of "projet" (intellectual design). Prof. Venturi went on to observe that the distinction was already an old one, clearly brought out by Frederico Zuccheri who referred to exterior and interior design. Vasari, too, was certainly aware of the distinction when he referred to the designing arts, which for him meant all branches of art from their technical and esthetic aspects.

While the concept of "beauty" was already linked with the arts in antiquity - a concept found again in Vasari and the Italian writers of the seventeenth century who refer to the "beaux arts" of design, "beau" being used as an adjective and not as a definition -, we must wait for the French classicism of the seventeenth century to find "beau" linked with "art" for the purposes of definition. Thus, in 1690, Charles Perrault published his "Cabinet des Beaux-Arts". The concept returned to Italy in the eighteenth century, through French influence - a fact that the speaker demonstrated through pointing out that Italy had adopted and still used the form "Belle Arti", while the normal form employed would have been "Arti Belle". Later, certain writers began using both forms, such as Milizia, critic of architecture, who published in 1798 : "L'Arte di vedere nelle Belle Arte Disegno". Watley's dictionary of painting, sculpture and architecture, published in 1792, defined beauty as "the perfection of art", giving a subjective meaning to something which had been - even during the Renaissance - objective. Prof. Venturi referred to Aristotle's definition : "Beauty is order and measure", which was equivalent to saying that it must be looked for in the object itself. The important factor in Watley's attitude was the recognition that beauty had several aspects. For he referred to the sensual arts as possessing their own kind of beauty, the sentimental arts as having their own, and finally the intellectual arts which possessed still another form.

Prof. Venturi then attempted to define the position of the Renaissance artists towards design, to which they attached great importance, some considering it as a tool of conquest in the hands of man and the world (Masaccio, Pollaiuolo, Leonardo da Vinci and Michel Angelo), while others, less tormented, less philosophical, had had a conception of contemplative rather than of powerful beauty (Botticelli, Fra Angelico, Raphael). Following Poussin and seventeenth-century French classicism, beauty was assigned the place of honour - a concept attacked by Lessing in "Laokoon", written in 1766. Trying to find the common denominator in the figure, he had formulated, or at any rate popularised, the expression "bildende Künste" - a term derived from the old German word "kuhnen", i.e. "können" (to be able). In using that term, Lessing's aim had been to conceive of painting and sculpture as completely detached from poetry, in opposition to the "beaux-arts" that united them.

In Schultzer's "Allgemeine Theorie" (1771), "Bild" was applied to the formal mass - a fact which, as Auguste Schlegel confirmed in 1823, implied that the term "bildende Künste" applied essentially to sculpture and architecture. The phrase had been very badly



translated into the Latin languages as "plastic arts" - a term that ignored colour - and in Italy, from 1852 onwards, the term "figurative art" came into use - a term which had spread all over Europe but which could not be accepted as art had become partly non-figurative, and even less so because architecture remained outside the scope of the definition. The true culminating point of figurative art would be the "scène de genre" in the taste of the sixteenth century.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the conception of art became revolutionized by the appearance of the definition describing art as a product of the eye, and the term "visual art" became popular, particularly in Great Britain. It would appear that the only term which would truly embrace all branches of art would be the term "art" in the singular. All the definitions attempted - and there were many others - revealed changes in taste, and while they furnished proof of the relativity of taste, they were not definitions.

Another current problem of terminology was the distinction between the craftsman and the artist - a problem which was of passionate interest during the Italian Renaissance, particularly for Leonardo da Vinci, but for which no solution yet appeared to have been found. There were still other problems arising, such as the distinction to be drawn between the process of artistic creation and the finished work of art. The speaker concluded his address by observing that only in English was it possible to make a clear distinction through the use of the terms "artistry" and "art".

Mrs. Giusta NICCO-PASOLA (Italy) observed that the discussion on terminology had been introduced by the Netherlands critics who had stressed the differences in meaning attached to identical terms in different countries - differences due to the cultural evolution in varying environments and periods. To conclude from the above that such deviations formed part of the ordinary historical process and must therefore be accepted without further ado would be to sidestep the problem. In any event, any critical research on a particular historical period implied the necessity of verifying the basic vocabulary of that period - in other words, checking on the ideas prevailing at the time.

It would be of the highest value to thoroughly revise the terms indicated by the Netherlands delegation, e.g. realism, naturalism, abstract, etc., and to try and reach carefully thought-out definitions, while the scope of their investigation could usefully be broadened to include other concepts current in the written language and critical literature. The investigation could be carried out in one of two ways. It could either include the consideration of historical variations or be limited to the present. But whatever method was followed, the task was not one that could be done by a congress, unless research were restricted to a few items which could be treated either theoretically or on the basis of actual experience in art.



She thought that a task that would be both useful and possible would be to examine some of the most noteworthy features of our era and to begin by asking why the question had been raised - a question that could be answered by referring to the growing number of meanings of the terms used because of the influence of science, philosophy, sociology, literature, etc. She was of the opinion that the Congress was not concerned with a mere question of vocabulary and that the problem was not unconnected with the agony peculiar to the contemporary era. But it was not enough to understand the sense of a critical concept. Critics were divided not only by words but by attitudes stemming from the deeper feelings of each as an individual. While a diversity of concepts could be taken as a sign of vitality, that could only be true once every outmoded attitude or the fear of facing the difficulties and vagaries of a situation had been given unbiassed consideration. That was why cultural control and revision should be at the base of any critical operation and idea and why no definitive answers could be expected. The best would appear to be those that would be more easily understandable to - and more capable of helping us solve the problems of - our age.

Mr. Werner HOPMANN (Austria) said that he would propose no solutions and would merely limit himself to pointing out some of the gaps in the professional vocabulary of art critics.

He referred to the widely differing work of Kandinsky and Mondrian : that of the former consisted of dramatic and convulsive improvisations ; that of the latter of classical equations. Both were described as "abstract", "non-figurative", or "non-objective", although the plastic message of a picture made up of straight lines differed vitally from one consisting of a feverish dance of colour. Therefore the term "abstract" could only suggest a general classification, without conjuring up subtle distinctions. Without wishing to list all the uses of the term, the speaker stressed its obvious ambiguity, which appeared even in the definition given in Webster's Dictionary, a most authoritative work - a definition that could be applied equally well to the works of Kandinsky and those of Mondrian, the various phases of whose work the speaker outlined.

He concluded by putting forward the view that the aims of a discussion on the terminology of art criticism were to show the organic relationship between logically successive phases, to indicate their connection with the laws of optics and to draw up an "abstract" vocabulary. While taking into account language problems and difficulties, it would be possible to use, as a basis for such discussion, the vocabulary of Gestalt Psychology, which distinguished between the phases of the *Vorgestalt*, followed by the differentiation principle leading to the *Gestalt*, and the reduction of the latter in the *Mondrianesque* state, which he would describe as the "*Reduktionsgestalt*".

The CHAIRMAN opened discussion on the three reports submitted.



