THE GLISTENING BRIDGE

LÉOPOLD SURVACE AND THE SPATIAL PROBLEM IN PAINTING

BY SAMUEL PUTNAM

With
An Autobiograpkic Sketch
An Essay and Notes
by M. Survage

and
Thirty-three Reproductions

NEW YORK • COVICI-FRIEDE•PUBLISHERS
1929

FRONTISPIECE 1925

Femme aux Poissons
Collection of the Arts Club of Chicago

THE GLISTENING BRIDGE

LÉOPOLD SURVACE AND THE SPATIAL PROBLEM IN PAINTING

BY SAMUEL PUTNAM

With
An Autobiograpkic Sketch
An Essay and Notes
by M. Survage

and
Thirty-three Reproductions

NEW YORK • COVICI-FRIEDE•PUBLISHERS
1929

A Madame
laquelle se promène
sous un parapluie
d'etoiles

THE EDITION CONSISTS OF
ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-
FIVE NUMBERED COPIES

THIS IS NUMBER
148

TYPOGRAPHY BY S. A. JACOBS
PRINTED BY STRATFORD PRESS INC., NEW YORK
REPRODUCTIONS BY MERIDEN GRAVURE CO.,
MERIDEN, CONN.

Ce peintre est le fils de cette guerre.
Calme et touffue son oeuvre est un pont
chatoyant entre ce que fut l'art avant
la guerre et l'essor magnifique qui
emportera les nouveaux peintres.

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE NO. I 1911

Le Penseur

Collection of the Artist

/

FOREWORD

M. LÉOPOLD SURVAGE and his work are possessed of an importance which the compiler of this brochure has no desire to sully by overstatement. And yet, important as the painter, the technician and the painting-philosopher are—those three personalities that meet, in so unwonted and engaging a manner, in the personality that is Survage—or perhaps, rather, because of their importance—this monographer would never have undertaken the task of attempting to fasten them down on paper, had it not been for the artist's earnest insistence that he do so.

This is not to imply that M. Survage stands in need, or feels the need, of any ambassador to public opinion; though that gentle institution, la publicité, is one which—in its highest form as group-propaganda, in its lowest as paid press-truckling—would appear to have flourished since the birth of modern painting. Discovered through his "colored rhythm" for the cinema, by the late Guillaume Apollinaire, that ante-bellum mountain-peak of modernity, on the eve of the World War, and having been given his first show in the rue de Penthièvre, some twelve years ago, under Apollinaire's aquiline wing—the battle-harassed Olympian, the black night of shells already closing in about him, pausing long enough to write the catalogue—Survage, a quiet individuality, has never lacked his meed of unnoisy appreciation on the part of those with whom appreciation is an art.

A revolutionist without being concerned with the pyrotechnics of

revolution, by his determined grappling anew with the problem of space (for this is the problem that interests him primarily), he has come to occupy a position which, in its strategic significance, may only be compared with that of Ucello in the latter's century—Ucello, who is reported to have died with the words "Mia cars perspettiva" *on his lips. And now comes Survage with a revolt against that optical perspective which Ucello so labored to achieve; not a revolt out of the air, not a revolt for the sake of revolt, not the frantic groping of a madman in his cell for a salvaging* bizarrerie*; but a revolt which is the expression of the working-out of a law quite as ineluctable as that of the Descent of Species or the Theory of Atoms. For painting, too, has its laws, and the history of painting; both have their laws and their evolutions; and here, as always, the only revolution that is valid, the only one that has any importance, is the one that brings about an evolution that is inevitable. All of which is merely by way of stating that Léopold Survage is, today, a force in modern painting, a subterranean force, it may be: hushed, but of something like volcanic quality; technical historians are only beginning to discover the debt which Modernism owes to Survage the painter and Survage the painting-theorist, a debt which, as a result of certain very human qualities in all too human beings, has not, invariably, been accorded the acknowledgment that is its due.*

*It is not, however, exclusively amongst the technicians, historians and theoricians that M. Survage finds his audience. It may be the mingled strains, Finnish, Danish and Russian, contending in his blood-stream, that go to make him a poet; it may, and it may not be; but a very fine and delicate poet he is, a poet whose medium happens to be paint. This it was, perhaps, that evoked Apollinaire's "glistening bridge" (*pont chatoyant*) ; for the earlier Survages are replete with a tempered gorgeousness of reds and greens that is connotative of the Slav. But all the poetry in Survage is not, by any means, the poetry of color; there is that other more elusive, more un-this-worldly poetry of*

form, and on this side, likewise, the painter has his ardent appreciators among those who know nothing, and care nothing, about the technical implications involved. It is not surprising, therefore, if Survage is now exhibited in the art-capitals of Europe and America, while permanently owned canvases of his are to be found hanging in the best private as well as public collections of both continents.

No, M. Survage scarcely requires anything in the way of vociferous spokesmanship; but he does sense, I suspect, the need of a certain externalization of his artistic position. Much of that early, more obvious poetry of color has vanished with the maturing years, and there are Survage admirers who will grieve for its going. The problem of form has become the all-absorbing one; in it, the problem of color has been caught up; and in this new and epic encounter, a youthful lyricism does not play so prominent a part. Then, about two years ago, (1927-28), the artist entered upon a new and disconcerting "period;' one of those periods through which every painter worth his salt must pass. That "disconcerting," it should be explained, alludes not to M. Survage but to his public; the former, I am convinced, knows exactly where he is going—knows, at least, the direction in which he is headed—but it is not easy to explain to dealer, gallery-goer, critic or collector. The new period is one which may be described as a breaking-up, that battle which every artist has to fight, but which not all fight to the finish, against his own success, his own achievement; in M. Survage's case, one may say that it is the conquest of a new freedom in fluidity, the discovery of form in freedom.[1] *It is not at all strange if, at such a time, the painter should experience the need of an alter ego, of hearing the sound of a voice in the clamorous silence; and as one who, during the initial birth-throes, was permitted to lend an*

[1] That M. Survage already has won the victory in his struggle with the new problems which he has set himself, no one can for a moment doubt who has seen his very latest work, especially those little short of astounding decorations for the Salle de 1'Union Catholique du Théâtre (3 rue Godot de Mauroy, Paris).

attentive set of eyes and ears, 1 find the task devolving upon me of becoming that voice in the luminous dark.

A friend, I sometimes think, ought to make an artist's best critic, provided he is dowered with intelligence; and even if his intelligence is not of a critical order, if he chances to possess a degree of reportorial ability, he may be able to produce that always valuable adjunct to criticism: a lucid statement of the artist's own side of the case. It has been my privilege to be Leopold Survage's friend. Many times, I have climbed those seemingly interminable flights which lead up to the aerial isolation of his Montparnasse studio, across the courtyard from his apartment at No. 20, rue Ernest Cresson; and our discussion there begun, coming back ever to that "Problem of Space," has, it seems, never ended: it has been continued as we met, by chance or appointment, on cafe terraces, in taxicabs, on the autobus, *where we forgot to get off, in galleries and at Salons, where the work of other men afforded a fruitful text. Often, M. Survage has taken the "*chemin de fer préhistorique,*" as he himself describes it, which runs from Paris to my former home in the suburbs, in order to clear up a point which had been left dark at our last meeting; and not infrequently, he would bring with him a sheaf of manuscript notes, sometimes a full-fledged paper with the ink hardly dry as yet; for his is a mind as orderly and well kept as a New England kitchen (the Dane and the Finn in him, shall we say, superimposed upon the Russian?). And as I we sat before the autumn fire or walked the cramped and rambling streets of the historic little town, our talk was of space: space on canvas, and that other cosmic Space which is back of all. Yes, Léopold Survage and I are friends, and the reader will, I trust, give me credit for such advantages, honestly utilized, as come to one for whom the doors of personal intimacy have swung open. I have hoped that my training and experience as a reporter might prove of service; and it is, indeed, very largely as a reporter plus a friend that I have chosen to speak; though I am afraid that I, more than once, have not been able*

PLATE NO. II 1915

Paysage Avec Feuille

Collection of M. Uhde, Paris

to resist the temptation to editorialize, and M. Survage is to be held specifically only for such views as are definitely attributed to him—there are times when I feel fairly certain that we should not be found agreeing in details; but the important point is that we agree thoroughly on fundamentals.

Had I had my way, I should have let the artist speak for himself, limiting my own efforts to those of translator. He is an exceptionally clear thinker and, for a painter, miraculously adept at expressing his thoughts in words; in this respect, he is to be compared among contemporaries only with M. André Lhote. And so, I should have preferred, simply, to present his own lucubrations on "The Spatial Problem in Painting" (including a rutilant little essay "On Style"), together with his paper on "Colored Rhythm" for the cinema, selections from his notes on his own works and on philosophy and the philosophy of painting in general, a brief article of his on scenic decoration and, finally, his "Autobiography," which was written at my request, and which, aside from the subject-matter, has a literary quality quite its own. This, it seemed to me, would constitute a sufficient presentation; but M. Survage did not agree: he wanted the Voice. A species of compromise has, accordingly, been effected. Impressed with the importance of giving to the artist's own published writings, which in the past have been scattered among a number of French art magazines, something in the nature of a permanent record, and desiring, also, to give the reader the benefit of some of the painter's latest but as yet unpublished cerebrations on his art, I have here made a somewhat synthetic use of both the published and the unpublished documents, M. Survage having very kindly placed the latter at my disposal, and having, in addition, gone to the trouble of specially preparing certain notes for my guidance.

What I have done, in my introductory essay on the "Historical Approach," has been to embody passages from the Survage essay on the same subject as they fitted in with the development and exposition

of the theme, aiding the eye by setting of the quoted passages in special type, while in the second Part, dealing directly with Survage's work, I have similarly drawn upon the essay on the "Plastic Synthesis," from the one "On Style," and from the article on "Colored Rhythm." In connection with the painter's excursion into scenic art, I have made use of a formal interview in Comoedia *of November 10, 1923, upon the occasion of M. Survage's staging of Strawinsky's* Mavra *for the Ballet Russe. The article on "Colored Rhythm" appeared in the July, 1914, number (significant date!) of Apollinaire's* Les Soirées de Paris, *copies of which are now practically unobtainable. As for the "Plastic synthesis," M. Survage is the author of two well thought out articles on that subject, one of which was published in the December, 1920, number of Action, while the other, completed 1927-28, is printed for the first time in the present volume. The later article is, I think, the more mature of the two, and I believe the artist would so regard it; what is of value, without being a duplication, in the former one has been incorporated in my own essay.*

By the plan here followed, practically a complete view is afforded of M. Survage's writings, in their constructive context, while on the question which is the core of his doctrine, that of the Synthesis, the painter is permitted to speak for himself. The "Autobiography" has been give for the sake of rounding out the reader's impression of artist and man, as well as for a certain light which it may have to shed upon the artist's work and his esthetic evolution. Lastly, a number of Survage "Maxims" have been included, for the reason that they were altogether too delightful to omit. I have intended quoting more of the painter's analyses of his own pictures, but was prevented from doing so by the fact that the list of reproductions to be included was not definitely determined until almost the last moment; but it is, perhaps, as well not to make a habit of taking the amateur behind the scenes! As to the reproductions included, they have been arranged, after the frontispiece, in time-order, for the sake of such interest as chronology

may hold. It has seemed to me that it would be superfluous, possibly an intrusion, to undertake here the detailed treatment of individual canvases; I have been concerned, rather, with giving a rounded view of Léopold Survage, his thinking and his art, and this course, I think, M. Survage himself would approve. 1 have felt that my business, first and always, in this little book, was to present my subject as faithfully, as lucidly and as honestly as possible, to make of the thing as good a job of reporting as I could. At the same time, I felt that it was necessary to widen the approach to the Problem of Space on canvas, with particular stress on late-medieval and Renaissance painting, in which connection, I fear, it has been both impossible and infeasible to attempt to preserve a strict reportorial neutrality. In the writing of the "Historical Approach," I am under no little indebtedness to an article by M. Albert Gleizes on "La Peinture et ses lois. Ce qui devait sortir du Cubisme,*" published in* La Vie des Lettres et des Arts (No. XII., *undated). It is of interest, by the way, to compare Survage's views, as put forth in his Action article in 1920, and those of M. Gleizes, which were set down in print some two years later. As for my reasons in making such extensive use as I have made of M. Gleizes' views, I have had something to say as to that in Part I. Section III. I have also made use of a rather exhaustive study of M. Survage's work and his ideas which M. Florent Fels contributed to the December, 1924, and January, 1925, numbers of the* Bulletin of L'Effort moderne*, of an article on Survage and his painting which I myself wrote for the* Magazine of the Art World *of the* Chicago Evening Post *(January 25, r927), and one on "Leopold Survage, Colored Rhythm and the Cinema" which I contributed to* transition *(No. 6, September, 1920, as well as of the Forewords of mine for the Survage shows at the Knoedler Galleries in New York City (1929) and the Chester Johnson Galleries in Chicago (1927).*

I wish to thank the writers and editors to whose material I have had recourse. I must thank, also, the collectors of Europe and America who have very kindly assisted me in the gathering of reproductions. For constant encouragement and cooperation, I must express my gratitude to the Messrs. Chester Johnson and Dell Quest and to Miss Alice Roullier of Chicago; without Miss Roullier's help in the rounding up of material, this book would never have been written. My very warm thanks go to M. Survage himself, who throughout has aided me with that minute and indefatigable seal which is one of his distinguishing qualities. If I have betrayed him in ever so little, he will, I trust, forgive me.

Samuel Putnam.

The Catskills.
September 15, 1929.

PLATE NO. III 1915

La Rose

Collection of Mrs. John Alden Carpenter, Chicago

PART I

THE MEANING OF THE PICTURE:

An Historical Approach to
the Problem of Space

"Préparez-vous à voir des mondes nouveaux."
PÈRE SURIN.

An Historical Approach to the Problem of Space

I

What is a Picture?

IT may seem, on the one hand, a pedantically rudimentary proceeding and on the other, a somewhat presumptuously didactic one, to begin a consideration of the painting of Léopold Survage and the Spatial Problem of which his art is an expression, by going back to so fundamental a question in esthetics, one concerning which most persons, including most painters and paint-lovers, are still firmly convinced that there can be no question. It is, however, necessary at the start of any discussion, that the parties to the discussion understand the terms which are employed in it; otherwise, the argument becomes entangled in muddled meanings and cross-purposes and ends by arriving nowhere. How talk about space in a picture, if you and I are not agreed, if one of us, possibly, does not know what a picture is? It may be that the definition which is to be evolved as the vantage-point for the modern painter's attack will not prove convincing, in which case there will be small hope of converting the reader to M. Survage's position. But conversion is not the only objective. If the reader can be made to see that the artist's position, granted his premises, is a firm and tenable one, that, perhaps, is all that is to be hoped for in the majority of cases; and it is something. An analogy may be found in the Church: once accept the premises, and the system is without a break,

irrefragable. But to pave the way for a convincing concatenation, the premises themselves must be shown not to be tottering ones; they must be worthy of respect.

What is a picture? That much overworked individual, the "man in the street," is quite sure that he knows, just as he knows what a house is—but ask him to define a house for you! Definitions, the truth is, are not his strong point; his tiny existence is lived out in a vast accepted haze, of which he is for the most part as unconscious as the mole is of his dark; and a certain curious protective instinct leads him to flee any irradiations which might bring an unwelcomed travail of intellect. His definition of the house, it is safe to wager, would fail to satisfy the lexicographer by covering all the contingencies in the case. This would not be so bad, if he were able to express, to define, what a house *means to him;* but that he is unable to do: he is unable to correlate even those contingencies of which he has received the personal and individual impress. In other words, he is quite incapable of registering his own confusions. But we are not to be too supercilious toward this mythical gentleman; and certainly, the one who has least cause of all to be uppity-up in the matter is the professional philosopher. The difference indeed, between the philosopher and the man in the street may be said to be this: the philosopher has achieved the knack of registering his confusions. A philosopher may be defined as an old party who ought to have a beard if he hasn't, and who will take a volume of considerable avoirdupois to make a statement which might have been made in a paragraph or, in case of, a pinch, in a sentence; and that statement is usually a negation, seldom an affirmation. But the man in the street, also, can tell you what a house is not! If I am certain that neither William Jones nor any of his acquaintance, even those who go in for "the moderns," will be able to tell me what a picture is, I at

PLATE NO. IV 1915

Le Mont Agel

Collection of Mr. Arthur Heun, Chicago

the same time cannot forget that no professing esthetician has framed a statement that would, simply, cover the empiric and historic facts. For the best way to define a picture is by seeking to establish what it has been in the past—if possible, what it was in the beginning—and what it has evolved into today. The historic approach is, in short, indispensable; I doubt if even a house can be completely, satisfactorily defined without it.

But thought-confusions have their annals, likewise, and in becoming a matter of record have, thrust upon them, the meretricious importance of the factual (as opposed to the real). The picture, ever since the Renaissance, ever since Giotto, has been, has been growing into, a thing which it is not and never was—but which it is; or which it was down to the birth of Cubism, with a certain not to be unduly stressed foreshadowing of reaction in the *compotiers* of Cézanne. And even since the Cubists—who, in their valorous consciously directed efforts, failed almost as utterly as had Cézanne in his instinctive fumblings—the picture has continued to parade the false entity into which it has been evolving since Giotto's day, an entity which the camera might have been expected to slay, but which it signally did not slay, the best that highly useful invention could do being to provoke a conspiracy of the painter with the Messrs. Darwin and Huxley, a conspiracy resulting in what is commonly known as Impressionism. But the maiden aunts of varying sex and age who write upon "art" for the Sunday papers remain unperturbed through it all. They know, very precisely, what a picture is and is not, and no doubt ever comes to titillate their minds. What is more: being assured as they are that there can be no doubt on the subject has not every one always known what a picture is, can he not *see* what it is?—they have proceeded to erect a whole system of esthetics, valid enough in itself, one must admit, around this essentially spurious concep-

tion. And if a ray of the truth never flashes upon them, this may be explained as due to two facts:

1. The fact that, for one reason or another, they never think;
2. The fact that, if they were to try to think about painting, their thinking would profit them nothing, without a knowledge which they do not possess of painting prior to the Renaissance.

Here, then, is another reason for the historical approach. But before entering upon that approach, we must define the present and prevailing false refraction. You cannot fit a man with glasses until you know, with some exactitude, what his vision is. We must, to vary the metaphor, try our hand at voicing—and this time, let us hope, intelligibly—those mumbled confusions of the ordinary tax-payer which the philosopher and the esthetician have done no more than to megaphone.

In our attempt to formulate the error with a degree of accuracy, we shall find that, here too, we shall have to have recourse to history; inasmuch as the first point that our collective Aunt Matilda[1] is bound to make is that the picture is

[1] Aunt Matilda, being a corpse brought back to life, really ought to be introduced—introduced, and then apologized away, back to her drop-stitch and her maidenly water-colors. As a weekly chronicler of paint, I gave painless and none too serious birth to the old lady some years ago. She was a youthful indiscretion, but she had a way with her, and before I knew it, she was twins: Uncle Ezra had been born to keep horrified company with her in the rounds of the galleries. But Uncle Ezra, having been as far from home as the Beaux-Arts, was a dull fellow, and speedily died a natural death-softening of the capillaries, some said. As for Aunt Mattie, she was soon running wild, and I found her romping through the columns of Mr. C. J. Bulliet and other writers. It was then that I killed her-killed her in cold blood. Things, I said to myself, had gone quite far enough. She was, after all, an indiscretion. And if I am here resurrecting her for the moment, it is simply because she is a handy sort, being a personification, the flesh-and-blood nexus, of a type of mind that is all too common. But I must vigorously deny harboring any ill-temper toward Aunt Matilda. It was she who

always been—and she, good soul, really believes it! When absolutely up against a fence, Aunt Mattie will invariably fall back upon the "old masters," by whom she means Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt, Rubens, Van Dyck, the Renaissance cohort. Go beyond the Renaissance, go back beyond Ucello, and she at once begins to be patronizing, even with Duccio and Cimabuë: they were all right in their way; they did the best they could; they, like everything else out of those "picturesque" Middle Ages, were so "naive" and "quaint" and altogether "charming"; but after all, you know, they were absolutely "ignorant" of perspective, and that is the reason why they painted the way they did. Aunt Matilda, of course, does not know that a scientific, optical perspective was practised in the time of Aeschylus, and that the medieval cathedral-builders were perfectly familiar with its laws—they had to be; she does not know that painters such as Cimabuë and Duccio, not to speak of their predecessors, had at their command a fund of technical resources of which they disdained to avail themselves, for the reason that they did not care to paint out of the Christian-scientific tradition (the expression will be clarified later) of the Middle Ages: they went a part of the way, but they did not go the whole way; it was for Giotto definitely to betray the Tradition, by clothing his figures in the glowing rags of realism.

began the thing. It would be superfluous to gather here a bouquet of all the brickbats she has thrown; dodging verbal brickbats is a zestful and amusing occupation, and for this, my great-aunt has my gratitude. Nor have I any desire to patronize. The only fault I have to find with Aunt Matilda is that she talks about things that do not concern her, and that she does not think before speaking; it is only when she comes muddling up a question with which I am vitally concerned that I may be permitted to put her gently out of doors. Yet even here, she has her uses, as is shown by the fact that I find it necessary to revivify her remains, which have not yet done shuddering over the last Picassoan or Picabian "atrocity:" Putting some one out of doors usually stimulates conversation, and has been known to assist in clarifying an issue.

