Note to Our Readers
The Editor

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wave that broke, from the death of Cézanne to the eruption of Dadaism, upset not only art and taste, but challenged the interpretation of classicism and modernism. Picasso, Schwitters, and Marcel Duchamp, these three names establish the break with traditionalism. At the same time, non-figurative painting appeared. Artists like Malévich and Magnelli, the Delaunays, Kandinsky, Kupka, and Mondrian come to the same conclusion: not knowing of one another, separated by sometimes hostile traditions, endowed with apparently incompatible temperaments.

Magnelli has told us (1) of the isolation in which he lived in Florence during the years 1913-19, when he produced the first of his works in which figuration disappeared: no reviews, no reproductions, no contacts. If his relations with the Futurists were friendly, they were disturbed by the lack of understanding of Marinetti's group towards growing non-figuration. By their adherence to epidermic modernity. Now we must remember that Magnelli who began to paint late, self-taught—he liked to say had fresco painters masters: Giotto, Paolo Uccello, Masaccio, and Piero della Francesca. His last figure gave way as quickly as styles. There remain only those who have added to the development of knowledge. Magnelli is eminently one of those. A plastician, he constructed his work strictly, felt repugnance at facility, built with the sobriety of the Dutch. It is useful to relate these characteristics to the work of Malévich in Russia. We note that towards 1909, the creator of Suprematism painted oils with a concision akin to those of Magnelli in 1913. Both, thus seem to reach constructivism by a similar evolution, by the purification of forms, as it were, by a classic approach contrary to Kandinsky, who reached the informal by expressionist lyricism. The route followed by Mondrian was different again, an impermeable logic led him to an absolute geometrism by the deepening of forms.

But the most uncompromising men sometimes have unexpected repentance. First Magnelli abandoned his haughty serenity: the war came to an end, and there was more enthusiasm. Enthusiasm exalted him. A more sensual effervescence was manifested in his compositions, a tumultuous song overwhelmed him. The end of hostilities liberated in him a generous taste that overexcited colour, impassioned forms, which to this point had been so strict. He called a "lyric explosion" the works which resulted from this. That preceded a questioning of the very meaning of the work of art. Magnelli was hesitating in the exploration of the possibilities opened by his own approach: he experimented by applying to his research the work of the Futurist, Cubist, and Surrealist painters, without ever giving in to their formulation. A powerful temperament kept him from adhering to whatever was not his fundamental intuition. He experienced these teachings, then moved away from them.

In 1928 he reached an impasse: he stopped painting. With difficulty two years later, he began to draw again, and was reconciled with painting by discovering in Carrara, the language of unpolished marble: with their transfiguration into a series of canvases "Les Pierres", lyricism mingled with an archaism of the Tuscan painter. Beginning in 1937, the creative tumult was mastered, Magnelli's work reached a state of serenity that even the upheavals of the second world war were not able to shake. "If one wants to produce something absolute, one must be able to choose what is necessary to realize this vision" (2).

As early as 1912-1913, Magnelli deliberately crossed the threshold of tradition, breaking it. He directly created his own language, reinvented a new plastic vocabulary and thus the after-effects had hidden. His choice was definitely made shortly before the second world war, and his work, henceforth, was to join in with the non-figurative trend which held general attention until 1955. And, in the purification of the constructivists he remains on the fringe, keeping his distance towards geometrism. A suppleness of form which is not softness, assures his freedom. "The straightest straight line is that produced by the maximum straightness of impact." This remark by Closon applies exactly to Magnelli's works. If the rhythm is architectonic in its discretion, it is shaded with a sensitivity which suits an ambiguous structure. The strength, the firmness of the construction bring daylight to the poetic line of this author.

This pictorial language new in its apparent treatment, was related by the obscure routes of heredity, the places he lived, the Tuscan landscape, and Florence, to the sources that Magnelli knew all about: Uccello, Piero della Francesca. We could even go beyond that and follow Arp, who thought that "the black, brown and blue of Magnelli's canvases made one think of the colours of frescoes of the first Cretan eras. His works could furnish an equivalent of these majestic and serene decorations". Crete, the Etruscans, Florence the international biennials offered them their galleries. Michel Seuphor wrote, "the most important event of the new post-war period was the appearance of Alberto Magnelli. When the war was over, Magnelli's star rose. He soon became the most important abstract painter in Paris." (3)

With his death, the last man (Sonia Delaunay being quite alive) of the initiators of the new art foreseen by Apollinaire passed away. His kindness, his gracious humours, were mediating between the elders, the explorers of virgin lands, and the generations which, successively, were to profit from their adventure, one of the most original known in the history of art. Magnelli surely occupies a prominent place which history reserves to those who change it.

NOTES
(Translation by Yvonne Kirbyson)

NOTE TO OUR READERS
We deeply regret that circumstances beyond our control prevent our not providing translations of the four following articles on La Danse à Québec, Robert Savoie, Marcel Duchamps, and the artists of theApollinaire translation Zacks. We trust our readers will understand and accept our apology for this inconvenience. — The Editor.