Mr. G.L. LUZZATTO (Italy) submitted an actual example of terminology of art critics in order to bring discussion down to a more practical level. He referred to two recent works, one by JEDLICKA, which drew a clear distinction between talent and genius, and added that he himself was unable to distinguish between them. In his view, the difference was merely one of intensity within the same quality, and not an absolute one.

Mr. RUDOLCI (Yugoslavia) thought that an important task for the art critics was to show the form emerging from community life - a term which had been much abused. However real the influence of community life might be on form, it was not easy to demonstrate and, to some extent, it only appeared indirectly as a result of the work of a creative craftsman, who did not differ in essence from an artist as such.

The CHAIRMAN announced that it would only be possible to give the conclusions of the reports submitted at the end of the next meeting.

The meeting rose.

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## S e c o n d   W o r k i n g   S e s s i o n

PALAZZO REALE, NAPLES

Tuesday, 17 September 1957, 9 a.m.

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The Acting PRESIDENT announced that the meeting would continue discussing the subject : "Terminology and Art Criticism". He called on Mr. H.L.C. JAFFE to take the chair.

Mrs. Magda Van EMDE BOAS (Netherlands) submitted her report. While she recognized the existence of a problem of terminology, she considered that the compilation of a theoretical dictionary, however desirable it might be, would demand a considerable amount of work and would take a very long time. The result might very well be that it would be outdated on completion, as the nature of the terminology of art criticism was just as dynamic as the plastic arts it had describe, analyse and evaluate.



She recommended the constitution of a sub-committee or working party, which would undertake, in co-operation with the national section of AICA, a thorough study of the terms most frequently used by art critics. In view of the proverbial clarity of the French language, Paris appeared to be the ideal meeting place for such a committee.

Mr. H.L.C. JAFFE (Netherlands), Chairman of the session, speaking in his capacity as a member of the group that had considered the problem, observed that the question of the changing meaning of terms resulting from new currents in art had already been discussed at Dubrovnik and Oxford. He indicated that the term "abstract art" had been created before the form of art so described, and had been used for the first time in a book by Boringier, called "Abstraktion und Einfüllung", in which it was opposed to tangible reality.

He said that Mr. Hofmann had already drawn attention to the fact that there were different trends in abstraction itself, while the problem of "abstract art" had become even more complex for the reason that in the present age even ancient art was considered from the abstract angle. What the critics were seeking were clarity and comprehension, and it was therefore their duty to pay attention to the clarity of the terms used and their correct application.

In conclusion, the speaker pointed out that what the Netherlands group proposed was a study of the terms and their meaning.

Mr. Hans REDEKER (Netherlands) discussed the question of art-criticism terminology from the philosophical aspect. The term "terminology" itself implied a system of ideas capable of isolated definition. The object of the field of art criticism was not only to interpret human life, but also the intermediate fields in which the argument determined the proposition, which in its turn determined the terminology to be used. It could be asked whether the problem of terminology for the art critic really existed. To answer that question, it would first be necessary to draw a clear distinction between art criticism and the other activities of the critic, e.g. the history of art. In comparing art criticism with the history and the philosophy of art, it could be noticed that art criticism did not imply a historic attitude, as it did not observe but evaluate, and tended not toward the general but toward the particular. Finally, the art critic was not a specialist but a dilettante, unscientific by profession, treating every branch of the art of mankind. There remained therefore only one field where he had to create his own vocabulary - that of values. Most misunderstandings arose from the fact that many of the terms employed, e.g. baroque, mannerism, realism, expressionism, etc., had a different meaning for the history of art, for esthetics and for art criticism. The problem of terminology in art criticism only existed in fact as a reflection of the concept of values, and thereby of the problem of artistic values.

Mr. H.L.C. JAFFE, Chairman of the session, asked for



discussion on the work of the Netherlands group, as submitted.

Mrs. NICCO-PASOLA admitted that the reports submitted had dispelled her doubts on the first subject put before the Congress. The enquiry on the subject of terminology had actually become a critical one, i. e. an attempt to understand certain burning questions related to modern art. The study of terminology could be a kind of historical revision of ever-important problems. The vagueness of the term "abstract" worried her a great deal and, like a great many others, it could only profit from revision. She agreed that the compilation of a dictionary was little to be recommended, but agreement should be reached on the task that would serve the most useful purpose. She was thinking of a theoretical history and stressed the advisability of concentrating effort on a field to be determined, covering only a few problems and trends. She did not consider that any purpose would be served by proposing a number of terms unless they were linked with specific art problems, thus enabling research to be orientated. The problem of abstract art might serve as the basis of research.

Mr. JAFFE expressed his satisfaction of the fact that Mme. Nicco-Pasola had drawn attention to the practical aspects of the question and on the concrete existence of the terms used. The art critics were meeting to revise and perfect the terms which were their tools in acting as middlemen between art and the public.

Mr. HOFMANN congratulated the Netherlands Section for their initiative in the examination of so important a problem. He considered that the publication - in fuller form - of the reports submitted to the meetings would be of importance. Finally, he supported his statements of the previous day by drawing on a few examples from literature.

Mr. JAFFE thanked Mr. Hofmann for his speech and the examples he had quoted which not only showed how words could change in meaning, but also how terms of opprobrium in one age might become the object of research in another. The fact furnished yet another proof that terms should always be considered in relation to the trends in art of a specific era. By studying, revising and considering terms from their philological, historical and philosophical aspects, it might be possible to prevent their falling into disuse and to revive them, which would profit not only critics but everyone engaged in the pursuit of art.

Mr. Lionello VENTURI also thanked the Netherlands group for its contribution to the study of terminology and its problems, congratulating particularly all those who had investigated the terminology of modern art. He agreed with Mr. Jaffé on the need to conduct research from a historical angle, which meant that the conception would have to be a little different than it would be from the philosophical aspect. He disagreed with Mr. Redeker, considering that the separation of the vocabularies of art criticism and art history entailed some risk for, if the history of art were truly what its name implied - and



not merely the history of culture - it would have to be put on the same level as criticism, from which the need for combining the two activities. The problem was of importance for terminology. He considered it essential that the terms be examined from their historic aspect and that the means be found - naturally without using the term "abstract art" to describe ancient or gothic art - of using the argument of history as a justification for a proposed term that could be used to distinguish Greek primitive art or the art of the Middle Ages from that which was now fundamental problem of criticism, namely abstract art.

Mr. G.C. ARGAN (Italy) said that the discussion had had a positive result in that it enabled the observation that the problem of terminology was that of the historical terminology, which did not have to be complied but justified.

Referring to the proposals for the compilation of a dictionary, the speaker pointed out that almost all existing dictionaries on the fine arts dated from the 18th or early 19th centuries. They had been compiled because of the prevailing attitude that the terms used had acquired universal value. Modern art certainly showed an international trend. It had freed itself from nationalism, i.e. from the traditional way of regarding nature based on national traditions, and had become established on an international basis. He thought it possible that a value could be found which, if not universal, would at any rate be general, for the terms used, without there being any risk of their historical meaning being distorted. He was of the opinion that, parallel with an exact terminology, a more general vocabulary should be compiled, as he would not like to give up using words that were of significance for specific cultural field. As a description of a form of art that put some distance between itself and naturalistic experience, the term "abstract art" seemed to him to fit perfectly, although with the proviso that the method used by individual artists be specified.

