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asked why certain war pictures are 'so very lovely while what they represent was in fact so very unpleasant,' he suggests 'that it is like falling in love. Our vision then is influenced by a particular state of mind, in which we don't see each feature, each small point of face and form as they would be in a photograph, but rather the peculiar beauty and significance that they assume to our adoring vision,' a representational standpoint which provided an entirely erroneous approach to the shifting of emphasis from matter to manner in the greater number of modern paintings.

Thirdly, 'Art,' says Mr. Casson, 'cannot be considered separately from ordinary daily life.' These talks prove conclusively that it can and must be so considered, if we are not, like Mr. Casson, to devote a hundred and fifty pages to explaining to the 'average man' the appreciation of the type of art he almost certainly appreciates already, the art, that is, of thirty years ago. Where, in the case of Mr. Dobson, Mr. Casson is dealing with a great and representative modern artist, he takes an infinity of pains to lower the discussion from Mr. Dobson's more or less abstract plane to the representational level of the 'average man.' 'As far as I can see,' says Mr. Dobson, 'it is a generally accepted idea that every human being is completely equipped as an art-critic at birth'—Mr. Casson's own theory, apparently; he replies, at all events: 'Every man in a sense is his own art critic, because you, as the artist, put something before him and he has to look at it. The man in the street is a pretty good judge in the long run, you know'; an example of peculiarly fallacious reasoning. We seem to remember a saying of Michelangelo, 'Good painting is a music and a melody, which the intellect can alone appreciate, and that with difficulty.' Relate art, of its very nature exclusive, to the ordinary man, ridicule the intellectual approach of the modern critic and, more important, of the modern artist, and you are left with the Royal Academy.

J.P.-H.

RECENT ART EXHIBITIONS

THE retrospective exhibition of Mr. Jacob Epstein's work at the Leicester Galleries has provoked the usual conflicting criticisms; he is insincere, insensitive, sensational by turns, while individual works like the *Madonna and Child* (No. 13) or the *Nude* (No. 21) are characterised as disgusting and obscene. It reaffirms, of course, what everyone has always said, that Epstein cannot carve in stone, but it shows equally that though he does not understand stone as a medium in the way that Dobson and Maillol understand it, his work in it is incom-

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parably superior to that of the second-rate pasticheurs of the Skeaping-Hepworth class.

Six of the twenty-nine exhibits are in stone, three of them belonging to the year 1913 and three to 1932. The largest, *Primeval Gods* (No. 23), is an exceedingly poor piece of work; its design is as crude as Epstein's invariably is when he is dealing with large planes and of a type justifiable only if it has been dictated by architectural considerations. In other words, it is primarily mathematical—this is particularly true of the much-praised *Sun-God* on the obverse side. The *Elemental Figure* (No. 19) is a contrast in every way; it has an originality of design and subtlety of execution which the larger carving is entirely without, and suggests that not only is flat relief unsuitable for exploitation by a sculptor with the coarseness that habitually characterises Epstein's work in stone, but also fairly conclusively that his talent is not for the gigantic.

Bronze, as Epstein uses it, with small, nervous planes and minute technique, is essentially a personal medium, so much so that even the largest of the bronze figures, the *Nude* and the *Madonna and Child*, have the impress of individuality that his stone figures lack. The *Nude* is sufficiently realistically treated to revolt those who consider modern sculpture solely representationally; from the abstract point of view, however, from which alone we are justified in judging Epstein's work, there can be no question that the design, with its meticulous balancing of curves (somewhat similar to that in which Mr. Eric Gill at one period indulged), is one of the most distinguished in the exhibition. The motif is repeated in the more recent *Jeunesse* (No. 7). Both relate themselves, of course, to negro work, of which a most important exhibition is at present being held at the Lefevre Galleries. There the tendency throughout is to view the body in terms of its nearest geometrical equivalent, balancing projections against each other, reducing them to an equal depth and thus forming a rectangular pattern of pairs of eyes, breasts, hands and knees (all, naturally, on the same two vertical lines) balanced on either side of the nose and navel. The *Madonna*, first shown four years ago, has been attacked repeatedly, because the features are Indian in character, an argument which theologically even seems a little absurd. Representationally, at all events, it is no more unlike the normal Sassoferatesque conception than the Pazzi *Madonna* or a typical work of Desiderio, and though the treatment of the drapery is not entirely satisfactory, it remains probably Epstein's most important traditional excursion into the grand manner. It is regrettable that it has not yet been bought by a Catholic church.

