Early Winter, 1937

AXIS
A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY ABSTRACT PAINTING & SCULPTURE
Editor: Myfanwy Evans

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25 in black and white

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Alexander Calder
Fernand Léger
Barbara Hepworth
Ceri Richards, etc.

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Myfanwy Evans
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John Piper, etc.

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PREHISTORY FROM THE AIR  By John Piper

Flying (whether we do it ourselves or not) has changed our sense of spaces and forms and vistas enormously. From the air, hills flatten out and towns are seen at a glance in the sense or nonsense of their planning. The sea from the air has become something new to the senses: it is like nothing we have ever known—quite unlike any map, or Admiralty chart, or sailor's tale, or any writing or painting about waves or cliffs or ships that was ever thought of. The significant thing being that from the air horizons vanish.

Flying was a necessity for the twentieth century. It was not an accidental discovery or series of discoveries. Its development may have depended, as it happened, on the internal-combustion engine, but if that had not been invented something else would; some other way would have been found. We might all have taken to ballooning.

Because flying has not created any new consciousness about spaces or vistas or anything else, it has simply served the new consciousness, and has been forced on in its development by it. It has grown up with it in fact, which is the only reasonable way for an invention to work.

So the horizon line vanishes, from the air. It has also vanished (nearly) from painting. Instead of being the end-all of landscape, it is now there on sufferance. It is not really strange that air photography began in the '80's, and that about the '80's the horizon in landscapes (with Courbet or Cézanne) was getting much less conscious of itself—no more self-conscious than the foreground, or the background, or the middle distance, all of which were becoming parts of the same consistent parcel. For contrast, think of Claude’s skyline castles in the scenery of his wonderful natural theatre. At its simplest, the change is one from elevation to plan. The picture has tipped over backwards on to the floor, and in being raised again it has brought part of the floor with it. Picasso, Braque, Klee, Matisse have painted elevations of wineglasses, gardens and windows at Nice which have the added richness and meaning of plan-patterns.

Years ago, one or two acute archaeologists thought how wonderful might be the results of making air-photography help them in their researches, and experiments were carried out. But it was after the war that the business really began. O. G. S. Crawford and Alexander Keiller took it right beyond experiment, and their photographs have had an immense influence on archaeological theory and practice. These photographs have elucidated known sites of earthworks and have shown the sites of many that were previously unknown. (Barrows that were ploughed up years ago, depressions in the ground that were the sites of dwellings or stone or wood circles, and so on). The first really remarkable discovery by this means was the course of the “avenue” across the downs from Stonehenge, which is invisible from the ground. In general, there have been two productive methods of archaeological discovery and photography from the air. One, by recording cast-shadows from mounds or banks, however slight, when the sun is fairly low in the sky; the other, by noticing the variations, chiefly colour variations, in the crops growing on ground that was disturbed, however long ago.

These photographs and the ones that have followed them (in particular Major W. G. Allen’s oblique views of earthworks) have been extremely productive to archaeologists. Apart from that (but not at all by chance) they are among the most beautiful photographs ever taken. They have the advantage in the first place of being completely un-art-conscious. They are purely archaeological-scientific, therefore they are photographs and not art-photographs. That is, they show in each case a site, not a composition. Secondly, unless they were very good photographs they would have to be scrapped as useless for their job; so they all are very good indeed; sharp and detailed.