In conclusion, he thought that the relationship between a full and a more restricted terminology could only be appreciated through the compilation of a comparative historical dictionary containing all the terms used in art history - ancient, modern and contemporary - without any attempt being made to create an artificial terminology. Such a dictionary, which would be the result of co-operation among the art critics of the entire world, would not be an abstract work, but a very concrete and important one that might even shed light on the true cultural traditions leading up to modern art.

Mr. Jean BOURET (France) also thanked the Netherlands Section for the excellent preparatory work they had done on the topic. He agreed that Mr. Argan's suggestion for a comparative dictionary was as an excellent one, even when the inevitable margin of error involved was taken into account. He would like to bring discussion into another level by drawing attention to the sociological aspect of the language



question. Through the fact that language was a means of communication among human beings, it came into the sphere of the social sciences. Doubts about the critical vocabulary were often expressed by painters who refused to be pinned down to a particular category. Nor should the fact be lost sight of that painting was a commercial as well as an intellectual matter and that, depending on the moment, it might be more or less interesting to be an abstract painter. Moreover, vocabulary was created more by painters than by critics, which confirmed its sociological aspect. A dictionary, provided it contained the historical context of the terms included, was essential. He concluded by suggesting that we were possibly not yet far enough removed from abstract art to be able to adapt the current critical vocabulary to it.

Mr. Raymond COGNAT (France) said he had little to add to the extremely clear and precise reports submitted by Mrs. Van Ende Boas and Mr. Argan. He was concerned by the fact that, in the study of the problem, the academic aspect might obtrude too much, a factor which would be difficult to avoid. In spite of Mr. Argan's suggested precautions, he was a little hesitant about deciding on exact definitions and he saw something contradictory between the wish to define terms exactly and that of allowing some latitude in the use of such terms. He was against the stratification of words. It was precisely because they deviated from their original meaning that words added richness to a language. To use the word "impressionism" for a period of the past that did not know it seemed to him to enrich, at one and the same time, both the present and the past, and to make comprehension easier. Rather than invent new words, it would be more valuable to broaden the sense of those existing, something which was, perhaps, an example of true internationalism. If Mr. Argan's dictionary should ever see the light, he hoped that it would be extremely flexible in structure. It would certainly be most precious for critics living some centuries hence in giving them an exact idea of what the critics of the present were trying to express. Something that could be strongly recommended would be the compilation of a vocabulary of current terms giving clear definitions.

Mr. Gillo DORFLES (Italy) said he had been a little disappointed with the reports submitted, as he had expected discussion to be based on terminology as a whole, and not on the value to be given to terms like abstract art, talent or genius. He assumed that everyone agreed on the changing meaning of terms in the course of centuries, or even within a particular generation. But there were in existence some very thorough semantic studies on aesthetics, which should have been referred to in considering terminology and its importance for art history and criticism. He expressed surprise that no one had quoted Wittgenstein, Carnap or Morris, authors who had shed considerable light on the whole field of analytical philosophy and the analysis of language. He agreed with Mr. Venturi that the art critic and art historian should use identical language, but thought there was some risk in using the Gestalt vocabulary, as Mr. Hofmann had proposed.



In conclusion, he expressed the view that, before proposing the compilation of a dictionary of art terms, and before discussing the possible meanings of individual terms such as abstract art, talent, genius, it would have been necessary to consult the available analytical studies which would contribute to the avoidance of serious errors.

Mr. Egon VIETTA (Germany) could not agree with the previous speaker that the problem should be reduced to its semantic aspect. He did, however, agree with Mr. Venturi that abstract art be recognized as a present-day phenomenon, for art was always linked with history, but pointed out that the question of the contemporary meaning of "nature" had not been raised at the Congress, while Heidegger and contemporary French philosophers held the view that what nature signified for our age was not the same as it had signified for the Greeks, Vergil or the Middle Ages. In the modern world, nature was becoming imbued with a technical element and losing its original religious and elemental value.

Mr. Ernst GOLDSCHMIDT (Belgium) said that he had been struck by a number of thoughts during discussion. The word "confusion" had been frequently mentioned, the reason for which could only be that the speakers were not always agreed as to the meaning of the terms they were using. Among the large number of reasons for that, mention should be made of the abuse of quotation marks in critical writings. Putting a word in quotation marks was equivalent to giving it another meaning. "Abstract art" and abstract art were two totally different things. Another snare, more appropriate to German, was the separation, particularly in the case of certain adjectives, of the prefix from the root. Too often the critic did not seem to be aiming for clarity but to deliberately sow confusion. Such abuses could be avoided through greater discipline and the use of words only in their habitual sense.

Mr. JAFFE thanked the previous speaker for his appeal for clarity and discipline, sometimes most necessary not only in the use of words but in ideas. The aim of the critic was to be understood.

Mr. Mario PEDROSA (Brazil) proposed a practical conclusion to the discussion. He supported Mr. Argan's suggestion for a terminological dictionary, the compilation of which would require an enormous amount of work on the part of AICA. The first stage could be establishment of a committee on which all those disciplines interested in, and capable of, treating philosophical, linguistic, phenomenological and logical problems would be represented.

Reference had also been made to the psychological problem of perception and to Gestalt Psychology. Equal consideration would have to be given to all presently-known derivatives, such as that of Luynes, topological psychology, the contribution of the Young school. He thought that the setting up of a small committee to consider the problems of psychological perception would be most advisable. Finally,



a committee of art historians and critics could consider the problems of language and historical terminology and its relation to modern terminology.

Mr. LUZZATTO said that Mr. Venturi had observed that, in referring to figurative art or "Bildende Kunst", one thought mainly of the art of the nineteenth century, very near to illustration. He did not think that that observation was strictly correct as the "art figurative" did not exclude non-representational forms. The misunderstanding did not arise through the use of the term "figurative art", but of the term "non-figurative" art, which meant nothing and had even given rise to long and sterile discussions among the critics themselves. He would suggest the use of the term "rhythmic painting or art", expressing - as did music - something experienced without representing an object. That might be a solution to the problem.

Mr. JAFFE thanked Mr. Pedrosa for his practical suggestions, which might be considered by the General Assembly when it drew up its programme for the following year.

While waiting for a system - whether good or bad - to be decided on, he agreed with Mr. Goldschmidt on the necessity of returning to discipline, i.e. on the responsibility of critics toward their readers and, more particularly, towards the objects they were discussing. The inaccurate, irresponsible or inappropriate use of terms might be damaging to the reputation of the objects referred to by the critics, something which would be contrary to his professional responsibility and his responsibility as a human being. After thanking all those who had participated in the discussion, he handed over the Chair to Mr. Sweeney.

The PRESIDENT, after congratulating Mr. Jaffé for the skill with which he had handled a difficult discussion which he had contrived to make most interesting, thanked the Netherlands Section for having realized the importance and utility of the question of terminology and for the preparatory work they had done.