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Over the portrait bronzes there is no longer any considerable disagreement. *Professor Lucy Donnelly* (No. 3) is a marvel of sensibility, *Isobel* (No. 9) a model of subordinated detail, while *Ahmed* (No. 11) most of all perhaps emphasises the purely Renaissance character of this aspect of Epstein's work. The earliest of these bronzes, the Conrad bust (No. 2), dates from 1924, the remainder from 1931 and 1932, and it is strange, therefore, that though they are mature works in a perfected idiom, they should evidence so little development from earlier types. Such development as they show tends rather to increased mastery of ornament than greater simplicity of form. The same lack of continuity is apparent in the sculpture; though in individual pieces the influence is plain (*Rima*, for example, and the Ludovici throne or the African origin of *Primeval Gods*), one is not visibly perfected from another. Epstein's art is as mature to-day as it was twenty years ago, or alternatively—and sculpturally at least it would be true—his art to-day is as immature as it was then.

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Last year's Academy contained several pictures of great interest; this year's exhibition is lamentably undistinguished. No new Orpen has been discovered, and the *Last Supper*, by Mr. Mark Symons, whose *Crucifixion*, in spite of the lurid publicity accorded to it, was one of the most interesting of last year's pictures, has been rejected by the committee in favour of inefficient rubbish like Mr. Harry Morley's *Marriage Feast at Cana* (No. 680). Though the acceptance of a larger number of 'modern' works than usual has been widely advertised, they amount in practice to nothing better than a few simplified designs of the second-rate Empire Marketing Board-Underground Railway Poster type, which have, needless to say, no connection whatever with the more significant developments of contemporary painting. Sir John Lavery and Mr. Gerald Kelly share what honours are to be had between them. In *James Maxton, M.P.* (No. 226), Sir John Lavery has a subject peculiarly suited to his hard and rather dramatic facility, and Mr. Kelly produces in his *Dr. Eleanor Lodge* (No. 91), with its subdued, feminine colouring, a portrait which is at least less obviously imitative than his large *Miss Anna Christine Thompson* (No. 133). Its great technical skill makes most of his work repay inspection, though visually every picture he produces is curiously negative. About the other portraits little can be said; Miss Cathleen Mann's *Lady Mary Pratt* (No. 65)—her work in the exhibition is of a consistently high standard—Miss Ethel Walker's *Frances Hudson* (No. 260) and *Mlle. Olga Eliena* (No. 308), Mr. Spencer Watson's *Miss Stella Kent* (No. 142),

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and Dame Laura Knight's *George Bernard Shaw* (No. 145) are the best of a bad bunch. In his *Delius* (No. 192) Mr. James Gunn treats the composer as if he were a piece of furniture—his *Pauline and Chloe* (No. 151) is a far better painting—and Mr. Sickert's *Diana Forbes-Robertson* (No. 242) is for different reasons quite as unsuccessful.

The best of the landscapes is Mr. Paul Gernez's *Entrée du Port, Honfleur* (No. 675). Mr. A. Stuart Hill's *Thames at Vauxhall* (No. 612) is pretty in a conventional way, and Mr. Ernest Proctor's *Stour Valley* (No. 103), Mr. Terrick Williams' *Café Florian, Venice* (No. 205), and Mr. Henry Bishop's *Villefranche* (No. 299) have attractive qualities. Mr. Russell Flint's *Pilgrimage at Midsummer Dawn, Old Castile* (No. 162) has a good design. Among the still-lives Miss Ethel Walker's *Bunch of Roses* (No. 145), Miss Clare Atwood's *Dining Room* (No. 33), and Mr. Philip Connard's decorative panels (Nos. 51, 130, 136) are best worth looking at. No religious picture shown deserves serious consideration.

All in all, Mrs. Dod Proctor's *A Growing Girl* (No. 44) is probably the best picture in the exhibition, because it is the only picture shown that has the peculiar individuality that we call style. Others of the exhibitors, Lavery, Dame Laura Knight and so on, have mannerisms, which are quite a different thing. Style is the quality everywhere most conspicuously absent; an individual style, save in a few instances, we cannot of course expect, but borrowed style surely would be preferable to no style at all. A recent exhibition at Burlington House showed the influence which Rembrandt had on Orpen's early work, and in the formation consequently of his final manner; this year's Academy shows no young painter with the capacity for absorption that foretells good work to come. Here and there, there are contemporary influences, a timid Utrillesque vision of a French village, for example, or a thing or two taken off Orpen himself, but of significant influence no trace is to be found.

There is no worse fallacy than that study of the method of old masters produces an inevitable eclecticism; experiment in an alien style teaches the artist not only how to paint but how to see, and sight is something of which the Academy is badly in need. In the absence of a matured genius, it can only be when such experiments in a positive style are apparent that the Academy will cease to be a place for the inexpensive exhibition of paintings which are not good enough to be shown elsewhere.

JOHN POPE-HENNESSY.