

STORM ON THE ENGLISH COAST

WINSLOW HOMER

In an exhibition of American Masters at the Babcock Gallery during March

## CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

REVIEWED BY JAMES W. LANE

Goya paintings, drawings, and prints have been placed in the same installation at the Metropolitan that set off the recent show of French eighteenth century sculpture and painting. Goya's portraits in oil seem to me to age better all the time. Apart from the uncannily shrewd characterizations in some of them, the *exposés* of men being, as is well known, completer than those of majas, princesses, and queens, the painting of stuff—military brocade and medals, the red silk lining of a hat, the nap of old velvet, even the guimpe on chairs—is very wooing. In spite or because of the grimmer subjects that compose the greater part of Goya's wash drawings and prints, the subjects that are supposed to show the acid of his wit but are better examples of his insubordinate nature, for I do not think he was exceptionally witty (not, anyway, like Daumier), my opinion is that the portraits are preferable both as wit and as art. If I were given twenty of the good Goya portraits to choose from, I would not know which to take, although both Senor and Senora Sureda in this collection are tempting. The evenness of Goya's genius, his infallible ease, the consistency of his vital characterizations is amazing, and in making the choice I should probably be guided at the last less by the sitter's face—for I would know that that had character—than by the rendering of the extraneous matter, the trappings and the props.

In painting, Goya's occasional ventures into other fields are always welcome: like the Metropolitan's *Bull-*

*Fight*, with its cerulean tonality, and the *City On A Rock* (both here exhibited) and the National Gallery's *Picnic*, the latter of which, with the *Gossiping Women* here, proves that he was not unaffected by the *fetes-galantes* type.

Any traveler in Paris, as he wandered through the boulevards, must have been impressed by the enormous ads or posters on the faces of buildings, on sidewalk billboards, and other places of vantage. How different, he must have thought, from the American variety—all slickness and photography. If the French want you to buy a glass of Dubonnet (with a dash of cassis or a little lemon), a copy of *L'Intransigeant*, a railway ticket to Brussels on their crack express, or even a cap, they blazon the matter in a most attractive and artistic way—that is, should they be able to employ Cassandre. He has a mastery of perspective, diagonals, overlapping planes, and cubism—in short, of design and color. Doubtless, there are other competent poster-artists in France, but when you have seen the show on the second floor at the Museum of Modern Art, you will say there is only one Cassandre. Like that tennis ball of his, advertising some big tennis tournament, with the batter of the ball far on the other side of the net, his posters come right up and hit you in the eye.

The Rockefeller Collection, some items of which were placed on view last summer, has now been assembled in its entirety on the third and fourth

floors of the Museum. It consists mainly of American water-colors and drawings, among the oils the more prominent being Sheeler's beautifully colored *American Landscape*, Kantor's bleak *Church at Truro*, and Blume's *Parade*. The Prendergast water-colors—especially the East River scene—are among the finest. *Mrs. Acorn's Parlor* by Hopper is as literal and true as an Eakins. The Burchfields and the Harts have been happily selected, while among the very good drawings—nearly all, as it happens, by "Immaculates"—those by Sheeler, O'Keeffe, and Blume are memorable. The water-colors by Marguerite Zorach have the genre air of a Carl Larsson about them, without the Swede's color, while her portrait of Kuniyoshi in lithographic crayon is entirely different in spirit, but, one feels, just what Kuniyoshi himself would have desired: and, if you're a portraitist, the most important person to please is your sitter.

The exhibition of plans and photographs of the architecture of H. H. Richardson on the ground floor serves the good purpose of "placing" that architect in his niche in American building. Though not obscure, he has been long obscured. Gathering some of his ideas from an early trip through Spain and the Auvergne—his Trinity Church, Boston, having its tower modeled on the lantern of Salamanca—Richardson, if freely using Romanesque motives, was not as eclectic as the McKim-Mead-White of that day. His railway stations and prisons were more or less *sui generis* and the

former, being built of indigenous stone, still look well and original today. As a designer of commercial edifices that gave the nucleus to steel construction, he did some buildings that are as important as those of Sullivan and Wright. As a good residential architect, there are doubts about him. He could engineer grandiose effects on facades, but the insides were something else again. Darkness, stuffiness, and poor planning, while characteristic of the Black Walnut Era in which Richardson's buildings were erected, are not architectural desiderata, and his houses—those who have had to do them over know—were poorly planned. On the whole, he was happier in stone than in wood.