The meeting rose.



Third Working Session

PALAZZO REALE , NAPLES

Wednesday, 18 September 1957, 9 a.m.

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The ACTING PRESIDENT informed the meeting that the session would be devoted to the discussion of the second topic on the Congress agenda, namely : "Everyday Life and value of forms". Mr. René HUYGHE, Professor at the Collège de France and former Head Curator of the Department of Painting at the Louvre, would introduce the discussion. The rapporteurs were Messrs. Bernard Champigneulle, Aleksa Célébonovic and Gillo Dorfles. He called on Mr. René Huyghe to take the Chair.

Mr. René HUYGHE (France) pointed out that, in the programme, the topic under discussion had been sub-divided into classical and modern art. The distinction was difficult to justify and should be questioned from the very beginning. A matter of principle was involved for if the problem were considered in its entirety, there was neither past nor present. The present worked to make the future and then became the past in its turn. He thought it dangerous to maintain the illusion that periods followed one another in succession and that each differed radically from its predecessor. It was difficult to separate art history from art criticism by assuming, more specifically, that art history concerned the past and criticism the present. Prof. Venturi had put the position clearly by observing that the history of art studied the factors determining art from a historic angle, i.e. that it was also concerned with the historic factors in the art of the present, while art criticism had to elucidate the value giving the quality of art to those historic factors. It was therefore difficult to mark a frontier between the art of the past and that of the present, for the term "art" embraced both that of yesterday and that of tomorrow. Before giving his personal views, he called on Mr. Dorfles.

Mr. Gillo DORFLES (Italy) entirely shared the opinion of Mr. Huyghe that it was dangerous to make a distinction between classical and modern art.

As he was the first to speak on the topic, he proposed to begin by giving a short outline of the background to his report. When the topic "Everyday Life and value of forms" had been proposed at Dubrovnik, Mr. Francastel and himself had raised the question of the advisability of including architecture and the collateral arts (industrial aesthetics, graphic art, etc.) and he had also suggested the inclusion of advertising art. The proposal had been accepted and AICA was about to hold theoretical discussions on architecture and



industrial art for the first time. It was obviously impossible, in the modern world, to ignore those new formal factors if the aim was to obtain a panorama of modern art corresponding to the social, economic and intellectual reality. Art had to be considered as a transcendental entity, but the art of to-day was not that of yesterday and would not be that of to-morrow, either in form or function. What appeared to be developing at the moment was a division between the spheres of technical and aesthetic forms; art had almost entirely lost its religious, magical and ritual functions. Technique had become the mistress of the machine, apparently cutting off from art a vast field of human productivity which in the past had been its own. But a link between art and technique, between fashion and style, was supplied by industrial design. A typical phenomenon, in that regard, was that of the rapid wearing-out of industrially produced articles, and the consequent need to fill a perpetual market demand and of performing a "premonitory" function, anticipating new formal data. The industrial article not only had to fit in with the technical demands made on it and the material of which it was constructed, but two conditions had to be borne in mind, namely its inevitable formal instability and its pre-eminently symbolic function.

The prominence of industrial articles in everyday life was also brought out by the fact that the specific forms of machine-made products led the public to expect them in equally furniture, architecture and sculpture. The very aspect of modern towns had been transformed by industrial building and elements borrowed from publicity design. A new stylistic factor had been added to the other branches of art, a factor which was itself transformed and sublimated in architectonic and plastic construction.

In conclusion, the speaker stressed that account had to be taken of all the forms surrounding us, whether architecture, articles of everyday use, letters and posters, placards, drawings, and the whole scenic background of the cities in which we lived. Sight should not be lost of the fact that it was only by studying that complexity of forms, which on the surface appeared only of secondary importance in art, that the reasons for the emergence of new forms in painting, sculpture and architecture could be unearthed.

Mr. René HUYGHE associated himself with the tributes to Paul PIERENS, whose absence from their midst had moved him intensely. But that absence was not altogether complete, as Mme. PIERENS was among the audience. Paul PIERENS had been a man who had never tried to separate past from the present, one of the most lucid minds that had ever been lent to the study of contemporary art and at the same time an historian of the art of bygone times, to which he had devoted himself as Director of the Brussels museums and as a teacher. He had been a great Fleming, in the same way that Rubens had been, and his last article, written for "l'Art et l'Homme" and not yet published, had appropriately enough been on Rubens. In his abundant vitality,



he incarnated the vigour of his race, while being equally at home as a Parisien critic. Like Rubens, he had been a great humanist, and in the international role he had played, Ruben's beautiful words could be applied to him : "The world is my fatherland".

The topic under consideration offered him the opportunity of putting forward a few general ideas. The question of form in everyday life had interested him intensely for five years during which time he had done a great amount of work. He had been led to ask himself whether, in making a re-appraisal of the history of civilisation, it would not be possible to make out a case for a permanent relationship among the forms, the system of forms and the basic conditions of life that made up an era in the history of man or in a civilization. He had recently treated that topic, in rather an abstract way, at the Congress on Aesthetics held in Venice. He expressed his intention of basing his argument directly on the consideration of the experimental situation which was, for aesthetics, the work of art. He began by pointing out that in asserting that forms were facets of life, he did not intend implying the existence of a historical determinism making of art a mere mirror of life. As Prof. Venturi had said, art was the quality bestowed on and added to the substance of history. He also stressed the fact that the individual living in a specific period was confronted with a formal factor, an edifice of forms from which he could not escape as it corresponded to the age in which he lived. And therefore, in the scientific sense of the term, it could be said that forms were a function of life - variations parallel to those of the social, economic and technical factors of life. But to the extent that man developed his ideas, forms depended on and reflected them, for the vision of the world was parallel to his concept which it interpreted in another way. This brought him to the definition of the word "form". He said that the Greeks, in using the word "eidos" to express both "seeing" and "knowing", had immediately brought out the correlation between ideas and forms. Man, submerged in a multiplicity of confused sensations, was compelled to put them in some sort of order, and thus he created forms. That was the origin of the well-known Gestalt theory which, in the sense in which the Germans understood it, stressed the pre-eminent role of structures. Forming a structure from the external elements was performed equally by sight as by thought.

It was therefore natural that a latent and deep-seated correlation between intellectual and visual forms should exist. The problem had interested him for several years and he had summarized it in a work being prepared for publication under the title of "Forme, vie et pensée". In France, too, certain philosophers were studying the evolution of intellectual structures from one philosophy to the next. In so doing, they were elucidating intellectual structures manifested as forms appearing almost free of clearly-defined content, and the convictions that nourished them. It was interesting to notice that such structures, as isolated, corresponded intellectually with the visual physical character possessed by art forms



contemporary with them. He had dealt with the problem in more detail in the chapters headed "Formes, Vie et Pensée" in the textbook "L'art et l'Homme" of which he was editor.