Something of the change in consciousness...
White Sheet Castle, Wiltshire. (Top) Plan in Colt Hoare’s “Ancient Wiltshire.” (Bottom) Air photo (Crown copyright reserved).
of spaces and vistas that we are not yet quite used to can be seen by comparing the plan of White Sheet Castle in Wiltshire, taken from Colt Hoare's hundred-year-old work, *Ancient Wiltshire*, with the air-photograph of the same camp. One of the most significant things about it to Colt Hoare, or his draughtsman, was that it was on a hill, a formidable one, that had to be toiled up and scrambled down whenever you wanted to visit the camp. (The Ordnance Survey itself is far less hill-conscious than it used to be.) From the *Ancient Wiltshire* plan one gets a strong feeling that the hill is a bastion as well as a camp site. Actually, White Sheet Hill is almost in front of Colt Hoare's house in his park of Stourhead, so he knew this hill well as a bastion, and is hardly likely to have sailed over it in a balloon. To the camera from the air, the hill is not much of a hill. Successions of rabbit-runs, and the way the grass grows on the hillside show delicate contours, but they are very delicate. Most, it looks flat, or undulating, a little wave-like, folding round the sudden sharp coruscations of the camp. Stukeley's engraving of Silbury Hill, Avebury, of 1723, shows a pretty strong contrast in consciousness with the air-photograph of the same site. (The engraving was taken from a drawing which he did on the spot.) Stukeley, above all, wanted to record the effort and the feeling for shape of the men who built it. Size and contour are all-important. The story of the size is well told, and as to the shape to jump, run, walk, or struggle up each slope with Stukeley in his drawing is as real and as sharp an experience as to take a journey round a wineglass with Picasso. The air-photograph is flat and subtle. The effect of suddenness that the mound gives in the plain, and the sense of size that the surroundings try to contradict, is as strong as that of all Stukeley's fold-explorations. Both these representations of Silbury Hill are beautiful—and together they give a very fair idea of this large and curious mound—but so different that it is hard to realise that each gives a reasonable account of the same monument.

*Antiquity,* Quarterly Review.
O. G. S. Crawford, *Air Survey and Archaeology* (Ordnance Survey Professional Paper) etc.
Silbury Hill, Avebury, Wiltshire. (Top) After Wm. Stukeley, 1723. (Bottom) Air photo (Crown copyright reserved).

Opposite: Painting by JOAN MIRO
BACKGROUND  By Kenneth R. Walsh

The difficulty to-day about artistic appreciation, about criticism, about judgment, about anything, is lack of a background. One wanders in a mist, different things loom up, one has no background against which to judge the size of things, a fence post looks as big as a telegraph pole. Not only does man not know what he ought to think which is a good thing, he doesn't know what he does think which is a bad thing.

The difficulty is not peculiar to art. In one's attitude to abstract art the difficulty is only somewhat accentuated. The lack of background is general, the lack of reference point. How does this lack of background come about?

A flight of birds wheels suddenly in the air, we are told, not because the leader changes his mind and direction and is then seen and followed by the others. No, the change of direction runs instinctively through the whole flock. It is very probable that the decision comes from no one bird, that it flows instinctively through the whole group. In an earlier time man too lived in this instinctive-intuitive group connection. We can infer it from the incredible ages to which the patriarchs of the old religions live. The unit of consciousness was not the single perishable person but a series of persons with a similar inherited consciousness. Thus "Methuselah" was not an individual but a unit of consciousness expressing itself in a series of single perishable persons. Thus the importance of blood and the family. The family face, the spiritual make-up, was handed down from generation to generation. "A chip off the old block." The single persons were no more than chips off the old block, and it is the old block which is taken as the reality in the old religions and which lives to such incredible ages. A dim reflection of this is to be found in Shakespeare's version of the story of King Lear. It is significant that Lear is a Celt in whom the blood-race-family consciousness lived with especial strength, and survives to this day in the clannishness of the Scots and the nepotism of the Welsh.

At the beginning of the play Lear is still held in a patriarchal group consciousness, he does not realise his daughters as separate entities from himself, each with her own will: therefore he divides his kingdom among them without trepidation. When Cordelia stands free of him and says she will take half her love to the man she marries, it is not the personal vanity of Lear which is wounded (though, of course, there is an element of this), it is his patriarchal pride, he cannot bear it that Cordelia will not bring her husband within the magic circle of family, he simply has no grasp at all of individual character and rights, blindly he pushes it off. The oath with which he casts off Cordelia is significant:

For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist and cease to be;
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this for ever. (I. i.)