An unfamiliarity with the facts is sometimes a blessing, enabling one as it does to be saved by one's adjectives. True, Aunt Matilda's peace has been somewhat disturbed, of recent years, by those earlier "primitives" whom the embattled modernists have insisted upon lugging forth; but the word was one which, like that "ignorant," held a none too subtle and saving condescension, the "poor savage" with his stocks and stones replacing the "charmingly naive" medieval craftsman. When caveman, Negro or native of the archipelago carved or painted a figure, he was, so Aunt Matilda will tell us, doing his best to achieve a likeness; and if he did not succeed in achieving a likeness, this was due to his ignorance, to his lack of technical equipment. Enlightenment, and this is the crux of the whole matter, began with Ucello and the discovery of a physiological perspective (forgetting once again a sixth-century Timon and those other Hellenic precursors, Polygnotus and Apollodorus). But what if it was not in any way a case of ignorance or of discovery; what if both poor savage and medieval primitive were intent upon something altogether different, something that had nothing whatever to do with that horizontal, and contradictory, pyramid of vision which a picture has come to mean?[2]

So much for that picture that *has always been* of Aunt Matilda's. As will be seen more clearly as we go on, it does not last long, it melts away, under the light of historic criticism. The truth is, the meaning of the picture has not been the same in any two of the broad and easily recognizable periods that have followed the Renaissance, while it is the Renaissance which

[2] "La *perspective* fait du tableau renaissant, par rapport au spectateur, une pyramide couchée dont la base est le plan du tableau et le sommet 1'oeil qui regarde. La *composition* tentera d'inscrire sur les quatre faces de la pyramide une figure, cercle, carré, polygone, régulier ou irrégulier: on voit la contradiction:" -Gleizes.

PLATE NO. V 1915

Feuilles

Collection of Mr. Arthur Aldis, Chicago

marks the wide-chasmed cleavage between what might be termed modern painting and the painting of the past. M. Albert Gleizes has brought this out, excellently. In the Middle Ages, he points out, painting was a rhythmic, rather a *rhythmed* affair; it was based upon *spirit* or the soul-mind *(l'esprit)* and upon *faith,* and exhibited *universal* characteristics. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, following Ucello's rediscovery of the visual pyramid with the necessity of the spectator's taking up a *point of view* at the apex, painting became a *composition;* its characteristics, instead of being universal as during the medieval period, were now, merely, broad and *general;* it was painting of the *senses* instead of the spirit, with logic taking the place formerly occupied by faith. During the period extending from the end of the seventeenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, painting was an *arrangement;* it was *visual* or *sexual,* and *accidental* rather than general or universal in its characteristics; it was, in brief, an *amusement*, with *manner* triumphing over technique. From the nineteenth century on, painting, in place of being a mural rhythm (of that "mural," more later), a composition or an arrangement, became *instantanée;* it became an *intellectual, fragmentary* and *anecdotal* thing, leading to the *"tranche de vie"* and the *"morceau."* One might go on and show, similarly, that the painter has changed from epoch to epoch, with the changing canvas in front of him: from the philosophic-leader of the Middle Ages, laboring monumentally for the communality of men, to the brilliant scholar and technician and kept courtier of the Renaissance, then, in turn, to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century panderer to nobility and bourgeoisie, and finally, since the middle of the last century, to the canny huckster and the clever craftsman, with cleverness superseding technique-"artists," says M. Gleizes, "at once ignorant and rotting with intellectuality."

As for that painting which is characteristic of the current century, it is doctrinaire in spirit, given to a ransacking of periods and museums, with no attempt to discover the spirit behind the work or the epoch appropriated; the artists, as M. Gleizes observes, will soon be ready to take, unblinkingly, any orders that may be handed him, and will balk at no platitudes. Such is the none too glorious outcome of that glorious experiment, Cubism; an outcome precipitated (the period-and-museum-hunting) as much by M. Derain, perhaps, as by any other one man. Since the War, since a Cubism slain by the war —slain to live with the advertising-artist and the manufacturer of department-store figurines—there have been a number of abortive flares, such as Dadaism and other belated Left Bank "movements," with manifestoes and all the customary paraphernalia; but these were flares and abortions; even though out of Dadaism there did emerge a Picabia.

Today, painting is in a pretty muddle, indeed. Cubism was too big, too ambitious a structure for its collapse not to prove seismic and demoralizing. Even Cezanne's apples have lost their one-time luster, and the young after-the-war painter would make a clean-sweep of all that went before the Armistice—with one exception. Striding through the chaos like the above-the-storm giant that he is goes Pablo Picasso, serene and unapproachable in an individuality that is its own law, the greatest painter of his age, possibly the greatest of any age (it seems to me, I recall M. Survage's having made some such statement to me as this). Picasso's stature is such a one that not even youth can reject him, not even a youth which, as in the persons of the young *Surréalistes*, would tear up all roots and break, cleanly and absolutely, with the past. Art, wrote André Salmon in *L'Art vivant* (how long ago it seems!), is a *prolongation* of tradition. There is no tradition, shouts the *révolté* of 1929; there can be

none, since the world began this morning. But Picasso-Picasso is different—Picasso is a god—yesterday, today and tomorrow—Picasso is timeless and sublime. Cézanne—bah! tired and pallid little estheticisms of before the war. For estheticisms are something of which your youngest creator of today will have none. Esthetes versus angels, he will take the angel. Esthetics versus life, he chooses life—"experience" is likely to be his vocable—but a life that is more than life, beyond the "real," a life that lives in legend—"We must create legends," says the Italian Novcentist—the expression of which must, accordingly, be epic in quality. He is seeking for "magic" and "alchemy," two of his favorite words, and his painting—look at the can vases of Ernst or Miro; they are like none ever painted before, or aren't they—? They are, certainly, not like the Cubists', not like Cézanne's.

What is to come out of it all? Whither, as the editorial-writer would insist upon knowing, are we bound? Even placid-running America is a bit uneasy. After reaching a point where an imitation-Matisse could be edged into almost any old-line show, in St. Louis, Minneapolis or elsewhere, we have, suddenly those of us who have heard of the *débâcle* on the other side—found ourselves left high and dry. What to do? Go back, as Walt Kuhn has done, to the simple, sincere, straightforward painting of rabbits strung up by the heels and such other dining-room and mantel pieces as the picture-buying burgher loves, but which may be, at the same time, first-rate painting (have we not had it dinned into our ears that the subject-matter has nothing to do with a picture)? We have, it is true, our John Marin, the American Picasso in water-colors; but we also have our Emil Gansos and others. What, it may be repeated, are we to do? Are we to go on imitating the trans-Atlantic dead, or

shall we try to be "American"—and has anybody discovered what it is to be American?

"Serves you right," I think I can hear Aunt Matilda exclaiming at this point. "Now, if you had just stuck to painting pictures—" Ah, yes, Aunt Matilda still does not doubt that a picture is what it always was, and that it always was what it is. Suppose we probe the old lady's ideology a bit, as painlessly as possible. Upon doing so, we find that her conception of a picture is a carry-over from art-academy days, from a time, that is, when Impressionism was in flower as the only modernism that was old enough to be respectable—Impressionism, which was nothing more or less than a conventional realism scientifically treated and tempered. This conception was the one which prevailed, roughly, from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century, and which had come as the result of a process of evolution extending from Giotto and Ucello down through the Renaissance and the centuries following; painting, in accordance with this view, was the art of *representing* objects (representing, that is, their *appearances)* by means of paint, or colors, upon a two-dimensional canvas. The fact that the world of objects to be represented happened to be not a two- but a three-dimensional one was not thought of; Ucello had solved that problem with his little trick of perspective, and perspective was something which, conveniently, could be taught in art-schools. As for Impressionism, it was perspective tempered by atmospheric conditions, and that, also, could be scientifically mastered. Painting was no longer a composition as in the Renaissance or an arrangement as in the eighteenth century; it was, purely and simply, a trick, a sterile intellectual trick to be employed in the service of insignificant anecdote; it was representation directed by that "plague," as Survage calls it, "the memory

PLATE NO. VI 1915

Marseille

Collection of Mr. Robert Allerton, Chicago

minus intelligence."[3] Things were going along very nicely, when Cezanne discovered that three-dimensional world of his which was to be inscribed upon a two-dimensional canvas, and then the trouble started. But the Aunt Matildas were quite undisturbed. Why bother one's brain about that? Hadn't Ucello—?

And Aunt Matilda is not the only one who is sure that she knows what a picture is. Our dictionary-makers are with her to a man. Open any lexicon to the word painting or the word picture, and you will find a representational meaning fastened upon the art. Thus is a heresy given its little smirking perpetuity. But our lexicographers, unfortunately, are not historians of paintings; if they were, they would know that this is only one of a number of Mistakes of the Renaissance, one of a number of false revaluations effectuated by that somewhat too fleshly era.

---

[3] See his Maxims: "La mémoire sans intelligence est un fléau:"

II

Rhythm and Art

WHAT *is a picture?* The man in the street, Aunt Matilda, the professional philosopher and esthetician are able to give us only bungled and conflicting answers; and this is not surprising, seeing that the painter of pictures himself does not know the answer. This will account for the practical nihilism[1] into which the art of painting has fallen at the present time. For the petty, trivial mid-nineteenth-century conception could not well last; it has been dead for the past twenty-five years, but errors and half-truths have a way of living on, a certain life-after-death. No one, I believe, would think of going back to eighteenth-century *galanterie*, not even to Watteau; it is, if anything, littler than the lingering nineteenth-century *tranche.* Recapture the sweep of the Renaissance, we cannot; our age may be another renaissance—we are a bit too close up as yet to tell—but it is not the Renaissance that Titian and Da Vinci, Raphael and Michelangelo knew, any more than it is the age of Durer or Rembrandt, Rubens or Van Dyck. "That is all right," chirps up Aunt Matilda, and Uncle Ezra turns over in his grave to add his exhortation, "all you have to do is to go on painting pictures." Yes, but are we to go on forever painting pictures that would have been accepted by the Salon of 1887 (the catalogue lies open before me as I write) or the Salon of 1927 (I again glance at the catalogue, and small difference is discernible)? Is painting to stand still; is it to be the only art that does not progress (though sculpture is in an even worse plight)?

[1] "…au nihilisme dont on ne sort que par le suicide. Contre le nihilisme et le suicide, ce quie compte encore d'énergie véritable s'est dressé."—Gleizes.

But the standpatters are not the unhappy ones; they at least, as has been said, are never troubled by doubt. It is those who recognize the impasse which painting has reached without being able to descry any portal marked "Exit"—it is these who flounder, and who suffer in their floundering. They realize, more or less vaguely, that there is a certain thing in the air called "Modernism," that there are certain New Masters of today to take their places beside the Old Masters of the day before yesterday; they realize that painting is not the same, that it has not stood still, that the world since the middle of the last century or thereabouts—since Manet and his "Olympia," perhaps we might say—has been passing through an age of great painting, an age fully comparable in splendor to the Renaissance. Cubism (b. 1907-8, d. 1914-18?) came as the brilliant crowning climax to this era. Then came the War and that "lost generation"—the loss of Apollinaire alone being sufficient to wreck a "movement." Whether Cubism caused the War, or the War caused Cubism (for the War, the forces that produced the War, began, we must remember, somewhile back of 1914) has always been a question in my mind. In any event, something crumbled when Guillaume Apollinaire died in hospital to the echo of Armistice guns; something crumbled that was not to be rebuilt.

Cubism, it may be said, had done its work, and perhaps it had. But Cubism is not all; it is not the sum of the content breathed by the syllables, MODERNITY, syllables that had come to be the battle-cry of a generation. What is it has been lost, what is it the loss of which is felt by the living painter of Chicago or Minneapolis, New York or San Francisco, as he stands before his easel? Is it, solely, the loss of a leader? That is something, that is much, but it is not all. Apollinaire, with his ventripotent genius for command, undoubtedly would have

marshaled the youth of Paris, which is to say, without any affectation, the youth of the world. As it was, he gave birth to *Surréalisme* before a German shell laid him low. Picasso—? Picasso strides on, a distant-glittering and unconcerned Messiah, whose gospel is the Nietzschean evangel of the star. He reminds one of Joseph Delteil's deity: "God…did not demonstrate the Universe; he simply pointed to it." Picasso knows the secret, but he is not telling. Apollinaire knew and would have told; he would have done a little more than point to his world; for his was a genius that was not merely graphic and plastic, but primarily literary, that of the teller; his was the philosopher's broad and synthesizing vision.

Synthesis—ah, that is the word, the thing. How, with all the centuries of paint behind us, from the islander's totem to the latest canvas of Chirico or Miró—how are we to go on without a catching-up of our snarled and raveled past? The thing to do is to untangle the snarls, and start winding the skein once more *where they began.* But the skein is the same skein, always, the same that the "poor savage" began winding in the dawn of art. For Life and the Universe are nothing if not concentric; from the center out is the cosmic course: *"ho kyklos ho athanatos tou theou*" is the phrase of the Hermes Trismegistus: "the deathless circle of God"; the serpent, tail in mouth, is the Type.

All of which is merely by way of saying illustratively what may be said in a sentence: that the thing which painting has lost *is rhythm.* Painting has lost the rhythm of the picture, for the reason that the picture has lost the rhythm of life, of the life of the world, of the *universal,* that universal with which the medieval primitives were so superbly in tune. For rhythm, the true ballet of life, is the genesis of art. And rhythm is but another name for religion. It was religion which inspired the sacrificial goat-song, or tragedy, and tragedy came before comedy, or

PLATE NO. VII 1916

Paysage

Collection of Mr. Hardinge Scholle,
Museum of the City of New York

village-song; but village-song also was an expression of rhythm. The first poem, or thing-made, was no doubt a song, or word-rhythm made up in honor of the gods, or one inspired by the dark deities of cave and forest and the storm. History, or the first prose, was the rhythm of recorded time, while the rhythmic character of music and the dance scarcely needs to be pointed out, being the same as that of astronomy and arithmetic, the cosmic sciences, those meeting-grounds of art and science. As for painting, we have but to look at the contemporary prehistoric, to paraphrase M. Survage, at the art of those few tribes which have been left untouched by the defiling hand of a civilization that followed the dethroning of the mystic and the enthronement of the rational. Hear the painter himself, in that section of his Spatial essay which bears the title "Historic Development":

"Prehistoric images are weighted down with a feeling of the mystic. Despite their apparent realism, which comes from an exactness of observation and a perfect familiarity with subject-matter, a spirit of synthesis expressive of form, thanks to a sensitivity which has not been surpassed down to our own day, is sufficiently intense in them to permit us to recreate the mystic soul-state of these first men, surrounded by a world replete with incomprehensible forces which they could not grasp. It is the same with the plastic creations of following ages, and, so to speak, with that prehistoric civilization of our own days which is to be found among savage peoples, whose images, with very rare exceptions, are of a religious nature (totems, amulets and symbolic emblems), an expression of all that the mind of these men has been unable to lay hold of and to transform into knowledge. The whole of Negro, Mexican and West Indian art is molded out of the supernatural and the mystic; and no sooner

is this feeling destroyed by contact with European civilization than the art of these people disappears or loses its purity of style."

The point here being made need not be argued at learned length. What the estheticians have to say matters little, since they have seldom done anything but dodder. They may tell us, as some of them do, that art arose out of the play-spirit of man; but this does not invalidate the rhythmic definition, since play in its genesis is essentially rhythmic and religious. With the general principles here set forth, qualified anthropologists will agree; and their word is a good deal weightier, since it is to them that esthetic historians must come for their data.

Some light may, possibly, be thrown upon the subject by the putting of a couple of questions:

First, why is it that the sight of prehistoric art—say, of a piece of African sculpture—produces two effects so divergent upon two differing types of beholder, giving to the one a feeling of "ugliness" and repulsion, while in the other it stirs deep and troubled but fundamentally elusive emotions?

Second, why is it that the latter observer is unable to analyze, to put into words the emotions that he experiences? For I am unaware that Mr. Bell, Mr. Fry, M. Faure, M. Guillaume or any other has succeeded in giving satisfying expression to the feeling behind a Negro head; when an attempt is made to put the thing into words, the result is a textbook frigidity: words.

To these, a third question might be added:

Why is it that when the sensitive, creatively gifted and technically skilled observer endeavors, by reproducing either a medieval or a barbaric primitive, to repeat the trick, the best he can achieve, ever, is a trick, the form without the animating substance, matter without spirit?

To the first question, I can give but one answer, and it may appear a snobbish one to Aunt Matilda and to the man in the street; but that I cannot help: Truth, I have found, is quite often a very snobbish lady. My answer must be that the one who is stirred by that head possesses a certain purity of soul which brings him into rapport with the mind unspoiled by "civilization"; while the one who reacts to its "ugliness" and its "repulsiveness" is, simply, unable to escape the widely propagated tradition of the drawing-master and the art-school, unable to make his way out from under the accumulated debris of a heresy some centuries old; in other words, the strata of error are too deeply overlaid, the incrustations of civilization are too thick.

As for the second question, if the one who reacts sensitively is unable to voice his reaction, it is because that reaction is: Voicelessness; the voicelessness of mystery and the encompassing dark. The spheres in their orbits may make a Platonic music as they revolve—and their revolutions are, in fact, musical: astronomy, music, arithmetic: the three universals; but that music is a silent one to human ears, too cosmically fine for their perception. The savage may not hear it any more than we, but he at least knows that it is there; whereas we of today, with our weather-tight little dwellings and all the puny ramparts of reason and the intellect which we have thrown up about us, have practically lost all consciousness of the luminous night around. Occasionally, there comes to us the voice of an Einstein or some other, speaking to us through a newspaper paragraph from the hermitage of his science; but the momentary tremor that it brings is a tremor of the intellect, rather than of the emotions, and so, is in no wise akin to the feeling that inspired the carving of that Negro head.

The third question, why it is the artist of today, whatever his

degree of sensitivity and his artistic equipment, finds himself unable, still, to reproduce the miracle, has already been answered by implication. He never can, quite, break out of that snug little house; he never can knock down the ramparts utterly. Which is another way of saying that, strive as he may, the man damned to and by civilization can never go back and become a savage, a "primitive." Need we call up the shade of Gauguin? But he can have his Intimations, and trail his clouds of a lost and splendid night. Better yet, he can do what savage and medieval primitives did; he can, if he has the persisting simplicity of soul, fall in with the rhythm of his own age, and be thus caught up in the universal curve. This, for the artist, is meaning and salvation; but neither is to be achieved without the crucifixion of effort. The "naïve" head-carver paid a price for his naïveté. For art is nothing if not the laborious snaring of the rhythm (however small a fraction) that sways the worlds.

And when the painter of the twentieth century sets out to discover that rhythm, he finds himself immediately confronted by the Problem of Space.

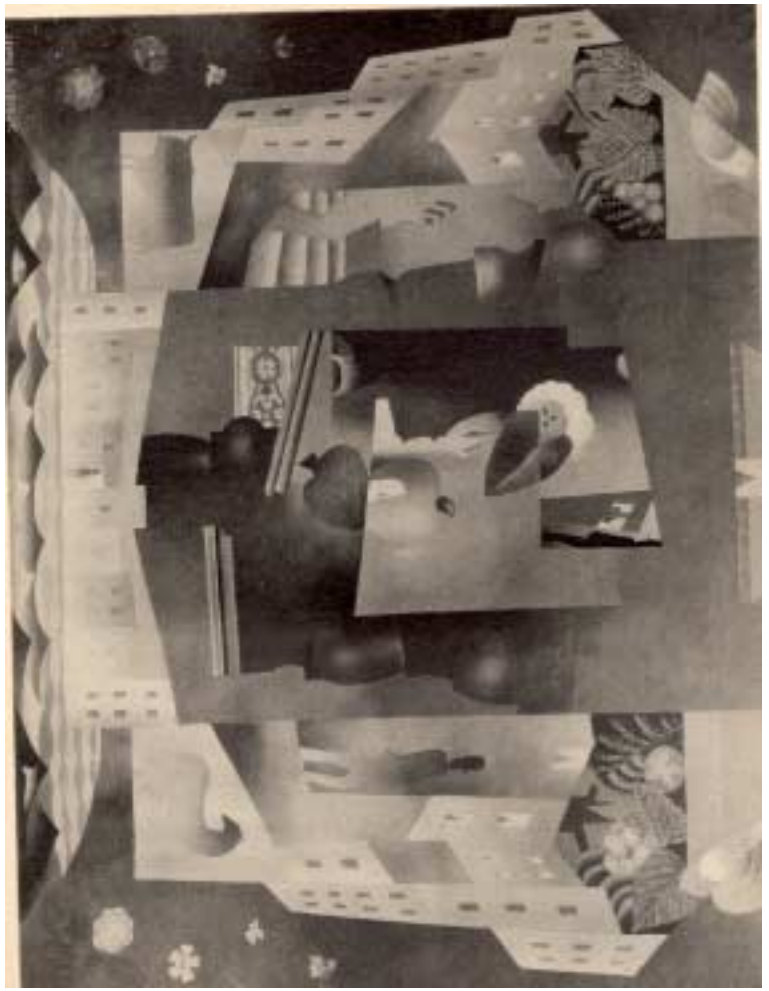

PLATE NO. VIII 1916

Nice

Collection of Mrs. George F. Porter, New York

III

The Rhythmic Wall

SPACE in painting—putting aside Greek painting, of which, apart from literary record, we really know very little—may be said to be non-existent down to the period of the Renaissance. The primitive simply is not concerned with it. Prehistoric man rarely felt the need of evoking the objects of his immediate environment. True, as M. Survage points out, in Egyptian art of the fifth century B.C., and in Asiatic art, there is to be discerned a certain adumbration of the problem, in the attempted simultaneous representation of animals, men and landscape-elements, bound together by the thread of action, or drama; and a rude and elementary groping after space is to be made out in the partial figuration of the legs and arms of a person or the feet of an animal, and later, in the multiplication of an object through the repetition of a one-sided contour, all this being a quest of a possible system of uniting, in and by space, the objects to be represented. It is to be noted, however, that this method, which is frequently employed in Egyptian bas-reliefs and Greek vases, is a quest not so much of space as of multitude, that is to say, of an arithmetic rhythm.