After this general survey, the speaker turned his attention to concrete examples, which would be accompanied by slides. He began with man at his origins, when life was not very complex. The facts stood out more starkly than at a period when the wealth of man's heritage made it difficult to separate the threads composing the closely woven texture of modern ages. He would therefore begin with the pre-historic period, trying to demonstrate how, in order to depict the world, man had invented forms, and how those forms had assumed different characteristics that marked successive conquests, as and when the primitive situation evolved. He then took another example from the Middle Ages. There was then a highly-developed intellectual life of which we had extensive knowledge through its writings that have come down to us. To the parallelism of forms with life had been added a parallelism of form with ideas and their expression, already clearly formulated. A similar break could be observed between Roman and Gothic forms on the one hand and between the modes of thought of Augustinian and Thomist theology, embodying the intellectual attitude of those two successive phases, on the other.

The speaker, in accordance with his view that past and present should not be divided and considered separately, raised the question of whether, in the contemporary period of history, it might not be possible to discern the symptoms of an evolution in forms, in accordance with that law stating that our structures were in a state of perpetual change.

Reverting to his favourite theory that the agrarian era, which took rough shape in the neolithic and was formulated by the first great archeological civilizations, was coming to an end, he showed that that phase in man's history had created the geometry of stable forms, in particular those lending themselves to the regular division of surfaces as in surveying. The forms derived from the intersection of right angles, rectangles, triangles, etc., dominated and formed the basis of both architecture and furniture. Added to them was the circle - a closed form. The irregularity and dynamic unexpectedness of curves pleased the civilizations of movement - whether maritime, e.g. Polynesia, the Vikings, or nomadic, e.g. the Steppes, the Barbarians, etc. There had also been a reversion during the baroque phase which tried to counterbalance the rigidity of tradition by a return to the dynamic. But since the industrial civilization, based on the discovery of new kinds of energy and their exploitation, had gradually encroached on the old agrarian economy, we were seeing a mutation of forms; curves expressing variations of functions, hyperbolas and parabolas were taking up an increasingly important place, displacing the regular figures which were losing ground. That development was favoured by speed, which demanded dynamic forms, responding to the new sensibility and becoming the basis of a style.



Architecture, which could be definition be assumed as static, rallied to it. For structures of a static equilibrium, the tendency was to substitute those the balance of which was dynamic through the use of tension, traction, etc. In the past, only the Gothic had taken into account those factors. And so, at the moment, a new system of forms was competing with those established for thousands of years, and even tending to eliminate and replace them, thus furnishing yet another proof of the close relationship between the problem of form and line at any given period.

Mr. Bernard CHAMPIGNEULLE (France) stated that he would be brief, as he was entirely in agreement with everything put forward, particularly by Mr. Dorflès, and had no desire to be repetitious. He did, however, wish to draw attention to a matter he considered vital, the question of functionalism, of use and beauty - a theory dating from 1920/25 which he had supported. It was the theory of Gropius and the Bauhaus in Germany and of Le Corbusier and l'Esprit nouveau in France. But looking around him, he had perceived that the theory was false and he was happy to note the development of a movement in favour of an altogether different one, that of aesthetic quality independent of function. He gave as an example the motor-car which consisted mainly of decor and camouflage and which, reduced to its principal parts, would be something hideous. It was therefore necessary to have recourse to the coachbuilder to give it a new beautiful appearance, a fact which raised the question of the role of the artist in industry. There now appeared to be a fairly distinct rift between the creative artist, the plastic artist and the creator of the industrial objet, and perhaps even some measure of unconscious aversion of the artist to certain features of scientific progress. Artists loved to surround themselves with ancient objects, and even the sources of their inspiration were not derived from modernity as had once been the case. It could on the whole be said that there was a kind of hostility between the artist and scientific progress. The ceramics made by great artists like Picasso and Chagall were unique examples, but they were the work of craftsmen and could not be truly mass-produced. In conclusion, he referred to the important question of the artist's place in the new tempo of civilization.

Mr. Aleksa CELEBONOVIC (Yugoslavia) said that, in view of the full and thorough report submitted by Mr. Huyghe, he would limit himself to drawing attention to a few facts that might throw a little light on the topic under discussion. Referring to geometry and dynamic forms, he said that, during the last decades, it had been possible to notice a continuous oscillatory movement between the two forms. The heroic era of Cubism had been followed by a contrary movement - he gave as an example Soutine, the creator of free and dynamic forms - which had lasted until the Second World War and had been succeeded by a return to geometrical forms. That oscillatory trend was accompanied by a progressive movement towards the simplification of forms, the purification of artistic ideas, and it was that purification that was linked



to everyday life and manifested in the manufacture of articles for use was much stronger during the modern era than it had been in the past and the social importance of art was incessantly increasing. In conclusion, he stressed the growing expansion of that type of penetration in everyday life.

Mr. J.J. SWEENEY thanked Mr. Huyghe for his brilliant survey. While discussion had concentrated on the general background of life and its influence on art, the role of the individual in the adaptation of seemingly out-of-date, futile fashions, foreign to true expression, appeared to have been overlooked. It was his view that American art, fundamentally influenced by that of Northern Europe, had suffered through the fact that it had never been able to break loose from that influence, and he further thought that, if the Latin influence had been stronger, American artists would have been provided with something worth fighting for. The expressionistic aspect and the illustrative character of Nordic art would have been less predominant in American art, which had been stifled by their influence until about 1940. It was only about 15 years previously that avant-garde art made its appearance in the United States. He stressed the fact that contemporary American art, whether Expressionism or any other school, was merely the development and the logical outcome of the American school since Emerson and the New England writers had fallen under the influence of Germanic philosophy. The River Hudson school of painting in New York had also been influenced by German Romanticism right up to the present century, and until the Second World War there had been the strong influence of Servais, Beckman and Hans Hofman, who had influenced the new generation more than any one else and had probably done more than any other artist to discourage it from looking toward the Mediterranean countries. In his view, to describe Pollock as representing a break in tradition did not correspond with the facts. Pollock had been an expressionist above all, from beginning to end. He had begun by imitating Rouault, and then Miro and certain linear types inspired by Picasso, but always in an expressionist vein, and finally arrived at a lack of form that worried him because of its simplicity. The President felt that if America had derived the benefit of the Latin influence, Pollock would have escaped from his dilemma, as Riapel had done. Turning to Calder, the speaker said that he, too, owed a great deal to a curious element in American art - the influence of the Orient. Calder had told him that the idea of mobiles had been suggested to him by a childhood memory of seeing Chinese carillons swaying in the wind at the San Francisco Exhibition. The speaker remained convinced that all those new factors, i.e. expressionism, Germanic expressionism, the colonial influence of Northern Europe and, finally, the oriental influence on the West Coast, had not really provoked a reaction, but merely the continuation of what had existed since the Colonial era.

Mr. HUYGHE thanked Mr. Sweeney for the information he had been kind enough to give on the existing situation of the American school.