Lear still feels himself bound with the divine background of life working through all beings, the golden background of Medieval Painting, but the very fact that he can eject Cordelia implies somewhere the existence of another principle, that of the free individual, free to choose for better or for worse. The hold of the divine-patriarchal state of consciousness upon him is made manifest when the opposition of Goneril and Regan stings him to reveal in words the factors underlying his consciousness. To Goneril he says:

I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell:
We'll no more meet, no more see one another:
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,
A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,
In my corrupted blood. (II. iv.)

And thinking of both his daughters he says:

Filial gratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to 't? (III. iv.)

Transferred into terms of painting, Lear has
man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! (Tearing off his clothes.) (III. iv.)

Since the impulse of the Renaissance Western man has been struggling more and more earnestly to come to "the thing itself" stripped of the godhead. Thus the insistence on naturalistic art, man's ability to see and reproduce things as he thinks they are. Cézanne is then forced to go behind appearance to get at "the thing itself," he spends a life of devotion and passion and struggle trying to find the apple.

The process, however, does not stop there. Once the individual has been discovered the mortality of the individual is abruptly realised. Lear emerging from the dream of kingship begins to realise the bare facts: "They told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof" (IV. vi). Before proffering his hand to Gloucester to kiss he says: "Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality" (IV. vi). One becomes aware of death and the corpse. And the corpse decays and splits away into its component parts. And so is born the science of chemistry and inductive reasoning. And psychoanalysis and materialism. Man has not found the source of life, he has merely analysed the process of decay. The growth of the child in the mother's womb is not a chemical process, the decay of the body after death is.

Into this process of decay abstract art enters, dissects the body of painting into its colours and forms and attempts to build up a new synthesis. The whole consciousness of man is going through this breaking down process, will have to go through it, as a necessary consequence to the break away from the intuitive faculties. There is no going back to the instinctive faculties, one cannot reacquire instinct. The abstract painter is a sort of individualistic chemist, trying things this way and that, and hoping that a new live thing may some day jump out of the test-tube. It is much too early yet to say what new form of consciousness will emerge. And therefore it is impossible to come to any permanent conclusions about the importance of Abstract Art. One simply doesn't know whether the tall columns are fence-posts or telegraph poles because one cannot see the background. The old background was lost with the discovery of perspective and the emergence of individualism: the new background is not yet to be seen.
PAUL NASH, 1937  By Myfanwy Evans

Paul Nash has absorbed the English climate. By some piece of remarkable magic he has almost become it; the pearly mornings and the fine pale afternoons and the irresistible charm of winter twilight. And through this hypersensitive medium he absorbs, to give out again, painting to-day. Abstraction in his hands becomes a weather-gauge, surrealism the hailstones like pigeon's eggs that startle the mid-lands' summer sleep—or the infinite caprices of the moon in its first quarter. Everything is translated into weather. However far from representation his work is, his violence is always the violence of an English storm, his clarity that of the Purbeck hills before rain, his brilliance the intermingled contrast of frost and sun and the whiteness of wet stones on plough-land. The English climate is his universaliser, through it there is nothing new he dare not touch, and nothing old he need renounce. It gives him both worlds. And when people turn half-relieved, half-apprehensive to the contemporary heir of Cotman, Cox and Turner, they find that he has enclosed the morning mist in a birdeage, given the solid form of hill architecture to the winter twilight and ruthlessly stuck a pin through the summer afternoon. Something else he has succeeded in making his own, too, and that is time. He paints three thousand years without turning a hair, and time is no longer that irritating thing that divides our morning coffee from our afternoon tea, discards this patina as a mere twentieth-century pretender, and time is no longer a measure beginning from yesterday, or preferably the day before, and going backwards through the centuries, but an indefinable sense of scarcely-shifting permanence, that includes then and now and sometime and after.