"But a knowledge of the laws governing the optical deformation of bodies made its appearance a long while afterward, and those laws remained in a state of empiric observation down to the period of the 'Italian Renaissance.' " (Survage.)

As for the sixth-century Timon of Cleon and his obliquae imagines, M. Survage would see in the latter the beginnings of optical foreshortening. Polygnotus, Timon's contemporary, was aware of the spatial problem in painting and made certain definite advances. Apollodorus of Athens, working in the theater,

is said to have been the first to model in lights and shadows, while in the pages of Democritus and Anaxagoras, we find the description of a process of creating scenic illusion by means of converging lines.

"With the painting of Apollodorus," says M. Survage, "with its employment of modeling by means of light, of foreshortening and of perspective, we enter upon the realistic period."

As for M. Survage, he tells us that the optical knowledge of the Greeks was "without scientific basis." With this, I must disagree, as would, I think, M. Gleizes. I cannot believe that the builders of the Parthenon, any more than the monks who erected the Romanesque churches and ogival cathedrals of the eleventh century, were without a very complete knowledge of the laws of optics, a knowledge which might have been utilized by the contemporary painter had he chosen, had he felt that it was his business to utilize it. But the painter of the Middle Ages, as we shall see, did not feel that it was his business; he had another task in hand. Like his barbaric predecessor, he did not feel the *necessity* of space; space would, indeed, have been for him a hindrance and a betrayal. With this fundamental position, M. Survage is in accord: the Byzantines had a knowledge of the principles of foreshortening and of "*fuites dans la profondeur*"*;* but it was, at the same time, the Byzantine spirit which "halted and modified…for a period of a thousand years" the legacy that Greek art left to Rome, a "tendency to the unification of the composition by a general principle, based upon a spatial concept." As for what came after, let us hear M. Survage:

"Christian art, bringing the image into the service of its own ends, by adapting the mosaic to the architecture of its churches, created, in so doing, a symbolic language. In order better to incorporate the fresco into architecture, its artists divided their

surfaces into rhythmic fields, the rhythm being determined by the spirit of dogma. Through the domination which the spirit of mysticism came to exercise over the fundamentals of their art, the Byzantines, and later the Gothics, partially attained a plastic truth of the very first importance. In order to accomplish a more satisfactory architectural incorporation, they looked upon the surface to be treated as an end, as reality, and not as a means or a possibility of creating a visual illusion. The surface of the wall had become a force in itself, and through the rhythm which it held and expressed, it became a plastic force amid the surrounding architectural forces. The religious spirit held sway over it, and transformed it into symbolic language, by way of interpreting a mystic will to believe, the whole in participation with the architectural rhythm."

With this, compare M. Gleizes:

"The fresco is a rhythmed wall and nothing else. Its images yield to the exigencies of rhythm…If the painter of these ages felt no need of creating space, it was for the reason that the surface of the wall impressed him as being not only immobile by nature, but also incapable of a presentational division, without being denatured, without being deprived of its successive harmony. The moral *(affabulution)* was sufficient to enable him to evoke man's special position. It was enough for him that his work should be the rhythm of the World, rhythm being the active spiritual element of the Universe, the material and passive means being strictly subordinated to it, rhythm being internal while the moral was material and external…The Christian fresco is the World; it is ruled by the World's law; it is the microcosm…Thus it is, a fresco of the eleventh or the twelfth century, in which the circles achieve their development in a simple and regular manner, from the center toward

the exterior, and in which balance is determined by an incontestable and logical will, is the equivalent of the concepts of astronomy and of the mechanism of the Universe itself. There is nothing astonishing in the fact that *rhythm* is to be found dominating the constructive order; since it is the element of permanence, spirit…The figuration, I have said, is the temporary, the fugitive element. It is integrated with the movement of the whole, but nevertheless, its function is a narrative one. If the whole is movement, the figuration is repose; it plays a static role. The construction of the fresco is abstract, and hence eternal; the figuration is concrete; it passes. The constructive circular rhythm is the dynamic divinity, without beginning and without end; the figuration is man and the stages of his individual life.

"It is indispensable to know all this, if one is desirous of entering into the constructive mystery of painting, for the reason that, in accordance with the Catholic system, it is the mind governing matter which is thus manifested in the fact of paint. The painter's work is, therefore, ruled by *rhythm*, like everything else in the world; it is upon the *realistic* notion of rhythm that it is built: rhythm, the persistence of a number, recurring at even or uneven intervals. The eleventh and twelfth centuries, in their highest and purest manifestations in paint, made use of even-numbered relations in establishing the correspondences between the different phases of rhythm…The figures employed are laid hold of by the rhythm, they follow the rhythmic movement of the whole, and are distributed over the surface of the wall at equal distances. The modality governing the external moral and the internal rhythm are the same. The first token of rhythm, balance, is obtained through the relations of equal quantities. The movement is abated on these large quantities, and the work turns upon its axis, symmetrically repeating

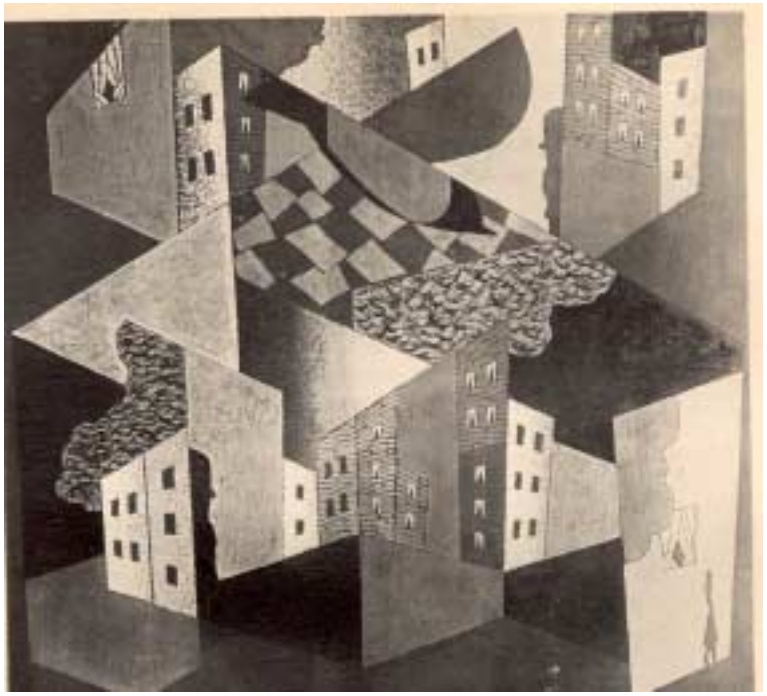

PLATE NO. IX 1920

Paysage

Collection of M. Léonce Rosenberg, Paris

that which exists on the other side. The fatality of rhythm, here once more, is manifested in this primary manifestation of the balancing of equal quantities."

If I have here quoted M. Gleizes' views at some length, it is not merely for the sake of bringing those views into enlightening juxtaposition with M. Survage's and my own; it is because I also desire to show that M. Survage is not alone in his thinking on the problem of space, but that he is, rather, in the current of his age, that latest age which, heralded by Cézanne's fruitbowls, may be said to have begun about the year 1907, and which, progressively, since 1918, has been entering upon a new metamorphosis and assuming a new and all-urgent intensity. And a point I would further make is that M. Survage's rôle has not, by any means, been a passive and receptive one, but that his has been, and still is, a guiding hand in shoving the nearfoundered bark of painting off the perilous shoals of all the little pre-War estheticisms, back into the calm, safe and onward-flowing mid-channel of painting history and the Time stream. And if I quote Gleizes rather than any other, it is because he is the only critic whom I can see at the present time who is endowed with that philosophic breadth and depth and historic equipment which are the indispensable prerequisites to criticism; he is the only critic in the movement, by which is meant, not *"le mouvement"* of Salmon, but the current of that direction-seeking impulse which has come "out of" Cubism, and which is—we had almost forgotten the word!—Modernity, the Modernity of 1929.

Here, it may be parenthesized that *we* are not "the moderns," after all. The real moderns are Aunt Matilda and Uncle Ezra and the man in the street and the master of the "life class" and the museum-director who refuses to purchase Picassos and who leaves his inflicted Cézannes in the basement. These are very

modern, indeed, in their esthetics; but we—we go back to the beginning of painted time, go back in order that we may go on, seeking to discover the spirit of our own age (our only claim to "modernity") by rediscovering that of the ages and of the Ageless. If this it is to be modern—let *us* arise and cast the stone!

That this felt need of the artist, and not of the painter alone, to go back, to rediscover his past, is a very real and vital one is indicated by the frequency with which we find it expressed in literature and in life.

"For I, too," writes August Strindberg to Gauguin (Gauguin, who also gave expression to the impulse in both literature and life), "am beginning to feel an immense need of becoming a savage and of creating a new world."

The "new world" which Strindberg had in mind may not be the one that the artist is seeking, nor his "savage" the artist's savage; both the writer's desiderated world and his visioned primitive may be gaudier, more theatric than the painter's (Gauguin's own was theatric enough); but the man of the theater, in this epistolary aside, is, none the less, giving dramatic expression to what is for the creator a platitude and a quotidian quest. As for the literal attempt to become a primitive, Gauguin's case is sufficiently instructive: the artist no more than any other man *becomes* a savage; he may not, in literalness, *go* back; the best he can do is to look *back.*

But how is this going back that is a looking back, this backward—voyaging of the mind's eye, to be accomplished? Mere period-fancying is quite as futile as museum-loitering. Exhibitions of primitives, whether prehistoric or medieval, very frequently exhibit only the stupidity of beholding eyes that do not see, of eyes that see only a fashionable taste to be cultivated, or yet more reprehensible and commercial ones that see only a

chance for speculation and for gain. The gallery visitor passes in front of the pictures hanging on the wall or stands in a conventional—conventional with his set—daze of delight before them, and the thought never occurs to him that if he is to attain to any real understanding of them, if he is to draw any profit from them whatsoever, he must make an effort to unveil the spirit that lies behind those works. This he is prevented from doing by his imposed, cultivated and ingrowing arrogances, arrogances which, so far as the medieval painter is concerned, derive from that most arrogant of all epochs, the Renaissance period, and which have trickled down to us through Voltairean rationalism and the scientific scepticism of the nineteenth century.

Accordingly, this gallery-goer of ours at once becomes patronizing, all that he is capable of seeing in the works before him being the religious anecdotalism of a highly credulous, a "superstitious," priest-ridden era, a part of the childhood of the human mind. He does not know, of course, that the true *naïfs* are the Clarence Darrows and the H. L. Menckens of the present day, with their blind, unreasoned faith in "evolution" and hear-say science; he does not know that his patronized Middle Ages were an age of *initiates,* of men who knew all about the doctrine of evolution, for example, and who were not in the least shocked by it, having caught it up and given it its proper place in an esoteric *summa theologica;* he does not know, finally—and this is the important thing—that the art of the Middle Ages was the *symbolic* expression of this initiation. It is fortunate for him that he does not know; else, he would lose the one thing he has: his superiority. As it is, he once more saves his face with an adjective. His adjective, this time, is: "decorative"; the painting of the Middle Ages, that wall which, in place of being a fugitive anecdote, is a World, with the

Rhythm of the worlds, is—a "decoration"! By which, this all too self-certain friend of ours would reproach the coadjutors of the cathedral-builders for not reflecting his own post-Renaissance mentality, and for not having painted easel-pieces![1]

[1] Gleizes.

PLATE NO. X 1920

Maisons

Collection of M. H-P. Roché, Paris

IV

Looking Behind a "Decoration"

IF the understanding, the appreciation, the criticism of a work of art are possible only through a Crocean process of re-creation, an understanding of the art of the Middle Ages, or of any age, is to be had only by endeavoring to reconstruct the milieu in which it was produced and the laws which governed its production. Whereas, as M. Gleizes points out, the mistake that is commonly made is that of judging a work of art of the past *in relation to our own age*, and not to the one in which it was produced. This has been especially true in painting; we are inclined to measure all painting by the Renaissance yard-stick, which simply does not apply to the medieval fresco, any more than it does to prehistoric art. It is altogether possible that I am inclined to minimize a period for which I, personally, do not care, in which I find no nourishing pasturage, of the false revaluations and evaluations of which I am all too conscious; but it cannot, I think, be denied that, as a result of the excessive enthusiasm of the intellectual nouveaux-riches for a newly discovered pagan antiquity (an enthusiasm spurred on by politics, to so ghastly a denouement as the Protestant Reformation), a whole glowing past has been betrayed for man and more than one truth has been buried. I am not asking the reader to accept my views *in toto* (M. Survage, likely, will not so accept them); but I am asking him, for the moment, to lay aside that Renaissance yard-stick of which we have spoken, in viewing and considering the art of that "Gothic" age which was so contemned by the men of the sixteenth century.

The Middle Ages! I should like to write a hymn to the Middle Ages, but I know that if I were to do so, it would be,

like all effusions of the sort, a hymn to something that the *moyen age* was not. For the Middle Ages, of course, never existed. The modern scientific historian knows that the term is a myth; he knows that it was not any Middle Ages, but the modern political state and the modern world, that began in the fifth century A.D., with the deposition of Romulus Augustulus and the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. What is more, a painstaking analysis of the thought-content of the Renaissance will show that content to be, in no small part, a heritage from the preceding age of "Gothic darkness." Even those "pseudo-sciences," such as alchemy and astrology, which the men of the Revival of Learning prided themselves on having outgrown, and which they proceeded to "debunk," in the manner of our current apostles of that art—even these we now know, on the word of the modern scientist, to have been true sciences. Does not Baron Liebig tell us that alchemy was "never anything other than chemistry," while as for astrology, Dr. Jastrow and others would come to the rescue here ("a physical science, just as much as geology," says Dr. Richard Garnet). The divining-rod and witchcraft, under slightly different forms, have been caught up and given an explanation by modern psychology, and we now see, those of us who are historically too wary to be hoodwinked by the false-modern, that Dr. Freud's "complexes" are nothing more nor less than the medieval exorcist's signs of demoniac possession under another name. And so it goes. It is not strange, then, if, with the present-day man of science engaged in rehabilitating the alchemist's and the astrologist's arts, assuring us at the same time that the Schoolmen were searching for truth "with scientific eagerness" —it is not strange if medieval painting should likewise be due for something in the way of a rehabilitation, a rehabilitation which would rescue it from its adjectival admirers, from the

worshipers of the "picturesque" and the intellectual secondhand-men.[1]

Post-Renaissance condescension, as we have seen, is summed up in the word "decorative"; but the simple truth of the matter is, painting from the fifth to the twelfth century is the reverse of decorative. Decoration implies an externalization, and externalization was the one thing which the painter of these centuries was not after; it was the thing he, through the employment of the concealing symbol, was endeavoring to avoid. The painting of this age is intellectual, spiritual and meditative. The very fact that the frescoes were placed, not in high lights, but in crypts and in the haunting shadows of churches should be of itself indicative. Decoration, it is true, implies the mural; but it implies something to decorate or adorn a wall, whereas the medieval painter looked upon his work as in no wise an adornment, but—and this is the point Survage makes—as an *end in itself;* and so, they were not concerned with, nor interested in *visual illusion*, the wall which they had to treat being for them a "force in itself," that is, a *rhythmic* force which was to be embodied in the architectural rhythm.

What was the rhythm which this wall expressed, rather, the rhythm which it held?—for the wall, we are to keep in mind, was a world. In order to be able to give an answer to this question, we must first seek the rhythm of the age, and that rhythm is to be found in the Church and in the system of society which radiated from the Church. Here, we must become for the moment sociologists. I think I can see, at this point, the lip-curling of the pre-war esthete, with his tiny-casketed doctrine of art for art's sake (it still lives on, and Mr. Whistler breathes today!). But in this case, the social approach is essential, and

[1] I wish the phrase were mine, but it is M. Gleizes': *"brocanteurs intellectuels."*

the event, I believe, will show that if society at the time had not been what it was, the painting of those some seven centuries would have been quite a different thing![2]

Medieval society was based upon a non-overlapping partition, a balance of power between Church and Monarchy, to the former being accorded the spiritual and eternal and to the latter the material and temporal authority. So long as this balance was maintained, all was well; it was the breaking of it which led to the break-up of the medieval system and the ushering in of the Renaissance period, an event which is now known to have been due to causes purely political, to the revolt of the King against the temporal power of the Church. But in the beginning, it was the spiritual power which was, in reality, supreme; it was it which curbed and chastised rapacious king and robber-baron; it was it which was feared alike by King and Commoner—by that vast, collective mass which constituted, in so large part, the intensely swarming life of the Middle Ages; and King as well as Commoner was on the outside, uninitiate. It was the Church that held the arcanum, and it was religion that ruled the world.

It is now in order to inquire what that religion was.

"It was," says M. Gleizes, "Man and Divinity, the part and

[2] Cf. M. Florent Fels: "In the great epochs, artists enjoyed a spiritual certitude; unity, the basis of the great religions, imposed upon them an absolute, which canalized the problem of plastic conception towards an harmonious union of reality with the mind, from which sprang a tradition leading to a style which was the materialization of the mind of the age."—M. Fels stresses the relation of the artist to his media: "The material means exerted an influence upon the final result which was no less than that faith of the artist which was the profound source of his being."—It was later that art lost its character of a "representation of the universe by the mind, becoming purely imitative." This occurred when the great tradition was swamped "under the materialistic tendencies of the Italian Renaissance"; the decline into naturalism came when the artist lost "that certitude which can only come from an absolute faith or a great ideal."

PLATE NO. XI 1924

Femme au Panier

Collection of Mr. Walter S. Brewster, Chicago

the whole; in other words, it was a knowledge of the relations which *bind together* all the constitutive elements of the Cosmic system. It was science, having for object an understanding of the laws governing the mechanics of the natural world. This knowledge, in the beginning, was kept hidden; it was the lot of the privileged few, who had had to win, step by step, their right to learning. These few had been progressively initiated into the sacred mysteries by those who had themselves received them from other initiates. Learning, accordingly, was not popularized. The ignorant masses simply had to believe. Knowledge was externalized in rites and symbols; the spirit had put on the cloak of the letter. The moral on the outside was the visible countenance of the doctrine, one which the faithful could recognize, and which was not opposed to the facts of their every-day life."

In other words, the Middle Ages were built upon the concept of the *universal.* The brain (the Church) was above the muscles and other organs; spirit was above, matter below, and it was matter which took the impress of spirit. The order of the whole was based upon that knowledge which the Church possessed of the order of the world, and ruling the whole was a certain rhythm corresponding to the rhythm of the Universe. Which is to say, if we lift the symbolic-Christian veils, if we go behind the moral painted on the Catholic screen, we shall find ourselves in the presence of Astronomy and the Theory of Evolution![3]

"Therein lies the truth concerning the Middle Age; one cannot appreciate as one should its institutions and its works, so long as one is ignorant of what is behind that impenetrable

---

[3] Gleizes.

mask, so long as one makes no effort to lift that mask."[4]

Spirit, then, was to give its impress to matter, and here comes in the function of that rhythmic wall. That wall was nothing more than a surface for the concrete and rhythmic recording of the postulate, the abstract idea, of *absolute time* (the eternity of spirit, the immortality of the soul). The thought never occurred to the medieval painter of opening an artificial, realistic *window* in this wall, through which the spectator might look out upon a world of *objects*. The work of art was a material and a static truth, expressed in the terms of a mystic algebra, and like all matter in construction, the painting tended to assume a significant *verticality*, the painter being unable to modify the gestures or positions of his subjects without destroying the occult significance of the whole, which he had no desire to do. The finished product, it should be remembered, was to be viewed *from below*, the beholder's eyes being lifted to follow the rhythmic line without any ocular trickery. The rhythm of the picture was a giratory, concentrically undulating one, like the waves produced by a stone that is dropped into water.[5] It was the Renaissance which, by putting an imitative, life-like window into the wall, abolished this concentricity by substituting for it an object or an assemblage of objects viewed in optical perspective.