Mr. LUZZATTO observed that any creative artist attending the Congress would feel a complete outsider, as it was dominated by generalizations and abstractions. He persisted in his belief that the great enemy of the artist and the critic was fashion, the grip of which was becoming increasingly tyrannical. The problem had been brilliantly treated by Simmel, who had pointed out that where there was no social hierarchy, there was no fashion, and forms, clothing and customs would remain unchanged for centuries. Creative art must always be the expression of a social revolution and appeal to the free man, equal to other men. It was the critic's duty to be humble before life as before death and, quite simply, to be the interpreter of all the attitudes of the great Creator.

Mr. HUYGHE said that there was basic agreement, as Mr. Luzzatto's conclusion approached his own statements. However, there had been no question of fashion, but of style, which was quite another matter.

Mr. E. ROGERS (Italy) said that, although he was an architect and therefore a creative artist, he did not feel out of place at the Congress, in spite of what Mr. Luzzatto had said. A problem that was of particular concern to architects was the definition - not the semantic definition but a clear and up-to-date one - of functionalism, which was too often confused with practical function. Functionalism was a relationship, an interconnection between a few elements, beauty and utility, which contributed to the architectural synthesis, and it was only from that aspect that the architectural problem could be understood. Modern architecture could not be embraced in a single formula as it denied the existence of any pre-conceived form. Its aim was to express, on as profound and broad a base as possible, the connection between beauty and utility. He did not consider the claim that certain rectilinear forms were no longer valid in modern architecture and that the forms of a more highly developed type of geometry were the true expression of modernity as being correct. It could, however, be said that modernity and geometry formed a single whole, for geometry was a necessity for architects for the interpretation of materials, i.e. for interpreting the physical reality. It was no longer a question of an ideal, abstract geometry, but of geometry that dealt with the concretization of material in a specific form.

Mr. HUYGHE observed that the last speaker's remark expressed what he had wanted to say to the effect that the past was carried on into the present as something acquired. But new forms were being added which, while not, in his opinion, imperative and exclusive, filled needs that had not existed previously. It was also obvious that in the treatment of stone, for example, the architect would re-discover some of the great constants of classic architecture.

Mr. Jean BOURET said that Mr. Huyghe, in his conclusion, which the speaker entirely approved, had merged beauty and ethics. He wanted to say that new form did not really have the importance



attributed to them. He had observed that artists surrounded themselves with objects of the past for preference, and that he himself had never seen any sign whatsoever of the new forms in their dwellings. Moreover, he did not believe that the beauty of the useful article had any influence on the user. It was a matter for the critic, the expert, and he did not think that the public was concerned in the slightest. The members of the public were apt to confuse beauty and modernity in the matter of furniture, for example. The problems of architecture were no longer problems of beauty but of utility. The problem facing architects was not connected with lack of taste but with cost prices. It would be important to discover some relationship between the new forms and the spirit animating them. He was of the opinion that two days were not sufficient to solve a problem requiring years of study and which, in the last resort, would be solved not by critics but by art historians.

Mr. Léon DEGAND (Belgium) was struck by the fact that Mr. Huyghe had built up his argument on a theory, namely the necessary shaping of the work of art by certain intellectual and social attitudes to be found almost everywhere during a particular period. He could also have pointed out the possibility that works of art might also influence our living conditions. From the same theoretical standpoint it could also be claimed that in art only the spirit or independence of the idea behind the work of art counted. In spite of all the vigour with which Mr. Huyghe had expounded his thesis, the speaker would recommend more prudence in making deductions from coincidence. The greatest prudence was necessary when one began to theorize. For example, Mr. Huyghe had described the spiral as a dynamic element, but that was not necessarily the case and depended on the way on which the spiral was drawn. He did not think that forms, which could be claimed as static or dynamic in advance, existed. Using examples, the speaker refuted the various hypothesis put forward by Mr. Huyghe and concluded by saying that, for his part, he would like the eye to be the servant of the mind, while Mr. Huyghe had pleaded for the contrary.

Mr. HUYGHE said that he would not like to reply to all the points raised by Mr. Degand, whom he referred to the first chapter of his book "l'Art et l'Homme", in which it was precisely those points that he had developed, particularly the concept that forms had an interior development - as Henri Poincaré had demonstrated - quite unconnected with the play of external forces. One of his chapters was sub-titled "Après l'influence de la vie sur l'art, l'influence de l'art sur la vie". The speaker then replied shortly to the various points of detail raised by Mr. Degand.

Dr. Van EMDE BOAS (Netherlands), physician and psychologist, contributed a few personal thoughts with regard to the extremely brilliant and lucid exposition of Mr. Huyghe, which had been not only a work of science but a work of art. The psychotherapeutic view was that no being could be more intelligent than his feelings and



emotions allowed, and the social-analytic group studying social psychology in Holland had widened the scope of that statement by claiming that no being, living in a particular civilization, could go beyond the perceptual and expressive boundaries of his time - which was what Mr. Huyghe had shown from the aspect of art. Moreover, Mr. Huyghe had answered the question raised at the first meeting on talent and genius by saying that, while the bad artist followed the fashion, the great artist created works of art in the style of his age. Speaking as a doctor, he had several objections to the examples given by Mr. Huyghe to prove the dynamism of the contemporary era.

Mr. VIETTA (Germany) contributed a few remarks on the role of the unity of modern thought in contemporary civilization. In his opinion, art was the modern precursor of almost all schools of thought including modern schools of philosophy.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr. Huyghe for his brilliant contribution to the study of the important problem under discussion.

As the first part of the consideration of the second topic was at an end, he asked Mr. Argan to report on the Archives of Contemporary Art.

Mr. G.C. ARGAN, speaking as Chairman of the Italian Section, stated that he had just received the proofs of the Archives of Futurism. While they would be formally submitted by Mr. Bellonzi, he would like to give a brief description of the work that had been done. The task had been difficult and it had only been possible to perform it successfully thanks to Mr. Campilli, Director of the Casa dello Mezzo Giorno and Chairman of the Committee for the Archives of Contemporary Art, of which the Archives of Futurism was the first volume. The school of art history at the University of Rome, of which Prof. Lionello Venturi was Principal, had also contributed valuable aid, as had the Ente Nazionale dell'Esposizione Quadriennale di Roma, which had organized the execution of the work.

Mr. Fortunato BELLONZI (Italy), in submitting the proofs of the Archives of Futurism, explained that it was the first volume of the series devoted to the Archives of Contemporary Art, the compilation of which had been proposed by Mr. Argan at the Istanbul Congress in 1954. The work had been entrusted to the Misses Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori, Prof. Venturi's pupils at the School for Advanced Studies in Art History attached to the University of Rome. The Rome "Quadriennale d'arte" had provided premises and partly financed the project, while the publisher Luigi de Luca had undertaken to publish the work.

Research had started in 1955 and was limited to the years between 1909 and 1920. The editors had contracted all persons who might have been in touch with Futurist artists and all contemporary art galleries and libraries throughout the world for the purpose of



obtaining the maximum of information. They had also consulted every publication (magazines, daily papers, weeklies, catalogues, etc.) available in Italian libraries. They had thus been able to collect and classify an enormous mass of material, to a large extent unpublished.