In no way does Paul Nash limit time, or try to reconstruct the past, when, for instance, he paints Maiden Castle or Ballard Down. He has no interest in the past as past, but the accumulated intenseness of the past as present is his special concern and joy. The contour of things past is given the aura of things present, so the reality and the romanticism of both is intensified. More than most other English painters Paul Nash has developed a personal idiom. He will neither proselytise nor be converted. Blindfold before the pig with pencil grasped ready to put the eye in, he doesn't peep and cheat for the conventional place, nor put it in anywhere and boldly say that that is the eye-place to-day, instead he spreads his hands and declares, "This pig is all eye"—and if you dare to challenge him, he will be bound to win in the end by explaining that it has been to a specialist and learnt to see through its skin. It is the unique inclusiveness of his gesture that makes him able in these sectarian days to hold an apparently middle course without suffering for it.

To-day we are conditioned more and more into being not so much individuals as parts of something else; of a school, a movement, a mass, a class. The individual is subjected to the class every time. This fact has to be reckoned with before anything else. And it is true of painters as well as civil servants and schoolmasters and engine drivers and typists. For those with a herd instinct it is a grand thing; for the others there are only two possible courses; to become a leader (if necessary start a group of their own to be leader of) or, to fight for individuality and justify it. It is a very curious fight, because it is an ethical one between two kinds of individualists and all the morals have been cleverly acquired by the movement side: the other side has either to redefine morality or be content to be labelled anti-social and therefore vicious.

In the work of almost all painters to-day who have any pretentions to being contemporary
there are signs of this struggle, in a few the signs are purely negative—that it has not been faced. Paul Nash is a vigorous and rather special exception. He seems at once entirely innocent of the predicament and to belong very definitely to things as they are to-day. He has escaped the conditioning, never been subjected to the group morality—a born, untroubled individualist. Without question he accepts history and time and accident, and with a conjurer’s flourish produces, like a coin from his neighbour’s elbow, the personal present—but he is careful to make it a current coin from a near neighbour’s elbow, so that it has some validity for all of us.

A struggle always breaks the continuity and existence is interrupted by sudden gaping holes and barbed-wire fences, and so to the original struggle is added the problem of keeping some kind of thread going, some kind of continuity. Paul Nash is outside the struggle, and specially gifted with the capacity to see things in their full time-and-space context. So he is able to break his personal continuity on purpose, and by taking full advantage of this and exercising his sense of fantasy, putting canaries into factories or prehistory, boats in drawing-rooms, maps in the air and solid mathematics into sands or green fields, he subtly builds up a relation with the present from the other end as it were. It was this sense of continuity and capacity to break it arbitrarily that made his war paintings such permanent independent works as well as such valid records.
CERI RICHARDS. Painting, 1937 (London Group Exhibition)
Though it is impossible to say when classical painting fell into its coma, the genesis of the present situation can be given as taking place in the period between 1816 and 1839. The classical school was then so corrupt that it defended itself from the romantic attack with such fatuities as: “It is impossible to produce a fine work with the subject in trousers.” The term had come to mean pictures of people in togas. Moreover, in addition to bankruptcy of ideas, the school suffered from political identifications. In 1816 David was exiled as a regicide and classical painting received a revolutionary tag, at the same time Napoleon’s visit to the studio of David during the hundred days raised mistrust of a different kind. Finally, under the monarchy of July, by an inexplicable process it became identified with extreme conservatism in politics. A position which its decadent exponents welcomed, without understanding that they had embarked for a spot where classicism and academism would be indistinguishable and where Meissonier would be found painting the “Retreat from Moscow” from toy soldiers placed upon a plain of salt. And in 1839 Cézanne was born as Daguerre perfected his invention.

The nineteenth-century carnival began, and hundreds of thousands of acres were covered with special cases or attempts at complete realism. The impressionists chatted away about the light while academic painting flexed its muscles against the camera. However, as the debauch went on Cézanne discovered through Delacroix what Rubens had extracted from the Italians of the Renaissance. It was the enormous vitality of their huge groups of people that excited Rubens, but Cézanne found the order that gave them reason and meaning buried beneath their appearance. The history of his painting is the history of the retreat of the appearance before the growing importance of design. His picture of his sister playing the piano while his mother knits tells one everything about the situation, but “Les Grandes Baigneuses,” is a geometrical design which does not bother to say why or how all those naked people came to be together. By restoring the importance of design Cézanne had recreated the classical school of painting.