We are able, by now, not only to grasp the significance of the medieval painter's rhythmic wall, but also to make out some of his algebraic signs. The Virgin, for instance, that dominating figure. The Virgin is Woman, and Woman is Matter, Matter again taking the impress of Spirit, Matter fecundated by Spirit. 'This accounts for her prominence; she is the mystic heart of the

[5] Gleizes.
[6] *Ibidem.*

doctrine. It is interesting to note that what the painters of the Renaissance did was to substitute a Woman-Virgin—a fleshly and, often, a fleshy one—for the Matter-Virgin that had gone before; while the painter of today finds his Virgin in the problem of Space. This whole embodiment of a "secret doctrine" in exoteric symbols is, it may be remarked, in accord with the oriental genesis of Christianity, which found an early artistic flowering in the paintings of the Catacombs, and which, in the form of Byzantine art, took its inspiration directly from that home of religions, the East. Not only that, but this esoteric "algebra" was one that held a meaning for monk and peasant; the peasant, who, in the field, was in the habit of observing and following the motions of the heavenly bodies, was quite capable of grasping the astronomic symbolism of a picture. There was, undoubtedly, in the symbolism of the age, a certain middle ground, where scholar-priest-initiate and layman met, a certain common language which both spoke, and that meeting-ground and common tongue were to be found in the symbolism of Christian art.

Byzantine art has been spoken of above as deriving from Eastern sources; it was, rather, an amalgam of oriental and occidental influences, and contained within itself forces which made for its own destruction, associated with the Latin-Hellenic forces which led to the breaking-up of the Empire in the East. It was when art made its way from Byzantium to Gaul, to find a domicile among the Merovingians and Carolingians, that it began to take on its true occidental-Christian character, a character of universality, heightened by the absorption of barbarous tribes. This was the age of cathedrals and painted crypts. Early Gallic art, of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, was extremely circumspect in its naturalistic borrowings, and evolved a sort of naïve naturalism of its own. It was at this period that

the rhythmic wall, which has been described in some detail in a preceding section, attained its development. In the presence of that immobile wall, the painter, as we have already seen, was conscious of no need of creating space, such numerically rhythmic repetition (of heads) as we encounter being for the purpose of creating, not space, but multitude-rhythm, somewhat as on the Greek vases and Egyptian bas-reliefs. But an objective window was soon to be opened in the subjective wall, the picture was to step down from the wall, and eventually, the Matter-Virgin of the Middle Ages was to become the Woman-Virgin, the beautiful patrician of the sixteenth century.

PLATE NO. XII 1925

Paysage

Collection of M. Woronka, Bucharest, Roumania

V

The Picture Steps Down

IF the social organization and the intellectual and spiritual rhythm of the Middle Ages have been considered in some detail in the foregoing section, this has not been a divagation; it has been with a purpose. It was necessary to show the meaning behind that *affabulation*, that fabled moral, of the medieval picture, for the reason that it was the growing encroachment of the *affabulation* which led to Renaissance painting, what is commonly known as modern as distinguished from medieval painting, a painting based upon the principle of ocular illusion. It was the encroachment of the external moral upon the internal rhythm, of the letter upon the spirit, which led to a decline into realism and its tricks. This, it is safe to say, had somewhat more to do with the case than did Ucello's seemingly revolutionary rediscovery of the laws of perspective, of which so much has been made by painting-historians. We have seen that the Greeks possessed some knowledge of those laws, and that the medieval builders must have been familiar with them, and even though the painters of the Middle Ages may not have possessed a thorough-going scientific knowledge of perspective, they certainly would have set about acquiring such a knowledge had they desired it, had their art called for it. It was not until the *need of realism* was felt, it was not until miracle had degenerated into anecdote, that painters began casting about for the laws of an art which would give an objective *likeness*, an illusion of life, of "the real." To put it a little differently, man no longer wanted a timeless eternity; he wanted life; and by life, he meant the life of every day. He no longer wanted Spirit; he wanted Matter.

Once more, we must turn sociologists. The fact that this evolvement from Christian symbolism into realism should have occurred at the very time when the balance of power between Church and State, between the temporal and the spiritual powers, was being broken is not without its significance. But this was not the only social change that was occurring; a fundamental change was taking place in social psychology, the mental giving way to the physical as the religious spirit was checked by a temporal particularism. The majesty of universal truth was being swamped in a flood of individual half-truths, all the more pernicious for the reason that they were not error absolute. The age (the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—the thirteenth had been marked by the glorious climax of the *mental)* was constantly becoming more and more external, the popular cathedral giving way to the aristocrat's palace, St. Louis to Francis I.[1] What was happening may be seen in the cathedral. In the cathedral of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the architect had struggled with shadows, and that struggle had been a symbolic one; in the cathedral of the fifteenth century, the physical exterior is beginning to trespass, while in the Renaissance palace, it is triumphant. In short, the principle of rhythm is breaking down in art, as in the body social and politic, where the chasm between the masses and the classes is beginning to yawn, and where *force* has commenced to take the place of a once binding cadence.

Following his excellent summary of the medieval rhythmic wall, which has been quoted in Section III, M. Survage proceeds, in his usual succinct and incisive manner, to give us an account of what happened at the time of the Renaissance:

[1] Gleizes.

"But this system, having lasted a thousand years, had to come to an end. The causes of its destruction were two-fold: an inherent and essential shortcoming on the part of the system itself, and the advent of a contrary state of mind. The first cause had to do with the insufficiency of its conception of space, a conception which was unable to satisfy the incoming scientific, critical and rationalistic tendency. This tendency, attaining its development, from the fourteenth century on, at first in Italy and later throughout the whole of Western Europe, was to become the basis of all thought and action, gradually effacing the religious spirit and, with its scientific exigencies, was to impose its own plastic system: that optical perspective which was the perfected Greco-Roman heritage."

The transition from the old order to the new may be seen in the work of Cimabuë and Duccio, on the one hand, and in that of Giotto on the other: Cimabuë and Duccio, who, with their gleams of "enlightenment," belong rather to the old; Giotto who is distinctly of the new. The two former are commonly looked upon as the good-willed, but rude and timid, precursors of the Renaissance. They are credited with "a certain nobility" and, on the technical side, with a feeling for the distribution of masses; but they are also credited with an *"ignorance désarmante,"* with a lack of suppleness in the gestures and attitudes of their figures and a lack of variety in the expressions of their faces; their composition is "rudimentary" and "too decorative." The religious conception is still present, and is still the basic one; the painter is still a good Catholic, and the medieval rhythm persists; but the naturalistic element has begun to assume a larger share of importance than is strictly necessary, in view of what, up to now, has been the function and the meaning of the picture.

It was, not unnaturally, in Italy that this new trend first became evident, in an Italy which had fallen under Byzantine influence, the influence of that materialistic tradition which was a survival of the Roman Empire in decomposition. But for the time being, it was the persistence of rhythm which saved the situation. This it is which accounts for the "stiffness" of the Duccio and Cimabuë Madonnas, for that "lack of suppleness." It was these two painters who, by conferring an increased importance upon the external and apparitional *affabulation,* hastened the decline into what we of today know as realism.

As for Giotto, he brought to the picture a new precision, a new acuity. The exterior *affabulation* is now more important than the interior rhythm. There was a lingering symbolism in the painting of Cimabuë and Duccio; they made few forays into ecclesiastic anecdote; while Giotto's work is "the episodic illustration of the circumstantial history of Christianity, and even of its recent history,"[2] and hence it is that those who see painting through Renaissance spectacles see in the painting of Giotto a "great progress," toward the spatial conquest of the picture, through the reproduction of external optical phenomena upon the plane surface.

"In reality," says Gleizes, "Duccio and Cimabuë were as familiar with perspective as was Giotto; a study of their works proves it. But they did not dare to prop their painting upon illusion. In this, Giotto was bolder, all the while seeking a conciliation with the indisputable domination of rhythm, a conciliation which would permit of the realization of the unity of the painting. What Giotto did was to utilize perspective as a means of indicating the rhythm, which he brought back to a play of balances. This perspective was made to yield to the different

[2] Gleizes.

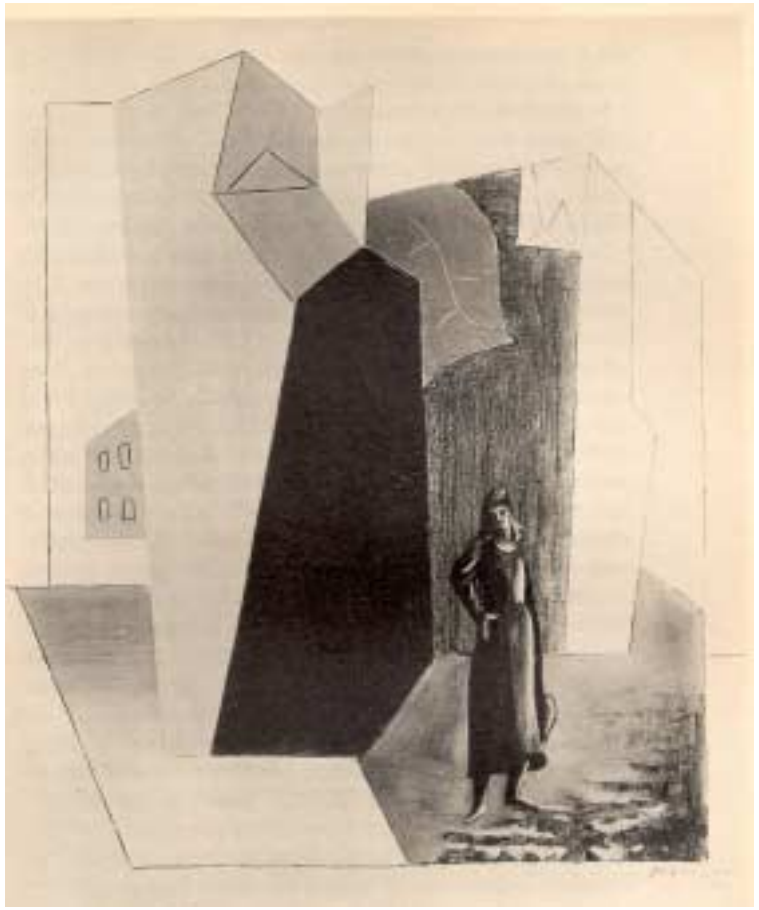

PLATE NO. XIII 1926

Paysage Avec Femme

Collection of Mlle. Gabrielle Chanel, Paris

gradations of the rhythm; and that is why it is the men of the Renaissance, and we after them, have looked upon the painter as a very simple soul, not to have discovered that the unity of a picture was to be founded upon the unity of view-point. The multiplicity of perspective-view-points has been looked upon as an imperfection due to ignorance, and while granting Giotto certain qualities, one could not but thank heaven when Ucello and his friends came along to put an end to this child's play." All this that was happening in the picture was but a reflection of what was going on outside the picture, marking the culmination of a struggle which had been going on for a thousand years, a struggle between the subjective and the objective, between spirit and matter, between rhythm and likeness. This is a struggle which we find summed up in two consecutive cen turies, the thirteenth and the fourteenth; it is a struggle which is embodied, on the philosophic side, in the lucubrations of the Schoolmen, in a St. Thomas and a St. Bonaventura of the thirteenth and a Duns Scotus of the fourteenth century. And the struggle was to end, in the province of painting, with the rout ing of rhythm and the leaving of the field free for realism. There is between the two eras, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a fundamental difference in depth; indeed, the difference may be said to be this: the Middle Ages are depth; the Renaissance is surface. M. Gleizes makes an interesting point, by way of bringing out this difference, in the form of a contrast between the feudal and the Renaissance chateau:

"The austere feudal chateau possesses baths and lieux d'aisances which one would look for in vain in the Renaissance chateau, however charming the latter may be to look at. This reveals a state of mind: the interior life of one era, contrasted with the exterior life of the other."

In speaking of depth in connection with the medieval period,

we are not to forget that the artist was an initiate, and that *science* is the corner-stone of his work. He was, therefore, working under certain laws which he dared not transgress. Painters such as Cimabuë and Duccio belong to this class of initiates; it was Giotto who effected a change by becoming the historical painter of his age—history superseding science and the temporal taking the place of the universal. This brought with it a new freedom, the painter being less responsible from the point of view of dogma; for it is also not without its significance that this new attitude should have coincided with the advent of a Humanistic textual criticism: within the bosom of the Church itself, the spirit was giving way before the letter, and schism was in sight; the Matter-Virgin was becoming, every day, more and more of a Woman-Virgin. That schism Cimabuë, Duccio and Giotto, fervent Catholics all, were instrumental in bringing about, by making of the letter of Christian truth a tangible reality.

It is now that the notion of space in the picture makes its appearance; it is now that pictorial space may be said to have been discovered. For it was the quest of likeness that brought up the problem; it was likeness, the desire of illusion, that rendered perspective a necessity. In this technical drama, for the situation has its theatric aspects, that aristocratic Renaissance palace of which something has been said played a part. The artist was no longer in the service of religion, but held his letters-patent from a luxury-loving royalty and nobility; and it was the need of creating a luxurious extension of mural décor which led Donatello to call upon Ucello and his friends for assistance.[3] The rhythm of the picture, once a universal one, now found its point of unity in an immobile spectator; instead

[3] Gleizes.

of being essentially vertical, to be viewed from below, the picture now took its place upon a horizon-line. Hard and fast rules were established, and the picture became an *effect* of perspective; which is to say, that painting had become, for the first time, truly *decorative*, the picture no longer being an equivalent, but an image. It is now that "natural space" enters the equation, the problem of reproducing and grouping objects in their *space-relations*; and the solution which the Renaissance painters and their successors lineal gave to this problem, the science of pictural grouping which they evolved, is the one to which we have given the name of *composition*.

It is to be noted that, by this time, the very nature of the picture has changed. It is no longer an *honest* affair, in accord with its medium; it is no longer that rhythmic wall which was an end in itself, *which was reality*; it has become, by taking on a dimension that is not its own, a trompe-l'œil, to deceive the spectator into believing that it is a continuation of his own vision. Painting has become a *trick*. The picture, nevertheless, remains vertical, an *upright plane*; and this brings about another disharmony, with its *inscribed geometry*, a dissonance which led to the rapid degeneration of the Renaissance composition into the eighteenth-century arrangement and the nineteenth-century *tranche de vie* or *morceau*.

The Renaissance painter was wise enough not to depart utterly or too far from the pictural rhythm of the preceding age. In the medieval fresco, an elementary symmetry is obtained through the distribution of figures; in the Renaissance picture, we have a distribution of *masses*, the introduction of perspective having created VOLUME; and this elementary symmetry, aside from his large Vatican compositions, is Raphael's method of composition.[4]

[4] Ibidem.

This may be true, so far as the technical side of the picture is concerned; but there has been a profound change in the state of mind behind the picture. Painting has become a purely sensory thing, a *story* told upon a plane surface; and the one thing of which a painter like Leonardo is afraid is an appearance of *falsity*. That superhuman side of the fresco has disappeared, and what we have is "the individual in his adolescence…looking at himself for the first time in a mirror."[5]

Following perspective comes anatomic design, with unity of view-point always strenuously insisted upon. In the name of this unity of perspective, we hear Leonardo da Vinci, in his *Treatise on Painting*, condemning the whole of the Middle Ages—wiping them out, one might say:

"Upon the facades of chapels, it is the general custom—and one which I, with good reason, condemn—to paint one story with its landscape-setting and its structures upon one plane, then another upon another plane, altering each time the *point of perspective*, in such a manner that a single facade is to be found painted from four points of view; this utter stupidity is to be seen in good masters. But we know that the point of view corresponds to the spectator's eye."

This shows us that the older painting was not yet altogether dead, but it was now being carried on by humble artisans, not by the new race of caterers in paint to the aristocracy. Meanwhile, not only in painting, but in the other realms of life, the CONQUEST OF SPACE has become the world's absorbing problem, and is to continue to be, from Leonardo to Lindbergh. This last phrase is not thrown in for the sake of the alliteration; for Leonardo, "in a moment of exceptional lucidity,"[6] put down upon paper the hypotheses of what, four centuries later, was to

[5] Gleizes.
[6] Gleizes' phrase.

PLATE NO. XIV 1926

Marine

Collection of Mrs. R. R. McCormick, Chicago

become the aeroplane. Since the Renaissance, from the Renaissance to Einstein, the Problem of Time and Space has been the all-engrossing one for thinking man; and it is a problem of which painting cannot steer clear, if it is to discover an excuse to go on living.

VI

Through Cube to Creation

IF, in our consideration of the Spatial Problem in painting, we have looked backward, it has been that we might be able, not only to look forward, but to gaze understandingly about us. In the "Historical Development" section of his essay, M. Survage writes:

"In the esthetic life of our age, one of the most important and significant characteristics is the possibility of attaining an insight into the plastic art of all preceding epochs, even the most remote; and this not merely as pertains to judgment (history and criticism of art)—it is creation itself, the artist's state of mind, which are indebted to this new factor. As a result of this, the very elements of tradition are singularly enlarged and transformed. It may be perceived that creators in the most diverse eras—eras which, in spite of common ethnic qualities, are frequently opposed to one another—have their points of contact, in a certain parallelism of esthetic means corresponding to the characteristic state of mind of the milieu or civilization in which they lived. Nevertheless, we find their art being dominated by ethnic traits, which serve as a basis for all analysis and study of these epochs. It was geographic and, still more, historic isolation which reduced to a minimum reciprocal influences among the ancients, or caused such influences to intervene only by chance and at long intervals.

"But water-tight compartments having disappeared in our age, the ethnic factor from now on is to be of the least, or even of no, importance in the formation of an art, a tradition. Esthetic and psychologic principles, on the contrary, are to

play a preponderant, and even exclusive, part from our time on."

It would be, decidedly, a work of supererogation to undertake to trace, in any more detail than already has been accorded the subject, the steady decline of painting from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, until, finally, the picture became something almost too trivial for contempt. We have seen, on the one hand, that the Renaissance painters were loath to abandon an essential pictural rhythm, and how they sought to preserve it by substituting a balancing of masses for a balance of figures, and, on the other hand, that it was a certain instinctive consciousness of inherent weakness which led painters to hasten on from the sixteenth-century composition to the eighteenth-century arrangement. The true inheritors of the Italian Renaissance, with its basically false system of geometric perspective, are the painters and the masters of the academy, who forever stubbornly insist upon the impossible: the inscription of a three-dimensional world upon a two-dimensional surface. And the Impressionists, of whom he would take Cézanne to be one, were, M. Survage observes, "the first real revoltes against academicism." Today:

"We are witnessing the formation of two great and opposed currents in the contemporary painting of all countries. One of these currents, sentimental in source, is formed by those who are often called temperamental painters, popular painters, *fauves*, expressionists, etc…We have here the spontaneous translation of visual emotion in pictorial language. The other current is marked by a constant and sustained effort to discover

and make use of determined plastic elements (Impressionism, Cubism)."

And speaking of the Impressionists brings us to Cézanne, that forerunner of modernity.

With the Grand Old Man of Aix, standing puzzled in front of his canvas, conscious, all too conscious, of its inelastic dimensions, and looking out upon a world possessed of a supernumerary dimension of which he was equally, painfully aware—with Cézanne, we approach the heart of the spatial question for the men of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, the problem of *volume*, a problem which was to give birth to Cubism and that art which is sometimes meaninglessly termed "ultra-modern."

The truth is, the reality of the volume had become more and more a matter of doubt as the idea of the plane-surface developed and took on a degree of consistency;[1] and a very good way to distinguish that painting which is in step with the trend of the time-spirit from that which is merely an uninspired reminiscence of an outgrown past, is by the consciousness which the painter displays of the true and inescapable nature of his art, which is *the art of the plane*. Cézanne possessed an agonizingly acute consciousness of this sort. It is M. Survage speaking again:

"Among the Impressionists, Cézanne alone was endowed with a breadth of thought and vision; and he alone went beyond the limits of Impressionism; he alone perceived the capital importance of the spatial problem, and sacrificed his whole life

[1] Gleizes.

PLATE NO. XV 1926

Paysage

Collection of Herr Fritz Wolff, Vienna, Austria

to the solution of that dilemma which is wrapped up in it: to inscribe a tri-dimensional world upon a canvas which presented him with but two dimensions, without destroying the essence of that world.[2]

"From the optical point of view, unity of vision is perfect, and Italian perspective is an integral means of translating it upon a plane-surface; but from the plastic point of view, it is but a system imitative of direct vision. In order to keep upon purely plastic ground, that is to say, to remain within the limits of means which did not go beyond the nature of that plane-surface which is the painter's field of action, it was necessary for Cézanne to achieve a compact and logical mental analysis. But the impossibility of detaching himself from a mode of work that was founded upon direct optical vision prevented him from finding a fundamental solution."

