

THE SHAPE OF THINGS

Art Boom Started With Hungry Myth

By RICHARD HIRSCH
Director
Allentown Art Museum

Leonardo da Vinci, Florence, did not die poor. Praxiteles, sculptor, did not die poor in ancient Athens. Watteau made a living. Delacroix was comfortable. Corot was well off. Rubens was rich. Van Gogh died in poverty. So did Gauguin. Why?

Art historians have endlessly pointed out that Van Gogh and Gauguin died poor because they were ahead of the taste of their times. They died poor because they were different and, because they were different (and gifted), their works are now universally revered, desired, and fought for at auctions.

Over and over and over this has been repeated. The result: a Van Gogh sold, in London, for \$350,000 not long ago. It was, rather, a poor picture. A Gauguin did much better than that last year.

The beautiful, beautiful boom is on. "Starving Artist" Myth. It all started with "the starving artist" myth. Actually, it has only been in the last 125 years that artists with fine talents and much to say have had any difficulty, during their lifetime, in making a comfortable or handsome living. But the cold garret and the struggling artist make good copy for historians and critics. Further, the starving artist myth was most satisfactory for a few recent generations of artists. It gave them the feeling that, since they were poor, inevitably

they must be possessors of superior talent.

For the art market it has proved helpful that the gifted artists of the last century died—though rarely of starvation. The melancholy event clearly put a limit on the production of their brushes. Thus, they currently fetch five and six figures on Madison Avenue and on streets running into it above 57th, in the borough of Manhattan. It was pretty predictable, probably.

Less predictable was the unconsidered enthusiasm and the ignorance which has occasioned the boom. Nothing of the sort has happened, in this country, since the Florida real estate bubble of the 20's. Florida real estate in the 20's had positive value and positive growth potential. Nevertheless speculators brought ruin in the wake of their frenzy.

Something of the sort also occurred in Holland, in an otherwise reasonable seventeenth century, when the thought of a black tulip made sensible burghers buy and buy and outbid each other in the hope that someone had developed a glorified onion into a bulb that would bloom as a jet-black five petalled flower without fragrance.

In the visual arts, right now, the same aberration is being exploited.

Destined to Appreciate
Since a minor Van Gogh brings a third of a million and the artist never sold a hundred dollars worth of painting in his entire lifetime, our art market has suggested, con-

vincingly, that all art is destined to appreciate in money value.

As a result, we have an unbelievable boom concerning work by living artists, spurred to an alarming extent by this supposition that all of our people who are currently armed with brushes and paint will provide goldmines for their patrons in future years. This could be a dangerous assumption.

Reminiscent of the tulip craze in Holland, serious businessmen, right now, are hammering at the doors of galleries to get in "on a good thing." Quite recently, as a very typical example, a well known New York gallery announced an exhibition of 15 paintings by Franz Kline. By 4 p.m., when the show opened, only one picture remained to be sold. The first sale had been made at 8:30 in the morning. The prices, reportedly, were between \$8,500 and \$14,000.

One could cite 50 such examples within recent months.

The critics have helped in this inflation of the living artist. So have the art magazines. A shocking case in point is the inclusion in a recent issue of a supposedly serious art quarterly of a new feature. It is titled: "Market Letter." It is designed to look like the business trend outlines in some of our national business weeklies, even to facsimile typewritten copy.

It starts off "Capital gains continue to be enjoyed by holders of Jackson Pollock." It introduces Andrew Wyeth with: "Living American painter sets new record." (It was \$35,000 for a slim visual message.) This amazing "art" feature goes on: "Look for upswing in prices of Max Ernst." It also presents the "find-of-the-year" (a lady who does things in leather and canvas). "Marktwisely," the Old Masters will continue to increase in value because the buying public has enormously broadened while the number of canvases by departed artists remains, obviously, constant. There is logic in this market



TYPICAL OF ART — Typical of the art that has attracted many speculators is this canvas, entitled "Ritual" by Elaine Hamilton, contemporary American painter. When such works are bought for the pleasure of living with them no one can complain. When they are bought because of the boom, there is cause for fear.

rise of tested masters. For the living artist the same logic need not necessarily apply. In the realm of the spirit, to which living art should belong, the dollar sign might prove a poor guide. (Copyright 1961, General Features Corp.)

The Family Council

Editor's Note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, three editors and a women's editor. Each article is a summary of an actual case history. The Council reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors. (Copyright 1961—General Features Corp.)

Bradford S. — My wife Brad can break in a man to assist him. And that way, we'd both have a chance to grow.

Hallie S. — I've always wanted to try catering.

Bradford S. — Hallie is still a young woman and, now that our younger child is a high school junior, she wants to accept an outside job and get started on a real career for herself.