Academism imagined that it had done the same thing by increasing the size of its pictures until an area parity with the great Italians was reached. (Elephantiasis set in and a picture exhibited at the salon had as a detail a full sized field gun). Impressionism was concerned with other matters; it is sufficient to quote an American critic who is under the impression that he is praising Manet: “… he seizes one by his intellectual vivacity. ‘This is something,’ he seems to say, ‘that you have never felt sharply before. Look quickly—from here—now—or it will vanish!’ ” You slap yourself down in front of the subject and plaster it on to the canvas, quickly, before the light changes. It is art because it is hand done, and it is better than a photograph because it takes longer. The number of these gobbets of undigested vision, how that haystack at Where were looked at ten that morning, how divinely the light fell on the little breasts of Bonnyboots, doesn’t stand thinking about. The enormous output alone would justify abstract painting, as a nice change, if nothing else.

But there are more elaborate reasons, representational pictures must be stiff with literary matter or visual special cases that are irrelevant to a classical work of art. The modern eye is conditioned by the camera. “Les Grandes Baigneuses” is a shocking photograph, it is as improbable a group to-day as it was in 1895, and the moral questions it stirs up as well as its archaic language divert attention from the picture. So, too, “The Origin of the Milky Way” is an obscene photograph, and the possible photograph and quite modern standard of taste hang like a blind before the picture. And the great occasion offers no refuge; the battle pictured is a lie about scattered ugliness, royalty puts up an umbrella when it rains, and the cliché is present at the banquet. In modern terms the great architectural larks of Veronese boil down to a glittering company dressed in sumptuous costumes and shining armour who
MIRÓ. Decoration. Paris Exhibition, 1937
have met in marble halls to eat from gold plate upon snowy napery, while they quaff wine from goblets their fiery steeds may be seen pawing the ground through archways. A painter using this idiom naturally did not consider these vulgarities, just as Giotto did not think of "The light of the world" when he pictured Christ, but the slop and journalese cannot be forgotten. They are in people's minds, and if the artist allows things that suggest them to remain about he will be guilty of allowing an ambiguity.

It is in order to avoid such ambiguity that the abstract painter repudiates the romantic special case and produces digested works. He produces not the picture of a thing, but a symbol for mature consideration of it; objects stripped of personality and eroticism are synthesised to produce expressions applicable to all such objects and are placed in formal disciplined designs that share proportion of the kind that makes good architecture and the precision of good music.

On the other hand synthesis can be made in representational art. The prostitutes of Rouault are all women who sell themselves. But he stops short at the drama and mystery of human relations just as Renoir stops close beneath the skin of his glowing young women. Rowlandson, Daumier, Goya, Michael Angelo, all produced pictures whose greatness is not diminished by the fact that they are great literature. However, although you find dignified ideas, or stirring ones, in this painting you find that it is filled with turbulent matter which escapes into your mind when your eye falls upon it. "The Martyrdom of St. Maurice and the Theban legion" clamours with a divided voice, El Greco's mind and the Roman Catholic Church appeal from it through streams of free association which it evokes.

This free association is the product of the same ambiguity that renders the Italian idiom useless to the modern classical painters, and it mars literary painting as completely. The Cornaro Titian was painted as an austere and formal family portrait to tell you about the greatness, power and religious fervour of the Cornaro Family. But a nineteenth-century conception of charm has made the thing an enormous setting for an incident about a coy little boy and a dog.

Hemingway writes about Miró's picture, "The Farm," "It has in it all that you feel about Spain when you are there and all that you feel when you are away and cannot go there." Perhaps it was possible to give this reading to the picture and to think about happy days in the sun instead of looking at the picture. Perhaps Miró thought so too, for his paintings are no longer like postcards to hold in your hand while you think about the days when you were younger. It is the design in his mind not the memory in yours which he wants to express.