A good deal has been heard in recent years of Cézanne, his "bathers," his "fruit-bowls," his "apples," etc., and there can be no doubt that the painter of Aix's accomplishment has been given, at times, an over-stress or a false stress which has rendered difficult a just placement, and one which has proved prejudicial, in the end, both to the artist and to the art of painting. It is only natural that a movement, once launched, should start looking for forbears (the *Surréalistes* are doing the same thing today); and Cézanne was a very convenient and tempting ancestor to annex. Unfortunately, however, in Cézanne's case, the thing became a cult; and to this cult must be brought the kindly-intentioned corrective of a clear-seeing vision and an honest, complete, unexaggerated statement of the facts. What

[2] In an earlier manuscript of his Spatial essay, M. Survage writes: "sans détruire son essence," but in a later revision, omits the phrase. I have taken the liberty of restoring it.

are the facts with regard to Cézanne? M. Survage, it seems to me, has very concisely set them forth above, in that "compact and logical mental analysis" and that "impossibility of detaching himself from a mode of work that was founded upon direct optical vision," this latter constituting the reason why Cézanne failed to find "a fundamental solution." With this view, the accredited historians of modernism are in accord.

"As I see it," says M. Gleizes, "Cézanne's effort has been betrayed through the creation of a fantastic legend…The painters have been duped by it, and have ended by placing entire confidence in this new fetich. Whence a sort of Cézanne hypnosis which interferes with any true placement. I am far from any desire to deprive Cézanne of the credit due him for his prolonged grappling with the problem of form; quite the contrary; but I do very ardently desire that the credit given should be such as is, indeed, his. In a word, I may merely state precisely here what I have already said elsewhere: " CÉZANNE WAS AN ARROW TO POINT THE WAY.

"Cézanne, in fact, did indicate the direction which was to be followed. He has almost nothing to offer, so far as profitable instruction is concerned; his formal methods are empiric and reminiscent, and his technique is disastrous so far as the lasting quality of his work is concerned," as will be evident in a few years. But his true significance, and one which cannot escape any one who is familiar with the development of Christian painting from the first centuries down to the fifteenth and sixteenth-century Renaissance, lies in his attempt, inspired by a sort of genial intuition, to put back upon the vertical plane that Renaissance art which had foundered upon the geometri

[3] *Du Cubisme et des moyens de le comprende*, Paris, 1920.
[4] That is, the physical duration of his canvases.

cal. Those fruit-bowls, the circumference of which he depicts in a purity that is more than relative, those wall-panels which he endeavors to put in their true and logical place—we behold in these his struggles against the deformations of perspective, his struggles against the Renaissance picture which was based upon perspective; if he strives to elevate that picture, and if he sometimes succeeds to a degree, he does not fail to fall back, not being able to free himself from the debris of the literal, and not perceiving the necessity of making a clean-sweep of it all. This Cézanne, engaged in a supreme effort to re-erect the pictural monument, is the one whom painters ought to know and understand and love…That whole lean-to of fantastic literature which has been thrown up around him can only serve to keep up a misunderstanding and to retard the coming of freedom."[5] But Cézanne is not the only pioneer. There are also Seurat, Denis, Seruzier, Signac—men who sometimes thought better than they painted, and whose thought-inspired work is not without its value. Then came Cubism.

Cubism took up the problem which Cézanne had adumbrated, that of volume, the inevitable outcome of that three dimensional world upon a two-dimensional plane which had come in with Renaissance perspective. Both Cubists and Fauves were seeking what M. Survage, in his expressive phrase, has termed a "pictorial alibi." And the Cubists, no more than the Fauves, succeeded in solving the problem, for the very good

[5] "Cézanne instinctively sought the plastic unity of visual appearances. He presented space as the apparitional basis of the external world. From this came that geometrization, that concordance of geometric facets, with which he built up his pictures, pictures which conveyed, in the ensemble, an impression of volume and of depth; but optic vision still held sway over him, at least partially. Hence, the conflict in Cézanne between naturalism, impressionism and his own interior vision:"—Fels.

simple reason that they did not succeed in formulating it; they do not appear to have grasped the necessity of discovering, intellectually, a general, basic and all-embracive plastic concept, one that would yield *the meaning o f the picture*. It was enough for them to be on their way; it does not seem to have occurred to any but a few that it might be of some assistance to know whither they were bound. As a result, there hovers over the whole movement, as we look back upon it, an atmosphere of the fragmentary—"metaphors, clever transpositions of objects and persons," as M. Survage puts it. The Cubists were, not infrequently, too clever, until their revolt against the realistic trick of ocular perspective came to take on, in the eyes of those who did not know what it was all about, the appearance of a trick. There was, too, a certain lovable play-boy spirit among them, of which Picasso is the enduring apotheosis. To say that "the movement" lacked seriousness would be to make a statement at once misleading and dangerous; but in spite of Picasso, in spite of Bracques and Derain—in spite of any *animateur, régulateur* or technical schoolmaster[6]—it did lack broad and underlying direction.

The upshot of the matter was, on the technical side—and this is Cubism's contribution—that the Cubists solved one phase, the lower phase, of the problem of space; they solved the problem of volume as embodied in the still-life, where volume is the dominating element; they carried out the implications of Cézanne's bathers and his apples; but they did not solve that larger problem of which volume is a part; they did not solve the problem of landscape; they did not carry out the implications of those panels of Cézanne.

An outstanding blessing which Cubism brought with it was

[6] G. Salmon, *L'Art vivant*.

PLATE NO. XVI 1926

Porteuse

Collection of Mrs. Flora Schofield, Chicago

the abolition of *the imitative notion*. In 1911, when the movement is still young, we hear Metzinger and Gleizes[7] declaring that the picture is to be "imitative of nothing" and that it is to "present nakedly its reason for being." There is, notwithstanding, a timid reluctance to go the whole way, wholly to abandon the outward eye:

"It would ill become us to deplore the absence of all that background, flowers, countryside or countenance, of which it (the picture) never could have been anything more than the reflection. Nevertheless, let us admit that the reminiscence of natural forms is not to be absolutely banished, at least for the present. One does not in a trice hoist an art to a state of pure effusion."

What we have here is the problem of the rôle of memory in the picture. The problem is not a new one; we find it being dealt with, and in an illuminating manner, by Baudelaire, the greatest critical intelligence of the nineteenth century in the field of painting. Go back to the *Curiosités esthétiques* and read what the author has to say concerning the artist and his model, and then compare the after-Cubism statement of André Lhote on the same subject. The question now is: the imitative basis of the picture having been done away with, how far is the spectator's memory to be catered to? And the answer that has to come is: only in so far as *the unvarying constituents*"[8] are concerned.

Imitation being no more, it was inevitable that the artist should begin to think and talk of *creation*. But what was to be the basis of this creation? Was the creator to seek it within himself, that is to say, was the basis to be a purely subjective

---

[7] *Du Cubisme*, Paris, 1912.
[8] Gleizes.

and individual one? That way anarchy lies, as the event has shown:

"Certain artists, having adopted the idea of creation, believed that the admission of the principle was all that was necessary for its realization. The regulating laws, they thought, ought to manifest themselves without any need of being mastered. If those laws did not so manifest themselves, it was for the reason that they were non-existent. Which is as much as to say, if one throws one's self into the water without knowing how to swim and at once sinks, that is sufficient evidence that the principles of natation do not exist." [9]

The principle is, moreover, historically incorrect. The medieval artist did not paint because he had an "urge" or because he felt "inspired"[10]; he painted to serve religion, that is, the rhythm of his age; and the great painting of the Renaissance was a flawless reflection of the mind of that epoch.

"Consequently, the picture which is a creation can only be realized by virtue of the knowledge and employment of the laws that govern it. An end to the slavery of chance and empirical gropings; the work of art is not born of a lottery ticket, which comes out or does not come out, but of the fact that the artist has put into his consciousness all the truth possible.

"There must be indisputable laws, an improvement on the laws that went before, which we now perceive to have broken down…These laws cannot emanate from individual opinion, nor are they to be extricated from a work the only virtue of which is its originality; they are that single consciousness which is being worked out in many individual consciousnesses. They must, when they are formulated, answer exactly to that

[9] Gleizes.

[10] "La foi n'aveugle pas à ce point."—Gleizes.

secret travail which is going on in each studio where the truth is already being approached, and they must aid in the complete realization of the means of expression.

"The moment has, therefore, come to formulate clearly those laws, the words and substance of which are already to be found in the life of all who, for a long time past, have been laboring with conviction. These laws do not belong to any one in particular; they are common property. There will be some who will be able to profit by them, and there will be others who will profit not at all, as commonly happens in every-day life."[11]

It was some seven years ago that the out-of-Cubism critic uttered these truly "ringing" words. The heresy of physiological perspective in painting may now be said to have been definitively slain, even though the students at the Beaux-Arts, and at the Beaux-Arts all over the world, may not know it as yet, while their masters may be still less aware of the fact. The dubious heritage of the Renaissance, as M. Survage remarks, "comes tumbling down today, after the lapse of five centuries, for the reason that, a hard and fast system, it is opposed to the mystic nature of all true art, and opposed as well to that state of elevated spirituality which, as a result of philosophic progress, the thought of our day has attained."

[11] Gleizes.

VII

The Virgin of Space

WHAT are the laws of that creation to which, through Cubism, the modern painter has fought his way? In framing an answer to this question, our only safe guide is the historic one:

"We are thus able to envisage, paralleling the historic evolution of the mind of man, the succession of the different phases of the spatial problem in art, a succession which we may divide into three stages: the first, the empiric period, from prehistoric times down to the Italian Renaissance; the second, the optic or rationalistic period, from the Renaissance to the advent of Cubism; and the third, the synthetic or spiritual period, from Cubism on."[1]

What have we learned from our survey of pre-Cubistic periods, the prehistoric, the medieval, the Renaissance? That the great art of each age has been the accurate reflection of the rhythm of that age; while the greatest art is, always, that which is in accord with the rhythm of absolute time, of the universal.

It may seem that there is a contradiction here with regard to the great art of the Renaissance; for that the Renaissance did produce some great art cannot, of course, be denied. But the contradiction is only an apparent one, though the solution of it is something in the nature of a paradox. For it is true that Titian's gorgeous flesh, for example, is at once the supreme embodiment of the spirit of the Renaissance (it is such for me, at any rate), and the embodiment of that lasting Rhythm (balancing of masses for the balancing of figures) which the Renaissance could not slay. And the art of Titian's century is great art

[1] Survage

PLATE NO. XVII 1927

Femmes

Collection of Mrs. Russell Matthias, Chicago

in so far as it takes on a reminiscent magnitude, beyond the puny post-Ucello-an pictural conception of that century—in so far as, by falling in with the vaster rhythm, it tends to take on a character of *universality*.

I am aware of the fact that, by speaking of the necessity of art's being in accord with "absolute time" and "the universal," I am putting my head above the trenches and exposing myself to a multitude of tiny bombardments; tiny, for the enemy batteries are not impressive ones. It is not a question, as with Cicero, of preferring to be wrong with Plato;[2] if I am under a delusion, if I am believing a lie, then it is the delusion and the lie of that post-War generation of which I find myself, whether I have willed it or not, a part. The War killed many stupidities, slew many false perspectives outside of painting, and was, I think, for that reason necessary. Talk to the *jeune européen* of today—the one who knows the War; America is as yet too young and too unscarred to think—of "art for art's sake," and he will laugh in your face, uproariously. Mr. Whistler's *Gentle Art* makes quaint reading now, and I am by no means sure that Ruskin was altogether in the wrong, after all—Ruskin who inspired a Proust; I am inclined to think that what we are engaged in doing is rewriting Ruskin in the light of the German shell and what it left in the way of a world. Permit us, accordingly, if you will, to relegate Jimmy and his epigrams to the Stygian society of his friend Oscar, who wrote, "There are no emotions; there are only extraordinary adjectives."[3] As for us, when our new Maiden Aunt (for whom we shall have to find a new name) pipes up in a quavering treble with something about art's having "nothing to do with propaganda," our ears

---

[2] On the question of the immortality of the soul.

[3] From an unpublished French diary of Wilde's that was found a few years ago: "Il n'y a pas d'émotions, seulement des adjectives extraordinaires."

laugh, and our thoughts go back to the esthetic hoop-skirts of the 1890's and the earlier 1900's.

The truth is, Tolstoy, with his view of the essentially religious function of art, was on the right track; but it is dangerous to read *What Is Art* until one has discovered religion, that is, one's relation to one's age, and, through one's age, to the universal. Come to think of it, what a senseless thing it is to prate of a picture's speaking a "purely plastic" (graphic) language; naturally, it does, on the technical, the graphic-plastic side; but does not language exist, primarily, as a means of *communication*, of saying something? And what is a picture to communicate, what is it to say? This does not mean that a painting is to "tell a story," in the ordinary narrative connotation of that phrase, for in doing so, it would be stepping out of its medium and its means, speaking a language not its own; and so, we may continue to condemn that painting which is "literary." But is there not another *story* which painting may have to tell, in its own language?

For the artist, the problem presents no difficulties. I quote Survage. His approach is the historic one. After observing that "Those epochs which exhibit the best style will always be found to correspond to the moments of elevated spirituality of an age, and we are able to perceive plastic preoccupations of a general order arising and going forward in step with the spirit," he goes on:

"The comprehensible or material side furnishes the plastic means, the plastic theme, while the intellectual and the mystic is the source of the meaning which objects hold for us, of their mutual signification, and of their signification in relation to us, whence their selection and coördination in the process of representation. It follows that the comprehensible side is determined,

and capable of being given a general basis. The incomprehensible side, on the contrary, is moving and changing, expressive of the state of soul. The comprehensible side may also be termed the objective and the incomprehensible the subjective, corresponding to the expression, or means, and the content, or spirit. It is to be quite well understood that these two factors, means and spirit, must be in a just proportion, under pain of giving rise to a false or sham style. This likewise conditions the purity of a style. Inasmuch as the comprehensible or objective element in painting draws for its resources upon the visual world, it is the phenomena of vision, transformed into plastic signs or values, which are to furnish us with the general basis of painting; and since the widest concept of the visual world, with which our understanding supplies us is that of extent or space, it is the solution of the spatial problem which will always force itself upon us as the basis of all plastic representation."

Space, then, is the rhythm of our age: the Space-Virgin[4] superseding the Woman-Virgin of the Renaissance and nearest akin to the Matter-Virgin of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In this recapture of rhythm, we find ourselves in accord with the religious tradition not only of the Middle Ages, but of the East. Our joint heritage is found to be: rhythm and space, the latter bequeathed us by the Renaissance; the picture having stepped down from the rhythmic wall, space has become the entity that has to be domptated. Indeed, M. Survage would

[4] It is of interest to note that Jonathan Edwards, the greatest metaphysician America has produced, in his early notes on the Mind, says that matter exists only in idea and that Space is God. This is all the more interesting for the reason that Edwards' conclusions appear to have been formed independently of Berkeley and Malebranche, as well as of Collier's *Clavis universalis*, though they do owe something to Locke, to Newton's color-theory and to Cudworth's Platonism.

assure us that "The adaptation of the concept of space to the material means at our disposal in painting, those means being the plane-surface and the coloring-matter, has always been the fundamental problem of painting, and will be one of the char acteristics of a style, whatever that style may be."

It is the scientist, now, who is to speak to us from his laboratory, the scientist who began his study of evolution, that is, of the problem of life, with the morphological approach, and who has ended with the physio-chemical; where, in quest of the internal cause, the eighteenth-century scientist went from the outside in, his successor, the biologist of the present day, starts with energy in order to arrive at form.[5]

"One would have to be absolutely devoid of reason," says M. Gleizes, "and above all, absolutely ignorant of the evolution of the manifestation of art, not to comprehend that the changes in scientific method have their correspondences in the changes which are occurring in esthetic methods."

The difference between scientist and artist being:

"The scientist retains a sort of moral prestige; his cold-blooded science, cold-blooded at least in appearance, arrests the opinion of the ignorant; he is no better off than the artist, but the world keeps still when he speaks. The artist has so degenerated, he has yielded to so many exigencies, that no one any longer has the least respect for him, and the result is, his right to free himself is now contested." Artist and scientist are after the same thing: life. If the painter has slain the false naturalism (based upon perspective) of the Renaissance—what has come to be known as "realism" it has been that he might evolve in its stead a new and true naturalism, for the reason that he is "convinced that nature is

[5] Gleizes.

PLATE NO. XVIII 1927

Les Deux Porteuses

Collection of M. Sam Meyer, Paris

no longer merely a distant sensorial percept, but an intelligent interior penetration"[6]; he desires to come closer to nature, to reality, to be more, not less, *naturalistic* and, in reality, realistic. Which is to say that the painter of today is not quite so naïve in his understanding of "life" as was his Renaissance predecessor; the latter, catering to a sensuous aristocracy, was, not unnaturally, concerned with externals; but the artist of today, laboring (in optimistic moments, he hopes) for a new and intelligent humanity, is interested in depth, and he knows that depth is to be found only by *going in*.

There is such a thing as an analogy, a parallelism, not complete and not to be overworked, between epochs; and our own era has, on the social and spiritual side, more than one characteristic in common with the medieval. On this plane, we find ourselves confronting a new collectivism of one sort or another (it has not been determined as yet what it is to be) that is not without its reminiscence of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance principle of individualism, of the aristocratic freedom of the individual, having gone down some while since. Today, we are facing a new internationalism, which art already has begun vividly to reflect; as M. Survage has pointed out, the ethnic from now on is likely to play a steadily diminishing rôle.

There are other analogies which, not being on the surface, are not so apparent, but which strike deeper home. That *brocanteur intellectuel* of ours, who so adores rummaging the "picturesque" Middle Ages, may be quite put out at being told that the modern motor or machine (of which he probably stands in horror), that motor which rendered possible the conquest of space, holds a rhythm that is distinctly medieval:

---

[6] Gleizes.

energy animating metal: spirit animating matter.[7] Surely, then, we of the "machine age" may be permitted to seek out our rhythm, and to build our philosophy, including our philosophy of paint, around it.

The spiritual problem of the age and the technical problem which the painter has to face are, thus, the same: the PROBLEM OF SPACE; and not merely the Problem of Space, but—for us, the contemporaries of Einstein—the problem of the *relativity* of space. There is nothing startlingly new in this; spatial relativity is a concept and a percept which has been progressively forced in upon the mind of man, by the slaying of time and space through the perfecting of the means of transit, including aerial transit.

But relativity, if it is to be accorded a solution, implies synthesis; in painting, a plastic synthesis. And this brings us to the painting of LÉOPOLD SURVAGE, which is a PLASTIC SYNTHESIS OF SPACE.

[7] Gleizes.

PART II

SURVAGE AND THE PLASTIC SYNTHESIS OF SPACE

"Le jugement ou la critique que l'on émet sur une oeuvre d'art est le jugement ou la critique de l'état d'esprit de son créateur. Établir la qualité de cet état d'esprit, c'est faire acte d'esthétique."

SURVAGE.

PLATE NO. XIX 1927

Départ Pour la Pêche

Collection of M. Jean Snegareff, Paris

SURVAGE AND THE PLASTIC SYNTHESIS OF SPACE

I

Meeting a World

I SHALL not forget my first meeting with the work of Léopold Survage. When one is introduced to a new world, one is not likely to forget the occasion. And I happen to be something of a fancier of worlds; I suppose, I might even say that I collect them, for they are, I have found, quite rare enough to stimulate a collector's passion.

There are, needless to say, worlds and worlds, differing from one another in luminousness and, what is, if anything, even more pertinent, in *liminousness*—have we not been told that star differeth from star in magnitude? My own taste, I must confess, runs to those worlds that are round, cleanly demarcated, self-contained. There are a number of things that I ask of a writer, painter or any artist; but I am prepared to forgive him the absence of almost anything else, if I find him creating for me a veritable and indigenous cosmos, in which I may walk and dream. There are, as has been hinted, not too many of this kind; there are none too many who possess the magic and the alchemy requisite for the creation of a world—and after all, what should the *poet,* that generic *maker* who is the artist, create, if not a universe? Did not Baudelaire, some seventy-five years ago, describe for us in just such terms the maieutics of a picture?