If Inness had been born in 1836, we could be celebrating this year the centennials of our most important landscape painters of the nineteenth century. Nature is not quite so neat, so we must content ourselves with Winslow Homer, Homer Martin, and Alexander Wyant. Justice has already been done to the first two, to the one by Knoedler and the Pennsylvania Museum, to the other by Mr. Macbeth.

It needs only water-colors—and this is all that was in Knoedler's superlative show—to show Homer's greatness. The painter himself had the vision to say that it was through them that he would live. One could indeed scrap many of the oils, retaining a sea piece like *The Northeaster*, and be none the worse. Somehow a greater artistic spaciousness came upon Homer in the more delicate medium. Subject counted, as it always did; but he infused it with more feeling and was more selective in the water-colors. A canvas like the *Prisoners From the Front*, which brought him his election to the Academy at the unprecedentedly early age of 30, before even La Farge and Inness, both his seniors, had gotten in, must not be minimized. Yet there again, above technique, which was of the Eakins type, it was subject that counted and that impressed even the French when he showed this canvas at the Salon.

His interest in the sea and fisher-people appears first in the graceful work done during his year's stay at Tynemouth, near Newcastle, Northumberland. He was over forty at the time. On his return he lived the rest of his seventy-four years in New England (except for several winter cruises to the Bahamas and Bermuda), and in New England, chiefly at Prout's Neck, Maine. Appropriately enough, his old studio there will be the scene, in July,

of an exhibition of all the oils painted from its shelter.

The immediate show at Knoedler's is quite unforgettable. One may say with truth that these water-colors, as much as the earlier wood-engravings for *Harper's Weekly* and *Every Saturday*, prove Homer was a born illustrator. Yet journalism refined and did not coarsen this talent. Probably as he came to live more and more alone in the country, his artistic sense grew. Frank Jewett Mather has well said of him: "Some taciturn trapper or skipper reckoning with natural appearances might paint like this."

The works that range the south wall of the first room in the Knoedler

Burnt Mountain, have an authority of perfect beauty. Why? The significance of these Adirondack and tropical scenes has been thrown into high relief and all irrelevance suppressed. That is why, although they are simon pure American, in masculine character, realism, and setting, they are universal, too.

It is good to see as many Homer Martins as the Macbeth Galleries have brought together. For Homer Martin (1836-1897) was a slow painter and his works are not numerous. They used to be very vulnerable to the skill of a forger when, just after his death, the originals began to command high



