Summaries of the Articles

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anticoche

BY JEAN DES GAGNIERS

The excavation of a city like Anticoche-on-Oronte (today the Turkish city of Antakya), ancient Roman capital and meeting point of oriental and occidental civilizations, will do much to enrich our knowledge of the art and culture of ancient times.

Eight archaeological expeditions, organized by Princeton University between the years 1932 and 1939, have produced the foundations of a large number of buildings, both religious and civil, as well as many different objects. The floors of several of the buildings were decorated with mosaics. In fact the series of mosaics brought to light at Anticoche constitute an admirable record of the development of this art from the first century of the Roman Empire to the sixth century of our era.

Anticoche was particularly well endowed with public baths, nymphaeums, pools and docks the mosaic inspiration for which is frequently marine in origin. There was an abundance of water in this city and the rhetorician Libanio tells us it was so limpid that it was possible to see the bottom of a pool as clearly as if there had been no water in it.

The mosaics discovered at Anticoche are far from being of equal quality but, for the archaeologist and the historian of art, they are all interesting. In that age, the mosaic makers, like the painters, drew on subjects inspired by Greek art. The Anticoche collection is an important one, since it includes several excellent examples of an art form that got its beginnings in Greece but really flourished in the Roman period.

The beauty of the work is particularly evident in such pieces as those which adorned the House of the Buff Supper, the House of Dionysus and Ariane and the House of Iphigenie.

canaletto

BY ANTONIO MARANZI

The city of Venice knew its greatest political and artistic glory during the 16th and 17th centuries but the 18th century was to go down as one of opulence for the city. The spirit of this era, reflected in the physical ambience of the city, comes to realistic life in the canvasses of a Venetian artist who always felt a deep feeling of pride for his native city.

The artist was Antonio Canale, known as Canaletto (1697-1768), a realist who faithfully recorded Venice’s life of refinement in the years before the treaty of Campo Formio imposed by Napoleon in 1797. Canaletto was an attentive observer, impartial and at times almost detached, who managed to be precise in his work without being overmeticulous. He had a remarkable awareness and, above all, had a deep pride in his city. In his canvasses, Venice is a queen city.

Canaletto is a classicist and the source of this faithful adherence to classicism, this love for landscapes bathed in light, may be traced to the works of Gentile Bellini and to the Carpaccios dedicated to the story of Saint Ursule.

The latter is a masterpiece that shows Canaletto at his best as the painstaking observer. The perfection evident in every detail underlines a rare sensibility and here, too, the artist reaches a point of perfection in the field of perspective. The remarkable L’Arc de Triomphe de Constantin (about 1741) in the Bracaglia collection in New York does not have the inspiration of the San Rocco work but the architectural realism and the lively expressions on the people give the painting a feeling of warmth.

italian architecture

BY MARIO PROFUMO

When one speaks of Italy and its architecture, one thinks instinctively of the marvellous works of other days. One recalls, for example, that the painter Rubens who went to Genoa in 1607 was quite taken by the charm of the palaces of the “gentiluomini particolari”.

The Flemish painter displayed a keen understanding not only of the aesthetic values but also of the social problems which are at the base of architectural work and the development of modern architecture has confirmed his intuition: the international style of architecture is the result of a complete generalization of the way of life brought about by an industrial civilization. From this point of view, however, Italian architecture has a special position. For one thing, in Italy, there are few of the limitations of a highly industrialized society. There is an originality of form and a new kind of expression.

The first personality encountered in the history of modern Italian architecture is Antonio Sant Elia (1888-1914), a man whose foresight and intuition put him well ahead of his time. Sant’Elia, however, did not launch an expressionist architecture in Italy and up until 1930 there was little in the way of original production. Starting in 1930, Italy went into a rationalist period, a situation that already existed in France. Some of the famous names are Giuseppe Terragni (1904-1943), Pietro Lingeri, Giuseppe Pagano and Cesare Cataneo.