There are not too many, but there are a few, and these we do not forget. I shall not forget the few stray lines of Rainer Maria Rilke which I found in a heavy Italian critical tome; they were to lead me to a *Bilderbuch* through which I have never yet tired of leafing. I shall not forget the battered yellow copy of Joseph *Delteil's Sur le fleuve Amour*, which I picked up on a shelfworn stall in Chicago. I shall not forget the new painter-poet world of old Flemish primitives that I met in Jean de Bosschère's *Béâle-Gryne and Dolorine et les Ombres*. I remember still the savage critical panning in a provincial newspaper which led to my acquaintance with Ronald Firbank's *Valmouth*. I shall remember, always, the first time I stepped into a room of Laurencins. And there is Derain and his tree-portals. These are some of my worlds. They are far from being of equal magnitude, and some of them, it is altogether likely, are not of over-awing size; but the point is, they are, whatever one may say of them—worlds. There are, too, those vaster ones—Dante—Homer—El Greco—Picasso

When one meets a world for the first time, one is always aware of the fact. There is no putting out of one's hand in a familiar how-d'y'-do. One preserves, rather, a respectful distance. The occasion is somewhat like being presented at court. And this, as I recall, was very much my reaction as, some years back, I stepped into the Chester Johnson galleries to find myself face to face with the Survage of the late "pink" period, of what, in accordance with a certain subconscious-dream-symbolism system of Survage interpretation which I have worked out for myself, I am in the habit of referring to as the painter's "metaphysical city" epoch. Here was, indubitably, a world. Rather a blinding, certainly a dazzling, one at that. For the painter at the time was on the point of emerging from his first brilliant bloom of color, a color which, with his steadily growing pre-

occupation with the pictural problem of the age, the problem of space as wrapped up in the problem of form, he was more and more to bring into line with the exigencies of his quest (color being, after all, only a form of form), but which he was never to succeed in really subduing—if, indeed, he ever strove to subdue it, which I doubt; his color, rather, like the rest of his form has, merely, been undergoing an evolution; it, no more than the other phases of the painter's art, has stood still; and in any event, endowed with a native richness which one is tempted to term Slavic, it is quite too instinctive and vital a thing ever to be completely downed—if a serious attempt in that direction were made, there would probably be an explosion worth witnessing. But at the time of which I am speaking, it was in full efflorescence; and had the painting been conventional Renaissance perspective, our Maiden Aunt would surely have dubbed its creator a "brilliant colorist." As it was, M. Survage's color, in a manner of speaking, was almost too good, winning for the artist, in quarters more intelligent, some such doubtful critical compliment as "shimmering surface loveliness." The color in these pictures did, surely, shimmer, but "lovely" scarcely impressed me as being the word; while as for that reproachful "surface," enough surely has been said in the preceding essay to show that, viewed in the light of the historic development of painting, this is a tribute and not a reproach, the painter's art being *the art of the plane surface*.

At the moment, however, I was not disposed to argue, but to yield, which is sometimes the wisest as well as the most gracious gesture that a critic can make. Once more, I was in the presence of the creator of a world, and nothing else mattered.[1]

[1]It was Nietzsche who cried of artists: "Alas' I have cast my net into their seas to draw up good fish, but always I have brought back the head of an ancient god."—"Here," appropriately observes M. Fels, speaking of Survage,

found, moreover, something which I had been expecting for some time, in the form of a certain logical metaphysical dénouement of Cubism, one which, it seemed to me, had been implicit in the movement. I was conscious of what the Cubists had done in the way of solving what M. Survage has referred to as the lower phase of the problem of space: the question of volume; but like many others of the modern painter's sensitive audience, I believe, I was rendered vaguely uneasy by the fact that, so far as a solution of the larger problem was concerned, as embodied in the landscape, the Cubists' rightful successors, from whom something was to have been looked for, appeared to be getting nowhere.

It was, accordingly, with receptive eyes that I gazed on Survage's metaphysical cities. There were, as I remember, two or three of them on the walls. And in the catalogue for the artist's first American show which I, later, rashly undertook to write, I said: "He is, for one thing, the only painter I know who can take a city and turn it inside out within the space of a few feet." In the first flush of my enthusiasm for my new-found friend, which is a state of mind that holds its perils for the art-chronicler, I said, in that Foreword, a number of things which, as I read them over again now, impress me as being—well, not as exact as they might be; if I sinned, it was in a lack of accuracy, due chiefly to a lack of acquaintance, a lack of knowledge of what the painter was after; and much the same thing might be said of the article which I went back and wrote for the Chicago Evening Post, though that was, largely, straight reporting. Since that time, I have had the opportunity to come to know M. Survage and his esthetic aims, and so, may hope to

"one will fish up neither a Jupiter nor an Ingres."—But he may bring up a weird submarine of the spirit!

PLATE NO. XX 1927

L'Oiseau

Collection of Mme. André Leroy, Paris

repair in this brochure any damage that I may have done in the past through the voicing of misleading half-truths. Nevertheless, in that little Foreword, I did contrive to write two sentences which still impress me as being thoroughly valid. One was the sentence quoted above, with regard to Survage's cities, those cities which, as Apollinaire (I think it was) remarks, are "endowed with the rhythm of the stars." The other sentence ran as follows: "They (his paintings) are as good an example as any I know of what Mr. Roger Fry calls 'visual music.'" With this latter statement, as will become further evident, I can find no fault.

I could understand, also, what Apollinaire meant when he spoke of Survage's paintings as giving "life to the pure nuance." That "tragic silence," "tragic grandeur," and the trace of a "barbaric joy" which M. Florent Fels encountered in those same canvases I was, likewise, in a position to comprehend—that silence which is like the dead calm of haunted seas, where one almost looks for the albatross, and where one finds something not unlike an albatross in that dark little man, that mysterious stranger, that weirdly human and lost but plastically in-place figure which goes wandering in and out of a Survage picture, at the poetically conceived, graphically expressed fancy of the painter-or in that equally baffling Survage fish, or bird, or leaf, or leaf flowering into house (but of these, more later). I could see that what the artist was giving me, and not merely trying to give me, was a "magic aspect of the world." I could see, as well, that his rhythm was "the rhythm of today" (M. Fels' phrase)—or did I see this? I can see it better now, for the reason that I have since become, I trust, a little better orientated as to what that rhythm is; and M. Survage has aided in my orientation. I could see, at least, that in this painting there was "*Pas d'anecdote, pas de littérature.*"

But reading what the critics, even the best of them, had to say about M. Survage and his work did me, I am afraid, more harm than good. Apollinaire was a big man and there can be no doubt that he at once glimpsed the impressive cerebration that lay behind Survage's canvases. When the painter, back in 1914, laid before the pre-War giant his colored rhythm for the cinema, Apollinaire exclaimed: "*C'est de l'avenir*—It had to come!"[2] And I believe that if Apollinaire had lived to see the gratifying maturation of this talent, the formal début of which he sponsored, he would have said of M. Survage's painting and evolved painting-theory what he had of that youthful, direction pointing experiment. These after-the-War times have been busy and jumbled ones. There were those four arid years to be made up, not to speak of that generation which had given up its birthright in the trenches. The new generation, the *jeune européen*, has been inclined to wipe out, with one disdainful sweep, the whole of an ante bellum past, has been, perhaps, a little too inclined to the view that nothing good, nothing worthy of notice, could come out of that past. They have forgotten—many a man has been drowned in that sea, and numberless little cadavers with the illusion of life go floating downstream. Where, by way of instance, are the Imagists of yesteryear? Where are the Dadaists, those would-be post-War rehabilitators of the divine play-boy spirit of Cubism? And where—ah, yes, where—are the Vorticists of long and long ago? Ask Mr. Wyndham Lewis; perhaps he knows.

Léopold Survage's position is a unique one, and its solitude

[2] As it was (see the prefacing quotation to this brochure), Apollinaire spoke in no uncertain terms of Survage's first show of paintings, in 1917: "This painter is the son of the War. Serene and densely-growing, his work is a glistening bridge between the art that was before the war and that magnificent urge which is to transport the new painters."

lends it strength. Coming out of that Russia which lies between the revolution of 1905 and the revolution of 1917, he is of that new Lost Tribe whose deracination fits them for a range of eventualities. In M. Survage's case (he is now a French citizen), I believe that this early uprooting, which he has described for us in his *Autobiography*, has tended to fit him for that inevitable breaking-down of ethnic barriers in art which he, like all who are observers of their time, has not failed to descry. But the way of the deracinate even though he finds a fresh soil in which to sink his roots and from which to draw a revivifying sap—even though he is fortunate enough to discover that international fatherland which France has always been—is one not without its hard going at times, as even Picasso, I imagine, has learned in the past, and Survage's former countryman, Chagall, and others. Yet this, when all is said, counts for little in Paris, the home of the artist, where a man out of the old Spain of the Moor and the Alhambra holds sway over that art of the century which we have come to look upon as distinctively French. It is not in this that M. Survage's uniqueness and his isolation lie. What isolates more than race or language or frontier is the possession on the part of the creator of a single and a singular vision, a business which he must be about. Had Survage been a communicating Cubist, his path might have been much easier—like belonging to the Methodist Church in Arkansas. For revolutions, whether in art or in politics, have their orthodoxies; a revolution, indeed, is, in analysis, built upon the concept of the orthodox; if the revolutionist did not believe that his own was the straight and the other the crooked course, he would not, presumably, revolt. Not only that; revolutions are stern and absorbing affairs, and call for a certain intentness as well as intensity on the part of those who are to put them through. Your professional *révolté* has little time for the man who, while

not against him, is yet, apparently, not with him, not a member of the party; and few of the benefits of propaganda are likely to go to the one who stands alone.

Léopold Survage has stood alone. He began, as he tells us in his *Autobiography*, where the Cubists did: with Cézanne; that is to say, where the Impressionists left off. Cézanne had made the problem of space a vital one, the one that had to be solved. In such a canvas as his *Baigneuses*, he had raised the question of volume, and this question the Cubists pounced upon. Survage, meanwhile, perceiving that this was but a part of the problem, preferred to go on working independently toward the larger solution. This is not to say that he has found that solution—I should not feel like making any such statement as that, and M. Survage himself, I am sure, would be opposed to it but he has worked toward it, and is still working toward it. Personally, I am not surprised if the self-engrossed Cubists failed to grasp what he was after; for as I go back and reread the early theoricians of "the movement," while I find much (in Salmon's *L'art vivant*, for example) about precursors from Maurice Denis to El Greco and from Cézanne to Ingres, while I hear much talk of Negro heads in Picasso's Montmartre studio and of scurrying over Paris for a certain house-painter's comb which Bracques had mentioned, etc., the thing I fail to find is any real formulation of the problem behind the cube, that of space, or of the essential two-dimensional nature of the canvas.

This is not, by any means, to imply that M. Survage has gone along for all these years, since 1910, when his serious painting may be said to have begun, without recognition. His work has been the object of a curious and fairly constant side-eying. No one seemed to be any too certain as to just what it was all about; the artist appeared to be living in a little world of his own—as he was, though not in any little world; and he was

PLATE NO. XXI 1927

Paysage avec Porteuse

Collection of M. Serge Jastrebzoff, Paris

worth watching from time to time. He exhibited with the Independents, and when he chose to utter himself in print, he was permitted to do so. If Apollinaire took him up, it was because Apollinaire was, in reality, not of the Cubistic pre-War generation but of that new race of baby-giants which was to come out of the War—it was Apollinaire, let us repeat, who envisaged Surrealisme and who coined the word; and had it not been for that German shell, he today would, no doubt, be the leader of a generation that badly needs one. And so it has been from understanding critics of the out-of-Cubism race that Survage has received the recognition which he deserves. In the December, 1924, and January, 1925, numbers of the *Bulletin* of *L'Effort moderne*, M. Fels gives the painter's work and especially his theories an exhaustive and sympathetic treatment. In the course of his articles, the Gallic critic makes a number of pertinent and valuable observations. And yet, as I have said, after coming to know M. Survage, after walking and talking with him, I cannot but feel that no one to date has *got* him, in type, and I am neither so rash nor so vain as to hope that I shall wholly succeed where others have failed.

For Léopold Survage is a rounded and lovably self-contained cosmos. And as an old French proverb has it, one does not run through fairs as one would through a market.

II

On the Musical Analogy: Colored Rhythm

I HAVE said that the painting of Léopold Survage is the nearest thing I know to "visual music." It *is* visual music when it is successful, when it achieves its aim. The painter's technical and esthetic aims, comprised in the Problem of Space, are, when analyzed, seen to be something perfectly analogous to music.

For it is only when to the dead geometry of a picture an animating rhythm is given that the picture ceases to be an inert and static thing and comes alive by achieving motion. And rhythm is the principle of those sister arts and sciences, Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music.

A good deal of fun has been poked at Plato in the past for his "music of the spheres"; but the Astronomer and Musician, upon comparing notes, absolve the philosopher of metaphor. Which is another way of saying that Space, the modern painter's problem, is a Musical quantity.

I cannot help feeling, therefore, that M. Survage's discovery of the Problem of Space as the essential one in painting was precipitated by his close associations with the art of music. The son of a wealthy Moscow piano-manufacturer, who in his youth had wanted to be a painter, the young Léopold fled to Paris to find the freedom to pursue his art, and there, over a period of toilsome years, labored to support himself as a piano-tuner. In addition, he married into a gifted musical family. That it was music which led him to his Colored Rhythm for the cinema, there can be no doubt; he tells us so, in as many words, in the article which he wrote for that historic last number of the *Soirées de Paris*, in 1914. After informing us that Colored Rhythm is "in no wise an illustration or an interpretation of a

musical work," but an "autonomous art, although based upon the same psychological premises as music," he begins with a section entitled "On Its Analogy with Music":

"It is the mode of succession of their elements in time which establishes the analogy between music, sound-rhythm, and that colored rhythm of which I am announcing the realization by means of the cinema. Sound is the primordial element of music. The combinations of musical sounds, based upon the law of simple relations between the vibration-numbers of simultaneous sounds, for musical harmonies. These latter combine in musical phrases. Other factors intervene, the intensity of sounds, their timbre, etc…But music is always a mode of succession, *in time*, of various sound-vibrations. A musical work is a sort of subtle language by means of which the author expresses his soul-state, or, to make use of a felicitous expression, his interior dynamism. The performance of a musical work evokes in us something analogous to this dynamism of the author's. The more receptive the auditor is—the more like a receptive instrument—the greater the intimacy between him and the author."

That phrase "in time" is the key to the whole thing. It is quite in accord with modern time-space metaphysics, what is commonly known as the concept of the "fourth dimension." Both music and color- (as well as colored-) rhythm are a su*ccession in time.*

But color is not the only point at which we find the painter thinking in musical terms. He is still thinking in those terms as he approaches the problem of transferring objective form to his canvas:

"The means of representing abstractly the irregular form of a real body is to bring it back to a simple or complex geometric form, and these transformed representations should be to the forms of objects in the external world as a musical sound is to a noise."

But it is in connection with the painter's color, especially that of the earlier Survage, that the musical element is most likely to assume for the spectator a high degree of visibility. For the color in a Survage does, as the expression is, sing; there can be no doubt of that. The form—by which is meant the linear and graphic form—sings, too; but this, unfortunately, is a visual music for which the average eye has been spoiled by the drawing-master and his perspective. Suppose we hear the painter's own definition of color:

"Produced either by coloring-matter or by radiation or projection,[1] it is the cosmos, the material; it is, at the same time, environment-energy for that apparatus of ours the function of which is to receive light-waves—the eye."

If color "sings," it is because it dances, because it is in rhythmic motion; and it was his perception of the principle of mobility as the life-giving one in color which led Survage to Colored Rhythm:

"And inasmuch as it is not sound or color, sole and absolute, which, psychologically, exerts an influence over us, but alternating series of sound and color, it is, then, the art of colored rhythm which, thanks to its principle of mobility, is to increase

[1] Cinematographic projection.

PLATE NO. XXII 1927

Paysage avec Porteuse

Collection of M. Jean Snegareff, Paris

this alternation which already exists in ordinary painting, but which there exists as a group of colors simultaneously fixed upon an immobile surface and without any change of relations. By means of movement, the character of these colors acquires a strength superior to that of immobile harmonies.

"By this fact, color in turn becomes bound up with the rhythm. Ceasing to be an accessory of objects, it becomes the content, the very soul of the abstract form."

As we shall see, the principle of mobile animation applies as well to that form which is aside from color.

As for "Colored Rhythm," one might think at first that the term is not precise, that rhythmic or rhythmed color would be more exact; but upon looking deeper, one perceives that Colored Rhythm is what the painter means. For the rhythm exists independently, and form and that form of form which we know as color are no more than the modes of its capture and esthetic harnessing.

The cinematographic realization of Colored Rhythm as Survage conceived it was to be effected through the creation by the painter of colored plates or images to be unrolled in front of the projecting apparatus. This presented, at once, certain practical difficulties:

"For a piece of three minutes duration, it is necessary to unroll from 1,000 to 2,000 images…That is a good many! But I do not propose to carry all this out, myself. I give only the necessary steps. The designers, being gifted with a little good sense, will be able to deduce the intermediary images, in accordance with the number indicated. When the plates are made, they are to be passed before the objective of a cinematographic apparatus in three colors."

This, it may be seen, is a laborious method, and, it may be, too laborious a one. But Survage, at least, has pointed the way. We have had, since, the "color organ," not the Survage thing, but something quite different, not the measure of that cadenced and directing rhythm of which Survage speaks,[2] but, for the most part, a rather curious combination of mechanism and chance. Interesting, undoubtedly, but most of us felt as we watched it that it did not attain that *free control* of the medium which is plastic creation, whether in sound or in light—the creation of an ordered and yet organic, rhythmic (organic because rhythmic, moving) succession *dans le temps*, as Survage puts it.

The latter, since 1914, has gone much further. I am by no means sure that he would look upon his simple statement in *Les Soirées de Paris* as sufficient now. But he is slow to speak. Some day, he may have more to say upon the subject.

In the meanwhile, not so long ago, I had a look at those Colored Rhythm plates in the rue Ernest Cresson studio. Whether or not they are ever projected upon a cinematographic screen, they *are* color *and* rhythm; they move of themselves, without any projection, and from the color point of view would make a very fine exhibition—some ambitious young American Left Wing group might do worse than to import them for that purpose.[3]

[2] See Section IV, following.

[3] It has not been feasible in this brochure to go into the color of all the paintings reproduced, but a note on a few of the pictures may not be without interest. One of the most striking of all in color is the "Femme au Panier" (1924) which hangs in the Walter S. Brewster collection, Chicago. This canvas, with its marvelous green, really does not fit into any period, though the same brilliant green is to be found cropping out again in 1928 and 1929 and is characteristic of the latest Survages. The other colors in the "Femme au Panier" are tan and white, but it is the superbly vivid emerald green, vibrant and alive, which one remembers.—Following the early Rose period came the years in which the painter worked largely in the tones of tan, brown and white with the dark outline. To the Rose period belong the "Feuilles" (Plate No. V, 1915) in the Aldis collection, "La Rose" (Plate No. III, 1915) in the Carpenter collection, "Le Mont Agel" Plate No. IV, 1915) in the Heun collection, the "Paysage" (Plate No. VII, 1916) in the Scholle collection, and the "Nice" (Plate No. VIII, 1916) in the Porter collection. The "Femmes aux Poissons" which forms the Frontispiece to this volume, and which hangs in the Arts Club of Chicago (date: 1925), belongs to the tan era, this canvas being wholly in yellows and tans. Most of the "Paysage avec Porteuse" or Collioure water-carrier canvases are in these tones. In the 1926 "Marine" (Plate No. XIV), which hangs in the McCormick collection, Chicago, the dominant colors are brown and blue. The "Femmes" (Plate No. XVII, 1927) in the Matthias collection displays the colors Chinese red, henna, lemon-yellow, ochre and dark brown, all against a light gray background. "La Mouette" (Plate No. XXV, 1927) in the Roullier collection is in cream-yellow, pale biscuit and blue. The "Paysage avec Feuille" (Plate No. XXIX, 1928), with its fascinating form, not unconnotative of Ucello's earlier canvases, before he had domptated his "beloved perspective," is characteristic of Survage's latest evolvement. It is in sky-variegated blues, the foreground a rich green; the black and white woman is ascending a tan-hued path; the tree is in black and deep browns, while the foliage is of that same transcendent emerald green to be found in the Brewster canvas—emerald green and egg-gray-white; the bird is a deep black and white, and the leaf of pale yellow and gray with a stem of solid tone.

III

The Plastic Analysis of the Object

BUT what, it may be asked, is the painter doing with form—rather, with the problem of space on the canvas—all this while?

We have seen where the nineteenth-century Impressionists left painting, a dead geometry touched by atmospheric nuance, the atmosphere serving as a corrective of that false optical technique which purported to convey an illusion of reality. We have seen what was the mediation of Cézanne who came out of Impressionism. We have seen what the Cubists did with the volume: they practically left the picture a still-life (or figure treated as a still-life). Survage, in the Cubistic interim, is intent upon that problem of the relations of volumes, to one another and to man, which is embodied in the landscape, and which is the Problem of Space.

Rejecting "an optical placement and deformation apt to lead to an illusion of direct vision," he at the same time rejects the impressionistic interpretation of a landscape motive "in accordance with this or that soul-state." His quest is an inner one, the "seeking out and evoking within ourselves" of "the objects and elements which go to make up our environment." The thing he is primarily concerned with is the essential plastic nature of objects; and in the selection of objects for a transposition to his canvas, it is the plastic nature of the objects themselves which serves him as a guide. One of the first things that impresses him is the (also essential) complexity of forms. In writing of form and rhythm, in connection with his colored rhythm, he had said:

"I understand by visual abstract form any generalization or

PLATE NO. XXIII 1927

Arbre

Collection of M. Schwarzenberge, Brussels

geometrization of a form, an object, in our environment. As a matter of fact, the form of these objects is highly complex, even though the objects are quite simple and familiar, such as a tree, a piece of furniture, a man…As one studies the details of these objects, they become more and more rebellious to simple representation."