Courtesy Midtown Galleries

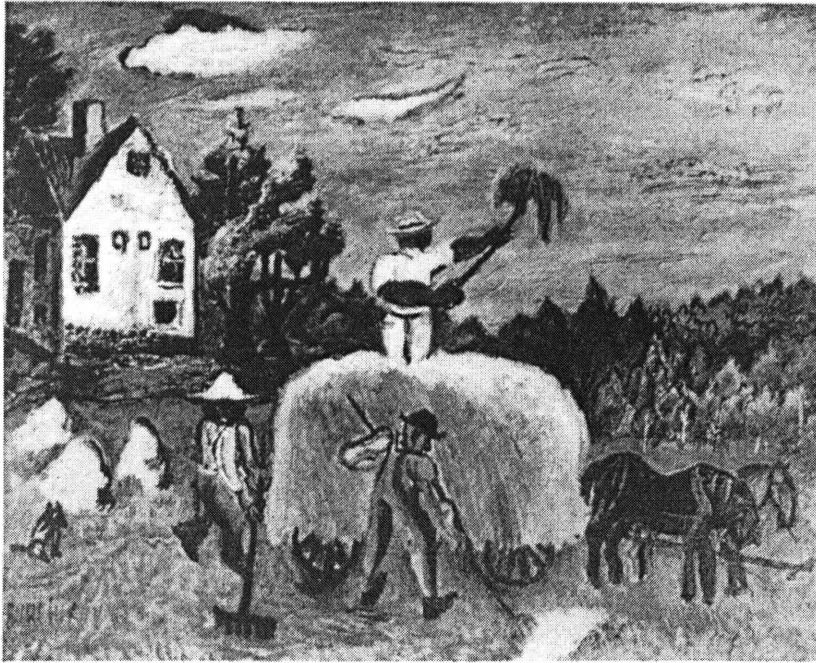
#### TWO GIRLS

ISABEL BISHOP

Recently purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

exhibition represent the finest Homers I have ever seen. They are Adirondack scenes and, although I should not have expected it, they carry off the palms of the show. The primordial dignity of nature in the wilderness, the shadow of great forest trees, is over them. Those gnashing sulphurous rapids (from the Worcester Museum), that strapping young guide with his boot resting on the fallen tree splintered into glowing red rottenness, that casting of the fly from the canoe (done in a black wash with Chinese white for the line and canoe), and—as one moves around the room—that Marinesque subject of the old guide and that brooding scene on

prices. Starting out in Albany as a typical Hudson River School painter, as in the well-composed *Old Mill* of 1860, Martin slowly evolved the brooding, melancholy, figure-deserted canvases that made him famous. Apparently he painted much from memory. That gorgeous wild picture of the sun setting over the Ontario sand dunes while wind and clouds sweep up the approaching storm at the left centre, was rendered in five versions between 1884 and 1887. Curiously enough, these years were mostly during the period (1882-1886) when Martin, then nearly fifty and a failure, was living near Villerville in Normandy and drinking in the new



discoveries of Barbizonians and also the work of Boudin, who was in his neighborhood.

The *Ontario Sand Dunes* in this show is one of the finest of Martins. It has less of the characteristic melancholy, being shot through with the freezing air which often comes in the van of a storm. Yet the sun has a hopeful and a thoroughly wrung-out look. The popular Martins have usually been those of the aquamarine skies, like *The Harp of the Winds* at the Metropolitan and *A Newport Landscape*, his last work, which has been lent to this exhibition. But the Newport landscapes, of which three are shown, all with the blue-green sky tints, do not impress me so much as the various Ontario sand dunes or some of the Adirondack views, like that of Lake Sanford. These latter gave the painter a chance to play with tree forms, bleak, perhaps charred sentinels, the remnants of forest fire. He got out of them all there was to be had of associations of solitude and melancholy grandeur. The sadness of people no longer living on the land is what, as Mr. Mather says of one of the most celebrated paintings, *Westchester Hill*, Homer Martin gives you. It was the fitting cap to a melancholy but distinguished career.

On very superficial first sight the still-lives, such as chiefly compose the exhibition, of Arthur Carles at the Marie Harriman Gallery have a certain resemblance to the Soutine manner. That is to say—and it is the best thing one can say of the manner

—they are jumbled and superposed with a great deal of strong color and suggestive line. But where Soutine, as I thought, failed in being artistic Carles did not. In some of the larger arrangements like the still-life done in 1927, the painter has been able to create at least three autonomous spheres of interest, leaving the central register interestingly vacant. His canvases are a whirligig of restlessness: superpositions, half-finished strokes and grace notes, strong nasturtium reds against deep peacock blues, clamorous purples, give as well a note of the barbarous and the Russian. In "Composition No. 5," the purples were so strong that when I let my glance rest for a moment on two innocent-looking grey-beige chairs on either side of the picture, the chairs were immediately purple.

In the human figure Carles is not nearly so successful. But his flower-pieces grip you in the only way that good art can: they are thrilling. Few painters—Fautrier with his *Flowers of Disaster* is one—have as yet gone completely modern with flowers en masse, because such flowers have exacted a certain grudging conventionality from even the most advanced guards among the moderns. It has been thought bad taste to deflorize flora. Carles can show you how ridiculous was the assumption.