The most important works are those constructed after the end of the war and such names as Giliardi, Franco Albini, Gio Ponti and Giovanni Michelucci are among a prominent list of people. Organic architecture in Italy has been emphasized by Bruno Zevi and to this school belong such people as L. Sasmona who directs the Venetian school of architecture. He abandoned the organic expression, the rational spirit of Padua. Italian architecture is given international importance by Pier Luigi Nervi, whom Pesvner has described as “one of the best architects of our time.”

italian art

BY GIOVANNI CARANDENTE

The new trends in Italian art have put an end to the quarrel which for several years has divided the figurative and the abstract artists on the question of the presence of man and natural realism in the field of artistic creativity.

The young Italian artists have drawn inspiration from at least three fundamental sources in the modern period. The first trend is more conceptual; that of Afro, decisively pictorial and with an exceptional element of expression; that of Burri, who opened horizons perhaps wider than any seen in art since the days of cubism; and finally that of Fontana, who provided a whole new concept of space.

It is to be noted that the present trends in Italian painting have most unexpectedly taken account of these three schools. This is evident even among the most rebellious of the young artists. Each of the three great Italian artists of the postwar period, who were the only true protagonists of a really dramatic adventure, who were the only real protagonists of a really dramatic adventure, in which such people as Guttuso and Vedova in painting and Consagra and Cella in sculpture were also prominent, was in the early sixties in an avant-garde position.

Italian art had for 30 years been marked by a certain chauvinism, despite the works of such people as Morandi, Severini and Morandi. The artists who started working again after the war, making use of European and American experiences, made a clean sweep of everything they considered had no raison d’ètre in Italian art. The young artists of today perhaps do not realize the debt they owe to the artists of the two preceding generations.

The young artists in Italy have a choice between a purely idealistic opposition to the informal influence and a return to the didactic sources which gave rise to pop art, between surrealism and neo-constructivism and the Guistali groups. Modern Italian art freed itself from the humanism which characterized it in recent periods by adapting itself to the demands of a modern civilization which wants its art to reflect the fears and triumphs of the present day. There is much promise among some of the young Italian artists.

italian objects

BY L. J. BEAULIEU

The aesthetics of articles of practical use were in focus at two exhibitions of Italian products. One was at the Milan triennal, held some months ago, while the other was at the Triennale, held last year, with the accent on a number of industrial objects of a very current style. The second, now showing, is sponsored by the Italian National Office of Handcrafts and Small Industries. This latter, sponsored by the collaboration of Italy’s Department of Tourism, displays a number of objects in the field of the decorative arts. The objects reflect a number of Italian forms in ceramics, glassware, basketmaking, brassware, enamels and paperweights.

The aesthetics in both exhibitions are comparable, although from two different points of view. The first concept put forward at the triennial was a display of selected works which gave rise to a great interest in neo-constructivism and neo-surrealism. The Guistali groups. Modern Italian art freed itself from the humanism which characterized it in recent periods by adapting itself to the demands of a modern civilization which wants its art to reflect the fears and triumphs of the present day. There is much promise among some of the young Italian artists.

travels

BY MELVIN CHARNEY

In the present world we are very much at home with mass technology and the anonymity of sprawling cities. History is no longer accepted as a lineal, sequential succession of chosen events but rather as a mosaic of the limitations of a highly industrialized society. There is an originality of form and a new kind of expression.

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The vernacular traditions that are of special interest are those that have ancient origins. There is little data available on the early development of architecture and it is therefore surprising that the vernacular has until now been largely ignored. For example, a dramatic tradition that has persisted since the neolithic period as a viable building system can be seen in the trulli dwellings of southern Italy. The trulli is a method of stone construction that results in a distinctive family of architectural forms that are profoundly ancient, profoundly Mediterranean and still in use.

After visiting the ruins of Pompeii and the temples of Paestum, a secret part of an architectural grand tour has often included a return to the east across Calabria with its hill towns to visit the trulli in the province of Apulia. Apulia is on the Adriatic coast in the region of Italy nearest to the orient.

