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struggles and in the common life and environment of the people.' The programme of production for the coming season certainly shows that Germany is to search into her own history and her own countryside for the themes of forthcoming films. Whether this strictly localized inspiration will achieve the universal appeal of the masterpieces inspired by international Communism remains to be seen, but there is ground for hope that, in one country at least, many of the aims of the international Catholic film movement will soon be realized.

V.W.

RECENT ART EXHIBITIONS

IN ART NOW (Faber and Faber; 12/6) Mr. Herbert Read has aimed at producing a vade mecum to the theory and practice of modern painting, and an exhibition illustrative of the pictures he discusses has been arranged at the Mayor Galleries as a complement to his book. It would be more true to say that his book is complementary to the exhibition. His system, which is clear and comprehensive rather than critical, involves a preliminary chapter on aesthetics, in which he traces the spread of empiricism and of the genetic method, and then discussions of Matisse (on whom he is quite first-rate), the German expressionists, the abstractionists and finally symbolism and *surréalisme*. Mr. Read's characteristic is an apparently illimitable capacity for the reconciliation of opposites. He can accept Matisse for the purely aesthetic reasons for which Matisse can alone be accepted. He can accept Ernst for psychological reasons which to one less catholic would appear (as they have in the past appeared to Mr. Roger Fry) incompatible with the arguments he deduces in support of Jeaneret. He can agree with one critic that aesthetics are the philosophy and with another that they are the psychology of art. Mr. Read is in position of a serious critic reduced to acting as *compère* to non-stop variety.

Provided we expect no coherent critical standard, this book is of the greatest value. Mr. Read is an extraordinarily able mouthpiece for the artists whose causes he pleads. But his position, considered in the abstract, is quite illogical. Art is a question of form. Reaction to form alternatively can be sensational or intuitive. If it is sensational (classical), so far as modern art is concerned, it can be discounted; if it is intuitive, in so far as the intuition is subconscious, it implies a whole series of other subconscious reactions running along in a scale more or less parallel to the conscious and fundamentally literary reactions which, though they may be avoided in the world of first-rate artists even when vocationally they are genre painters like

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de Hooch, are incompatible with painters of the second or third rank, Morland for example, or Brekelenkam. Now Mr. Read would be the first to admit that neither Brekelenkam nor Morland are first-rate painters, and if he were asked why, he would say probably that particularly in the case of Morland, the reason was that his interest was literary rather than pictorial. Yet when Mr. Read wishes to persuade us to accept *surréalisme*, the arguments he uses are precisely contradictory. He advocates Klee (whose world, a little euphemistically, perhaps, he terms an 'intellectual fairyland') on the same grounds on which he would reject Morland. Klee, he says in effect, is a good painter because he is a literary painter. After all, it cannot make the slightest difference whether qualities which we all agree to be not incompatible with, but at least extraneous to good painting, are conscious or subconscious; they differ in quality only, and not in kind. In Mr. Read's theory, Mrs. Browning would have been a greater poetess had she written her poems in code and, instead of publishing them, sealed them up in a bottle and thrown them out to sea. The important thing about *surréalisme* is not the reliance of its exponents upon concordance of subconscious reaction in the individual, but the perfectly straightforward fact that Ernst as a painter is not so much bad as quite uninteresting, while Dali is extremely disagreeable. Ernst's position is far nearer Frith's than Blake's. When he deals with abstract painting, Mr. Read's case is based on Mr. Roger Fry's assumption that fundamentally there is no difference between painting which is representational and painting which is not. In Mr. Fry's case the assumption may be justified in so far as he approaches aesthetics from the standpoint of the artist. But Mr. Read believes aesthetics primarily a business of psychology, and the exhibition at the Mayor Galleries suggests a strong line of demarcation between representational and non-representational painters, between, that is to say, Hofer, Roux and Soutine, who for all their distortion have one foot firmly planted in reality, and Léger, Marcoussis and Baumeister, to whom form is synonymous with pattern. Can we get as intense a satisfaction from a simple bi-dimensional scheme as from a complex design visualised in three dimensions? If we look at painting as an intellectual nut which we must crack, the softer the nut the more likely, surely, that it will be rotten. We are so intent on criticising (in the narrowest sense of the word) by what we are pleased to call purely pictorial standards, that we forget that appreciation depends quite as much upon a standard that is visual. Criticism may be a matter for the intellect, appreciation is one for the intellect helped on by the emotions. Miraculously lovely painting merely does not explain the exaltation of Chardin or Vermeer. Whether we like it or not, each

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was passionately interested in his subject and communicates his interest to us. Where this interest is absent, the picture, good though its design may be, in so far as it is deficient in a vital quality, is in quite a different category from the painting in which visual and pictorial qualities combine, and we can consequently call Léger 'merely abstract' with the same confidence that makes us term Frith 'merely representational.' Pure representationalism and pure abstraction are the opposite ends of the same scale.

In the nineteenth century the critic was generally an artist. To-day the artist is almost invariably a critic. Mr. Eliot's poetry and Webern's music are both critical, and in the same way Seligmann and Ozenfant and Villon are critics and not artists. There used to be an old jibe at the critic as an artist manqué. Now the reverse is true. He may provide interesting illustrations of the trend of modern criticism, of successive emphases on line (Ozenfant), rhythm (Masson), colour (Rouault). What he does not provide is art, because art involves an integrity of vision to which the critic with his concentration on theory does not aspire.

It should not be thought from these criticisms that Mr. Read's book is in any way a poor one. It is very good indeed, so good that it is something that every student of modern painting ought to read and think about. But it does emphasise the need for some kind of discernment in the welter of conflicting theory it advances, and if what I have said about it seems curiously out-of-date, I can only plead that honesty is the best criterion in the end.

JOHN POPE-HENNESSY.

CINEMA

Man of Aran, the film produced by Mr. Robert Flaherty, has a setting as strange as his *Nanook of the North*. For it was made in part of a fisherman's thatched cottage on Aranmore, the largest of the three islands that lie beyond Galway. The caste is composed of native Irish speakers, the chief parts being taken by 'Tiger King,' a young Islander, Maggie and Michael Dirrane, Patch Ruan and Bredig Mullin. The film reproduces, in a manner astonishingly faithful, the lives of the men and women of Aran, who depend mainly on fishing and the kelp industry. The rocky cliffs, tiny fields and thatched lime-washed houses, the curraghs that are rowed by the men in *bainins* and homespuns, the perils of an Islander's life—all these are shown to us in Mr. Flaherty's remarkable picture. To those who have never seen these outposts of the ancient Gaelic world, the picture will give a glimpse of civilization more foreign to many people in England than are others to be found in regions far