The Milch Galleries have put on one of the best-selected shows of nineteenth and twentieth-century American painters seen in a long time. Eight of the twenty-one canvases are

so good that I have rarely seen anything else by their respective painters, either in the particular style shown or in all the media, that I liked better. Sargent's *Henri Lefort* is doubtless a very early painting, but it has a sincerity and an idealism that combine with its juicy blacks to make a work, which, if still near the school, is distinguished. What I can say of George Fuller's canvas, *Maidenhood*, is that it is the finest Fuller I have ever observed. It has none of the Carrière-like mists which, more characteristically, enshroud his other work. Not that he comes down in *Maidenhood* on all fours, for it is exquisitely and delicately painted, but that the girl is less sad and the color is—so it seems to me—the most deliciously fresh color Fuller ever used.

Mrs. Ward by Eakins is an unfinished work of genius. How much better unfinished—in order to throw into relief those wonderful "speaking" hands that are worth the price of observation alone. And what subtle urbanity there is in the cant of the head!

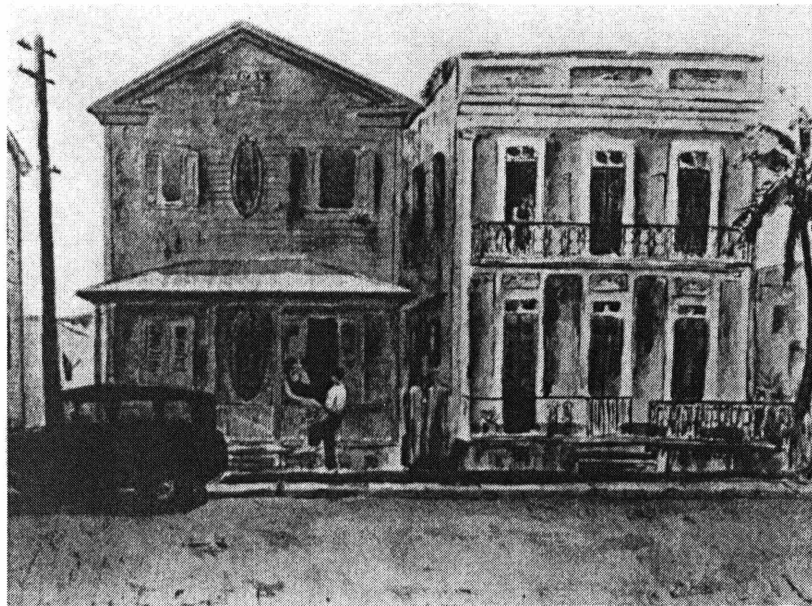
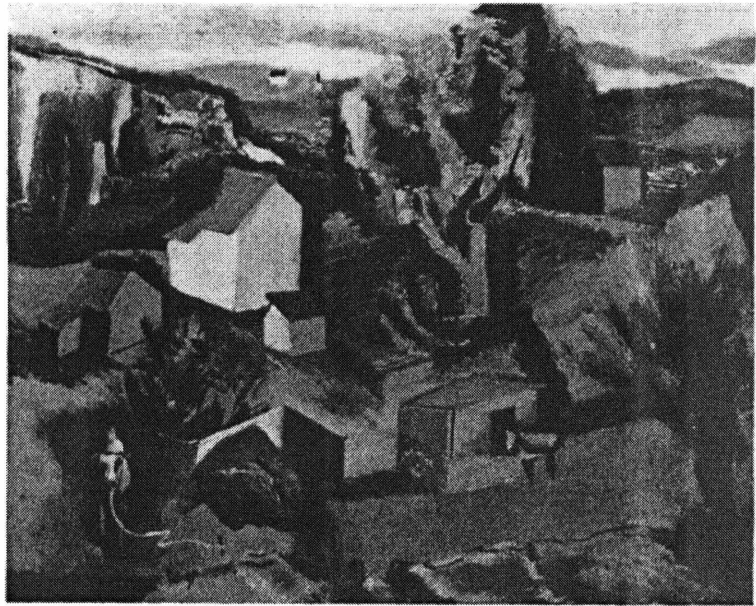
The *Bellows Portrait of Jean* and the *Thayer Profile Head* are also unusual in being fine portraits without being very recognizably in the styles of their authors. I like paintings which, if they are good, do not fall into the usual clichés connected with their creator's manner. They show that the artist for once was able to get out of himself and reach the promised land. The Thayer portrait, as an instance, is as "realized" as might be a study by some Dutch master, like Alfred Stevens, yet it maintains a glazed effect like that of Thomas Dewing. One more important portrait, this time more according to Hoyle, is Duveneck's *Sea Captain*, a rarely successful School of Munich bit—old masterish in lighting and patine, but quite modern in characterization. Mary Cassatt's *Children Playing With A Cat* is unusual in being on a rectangular canvas holding four figures, including the cat. Cabined, cribbed, confined as are some Cassatts, this one gives the impression of being more happily composed, of having more space for its figures to move around in.