The destination which the artist has in mind is "simple geometric forms, which are the purest and, at the same time, the most imposing, and which represent, each of them, a synthesis of space." But how, after the objects have been deprived of their accidental qualities, is the painter, guided always by the inherent plastic nature of those objects, to set about determining their mutual positions upon his canvas; what is to be his technical procedure here? Survage's answer is by means of their interior axes." This axis-grouping is a central point in his technique; it is this which is to guide him to those "simple geometric forms," pure and imposing as possible. In his grouping of objects, the painter is not to be frightened off by the "unlikelihood of propinquity"; he is to keep on seeking for that "hidden law" of the objective universe which is the only guide to "plastic function." The object is to be transposed or recreated in accordance with the "new order," that order which is "imposed upon us." And all this "leads us to group about an axis the planes of the objects selected, in order to obtain, without employing the means of optical perspective, an ensemble which shall be perfectly evocative of space."

In the course of his labors, the painter is bound to make certain technical discoveries:

"In seeking to find for the objects selected a place upon our canvas, we shall remark, first of all, that the edges of the sur

faces occupied by them, if they are vertical or horizontal, evoke depth with less force than do angular lines."

And this, again, leads to the grouping about an axis. In his "Essay on the Plastic Synthesis of Space and Its Role in Painting" which he contributed to *Action*, M. Survage appears to have discovered that one of the most useful of those "simple geometric forms" which have been spoken of is the hexagon:

"Of them all, it is possibly the hexagon which would seem to be at once the most ample and sober plastic synthesis of space. Without exceeding the two dimensions of the surface which is to be treated, it gives complete indications of the third dimension by means of its diagonals forming a center.

"A number of simple geometric forms, introduced one into another, and bound together by a common center, constitute for the eye an organic and centralized ensemble that is capable of suggesting depth without hollowing out the plane-surface to be treated and without imitating the foreshortening of objects in ordinary perspective."

In his later (1928) essay on the Plastic Synthesis, M. Survage leaves out this statement with regard to the hexagon. Whether or not this has any significance, I am, as it happens, unable at the moment to say. But I am inclined to think that, if the omission was advertent, it was, simply, a matter of stress; one thing I do know is that, in the past, the painter has made, upon occasion, a most brilliant use of the hexagon.

Speaking of the Survage composition, M. Fels has this to say:

"Disposing of objects according to their axes, he arrives at geometric forms, or rather, at ideal forms, which preserve, nevertheless, the absolute identity of the subject represented.

…Depth with him is expressed not by the deformation of the subject but by its function in the ensemble of the composition. The object remains, thus, isolated in its vital sincerity; it is the image of reality, and takes its plastic value in the general composition of the work through its function."

The plastic qualities of objects is to be the guide in the transference of those objects to and their grouping upon the canvas; but this is not the only determining factor in the painter's choice, his selection of objects to be transferred and grouped. Back of that choice, there are other more shadowy but not less substantial determinants. Else, the picture would have no ultimate meaning, for the reason that there had been no meaning in the artist's selection. Selection, indeed, would be in such a case theoretically an impossibility. Herein lies the undeniable silliness of those who would vociferously assert that the picture can have no meaning, no qualities other than "purely plastic ones." Such as these would reduce the picture to an academic exercise in the handling of plastic and graphic problems—but how, abstractly considered, is the painter in such a case to reach a decision as to what problem he will treat, what object or group of objects he will handle instead of another object or object-group? Is his choice of problem to be determined by the technical difficulties involved? If so, he remains—an academic showman, and by ceasing to be a *poietes*, a *maker*, is unworthy of the name of artist, in view of the meaning which has been conferred upon the word in the other arts. This attitude, this pose—for it is, almost invariably, a pose—which tends to make of painting a little thing, is one that has become fashionable of recent years—since Cubism, since "Modernity" came in, since Mr. Clive Bell and his "significant form," perhaps—until the little painter has become afraid to avow any other motive in his work, and ends by arrogantly parading his lack of courage as

a superiority. But M. Survage has the courage to admit that the plastic is not all; though I do not believe the thing took the form of courage with him: he is too relentlessly clear-seeing and intelligent to be capable of permitting himself to be hoodwinked by any strutting academicism of modernity, any more than by the academicism of the Academy. He would not deny the necessity of a "plastic imagination" or a gift for plastic observation:

"An artist's capacity for observation, his plastic imagination, will guide him in entirely transforming the planes forming the synthesis, or in partially peopling those planes with objects or the plastic details of an object, the result of his plastic analysis, or in using those objects or details of objects to break the planes, thus enriching and humanizing the surface through the pictorial transposition of structure or material."

But back of this plastic imagination, there are other forces the Subconscious, and back of it, the Will. We have elsewhere heard the painter speaking of subjective and objective in painting, and informing us that the material side furnishes the plastic means, the plastic theme, while the intellectual, the mystic side is the source of the meaning of objects in relation to one another and to ourselves, that meaning being a determining factor in "their selection and coordination in the representation"; and we have also heard him telling us that the comprehensible side is determined and capable of being given a general basis, whereas the other is "moving and changing." And now, after defining the Will for us as "the resultant of the sum of the attributes of man and of the degree of intensity of his faculties," and after further defining style as "its expression," M. Survage, in his essay "On Style," continues:

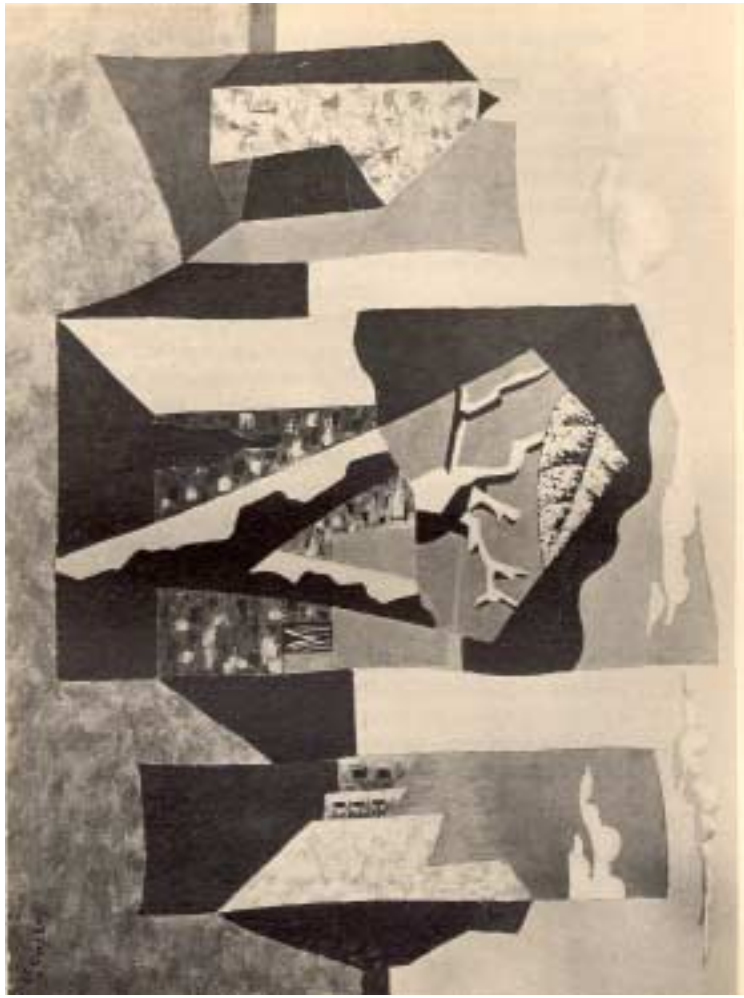

PLATE NO. XXIV 1927

Paysage Avec Nuage

Collection of the State Museum of Moscow

"The expressive elements of an art will always be the product of the Will; it is the fashioning force with relation to the exterior phenomena of vision. The unconscious side of the Will, which assists in the birth and choice of the elements of expression, is the intuition. The intuition is the point of convergence of the immediate sensations or external contributions of the senses, of the memory and of the subconscious, source of associations. These factors, thanks to their self-contained conflict between the intellectual and the physical world, are the condition of an infinite number of styles.

"From the plastic point of view, style first finds its expression in rhythm, that is to say, in the propinquity and proportions of the interior parts of a plane (surface) and in the number of unifies or divisions contained. This element has its roots in our general physical qualities, which condition the choice and adaptation of the phenomena of vision. The very transformation of visual elements into plastic signs or values has its point of departure in the subconscious, and it is only at the last that the intelligence enters, as a control and affirmative force. This is the *quantitative* side of a style, or its material content."

I am aware that the somewhat detailed presentation which I have been giving in this brochure to M. Survage's views—which are, in sum, those of the sound-thinking psychologist, scientist, philosopher—may easily give rise to the impression that he is a good deal more "metaphysical" (with an unpleasant inflection on that word) than he, in reality, is. The truth is, I have never known him, in his studio, as he stood before a picture, to make use of the term. Nor have I ever known him to be willing to talk about the "fourth dimension," and I may say here that I am inclined to doubt that the phrase holds a meaning for him. Ask him why anything is as it is in one of his pictures, or why

it is there at all, and you are sure to get the answer that it is for "graphic reasons." The expression is rather a favorite with him. I recall, one day, asking him:

"And should you call that metaplsical?"

"Not at all. It is graphic, simply."

I shall not forget that "*simpelement"* of his.

He will tell you that the result of a picture should be poetic, and that its birth is in poetic feeling; but once the conception has been attained, the means become "graphic simply," and it is then that cerebration begins.

In connection with plastic and subconscious elements in painting, something may be said as to those mysterious, haunting symbols, if symbols they are—bird, leaf, house, dark stranger, and that weirdly luminous fish of the "pink" period—which are to be found running through the Survage canvases with a pertinacity that cries aloud for a meaning. Ask M. Survage, and he will tell you that they are there for purely plastic reasons; I have never been able to get any other answer from him than this. But why the same recurring objects? Broach the subject of the Freudian subconscious, and all you will receive is a smile. Yet what the painter himself has had to say, above, with reference to the influence of the subconscious in determining the artist's choic—the subconscious and the memory converging with immediate external sensations in the Intuition, which is the unconscious side of that "fashioning force," the Will—"the very transformation of visual elements into plastic signs or values has its point of departure in the subconscious"all this should permit us—force us, in fact,—to suppose that the "plastic signs or values" in M. Survage's paintings have their source in that deep-buried but rustling stream which springs to the surface in dreams and in impulses of dream-quality—"In dreams," says M. Fels, "every man is a creator; may we not say

that the artist is one in a permanent state of dream?" And, it is possible, in that "zoölogy book with pictures" which the painter (see his *Autobiography)* was given in his youth, we may have the origin of M. Survage's bird and fish—that fish which, like the ecclesiastic *icthus,* would almost seem to have a hieratic significance—as well as of that bull which he has employed a number of times, not as an incidental plastic value, but as a central theme, as the plastic equivalent of the intellectual idea of brute strength—see his mural for the *Salle de l'Union Catholique,* Plate No. XXX—"Innumerable animals, birds and fish, all superbly colored. I selected a bull and copied it…"

On the other hand, his leaf is, quite obviously, employed for its plastic-flowering potentialities; this graphic efflorescence of the leaf may be seen as clearly, perhaps, in his *"Paysage avec Feuille,"* Plate No. II, as in any other canvas, while in the *"Feuilles,"* Plate No. V, which hangs in the Aldis collection, the leaf has become the plastic theme.[1] Then, too, in many of Survage's landscapes, in his "metaphysical cities"—see his resplendent *"Marseille"* (Plate No. VI) in the Allerton collection and in his *"Pêcheuses"* and *"Porteuses,"* reflective of life in the little village of the Hautes-Pyrénées (Collioure) where the artist is passionately fond of painting, what may seem to be, frequently, an individual symbolism of some sort, or at any rate, a highly individual deformation, is nothing more or less than the features of the particular paysage as viewed by the painter and by him translated into plastic terms.[2] So that, it may be seen, while the subconscious undoubtedly is there, it is a some-

[1] For other leaf pictures, see *"Le Mont Agel"* in the Heun Collection (Plate No. IV) and *"La Rose"* (Plate No. III) in the Carpenter Collection, both of the year 1915.

[2] For a superb evolvement of the Collioure-Pêcheuse-Porteuse theme, see the gorgeously colored *"Femme au Panier"* in the Brewster Collection (Plate No. XI), the date of which is 1924.

what perilous business to undertake to discover it; and if we do embark upon any such enterprise, it should be not too seriously, but for our own amusement chiefly. It is better to accept the artist's statement, to the effect that his object is the creation of a poetic world "through means exclusively plastic."

PLATE NO. XXV 1927

La Mouette

Collection of Miss Alice Rouiller, Chicago

IV

The Necessity of Synthesis

THE plastic qualities of objects, then, are to be the guide to a transposition and canvas-grouping which shall be a means of evoking space. But the plastic object in itself is not enough. It had broken down some while since, its *débâcle* being evident in the Cubistic *volume.*

In his 1920 essay, M. Survage has this to say:

"The abandonment of this path (Italian perspective) led a number of artists to the discovery of the object as the single source of plastic facts, outside environment. Each detail of the object selected constituted a plastic fact in itself, perfectly viable, and occupying the place upon the canvas which its importance and plastic significance deserved, as each time determined and classified by the artist. The realistic physical ensemble of the object suffered a violation, for the purpose of a plastic construction—not less realistic—representing the plastic analysis of the object. As a framework or pivot of the construction, one made use of a central object, preserving its natural size and its approximative contour, and grouping about it the objective and accessory elements. The dimensions of the central object determined the dimensions of the construction and of the surface. The necessity of covering a vaster surface entailed great difficulties, since the increase or reduction of the size of the object beyond certain limits brought with it the danger of falling into the grotesque. The human body came near to being the largest object, representing all the plastic and esthetic qualities combined.

"In seeking to assemble a number of objects in a single composition, for the sake of extending the composition, one was

threatened with the danger of lapsing into an accumulation of distinct groups, analytic, not bound together by any general method, strictly constructive and plastic in their nature. The forced abandonment of environment was taking its revenge. Our eye, being an apparatus of centralization, revolts, and condemns everything which is not centralized, that is to say, which is amorphous.

"Hence, the process of plastic analysis of an object is not in itself sufficient as a plastic source, and we are forced to come back to a reality that is more vast, that is, space. Our notion of space being formed by the factual isolation of and the distance between the objects in our environment—each constellation of objects is capable of furnishing a new synthesis of space."

In other words, the inert geometry of the picture still has to be given life, that life which is in and of motion, through the arithmetic of rhythm. Survage had envisaged the problem as far back as 1914, as we see from his Colored Rhythm essay. After remarking that the simple, abstract, transformed representation of a complex geometric form should be to the external object-form as a musical tone is to a noise:

"But this is not enough, if they (the representational forms) are to become capable of representing a soul-state or of directing an emotion. An immobile abstract form does not say much. Round or pointed, oblong or square, simple or complex, it produces only an extremely confused sensation; it is but a simple graphic notation. It is only when it is set in motion, when it is transformed and meets other forms, that it becomes capable of evoking a *feeling.* It is through its rôle and its destination that it becomes abstract. Upon becoming transformed in time, it sweeps space; it encounters other forms in the path of its trans-

formation, and they combine; sometimes, they travel side by side, and sometimes, they battle among themselves, or dance to the cadenced rhythm that directs them: that is, the soul of the author, his gayety, his sadness, or his own grave reflection…And there, it would seem that they had reached an equilibrium.…But no! it was an unstable one, and the transformations begin anew…"

The artist is here thinking, it is true, of that projected motion which the cinema can give; but I am not inclined to believe that he would disapprove my quoting his words in the present connection.

Having brought the volume into harmony with the plane-surface, by treating it as a simple "de-gradation of a tone," the painter is prepared to go on to the problem of landscape (extended vision, distance), "which contains within itself the notion of volume, through the possibility of the presence of objects evocative of volume." It is the vision of distance or extent which, independent of *éclairage* and having for basis the muscular angle of the eye, "indicates or reveals to us the point of placement of an object and its degree of removal or distance from another object."

All this brings us, inevitably, to THE PLASTIC SYNTHESIS OF SPACE, which M. Survage would define for us as *"The reconstruction, in its essential elements, of the complex fact of space, by means of a plastic analogy."* Synthesis itself, in his earlier paper, he defines as: "The reconstruction of a complex fact in its essential elements by means of an analogy."

The philosopher-painter then goes on to point out the advantage of such a synthesis over the painting that went before:

"Not being a congealed and general system like Renaissance perspective, which served only as an auxiliary means, the Syn

thesis of Space is capable of being, at one and the same time, the end and the means, and is capable of doing without any literary subject or theme, by utilizing only the plastic elements of objects, which serve it as a source in the formation of the synthesis. At the same time, the dimensions of a construction of this nature depend only upon the intention and the will of the artist."[1]

This is as far as M. Survage has gone at the present time toward the precision of his Synthesis, and he no doubt senses the fact that to go further would be perilous.

---

[1] I give here, for the reader's interest, the artist's own analysis of two of his paintings. The first is the one entitled *"Le Penseur"* (Plate No. I), which, it is an open secret, is a self-portrait, and which hangs in M. Survage's own collection. This, it will be noted, is an early picture (1911).

Analysis

Plastic Theme

Linear rhythm.

Subject

Feeling of interior concentration.

Means

Indication of volume by a light de-gradation (diminution). The propinquity of light and deepened shades in de-gradation constitute the contour of the form. Depth through the superposition of the first plane (the hand) upon the background (the face).

The second painting is *"Porteuse"* (Plate No. XVI), the date of which is 1926 (Schofield Collection).

Analysis

Theme

Plastic synthesis of space.

Means

Composition (construction) by means of two frontal planes, each forming a plastic synthesis of space, bound together by a third frontal plane (the leaf). Introduction of volume through de-gradation (the water-carrier).

PLATE NO. XXVI 1927

Foueur de Balle

Collection of Mr. Samuel Putnam, New York

But this is not the only synthesis. Six years ago (in 1923), when his starling stage-set for Strawinsky's *Mavra* was creating a mild furore and the artist was being interviewed by the Parisian press, M. Survage, in the statement he gave to *Comoedia,* after saying what he had to say with reference to the art of scenic design, threw out the courageous declaration: "Art is, then, always a synthesis, that is to say, a creation of our spirit."

Let us see what there is to this *synthèse d'esprit.*

V

The Higher Synthesis

"WORKS of art," writes M. Florent Fels, "participate in and are nourished by the beliefs and religions of their epochs, and sometimes, unconsciously, by that epoch's scientific and even economic problems. They receive, thus, a rhythm determined by contingencies which are in appearance as foreign as possible to pure art; and it is, perhaps, the glory of our age to have dared to recognize this rhythm.

"The desire to limit art to its own proper means of expression is characteristic of all ages. But never has the desire to divest painting of everything foreign to it been marked by more asperity and zest than in this age of ours. And it is this very fact which has led a number of seekers into decoration.

"The desire to detach one's self from life and its contingencies can lead only to the spectacle of our own impotence. Confusion of ideas leads to confusion in the realized work of art, which ought to be a harmony, that is to say, a marriage of mind and matter. The great *réalisateur* is he who succeeds in suggesting to the spectator a sort of emotion which is the sensation of harmony, of the universal with the individual. That was the fundamental preoccupation of artists in all the great epochs."

If it is the "glory of our age to have dared to recognize this rhythm" (the rhythm of the age and, through the age, of the universal), that same recognition is, surely, Leopold Survage's individual aureole. And this implies what Survage has termed "interior dynamism."

"As a consequence, in the plastic world, the visual form of each body is precious to us only as a means, as a source, for the

expression and evocation of our own interior dynamism, and not at all for the representation of the significance or the importance which that body takes as a fact in our life. From the point of view of this dynamic art, the visual form becomes the expression and the result of a manifestation of form-energy in its environment." *(Colored Rhythm.)*

And in the essay "On Style":

"Elevation of spirit is determined by the tension between the *comprehensible*, that is, our knowledge of the physical world, which will always be inferior to the phenomenal world, and the *incomprehensible* mystic part, to be found in our intellectual and affective faculties, which will always be in excess of our knowledge of the universe. The consciousness of this rupture or lacuna between our always limited knowledge and our intellectual faculties, ever unsated through the lack of positive data of a definitive nature, creates in us a faculty for a state of contemplation, which is the mystic side of our intellectual life. This mystic or incomprehensible side of our being constitutes the second phase of style, the *qualitative* phase or its spiritual content…

"The mystic or incomprehensible side, the subjective, is the second factor which goes to characterize a style. The subjective, spiritual force, which we have also termed 'elevation of mind' *(élévation d'esprit),* will always be the source of all exalted preoccupation, even though it be a hidden source, visible solely through intentions and the results attained. For it is, naturally, not the theme of the content (that is, the representative phase, or more accurately still, the illustrative side), but rather, the character of the content, or what amounts to the same thing; namely, the plastic means, which is to provide the measure for

an elevated style. And that style will be all the more elevated, in so far as the participation of the two components, means and content, is an intense and a harmonious one."

