

"LES AMERICAINS" IN PARIS

Three Large Shows of Expatriate Painters— "1940" Looks Singularly Out of Date

By RUTH GREEN HARRIS.

PARIS.

SINCE the first of the year there has been intensive showing of American work. At the Galerie Jeune Peinture, Sam Putnam organized an international exhibition in which Americans predominated. The vernissage was the talk of the town. The crowds burst the door of the gallery, connoisseurs spilled over into the café opposite and out onto the street. Lilion Fisk, George Seldes, Joseph Stella, William Walkowitz and B. Kessler, were among the American exhibitors.

Artistes Americains de Paris opened a little later at the Galerie de la Renaissance. Chil Aronson, its organizer says: "The young generation of American artists comes to art delivered of the sentimentality of yesterday, of the heavy weight of tradition, and it strives to express a new plastic spirit, a spirit not as yet fully crystallized, but one that brings to us already a foretaste, a warning of a new enthusiasm, of an *elan*, a vision yet unknown of a fresh and vital force."

The French press has given generous space to the exhibition and taken it seriously, though one can hardly blame the press for looking with amusement at such American names as John Xceron, Vaclar, Vyt-lacil, Sam Ostrowski, Annie Neogoe or Sacha Moldovan. Among other exhibitors are Martin Baer, Jerome Blum, Don Brown, Paul Burlin, Sam Ostrowski, Emlen Pope Etting, Lee Hersch, Hilaire Hiler, Walter Pach, Abraham Rattner and Edgar Rupprecht. Hunt Diederich, Wilmer Hoffman, Heinz Warneke and Allen Ullman are also shown.

The likableness of the exhibition as a whole is its thorough-going professionalism; its good craftsmanship; its personal points of view; its earnest attacking of problems. It brooks no frivolity and no grand stand play.

M. Aronson's observation notwithstanding, traditions are all over the place. How can it be otherwise? We are not Hottentots. But for all that, this exhibition is freer than many of direct influences. There are the little Soutines and the little Dufys, but there might easily have been a lot more.

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NO doubt it is dangerous to be affected by the general atmosphere and the pervading perfume of a show. But at the Parc des Expositions, "1940" smells so bright and alert and wide-awake that one is attracted to everything "as a whole"—though it is only fair to state that the wide-awake perfume, radiating from the exhibits is given plenty of light and space and air in which to circulate. (The Artistes Americains de Paris, at the Galerie Renaissance, have hung themselves in twilight on saffronized pink walls.)

In the "1940" show we find Americans again. Alexander Calder's metal bar and small wooden balls, a contraption looking as if it might have something to do with television, is called "January 3," but this writer is too ignorant to appreciate the historical significance of the date. Ary Stillman's painting of figures and landscape resembles deep water in the sun. You know the look—as if the sun, rather than being reflected in the water from above, were being drawn up through the water in electric points of color. Janice Ford Biala is of G. R. D. fame. The things and figures in her painting gravely turn about as if in some slow and harmonious dance of joy. Not a hilarious joy nor a country dance. Something much richer and more contemplative than hilarity.

If the Association Artistique intends that "1940" should represent a future date and that the present work presents a prophecy, they are unaware of the present trend. Many of the exhibitors have contributed compositions of squares and angles and triangles in bright colors that are no doubt the result of speculation and study in the realm of color and form. The present tendency is away from cubes, however. The present seems to be less self-conscious

about the human figure and the familiar landscape and less afraid of both.

One becomes such a traitor to one's self. A few years ago this writer would have been in bellicose sympathy with the recent sculptures of Joan Mirò (at the Galerie Pierre) and all on the alert to study and discover them. Now they seem only amusing and the "amusing" has become an awful bore, as old stuff as the bright squares of "1940." The only satisfaction derived from the Mirò exhibition of things called sculpture—any old things nailed to boards—was in the ringing of a bell that hung by a cord to one of these boards and then looking as though the bell hadn't been rung; admittedly, pretty childish sport.