Winslow Homer's *Watching the Breakers*, from the Chicago Art Institute, is a fine combination of English figures—the Tynemouth types—and the Maine sea. The red shawl as a set-off is most effectively painted. The artist is not quite so determined to paint a blob of red as he might have been in the heyday of Corot, but the fashion was still strong, and this was

Opposite page:  
 HARVESTING HAY IN NEW JERSEY  
 DAVID BURLIUK  
 In a one-man show at the Boyer Galleries  
 in Philadelphia until March 17.

Right:  
 PASTORAL ANTHONY PALAZZO  
 On view at the Dorothy Paris Gallery from  
 March 8 to 28.

Below:  
 PUERTO RICO: TWO HOUSES  
 WALT DEHNER  
 Head of the Art Department, University of  
 Puerto Rico.  
 In an exhibition of watercolors, March 2  
 to 14, at the Jacques Seligman Gallery.



his way of getting around it—to make the shawl red, but brindled with white.

Isabel Bishop's painterlike work, although stemming from that of Kenneth Hayes Miller, her master, is more personable than his, because she has not stereotyped any of her characters. She paints in tempera, with the forms, as in *Waiting*, well reinforced with pencil. Her colors are pale but not unpleasant, for the people she paints have usually as much health and embonpoint in them as those of Rubens or Rembrandt. Her well-rounded forms would feel lost if they had to find only emaciated models. She has a great sense for the contours of faces; her composition and drawing are

equally good. If deficient in a sense for genre, she is perhaps better off so. For genre, as too often with American painters, dilutes the aesthetic sense—and this, in Isabel Bishop, is fortunately strong.

Alexander Calder's mobiles at the Pierre Matisse Gallery are noiseless and slow-moving. Little discs, one side one color, the other side, another, depend from strings which themselves depend from cross-pieces often affixed to other cross-pieces with *their* depending strings. It is a world—quite like *The World*—of delicate adjustment and balance. The mobile attached to a motor, the one in which a yellow disc makes different pere-

grinations against a blue sky (painted back drop), is one of the most interesting. Before it one stands with the naive pleasure of a man before a nickelodeon exhibit. Just as, if one had the time, one could watch sunrise and sunset indefinitely, so with this one, one goes on into infinite moments.

But time fleets—and the other mobiles, the one of a bloody-nosed hunter (at any rate, that's my guess) aiming his blunderbuss at a high-flying bird, much took my fancy. When gently set in motion, that's just what they're supposed to do. Since fancy is the great be-all here, no catalogue seeks to delimit you with petty titles. Much better that you should appreciate the delicate thrust-and-balance with which a sinuous rod keeps its place in space than that you should try to know what mundane meaning it has. If we are led to reflect upon the hazardous business of our own living, by what recondite adjustments it is maintained, is not that enough for wonder? Is not that enough for truth?

This year's showing of Massimo Campigli at the Julien Levy Gallery represents that artist in a change of style, if not of mood. Instead of placing his people in pairs with a certain amount of space in between, instead of making them rather impersonal sheaf-like figures, he has now in one canvas a girl braiding another's hair and in another four girls with three violins. Accomplished paintings where the paint is thicker and more luscious and the figures themselves are less impersonal and "hieratic." The Fayum