The land is steeped in history. There are prehistoric remains, ruined structures that belonged to Magna-Grecia and to Rome, rock-cut cells of Byzantine hermits as well as beautiful examples of Norman architecture. The trulli are in a triangle of land formed by the city ports of Bari, Brindisi and Taranto.

The visual strength of the trulli as architectural objects and the relation of the trulli to antiquity attracts the afficionados to Apulia. The old neolithic found here is particularly Italian. The primitive hut presents a "bella fuga". But what is especially interesting for the architect is the clear and strong environmental system of the trulli and a system that allows to make functional variations within a standard building method. Human values that have persisted despite change can here be experienced at a time when humanity is losing touch with its environment.

An exhibition of the works of Giuseppe Fiore was held recently at the Galerie Agnes Lefort. Barely fifteen minutes after the opening of the show, there was only a single canvas left for sale and half an hour later the sale was declared definitely closed. Lemieux’s fame has spread far and wide.

The worth of this artist has never been more definitely established than since his death in 1958. Exhibitions of Lemieux’s works have been staged all over the world. One of his best shows, however, was held recently at Montreal's Museum of Contemporary Art. The show was, in fact, a striking example of the esteem in which he is held by the people of Montreal. The Lemieux family released a number of the artist’s major works for showing internationally.

Visitors to the Montreal exhibition were given the opportunity of seeing a number of works which the artist was unable to finish and which were taken from his atelier after his death. These works, perhaps even more so than the ones which he had completed, allowed the viewer a chance for an intimate look into the genius of Rouault.

Rouault’s genius was unrestricted. Son of a cabinet-maker and a trade apprentice himself, he thought with his hands. Painting, engravings, ceramics, windows, enamels, tapestries, even sculpture — he was always curious about things, always the searcher. But in every field, he emerged as Georges Rouault the man, Rouault the artist.

Rouault’s works covered a wide range of things. He loved the waters and the trees, the cities and the villages and every living being. His feeling for man was always present but it was particularly noticeable where man had need. The painter's great affection for living things stemmed from charity rather than curiosity.

Aldo Carpi

Aldo Carpi is an Italian artist who at 78 still seeks a poetic expression of truth. The artist, who never left Milan, still paints the seasons, flowers, birds, beaches, mornings and children. But in the panorama of contemporary Italian painting, Carpi appears to be one of the most significant and one of the most original painters of the first half of the twentieth century. This is a man who has dedicated his life to artistic poetry.
Three contemporary Italian sculptors, Berto Lardera, Pietro Consagra and Francesco Somaini are the subjects of a remarkable new publication from the Editions du Griffon at Neuchatel in Switzerland. Each is accorded a volume of his own. The text for the book on Lardera is by Michel Seigneur, the text for Consagra by Guido Carlo Argan, and the text for Somaini by Michel Tapie. There are excellent photographs of the artists at work, important bibliographies and a list of exhibitions and another list indicating where the works concerned are located. No one interested in sculpture should miss this series.

Le soleil sous la mort

The latest collection of poems by Fernand Ouellette, published by the Editions de l'Hexagone under the title, Soleil Sous La Mort, merits attention for its excellent presentation and for the simplicity and goodness of the material between its covers. This is a return to a "figurative" kind of poetry in which the musical element regains its position of importance.

L'art abstrait

L'Art Abstrait dans L'Art Sacre by Georges Mercier is an important study in line with the current trend toward renewed inspiration in the field of sacred art. The book, published by Editions R. de Boccard (Paris), with the co-operation of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (France), makes the point that since the last war there has been more and more call for the services of artists unspecialized in religious art. The book contains 251 pages and 52 plates of black and white photos.

Canada 20e siècle

The Concise History of Modern Sculpture by Sir Herbert Read, published by Frederick A. Praeger, New York, is part of the series, Praeger World of Art Paperbacks. The author is a professor of art in England and is also a poet and his text here is highly documented. In 310 pages, he discusses aestheticism, cubism, constructivism, futurism, surrealism and the diffusion of styles. There are numerous illustrations in both color and black and white.