So that in abstract painting the formal order and mental discipline of the great Italians is cherished although their idiom is rejected. It is no longer adequate to place a design in terms of a man, a woman and an object, it must be expressed in terms applicable to all men and all women, and all objects. Such expression of mature thought has always been the aim of classical painting, and it is by following this great tradition that the dignity and beauty of art will be handed on as a heritage to the future which in its turn will preserve, reject and add.

THE PARIS EXHIBITION  By Herbert Tayler

"Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques," is the full title, and after this in a whisper or a scream according to your nationality—"et des Sentiments Politiques." What is it like? The French are a logical race, have great enthusiasms and great sensibility. The spirit of this exhibition is right. We here would never be so wholehearted, so in-for-a-penny-in-for-a-pound. The public would probably never be endangered or inconvenienced as in the Palace of Aviation, where a spiral ramp hanging from the steel roof members encircles the exhibited planes, the daylight falling through pleated celluloid, the building's
You may be quite far from the Champs de Mars coloured from the river they soak the Pont D'Iéna at the crossing of the two main plan axes. Inconvenient, but magnifique! And so is the spirit.

The plan is traditional and forms a well-known Beaux-arts composition; it lies over the streets and bridges and along the river, being bound to take the classic axial plan-form of the Napoleons. All the approaching avenues were there, ready, tree-lined, matured, binding the exhibition to the plan of the city. The nine entrances exploit the great charm already exercised by the Arc de Triomphe; the quality of the light, the length of the approach, the trees, and then the large scale feature mysteriously seen at the end. It would have been possible to visit London at the time of the Wembley exhibition and to have ignored it. But in Paris you may be quite far from the Champs de Mars and yet be drawn in: by some pylons constructed of tiny mirrors in one case, a wall of grey granite in another, inscribed with words (they do not matter at a distance) which prove to be the Mussolini oracle—the Italian pavilion. Where a traffic artery is to be maintained through the fair ground bridges span the road, like a Hiroshige with the people crossing. One of these brilliantly uses layers of wood like car springs to achieve its span.

Schooled by these approaches one is prepared for symmetry. But not for this effete classicism of great flights of steps, a terrace, steps dividing round the bassins with their seventy-six jets d'eaux all worked out to the tired Versailles formula, finished off with a weak, white, stony embrace from the two arms of the Trocadero. This grandeur is not even rugged, as in the Hitler classic at Nurnberg, or the Berlin Olympic Stadium. Here, then, is the official keynote to architecture: the real modern to be eschewed, the Corbusier scheme for the Bastion Kellerman to be suppressed, the watchword to be compromise—Beaux Arts but not too too. Sculpture and painting suffer too. Look at the carving on the Musée de L'Art Moderne. At any rate this will cost you nothing, whereas entry costs a whole lot, the two symmetrical wings of the building are not joined and you pay which ever side you choose. Science is cheap compared to art. The Grand Palais, in the worst of nineteenth-century baroque, has within its walls a complete history of modern science perfectly described. Mendel's theory is told, dramatically, with as much art as we should expect from the hand of Cézanne.

Apparently the foreign exhibitors might do more as they pleased. Now there are three courses open in the theory of design on this occasion. One can put up what will be easy to take down, and enjoy the impermanence of life by looking like it. Or one can sacrifice a spot of ease in building and demolishing by only looking nice and solid (like a real building). "A jolly good idea," said an English lady tapping the surprisingly hollow sounding walls of her country's concrete-looking pavilion. Lastly one can look solid and be solid and damn the expense. Deutschland uber alles! The first technique is doubtful nowadays, even for non-exhibition building. The German Pavilion, of actual masonry, is supported over the river embankment (a road being maintained in spite of the exhibition) by girders which form a noble spectacle. But, read an account of the Crystal Palace: "... the transparent definition of space, the total elimination of mass and the sense of tensile, almost live strength as opposed to the solidity and gravitational quality of previous masonry architecture." That goes for the Eiffel Tower too, strangely honoured in this exhibition, but not apparently quite understood by the officials of its country. The beauties of nice calculation, the delights of a debauch, as it were, with no hang-over, were appreciated in the Stockholm exhibition of 1930, an affair of glass, wire, canvas and flags. Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and Holland all have this enchanting sense of evanescence.