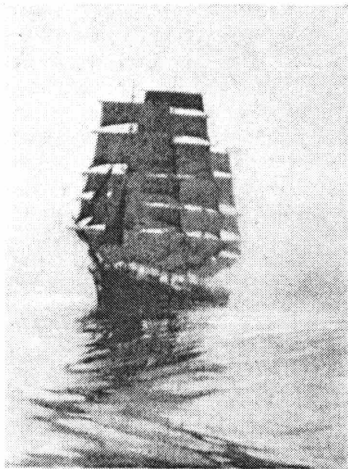
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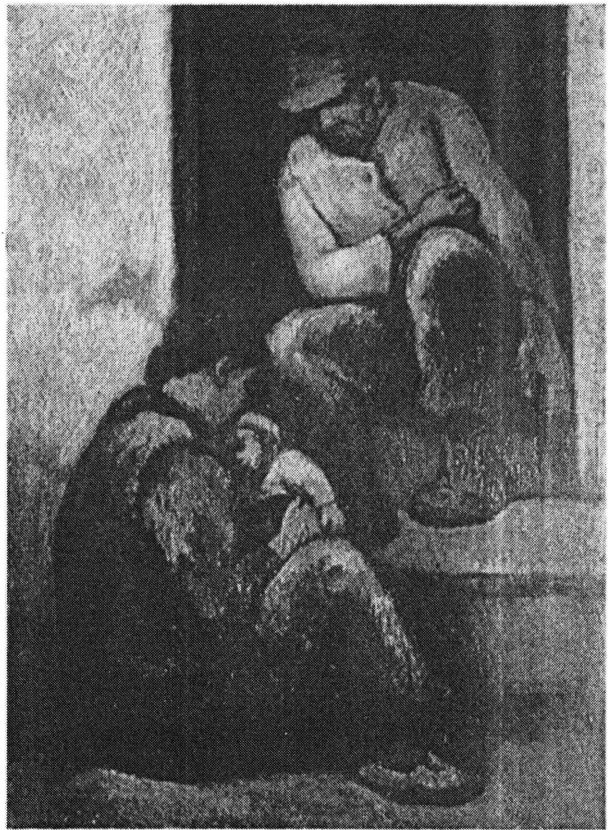
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look is going out of the faces and the background of beaches is now not scarified to simulate the scrapings of a fresco-trowel. Personally, I prefer these older mannerisms: they carried more distinction, were more Italianate. But even now, with signs that Campigli is trying to paint more naturalistically, he remains an excellent patternist—witness the painting where two hands of two girls meet and interlace. This is a recent one, but no less effective than his *Femmes S'Habillantes* of 1926.

✓ The most signalizable event of the winter is the Jean Charlot show. The John Levy Galleries have now had three of his exhibitions, the first covering the period 1927-1930, the second, 1930-1933, and the present one, 1933-1936. As far as design, drawing, color, and conception are concerned—and after all, they are the primary artistic objectives—Charlot is in a class by himself. Others, to be sure, may be slightly better colorists or superior draughtsmen, but not many. His possession of four virtues in generous degree does not make him less strong than some painters who have only one but that profound.

The characteristic tinge is still evident in some work. The ample comfortable forms—the bodies broadly monolithic, the faces rectangular—

compose lovely designs in paintings such as *Embrace*, a fresco; *The Storm*; and *First Steps*. Yet the emotive quality of each of these paintings is utterly different, the first being a flared design for the comprehensiveness of love, the second, with its livid greenish yellow folds of the blanket, underlining the terror of the unknown in nature; and the third, being of tender solicitude all compact.

But these ample forms are not the only ones employed by this well-rounded artist. His touch evokes the great beauty in a mass of Indian lilies (this, if a trifle dull in color, is one of the best flower pieces of the season); he perseveres in a luminous delineation of a bared back until it seems to be not human but a spar of iridescence shooting into the murk. Too, in the paintings of a couple with a cane and of the burden-bearer at rest, he has brought into play two palettes of unusual occurrence: in the one, grey, blue, green, and white; in the other, lake, pink, and green. In the paintings of *Zobmah*, *Prudence*, and *Hand*, the stylistically rectangular faces do not neglect to emphasize bony structure. Among these portraits that of Henrietta Shore should be remembered. It is an instance of a gorgeous painting in the Renaissance mode—but animated with the liveliness of modernism.