The "Archives" consisted of two volumes - the first documentary and the second iconographical. The first section of the first volume was devoted to the manifestos and theoretical writings of the artists. It included not only writings on figurative art, but more general writings necessary to throw greater light on the intentions of the group. It was followed by correspondence written by members and sympathizers of the movement.

The second part consisted of a complete list of the works of Futurist artists, preceded by a short biography and followed by summaries on the movement, and a bibliography. The index included an index of concepts, to facilitate consultation of this tremendously detailed volume. The work "Principi di una estetica futurista" by Ardengo Soffici, which had now become a bibliographical rarity, was reprinted as an appendix.

The second volume would include reproductions of the works referred to in the first, with a detailed history of each (date, owner, literature).

The PRESIDENT congratulated Messrs. Bellonzi and Argan for the vitally important work they were producing. AICA's first publication, the Archives of Contemporary Art, reflected great credit on both the Italian Section and the Association.

The meeting rose.

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#### F o u r t h   W o r k i n g   S e s s i o n

THE HALL OF THE "STORIA PATRIA" SOCIETY, PALERMO

Friday, 20 September 1957, at 4 p.m.

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The PRESIDENT opened the session, which would be devoted to a resumption of discussion on the second topic: "Everyday Life and value of forms". He called on the rapporteur-in-chief, Sir Herbert Read, to take the Chair.



Sir Herbert READ (United Kingdom) said that, while the intention of Mr. Huyghe's report had been to show that the elements of form had altered from one period of art history to the next, as a result of social and economic factors, he himself would like to dwell on a constant factor - the human organism itself. While minor physical changes in the structure of the human body had come about since the paleolithic age, it could be said that, in contrasting it with its surroundings, the human body had remained static. That fact had been important for art, as one of the latter's essential factors was human sensibility, by which should be understood man's sensory treatment of the materials of art.

Man's civilization had entered a fundamentally new phase - the machine age - which demanded the complete revision of aesthetic concepts. New concepts would find expression in new forms, generally recognizable through their naturalism or abstraction, which could already be observed in modern painting, sculpture and architecture.

But, as it was necessary to stress persistently the factor of sensibility, the speaker wanted to draw the attention of his colleagues to the following problem :

" How far is it possible to maintain the vital element of sensibility in machine-age production, i.e. in the objects which are the very substance of "everyday life". "

The speaker distinguished between three stages in the creation of a work of art :

- (1) Formal values, which the former speakers, particularly Mr. Huyghe, had stressed;
- (2) The internal articulation of art forms, described as decoration, style, mannerism, etc. ;
- (3) The sensory factor, consisting of the relationship of the artist with his material.

Certain distinctions could be made :

- (I) Between the industries or processes for the reproduction of a hand-made prototype and the industries or processes for assembling machine-made parts :
  - (a) Moulded objects (glass containers, pottery, chinaware, plastic objects);
  - (b) Electronic equipment (locomotives, aeroplanes).

In the case of (a), the formal qualities of a hand-made article were multiplied, the result being a partial loss of their sensory qualities, in spite of the fact that they were reproductions of a hand-made prototype.



In the case of (b), the formal qualities were to a large extent determined by the physical dimensions of the assembled parts. But such a procedure still left room for the exercise of aesthetic sensibility. Quite apart from the beauty of logical arrangement, dimensional alterations could be introduced to the form of the whole object or to the style. That process, known as "styling", was common among industrial designers.

(2) Between a functional structure and the ornamental elaboration of a structure.

It was important not to confuse ornament and decoration. While the latter was added and might be appropriate (frescoes, wall paper, colours), ornament was the elaboration of an essential element (the modelling of a column, the form of a cornice, the ribs of a Gothic vault, the "shuttering" marks in a modern reinforced-concrete building).

On the basis of the above summary analysis of the artistic process, it could be asserted that while the objects of daily use must possess the formal and sensory qualities that were basic factors in every work of art, their relationship with an external situation - here everyday life - did not necessarily involve the emotions. We did not look for the expression of emotion in a machine-made product and its adaptation to the external situation - the third stage of artistic creation - was justified by the meaning of its conditioning to fill a given purpose. Such conditioning was enough to justify an industrial product aesthetically, always on condition that the fundamental conditions pertaining to a work of art (the conscious exploitation of the virtues of the material) existed. It was sufficient to analyse the typical forms of modern architecture to discover the adaptation of the material to the archetype models of human perception. The "modulor" was never arbitrary, but was an archetypal form based on the known and experienced proportions of the human body; it was thus possible to uphold the theory that all the formal values in the plastic arts were closely related to the structure of the human body.

While other speakers would certainly stress different aspects of the problem, Sir Herbert Read concluded by expressing the hope that the aspect he considered vital - the presence or absence of sensory qualities at the base of the work of art - would not be overlooked.

Mr. J.P. HODIN (United Kingdom) asserted that it was only by integrating into his own experience its immanent content that man could appreciate and estimate the value of a philosophical idea or work of art; it was only by the creative method that he could make a valuable contribution to the world of aesthetic ideas or concepts. All the rest was mere intellectualism and education, a fact which led him to suggest a slight modification to the title of the topic under discussion, i.e. : "Everyday life and the value of form in art". Taking existence and everyday life together, the speaker defined



the artist as the witness of existence. The formulae of Darwin and Einstein, through which the godhead was replaced by a biological or mathematical formula, had left him cold, and the following generation had considered all ideal concepts as pure illusion, substituting abstract forms for elemental ones. It was the cold and essentially cerebral state of mind of an entirely technical civilization that had given art its abstract character.

The life-forms were definitive and eternal and in no way linked with time, and it was only by a return to the pure vision of the child confronted for the first time with the eternal forms of creation that every generation began to experiment; it was only by a return to the intensity of that experience that the artist, on reaching intellectual maturity, would attach himself to the horizontal lines of artistic experience and neglect the vertical ones that were basic and essential for the linking of his own internal experience with existence.

After giving a critical outline of neo-realism, neo-primitivism and abstraction, the speaker observed that the contemporary artist was reverting to the first experience of definitive and eternal life-forms; styles and formulae were linked with time and reflected the metamorphoses of the world in the individual. However deformed, reformed or modified were the definitive forms of life, they remained the receptacle of creative activity and artists of integrity, such as Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Kokoschka or Miro, had never allowed them to disappear. Disappearance was the work of the following generations, the minds of which were controlled for more by psychological than creative considerations, by a state of mind that was more scientific than artistic, more logical than intuitive, more analytical than synthetic.

He concluded that, while men were not beginners in the field of the arts, they were with regard to their own knowledge and experience. The choice of their spiritual ancestors was dictated by an internal need and they remained the heirs of a secular tradition, now universal and completely humane in all its aspects. Abstraction had become the commonplace and, without glorifying the life-forms in their definitive sense, without reconciling emotionality and completely cerebral analysis in line, colour and writing with the finality of the formal process of life, men would be incapable of creating any art responding to the fullness of life.