I have a small paint and lacquer store and if Hallie'd help me there, I could branch out. She could learn the stock and how to sell and order. Then I might leave her in charge, while I go out on actual decorating and refinishing jobs.

But she says no. She'd rather start at the bottom in something completely different. If she worked with me, though, she'd make things easier for me, add to our income, and get to know an interesting business, all at the same time. I don't want to force her to do this, but I can't understand her refusal.

Hallie S. — Brad and I have been happily married for 18 years and I'd like to keep it that way. And I think we should continue as husband and wife, friends and sweethearts to each other, rather than boss and helper, or even business partners.

In the first place, I've always had a yen to be a professional caterer, and now I have a chance to serve as an apprentice with a concern which specializes in children's parties. I'm eager to learn the little touches and tricks that make all the difference between a plain meal and a festive celebration.

Honestly, I don't feel any real "call" to become a paint salesman! Of course if I really had to, I could and would. But

The Council: — Hallie ought to have her fling. She's bided her time, meanwhile filling her commitments and enjoying her role as wife and mother. Now she's eager to turn her interest in gracious entertaining into a remunerative vocation, and Bradford should cheer her on, rather than make her feel guilty and remind her of a helpmate.

For a husband and wife to work happily together in the same business enterprise, one or two pre-existing conditions must obtain. Either the wife has no special business or professional preference and can give her full enthusiasm to the job at hand, or it just happens they're both in the same line from "way back when. Thus Miss RN helps out as Mrs. MD and Alfred Lunt joins Lynn Fontanne for a smooth-silk theatrical partnership. Or Miss Post-Deb marries a furniture dealer, and then begins to hone up on Hepplewhite and Chippendale, to be helpful.

Even then, being together 24 hours a day can take the sheen off a romantic relationship. There can be few surprises, no illusions. Yet, these are often the stuff from which the freshness and adventure of marriage can be renewed. For this and other reasons, some universities and corporations which employ husbands and wives, insist that they work in unrelated departments.

It's better for Brad to join Hallie at the end of a day in which each has found some real fulfillment and is bursting to share it, than to have

TAX WORK MADE EASY
Rent or Lease
• Adding Machine
• Typewriter
• Calculator
VOIGHT'S
8th & Grape SP 2-4100
Easy Parking Green Stamps

FIRST CLASSES
St. Louis — Kindergartens became a part of the public school system for the first time in the U. S. in St. Louis in 1872.

RAIL MILEAGE
Buenos Aires — Argentina is said to have more miles of railways than any other country in South America.

her at his side day and night, with visions of what might have been constantly in her head. And who knows? The paint and lacquer game may look awfully good to her, after a few years of radish roses, melon balls, and drunks who dip shrimp into the cherry mouse.

PLAN AHEAD
PRE-SEASON

AWNING SALE

PAY MAY 1
15% Discount
ON CUSTOM MADE AWNINGS

Our present wide selection of solids and stripes gives us this opportunity to offer you this saving. A small 10% deposit will hold your order until installed at your convenience. This offer good until March 15.

SEASONAL REDUCTION ON ALUMINUM AWNINGS
Call SP 2-4472 for Free Estimates Without Obligation

Burk's

For All Your Canvas Needs
314 EAST MAIN SP 2-4472

HOW CHRISTIAN SCIENCE HEALS

Station K-BOY
Sundays—9:45 A.M.

MATTRESS BUY of the month

Our Famous Slumber Cloud MATTRESS and Matching BOX SPRINGS

"Like Floating on a Cloud"

FULL OR TWIN SIZE
Reg. \$59.50

- 510 Coils—by U.S. Steel
- Cellacloud Filling
- Odor-Free
- Non-allergenic
- Mildew Resistant
- More Resilient Than Cotton
- Light Weight, Easier To Handle
- Moisture Resistant
- Dust- and Lint-Free

12-Year Guarantee!

\$44⁸⁸ Each

Mattress or Box Spring

EASY TERMS!
No Carrying Charges or Interest

At Weeks & Orr you pay only for the merchandise. There is no extra charge added to your payments. Shop at Southern Oregon's longest established Furniture Store where you find fine quality at lowest prices!

CLOSE-OUT PRESENT STOCK OF

DINETTE SETS

5-PIECE SET 4 CHAIRS Large Table— Only \$59⁵⁰

5-PIECE SET Only \$49⁵⁰

7-PC. BRONZETONE SET
Heat, chip and stain resistant laminart tops in blond or walnut. Heavy padded chairs, choice of colors. Decorative brass compliments. These will go fast, so hurry!

\$79⁵⁰

Shown at Right

Same Set as Above Except With Round Table **\$89⁵⁰**

These Values Are for a Limited Time Only — so Shop Now and Save at

WEEKS & ORR

114 West Main Street
OPEN MONDAY NIGHT
Phone SP 2-9351