Charlot's religious panels—six depicting Christian mysteries of the rosary—are both from the standpoint of perfectly fused intellectuality and feeling and from the difficulties of design the most wonderful things he has done. The difficulties of design, indeed, have been made to seem of small account. The paintings have been done on square panels but a tondo in which lies the subject matter has been placed just within the edge of the canvas. The *Christ Before Pilate* and the *Deposition from the Cross* are especially fine in this spacious series. Not Tiepolo could suggest in tondo or even ellipse such wide worlds as Charlot opens to us. I commend in particular the juxtaposition of rose madder and sapphire in the first-named and the contrast of Our Lord's thinness with the goggled-eyed inertia of fat Pilate. In the "Deposition" a singing ultramarine has made its way into what would ordinarily be the closed corporation of pinks, greens, and straws. The composition in this latter is perhaps the most complicated, yet even here, in the midst of foreshortenings and other simplifications, all the forms, blocked out as they are, remain amazingly tactile.

At the Marie Sterner Galleries Zolton Sepeshy, a young Hungarian art instructor from the Cranbrook Foundation in Michigan, has been exhibiting unusual paintings in tempera. To Sepeshy, trained in Hungary to look at things in the more detached, abstract European manner, the American scene offers material for two-rather than three-dimensional forms. Most painters—if rhythm possesses them at all—would give their eye-teeth to be able to achieve the linear relationships constructed by Sepeshy. He establishes relationships not only between the forms but between the lines, cutting off a volume here (as on the captain's bridge of the ship), just as the ordinary painter would be willing to model it out around the curve, and perhaps lengthening a form there. Then, through successive forms he will run lines generated from some original figure, and the composition is sewn together in line. (These directive lines are usually a neutral brown). The low-keyed color—chocolate brown and moody reds, with patches now and then of red and blue—is not very important, but occasionally a neutralized orange sings out against the others. The subject matter, though it is Middle Western, is hardly the thing. The thing is to concentrate upon the design and the acute, piercing, unerring line that

makes attractive relationships, and even reticulations, in each picture.

American abstractionists can be counted on the fingers of both hands. Archile Gorky, a protégé of the Guild Art Gallery, which gave the first one-man exhibition of his pen-and-pencil drawings, is one of the few. He is an abstractionist in the style of Miro, but his better-knit compositions have more rhythm and harmony than the Spaniard's. The present ones are all black and whites, with, in one case, a little sepia and violet ink added. Only four of them boast titles, one of which, *Nighttime Nostalgia*, is actually quite understandable from the composition—cronies in Morris chairs blowing smoke-rings. I daresay Mr. Gorky wouldn't care if it weren't, and *we* are not supposed to care. Mr. Gorky's forms are still those of rememberable reality—jawbones of an ass or great rounded piano-top surfaces, "Schnozzle" Durante's schnozzle, the carcass of a man with a horse's head, and what-have-you. A hole in one of the chairs or piano-tops seems to be a passage leading inward and covered at the end with chicken-wire, of which, in the form of cross-hatchings, Mr. Gorky employs much. The artist is to be congratulated more on the successful carrying out of his interlacing rhythms than upon anything else.

Virginia Berresford, with work exhibited at the Walker Galleries, has her place among "The Immaculates". She stems from Sheeler. Her oil at the Brooklyn Museum last fall recalled Demuth's *Paquebot*, being nothing but the funnels of an ocean liner. The most admirable landscape in the present show, *Chilmark*, one of the tips of Martha's Vineyard, shows the stark anatomy of hills that we associate with Georgia O'Keeffe, but it possesses a more rolling rhythm. She is not the colorist that O'Keeffe is, for O'Keeffe, on the basis of her very last exhibit at An American Place, has come ahead surprisingly as a tonalist. But Miss Berresford is gifted in making clear, simple designs: witness the view of St. Kitts, the island rising from a deep, inscrutable plum-black sea with the green fields licking the stony cone of the mountain like flickers of flame. Some water-colors of fishes have been rendered in a bold-brushed style, and are among the most attractive renditions of fish I have seen, naturalistic yet mystical, as though making very due allowance for the refraction of a none-too-clear salt water.

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