This insistence upon *élévation d'esprit*, the secret of the art of the great ages, as the factor behind the work of art and determining its elevation, has an almost medieval ring; but it is the new medievalism of our century with which we are dealing here. There has been something not unlike a return to that rhythmic wall which was an end in itself. Save that now, the rhythm is a wider (not to say, a larger) one, following man and the painter's discovery of that complex and perplexing fact, the Mystery of Space. Léopold Survage is a "Son of the War."

PLATE NO. XXVII 1927

Pêcheuse

Collection of Dr. Daniel Tzanck, Paris

VI

The Return to the Wall

IF there is one outstanding contribution which Leopold Survage has made to the art of painting, it is this: he may be said, to borrow Huysmans' word with regard to the novel, to have aërated the picture; he has opened the windows and let in the breath of space. It is not strange, therefore, if, with his wide-ranging view and dimension-swept canvases, he should, now and again, find himself called upon to treat that larger surface which, in these the muralist's degenerate and imitative days, stands in need of an esthetic ventilation, namely: the wall. For the landscape, which is the pictorial embodiment of the problem of space, possesses a certain adaptability to that surface the function of which is to immure space—have we not beheld Donatello, pressed with the problem of giving a spatial extension to the aristocratic wall, having recourse to Ucello and the tatter's perspective ?

In M. Survage's case, the wall to be dealt with may be a real one, or it may be that make-believe wall of the theater—the theater, which is, etymologically, the place where one goes to *see*, and to have things happen to one, emotionally and esthetically, through the seeing. In his décor for the Strawinsky Mavra,[1] the painter showed what may be done in the way of letting space into that, usually, the most stifling of all forms, the scenic design. We have had, in the theater, Mr. Gordon Craig and other professionals; but here was a man not primarily of the theater, primarily a painter, who came bringing into the house of vision a perspective that knocked down the walls and

[1] The author regrets exceedingly that he has not been able to procure an available reproduction of this set.

let in infinity. The set which the audience saw before them was a room, with a table, chairs, a picture, points of friendly human recognition; but just around the corner and breaking through the walls was the cosmos itself; the artist had done with the hard-and-fast stage room, that three-walled affair with the fourth wall conventionally absent, the same thing that he had with the false ocular illusion-seeking perspective of the picture: he had, simply, disdainfully abandoned all attempt at the customary trick of the trade, and what he gave us, instead, was not something that might, with the trained connivance of the spectator, pass for a room, but a room *and* a house, a house turned inside out and outside in, as in the manner of the Survage cities, with the world of space, that world in which the object is situate, penetrating and permeating all; what he had done, as elsewhere, had been to take the plastic fact and locate it in time and space.

It may be of interest at this point to hear some of M. Survage's opinions with regard to the art which he so startlingly invaded. In his *Comoedia* statement, he takes an optimistic view of the situation. He sees the present theatrical era as one "rich in effort and in attempted renovations." He believes that the décor of the theater is evolving naturally, in accordance with the changes and quest of change that are visible in dramaturgic art and in the art of painting.—"If we have seen sets badly conceived and constructed according to false ideas, they will disappear, as everything that is insufficient must disappear in time."—The hopeful sign is "the freeing of the stage-set from that routine, which is always the result of a too narrow specialization." Old habits must be broken, and that "inertia of the human mind," which leads to the cry of danger and perdition when an innovation heaves in sight. The scenic creator must have a fund of special technical knowledge; while creative

freedom is, after all, relative, the dramatic work imposing certaro limits on the imagination of the *décorateur*—

"…but it is evident that the term, *'décor'* begins to be justified when there is the creation of a milieu that is in harmony with the spirit of the action which is to take place there…In the domain of art, who says creation, says invention, which means the transposition of the elements of the object to another plane, leading inevitably to the synthesis…In the appreciation of the qualities of a theatrical set, we find ourselves in the presence of the same elements as in the appreciation of any other work of art, whether music, painting or literature. The judgment or criticism which one utters regarding a work of art is a judgment or criticism of the state of mind of its creator. To establish the quality of this state of mind is an esthetic act."

But M. Survage is not, first of all, a scenic-designer; he remains the painter; and my object in here quoting his views on the plastic side of theatric art has been to show not so much the breadth as the essential unity of his thinking. He is not cramped within his own art, but perceives the individual nature of the problem in each of the arts; and what is more, he sees the force behind all of the arts which is the thing—"subconscious," "mystic," "spiritual," "intellectual," "incomprehensible," "subjective"—call it what you will—that tends to make them one, and which impels the creator to the act of creation. The higher synthesis continues to operate.

It is also in connection with a wall that Survage has won his latest triumphs; though here, I would not lend a false stress to what was in the beginning a commission, but a commission which, as in the case of his Ballet Russe set, the artist turned

into a masterpiece. I refer to his murals for the Salle de 1'Union Catholique du Théâtre in the rue Godot de Mauroy. It seems to me that, in his panel which is reproduced in Plate No. XXX, the one with the man and bull and the veiled maiden in the foreground and the two fisherwomen in the background, he at once has displayed a perfect comprehension of and feeling for his medium, and has achieved a renovation of that medium by bringing the treatment accorded it into harmony with the modern wall. At the same time, the result is good Survage—if not Survage at his best, certainly in one of his strongest moments. The painter, it is to be kept in mind, was engaged in decorating a room for a dramatic organization; his theme, accordingly, called for drama and for allegory; and he has given us both, but without lapsing into literature: his drama and his allegory are plastically conceived and plastically executed; he has, faithful to his method, given his objects a plastic analysis, and then has proceeded to the synthesis of space relations.

But a thing I like even better in these murals is his *"L'Amour Maternal"* (Plate No. XXXI). In this piece, I feel that the artist has attained to something like a fruition, large and satisfying, of his talent and of his method. The thing is big—that rhythm which begins with the woman's upraised arms is immense; yet, it is but a part of the rhythm of the whole. The important point, however, is that here at last is a picture that is perfectly in accord with the two-dimensional nature of the canvas, while conveying all the emotional power—the volume and the avoirdupois, physical and affective—of a three-dimensional world. In this respect, I do not know of any painter who has gone farther, and I cannot think of any other who has gone so far. This picture is a good deal more than a mural—it merely happens to be on a wall. It is a synthesis and a justification.

I am aware that Leopold Survage's wall is not the wall of the

PLATE NO. XXVIII 1928

Femme au Raisin

Collection of M. Fourneau, Paris

eleventh- and twelfth-century frescoist. Where the Virgin once reigned in an immobile yet rhythmic eternity, this new mural brims and aches with that infinity which is Space. Eternity and Infinity—who shall say where they meet? Or who shall say where they cease to meet?

THE PLASTIC SYNTHESIS OF SPACE

By Léopold Survage

PLATE NO. XXIX 1928

Paysage Avec Feuille

Collection of Mr. Chester H. Johnson, Chicago

THE PLASTIC SYNTHESIS OF SPACE[1]

By Léopold Survage

LET us take, as the starting point, the intention of assembling and of fixing in a picture, upon a canvas, the elements of the external world, not by copying a landscape motive in accordance with direct vision, or by interpreting it according to this or that soul-state, but rather by seeking out and evoking within ourselves the objects and elements which go to make up our environment.

These elements will be composed of objects which in themselves shall serve us as guides in giving them a place upon the canvas, in accordance with the qualities and characteristics of a plastic nature which we shall be able to divine in them, without being able as yet to formulate, and also in accordance with the rôle which they play in reality, in their relation to one another. In each new picture there will be brought out precisely the existence of a general bond between them, despite the unlikelihood of propinquity, in which procedure all subordination to the current laws of optical perspective will be absent; one hidden law governing them will oblige us to discover in each of the objects the plastic function which is proper to it as we come to transform or recreate it in accordance with the new order.

[1] This is M. Survage's later and revised essay on the subject, the main points of his earlier *Action* paper having been embodied in my own treatise.

Endeavoring to make out the order which is thus imposed upon us, after numerous efforts in many pictures, we shall come to understand the manner in which this transformation of elements and objects takes place, before they are fixed upon the canvas.

Obedient to our eye, which represents for us the world not as it is, but deformed according to the eye's own laws, we are led on to a staunch imitation of this vision—ending in the rules of optical perspective.

By taking, on the other hand, as the starting point of a composition, such or such isolated objects, one is led to group these objects upon the canvas, not in accordance with an optical placement and deformation apt to lead to an illusion of direct vision, but by seeking to find how the plastic qualities of the objects alone may be able to lead to a means of evoking space which is a justification of their presence upon the canvas.

Absolute space (infinity) is a speculative thing, and one incapable of representation by means of a plastic demonstration. The notion of space is revealed to us through the collaboration of a number of senses, and of the associations resulting from that collaboration. All vision of that which surrounds us may be referred back to two principal notions: *volume* (physical body) and *extent* (distance):

The notion of space is their resultant.

The vision of "volume" comes to us through bodies undergoing an illumination *(éclairage)* capable of indicating to us their "mass" through their tri-dimensional appearance. But it is always the illumination which is the revealing factor. The vision of "volume" finds its plastic expression in the modeled object. Considered as an imitation of the relief, the modeled object contradicts the very nature of the plane surface. But taken as a simple de-gradation of a tone, it becomes the means of expres-

sion of a plastic quality in harmony with the plane surface.

On the contrary, the vision of extent (distance) is independent of illumination and has for basis the angle of vision which, formed by a muscular retraction of the visual apparatus of our eye, in collaboration with various associations, indicates or reveals to us the point of placement of an object and its degree of removal or distance from another object: The function of the eye varies in the two cases

I. In short-distance vision (volume), the eye is operative upon objects smaller than ourselves, and is aided by illumination, the resultant being the notion of volume contained in the still-life and in figures.

2. In extended vision (distance), the eye is operative upon objects larger than ourselves, and which are only visible at long distance, with the aid of the angles of vision; the result is the notion of space comprised in the landscape. This contains within itself the notion of volume, through the possibility of the presence of objects evocative of volume.

In seeking to find for the objects selected a placement upon our canvas, we shall remark, first of all, that the edges of the surfaces occupied by them, if they are vertical or horizontal, evoke depth with less force than do angular lines. This observation leads us to group about an axis the planes of the object selected, in order to obtain, without employing the means of optical perspective, an ensemble that shall be perfectly evocative of space.

We find ourselves, thus, in the presence of what we call *the plastic synthesis of space*, that is to say, the reconstruction in its essential elements of the complex fact of space, by means of a plastic analogy, our notion of space being formed by the factual isolation of and distance between the objects of our environment, each constellation of objects being capable of furnishing

a new synthesis of space. This is the only means which enables us, not to represent objects as we see them, but rather to make use of those objects in forming and creating a poetic world, constituted and expressed through means exclusively plastic.

It goes quite without saying that choice and adaptation, that is, the intuitive power of recreating an object in accordance with its essential function, as well as the creation of the object-group itself, will bear witness always to the degree of spiritual elevation possessed by the artist, which is the only valid measure in art.

1927-28.

PLATE NO. XXX 1928

Panneau Mural

Salle de l'Union Catholique du Théâtre, Paris

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By Léopold Survage

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By Léopold Survage

IT was my two grandfathers who, each coming from his own country, took up their residence at Moscow. The one on my father's side came from Finland; the one on my mother's side came from a Danish island called Egholm, a name which he bore. My father married against his family's will, for his family was rich and my mother's poor; but they loved each other, and their marriage took place the 31sst of October, 1878; and on the 31st of July, 1879, I came into the world.

My first awakening of consciousness occurred a year afterward. I can still see a narrow gleaming strip afar off, intersected by vertical black rays, which met above in a sombre arch. With all the strength I had, I rushed toward this mirage. Under my feet, I could see the earth of a reddish-brown color, but something that held me up under the arms kept me from going forward. Later, I was to learn that this event had taken place at Zikovo, a few kilometers from Moscow, in a little pine wood on the edge of a pond; they were teaching me to walk by the aid of a towel passed under my arms and held from behind by my mother.

When I was capable of sitting up on my father's knees at a table, I saw rising up in front of me, upon a sheet of white paper, men, heads and animals, which my father was drawing to amuse me; he later would cover them with colors. About the

age of four, I had the chicken-pox, and while in bed I had a zoology book with pictures. Innumerable animals, birds and fish, all superbly colored. I selected a bull and copied it upon a pretty white sheet with water and body-colors. It was a New Year's gift for my grandmother. From then on, I did not stop producing these presents for my parents, uncles and aunts. At my grandmother's house, I often gazed with admiration at a picture—a woman and a little boy—it was a painting of my father's. In his youth, he had wanted to become an artist, but my grandfather had forced him to give up his dream in order to become a successor in the piano factory which my grandfather had founded upon his arrival at Moscow. I saw also, in the same room, a head of Christ, which I admired still more than my father's painting. It was a drawing of my grandmother's in her youth.

At the age of seven, I went through my first great sorrow—I lost my mother. A year later, my father took me to school. The first day, at recess, I received a rude blow of the fist in my back, and a voice asked me: "Are you afraid of me?"—I turned and saw a reddish lad, and one bigger than myself, who stood there ready to fight. I replied by shouting: "I'm not afraid." The other lad smiled and held out his hand, suggesting that I become his friend, for he liked the brave. And this was a friendship which lasted for years, up to the time when I left Moscow. My friend was already painting in oils; he was twelve. At school, we were the best in the drawing class, and the superintendent had preserved in the school collection a number of our drawings, which made us very proud.

Upon leaving school, my friend entered his father's business. As for myself, I could not make up my mind to enter that of my own father, since I had aspirations to become a painter; but all my family were against it, and especially my father. I was

PLATE NO. XXXI 1928

Panneau Mural: l'Amour Maternel: l'Affection

Salle de l'Union Catholique du Théâtre, Paris

sixteen. After a year of hesitation, I ended by obeying him, and became an apprentice in a piano factory. I now had many friends. Enjoying an absolute liberty, we had the right to amuse ourselves in all the night resorts, and we abused the privilege terribly. My father was even proud to see me the leader of the band. Though I passed the night abroad, I was always, without fail, at my place in the factory at seven o'clock in the morning. I had an iron constitution and Herculean strength, and I gradually became a perfect ruffian. I no longer drew—no longer read—I sought only to amuse myself of an evening, after a day of toil in my father's factory.

One torrid afternoon in the month of July, I came home from a round of errands and felt myself overcome with a strange fatigue; my father, observing that I had a very high fever, sent me to a doctor. The latter, perceiving that my temperature was above 40 degrees centigrade, ordered me to go home and go to bed immediately, which I did; for I was completely exhausted. I was barely in bed before they came to take me to the hospital. The doctor, in the meanwhile, had notified my father that I had typhoid fever. I passed seventeen days without any suffering, being completely indifferent to anything that took place; I saw that my uncles and aunts who came to visit me were sad, and that they sometimes wept, for I was doomed to die; but I took no notice of anything. When my fever went down, I barely had the strength to lift my arms; and then a phlebitis in the leg made its appearance. At the end of the month of a October, I left the hospital, unrecognizable, doing my best to learn to walk with the aid of crutches. By the time spring came, I was built up again, but I felt myself a different being in body and soul. I was now clearly aware that I could not go on with my work in my father's factory, and I informed him of my

decision to enter upon an artist's career. My father thought I was mad, and was absolutely opposed to my going. Despite all the sorrow which I knew I was causing him in thus deciding to leave him and begin another mode of life, I took my hat, one day in June, and, with three rubles and a piano-tuner's key in my pocket, I went away, leaving a letter for my father. I was twenty-two years old.

My troubles were about to begin. I had found lodgings with a cordwainer, sleeping with the apprentices, on the ground, in the corner of a room that had no window, for my means were very slender ones. None of the piano factories that I knew were willing to employ me, having received notice from my father, who wanted to compel me to come back to him. I often went for days without eating. At last, a good and unassuming man, a musical composer (as well as a tuner and builder of organs of his own invention), a pupil of Tchaikowsky—his name was Arnold, and he was of French extraction—made up his mind to assist me by procuring some work for me from time to time.

Having entered the school of Fine Arts of Moscow, I passed the greater part of the day running back and forth through the streets of the city to tune the pianos of Arnold's customers. I had but a very slight margin of time for the Academy. One day, with other students, I visited the private collection of the pictures of Chtchoukine, and for the first time I saw the pictures of Manet, of Gauguin, of the Impressionists, and of Matisse. I was overwhelmed, for this painting was absolutely different in spirit from that which they taught us at the school, and I assured myself that the very conditions of life in the society where these artists had produced this work, as well as nature itself, must be quite different and special, to be able to produce such results for here I saw real art, up against those academic conventions to which we were bound in our academy.

Another event, not less decisive, soon took place; this was the revolution of 1905, in which I took an active part. I had discovered the distress of the Russian people, the failure of the Czarist regime, but I was also deceived and discouraged by contact with the leaders of the revolution, who fought among themselves over their doctrine. I could see that, in order to free Russia from that night into which she had been plunged, the life of a generation would not be sufficient, and that, for an artist, to go on working in the existing atmosphere was an impossibility. There was, moreover, the set-back which had resulted from the first revolution, and the terrible reprisals on the part of the old régime. In the meanwhile, my father had ruined himself in an unfortunate speculation in the oil lands of Bakou in the Caucasus, and had died. When his affairs were straightened out, there was left me barely the sum of money necessary for the journey from Moscow to Paris. I immediately decided to leave my native city, and to go to live and work in France.

It was on the fourth of July, 1908, that I got off at the Quai d'Orsay. I made the trip in the company of a group of students who were on an excursion which included Constantinople, Smyrna, Athens and Turin. At Paris, it was my intention to earn my living as a piano-tuner—studying at the same time in the studio of Henri Matisse, who kept an academy in the boulevard des Invalides. But having entered a large piano-house, I saw that it would be impossible for me to keep up my painting, for I was forced to be on the job at seven o'clock in the morning, and my work was not over until seven at night, with an hour off for lunch. There was no way out possible. The only thing for me to do, if I wished to go on with painting, was to take a sketching-course which was open in the evening from eight to ten, and which I attended three times a week. I did not

feel that I had sufficient strength to go every evening. But on Sundays, I painted, visited the museums, which were a veritable oasis for me, or else shut myself up, in order to forget the moral tortures which I was suffering from not being able to discover any means of escape from the killing labor of a piano-tuner, which was necessary to my existence. Long years passed, weary and monotonous ones, and only for a short period in the dead of summer did I have, perhaps, one afternoon a week to myself in which to keep up my painting.

In I912, I began exhibiting with the "Independents." All my visits to museums, private collections and public exhibitions had provided me with an abundance of material for thought during my hours of manual and auditory labor as a piano-tuner. It was the painting and the ideas of Cézanne which ended by taking firmest hold upon me; but not being able to do enough practical work, I gave myself over to speculations, which ended in the creation of "Colored Rhythm" for the cinema—symphonies in color—in 1913. A year later, I took occasion to lay before Guillaume Apollinaire a description of the principles of "Colored Rhythm," accompanied by plates. He received me in his little apartment in the rue St. Guillaume with that jovial cordiality which was always his. He was very enthusiastic, and at once published in the *Soirées de Paris* my description of the "ninth muse," as he called my creation. This was in the month of July, 1914, and it was but a few days later that the great cataclysm which was to sweep away men and possibilities fell upon France. In October, 1915, I was able, thanks to the intervention of friends, to leave my work as a piano-tuner and to give myself, utterly and for the first time, to painting. In 1917, under the patronage of Apollinaire, I had my first exhibition in the salon of Madame Bougard in the rue de Penthièvre.

PLATE NO. XXXII 1929

Taureau

Collection of Mr. Chester H. Johnson, Chicago

THE MAXIMS OF LÉOPOLD SURVAGE

THE MAXIMS OF LÉOPOLD SURVAGE

IN painting, the technical means are conditioned by the intention, which is the measure of our degree of spiritual elevation.

The state that is favorable to spiritual travail is the happy alternation of feeling and intelligence.

Feeling is a physiologic state, the result of perceptions and sensations.

Every perception that is not finally guided by our consciousness to the intelligence remains in the state of feeling.

Feeling alone leads but to animal reflexes.

Absolute intelligence—total absence of feeling.

Quality of intelligence—spiritual elevation.

Degree of intelligence—penetration.

A conscious being is, of necessity, cerebral.

All art is abstract, for all art is generalizing; it remains to specify the degree, which is quality.

Cerebral art—art which has gone beyond the reflex-gesture of a sensation or external perception.

Memory minus intelligence is a plague.

But intelligence without intuition is a phantom.

The subconscious—our body's memory; intuition—its intelligence.

The will is the degree of intensity of our faculties.

October, 1927.