Mr. James Johnson SWEENEY suggested that, in the discussion that had just taken place, too much emphasis had perhaps been placed on the influence of everyday life on art forms. He would suggest another approach, namely the influence of art forms on the daily environment and, along those lines, directly or indirectly, on everyday activity.

When referring to "art forms", he meant the forms created by creators and experimenters generally described as artists, and



particularly painters and sculptors working for themselves and for others. The artist in his highest form could be considered as equivalent to the scientist in his laboratory. In the retreat of his studio - his laboratory - he renewed the forms he had inherited, with the idea of transmitting them to those of his contemporaries who might be interested. From the angle, the artist - especially in the modern period - was working in a disinterested way; he was not working for either political or religious propaganda purposes. The forms he discovered were put before the public and might possibly attract their attention. It was at that stage that the designer of objects for use - the architect or commercial artist in general - could discern the extent of public taste for such forms and use them either consciously or unconsciously in his own work.

Such was true for the aspect that Brancusi and Archipenko - and perhaps even Arp - had contributed to mechanical forms such as aeroplanes, automobiles or smaller objects. It could also be observed in the inspiration that Dufy, Léger, Mondrian, Miro and others had given to commercial art. It could still be seen in the influence of those artists on stage decor - the development from Cubism and Futurism through Surrealism and Tachism, or the influence of Picasso, Léger or Mondrian. If a classification were made in the modern art galleries of the United States, it would show that, after the school of Léger, followed the school of Miro and the "Tachist" school, that of Léger probably being the most popular and the "Sunday Painter School" the most durable. The following stage was the decline of that source of inspiration still fashionable until very recently. Inspiration was drying up and there was a need to look for new sources. It was in that way that the artist in his "laboratory" created the forms influencing the objects surrounding us in our daily existence and, through that, he influenced our daily existence itself.

There was, however, another side to the picture - the action of that development on creative expression. Utilitarian design eventually exhausted the formal discoveries of the creative artist. What would happen if designers did not use those discoveries? The interest in the production of new forms would be showing a trend towards decline. But the very use of the laboratory production of the creators had developed an appetite for new ideas in the forms used in everyday life. That consumption of the renewed forms of the creative artist in "everyday life" - that rapid adaptation of the eye to unusual forms - prevented the accumulation that would most certainly discourage new creation.

Among several others, those were two aspects related to the connection between everyday life and form that had to be considered from the angle of the influence of art on form in everyday life, rather than in the opposite direction. The extent of the influence of the forms created by artists on everyday life had possibly been neglected in the discussion that had taken place, for there was a



reciprocal influence at work. But what we owed to the creative artist for the difference between the surroundings and attitudes appearing from one generation to the next, i.e. what we owed to the artist for the world in which we lived, was often lost sight of.

Mr. G.C. ARGAN said that the technique of art was not independent of the technique of production, the relationship between artistic production and technique being dialectic. While the present dialectical method differed from that of the past, there was no contradiction and the dialectical relationship had to be based on integration.

Mr. Mario PEDROSA was of the opinion that the problem was related to the definition of everyday life and should be studied from every angle, whether economic or sociological. Art critics could only define everyday life in the light of the forms they observed in art and in the technique of contemporary production. Formerly, the search for the renewal of forms had been in archaic art and not in our daily life. Artists had no longer gone to art galleries to discover new forms, but to archeological museums. It was in primitive art, until then considered barbaric, that German Expressionism, Fauvism and Cubism had found their inspiration. Gauguin had said: "Flee the Greek and look for the Egyptian and, more particularly, for the Cambodian". The study of the unconscious by the Freudian school had unearthed a new source of inspiration - that of the collective unconscious - which had led to Futurism and the study of the art of the insane of children. A trend against neo-plasticism and concretism had appeared at the same time and resulted in the search for new forms in applied geometry. Topological geometry had become a living science resulting in the vision of geometrical forms in space. In conclusion, the speaker stressed the international nature of contemporary art and the relationship existing between modern international life and modern values in art.

Mr. Mario BARATA (Brazil) agreed with what Mr. Argan had said. Some civilizations had been closely bound up with the objects surrounding them, particularly in the 15th century. That harmony of man with his surroundings in architecture and furniture had been broken in the 19th century through the introduction of new forms in every industrial field, e.g. materials, ceramics, etc. A close connection had been established between the major and minor arts, on the basis of a visual experience of similar sensory origin. As technique was the source of present living conditions, industry could now be described as an intermediary between art and technique.

Mr. Aleksa CELEBONOVIC said there were two ways of approaching the theme under discussion, namely through considering the use of the various objects produced by craftsmen influenced by the plastic arts or, much wider, the standing of industry in community life. Every element in our daily life had some influence on artistic life



and was, in one way or another, reflected in the forms of the plastic arts. On the other hand, art influenced daily life, particularly with regard to the use of movable or immovable objects to which man had given a determined form in harmony with the conceptions and experiences acquired in the realm of art.

The other elements of daily life did not enter into the field of plastic forms nor exercise anything but an insignificant influence on them. Art could not change the natural conditions of life and its influence on social relationships or religious ideas was merely the reflection of an already existing state of affairs.

Modern art had ceased treating a subject as an isolated scene in nature and the artist tried to express his attitude in the face of truths of a much more general kind. In its tendency to purify the problems of form, modern art was approaching architecture and the purity of formal language was becoming less and less the interpreter of man's feelings towards the world and moving towards a role of mere decoration.

Since 1920 there had been a constant weaving between geometric and antigeometric forms, a trend he reviewed rapidly. He himself did not think that modern art lacked depth and was merely decorative, for he was of the opinion that, while it maintained the tradition of profoundly human qualities, it was using a more condensed form of language. Solid bonds existed between everyday life in its widest sense and art that was capable of depicting its most varied manifestations. The influence of art was especially great in the manufacture of various articles and in architecture, and was thus penetrating into places which one could never have dreamt of reaching in former times.

He recognized that his report tended rather to initiate discussion than to contribute basic conclusions, but hoped that it brought out the fact that the art critic could no longer restrict himself to observing the beauty of works considered individually, but was increasingly being compelled to draw on other fields of knowledge in the process of observation.

Mr. Jean LEYMARIE (France) pointed out that the relationship of art and daily life was that of the relationship of life and the form surrounding man, some of which were transitory and others permanent. While Mr. Argan had put the problem on a philosophical plane, most of the critics had expressed a wish not to do so. Man was an animal living in an environment of techniques, science, art, religion - a co-ordinated structure appearing throughout history. He gave a short analysis of the concepts of design and technique in human life since the Renaissance. Beauty had been thrust aside during the industrial revolution and the artist, proclaiming the vital importance of aesthetic values as against the exclusive value of labour alone had fought against that unbending anti-artistic trend in the machine age until, finally, beauty had reappeared in everyday life, in industrial production and in architecture. The problem of the relationship between art



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After thanking the rapporteurs and all participants for their efforts at a meeting that appeared to have been of interest to them, he

Before closing the Congress, he expressed the thanks of AICA to all those who had contributed to its success. In the first place,

He declared the Vith Congress of AICA closed.

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