To be normal, one must be neutral or nordic. Spain is a brilliant exception to this rule and produces the most vivid of all the pavilions. Perhaps having no "name" to lose at the moment, she can be as bold as she pleases and flaunt Picasso and abstraction in the face of countries who cannot afford to be thought so queer. Compare the sculptures at the entrances of this and the German pavilion.
CALDER. Mercury Fountain. Paris Exhibition
They are both phallic, both have one purpose of propaganda, but the stronger urges along the subconscious and firmly achieves its purpose; the other fails, except to make small boys laugh and virgins wonder as before the tomb of Oscar Wilde in Père Lachaise. The large Picasso at the entrance to the Spanish Pavilion continues the subtle persuasion, beautifully related to its time and place opposite Calder's mercury fountain. The painting is so impressive that it is impossible to imagine Picasso working to better purpose. Clear thinking and hard passionate work have solved the problem.

The official arts then are compensated for by the official techniques—the artificial lightning under the darkened dome of the Grand Palais is better than the fêtes lumières on the Seine with special music (shades of Handel). Of the visiting nation's art there is something for everyone, and a very small special bit for you, reader.

Of Les Sentiments Politiques? These give the nervous thrill lacking in the art as a whole. It is the uncivilised thrill of modern Europe. The great Czechoslovakian pavilion is made of armament materials and probably paid for by the makers of these things. The German eagle, Mickey-Mouse-like, taps its foot impatiently at the brandished sickle opposite. In dark corners of the Italian pavilion, dusky sculpture suggests petrified Ethiopia.

Fly over the cathedrals at Beauvais and Canterbury, and you may wonder whether art and technique are indeed divisible at all, so little is the difference made here by temperament, ideas, climate. It is, or should be, a very quaint idea, an international exhibition of arts and techniques. But there it is.
LEGER. Painting. (Courtesy London Gallery)
BARBARA HEWORTH. Single form in plane wood
(From her recent exhibition at Alex Reid & Lefevre Ltd.)
(Above) PETER MACINTYRE. Painting
(Below) JESSICA DISMORR. Related Forms
(Above). F. E. McWILLIAM. Carving
(Right, above). JOY WILLIAMS. Painting
(Right, below). ROLAND PENROSE. Either was the other's name
It happened by chance that I was forced to stay in Munich for twenty-four hours, but I reconciled myself to the delay when I remembered as I left the station that I should be able to see the exhibition of Approved German Art at the new House of German Culture just opened by Hitler, and also the exhibition of Decadent Art; the art Hitler hates.

For the sake of the walk I went there by way of the Brown House and the tombs of the Nazi Martyrs. "Above all I must try to be fair," I thought, as I looked down on the bronze coffins and did my best not to think of all Nazis in too facile a way, as fools and ruffians who had placed a manqué artist at the head of the German nation.

Anyway Hitler the artist had had his fun choosing the work for his great exhibition. I wondered how many famous old masters he would have flung out if they had been carried in by mistake from the Alte Pinatotecke over the way.

As I turned into the Prinzregentstrasse and saw the new building I recognised the new German style. Impressive rows of simple columns repetitively asserting "Noble Simplicity and Iron Discipline." It had a modern air and was certainly preferable to the I.C.I. building or Unilever house. A lot of people were crowding in; the exhibition was obviously well attended. It has been said that the crowds at the decadent art exhibition were greater than those at the approved art, but when I went I should doubt if it were so. The decendent art galleries are much smaller and look more crowded therefore; so far as I could see there was no gate or way of checking the numbers who went there. Of course the approved art cost fifty pfenigs, while you could see decadence for nothing, which may have sent the numbers up a bit.

It would be foolish to deny the popularity of the New House of Culture, for there was nothing in it to shock Mother, and some things that were pleasant by ordinary standards; at its best it was pleasant but dull.

The decendent art shown was most of it bad art and no one could make it out to be anything else, but it was much more interesting and vital than the approved art. The interest of the exhibitions was in the comparison. The decendent art shown was all German. Those who thought they would see Picassos and Matisses there were mistaken. It was strictly German and for the major part was the product of the post-war period and a very interesting document of the times. The works were hysterical, but attempted to say something. The worst and most lurid examples had obviously been chosen. Religious pictures executed in violent colours, negroid crucifixions, imitations of Picasso and Matisse that could never have been good. Pictures of the horrors of war, stark, and probably rather good. Prostitutes with yellow faces, puce cheeks and thighs. The pictures were hung without frames. At the approved art the pictures were hung in a single line. There were the flashy superficial portraits of generals and S.A. leaders; portrait society stuff that can be seen in any society salon. Hitler in uniform. Hitler in multi. All either slick and slovenly or elaborately careful and sentimental. Here again, amongst the official artists was the hysterical note, but this time inhibited and sinister. Boys and maidens beating drums and waving banners. Gigantic sculptures of nude men striding forward, the
artist taking so much care that they should not
look pansy that they ceased to be men at all—
symbolism had made them inhuman. Pictures
telling you what a fine thing war is. A picture
of the bombardment of Almeria; there was
Hitler in mediaeval armour riding a white horse,
pretending to be the white knight (that is how
you are supposed to think of him next time you
see him being driven through the streets in his
Mercedes-Benz). There were one or two large
historical pictures; Hindenburg receiving Hitler
as chancellor; Hitler in his early days address-
ing a meeting. Is it possible to be a good
official artist nowadays—like David in the
Napoleonic era? Good official art is only
possible when the artist is left to himself to
make his own choice, and not imposed upon
from above. The hideous perverted failure of
all this is because European art is essentially
individual.

I went upstairs, and there saw many un-
assuming little pictures by what I suppose
must be the majority of painters. In the
traditional technique of representation some
of these were very well done. I had the impres-
sion of a number of artists pleased to work
quietly, with their minds relieved from having
to cope with modern aesthetic or social problems.
But it was very monotonous. The unexpected
illumination of feeling was gone from them.
I was pleased to leave.

NOTES

The Association of Arts and Industries of Chicago has founded an American School of Design.
It is to be called The New Bauhaus and Moholy-Nagy has gone to be its director. It embodies the
principles of the famous Bauhaus at Dessau founded in 1919 by Professor Gropius. Gropius, who is
now Professor of Architecture at Harvard University, will be chief adviser to the new school. The
lecturing staff includes James Johnson Sweeney, known to readers of Axis.

From the prospectus: “After long years of experiment it has been found that a successful art
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scientific and technical devices, must be incorporated in any new teaching programme. Such a school
has the practical task of serving its graduates and the community by equipping its students for well-
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Alexander Calder, American sculptor, maker of mobiles constructed in wire, is having a show in
London (his first one here) at the Mayor Gallery in December.

The English Surrealist group has arranged a show of surrealist-found objects, to be seen at the
London Gallery now.
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THE TOWN PLAN FOR NEMOURS, NORTH AFRICA, 1934.

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This is an illustration from Circle, "an International Survey of Constructive Art," edited by J. L. Martin, Ben Nicholson and N. Gabo, recently published by Faber & Faber Ltd. It illustrates admirably many works of contemporary painting, sculpture and architecture, and its articles are grouped under four headings: (1) Painting; (2) Sculpture; (3) Architecture; (4) Art and Life. The Editorial says: "By placing this work side by side we hope to make clear a common basis and to demonstrate, not only the relationship of one work to the other but of this form of art to the whole social order."
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