

CONSIDERATIONS ON MODERN PAINTING²¹

In all epochs one can observe a preference for some determined quality, some determined human capacity.

There have been epochs in which courage and the art of war were appreciated above all. In others, virtue and abstinence were admired. In others again elegance and refinement dominated.

Our century also has its ideal: intelligence. Many of our contemporaries desire one thing alone, to be or at least to seem to be intelligent.

As intelligence is a gift from heaven and can by no possible means be acquired, intellectualism has been invented as a substitute.

Whilst intelligence is a gift of nature, intellectualism can be learned easily enough: it suffices to have a normal memory, to not be overly personal and to follow the current without diffidence.

Modern art is one of the phenomena that most clearly show man's need to create intellectualism (true intelligence becoming ever more rare).

The docile acceptance by our contemporaries of modern painting, sculpture, music and literature will remain a miracle through coming centuries.

The 19th century, especially the first half, gave us masterpieces in all arts. Whence came this rapid decadence? It is, however, about painting we wish to speak of in this essay.

Over the course of the last centuries humanity has produced many artists of genius. A pause was inevitable and this pause by chance or by will of providence coincided with a moment in history in which important social changes were taking place.

The bourgeois became the principal buyers, appraisers and critics of art gradually replacing aristocrats and other exceptional personalities, who in former times acted as arbiters of art.

The new patrons could not improvise themselves as art connoisseurs. To understand the real value of a work of art it is above all necessary to be in possession of a natural artistic sense. This sense must then undergo further cultivation over the course of time. We must inherit this sense from our fathers or better still from our grandfathers. In order to have a good understanding of a work of art one must be equipped with a long tradition or exceptional intelligence.

If specialists need many years experience to judge the quality of a fabric they can touch with their fingers, or burn a thread of to see if it is real wool or silk, how many more years of experience are necessary to judge a work of art, in which only our artistic sense and culture can guide us?

As the birth of geniuses has become very rare, it is natural that the arts should have declined.

But what is even more mysterious is the progressive and complete loss of the secrets of painting technique that has been taking place for some time now. Second-rate artists and even mediocre artists have lived and worked in all epochs, but for the most part they followed the traditions of the great masters more or less faithfully. Having found themselves before a cultureless public at the end of the 19th century, artists probably forsook the tradition of great painting and took to decoration.

The last great painters were: Courbet in France, Böcklin in Germany and Carnovali in Italy.

Decadence began with Manet. Notwithstanding the talent that is still felt in the works of this painter, we

21 G. de Chirico, *Considerazioni sulla pittura moderna*, in "Stile", Milan January 1942, pp. 1-6; republished signed "Isabella Far" in *Commedia...*, cit., pp. 133-149. Published in English here for the first time. A number of brief passages later formed part of the novel *Il Sig. Dudron*, published posthumously, Le Lettere, Florence 1998.

can already see in his paintings the fate painting would encounter after him. Later on, painting quality began to be completely substituted by decoration, invention and false beauty.

Great painting is beautiful; it is of a severe and serious beauty. Subjects and colours do not count; we see masterpieces in which the artist of yore has chosen old wrinkled people, without beautiful lineaments, but the picture is marvellous, it has a superior beauty and great quality. The painting is perfect; it unites within itself both the magnificence of execution and the beauty of matter created by a genius.

The pure and complete pleasure we experience upon looking at a masterpiece is equal to the pleasure we get from listening to highly inspired music or whilst reading the work of a philosopher, and consists in the comprehension of a grand idea. This pleasure is precious because it is not provoked by human nature's animal instincts but by the understanding of noble things of the spirit. It is a pleasure that has its origin in Supreme Good.

Let us return to modern art.

We think that the great interest the Jewish people have shown for modern art derives from the fact that they like abstraction and anything that has to do with it, whereas they do not like concrete creation. They are a people that has never had the desire to see the divine image conveyed in reality, fearing perhaps that it would diminish the abstract idea of God.

Almost all other people have felt the very human need to touch, kiss or at least look upon images of their gods or of their God. Art was born from this desire of representing God in the most ideal and perfect way, and true art is indeed a particle of the Divine Spirit that lives among us.

The bourgeois were less select but a more numerous audience. Buyers, not being very expert, needed guidance in their choice and thus the art dealer appeared.

This name "art dealer" is quite to the point as it indicates men who, not being in the least amateurs or lovers of art, were simply traders wanting to get sell their wares. Art dealers later played an important role in the misunderstandings surrounding modern art and its decadence.

The two principal movements that were created are "Art pompier" and "modernism". Manet was the father of Art pompier. He was the first to neglect the quality of paint. Manet did not possess the painterly intelligence that is indispensable in a painter of great talent and which tells him that without good material there can be no good painting.

Good material allows a painter to work long at his paintings, to obtain transparency, perfect modelling, plasticity of forms, fusion and other qualities that can be seen in the paintings of old masters.

Good materials allow the painter to give a finished look to summarily painted parts and even to make errors appear as qualities of design and modelling (see Goya and El Greco). Good quality paint allows for finishing and smoothing, and for uniting tints to their highest degree without the painting acquiring a banal, oleographic look.

In a word, fine materials make the draft expressive and complete, and allow the painting to acquire its "finish" and "detail" without becoming "Art Pompier" and unartistic. A true painter is urged by his talent to seek a material that is ideal; ideal in its beauty and through the help it can give his work.

In the other movement, modernism, the father of which was Cézanne, it was thought that invention could substitute great painting (which painters were no longer capable of).

Thus cubism, fauvism, expressionism, surrealism and abstract painting were born. But of all these manifestations, cubism alone, created by Picasso who exploited largely Cézanne's drawings and also to a certain extent Negro sculpture. It was cubism alone, as we have said, that achieved moral and commercial

success and influenced architecture, furniture and interior decorating among other things of our times.

Cézanne, the originator of cubism, is erroneously considered to be a great painter. The only interesting aspect to be found in his work is a curious phenomenon that appeared at a certain moment of his life after he had been a mediocre 19th century painter for some time, which was that of seeing men, nature and things in a faceted, bare and geometric way. However, the cubification of forms in drawing and the evocative element it creates is not new. To understand this it suffices to see the cubist drawings of Dürer and Paolo Uccello.

In all countries, there were groups of people who were obsessed by the idea of intelligence and were only waiting for a favourable moment and suitable occasion to show and prove to the world the superiority of their spirit by displaying their grand comprehension of this new movement.

“Art Pompier” painting, “Liberty” style architecture, decorative and applied arts that had previously prevailed were gradually replaced by modernism, a change that was due to intellectuals and art dealers.

People were tired of excessive sweetness and bad taste in beauty, in a word of all that surrogate of art that had been produced at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of our present one.

Vollard was the first to understand that true ugliness could be a success with a public that was replete and wearied by false beauty. He understood also the need intellectuals felt in having a good pretext to manifest their intellectualism and that they would defend, encourage and support anything allowing them the possibility to do so.

Vollard was a merchant and as such wanted to make money; but subconsciously probably felt that the black race wanted to revenge itself upon the white, imposing art which was not really art, thus lowering the white race through the acceptance of such art.

A (half) Negro, sturdily backed by a group of ignorant merchants, that is, two elements absolutely negative for art, imposed the trend that painting was to take.

Two new phenomena thus appeared in modern art: dealers who had thus far played but a modest role and art critics who had previously not even existed. The cases of Sainte-Beuve, Diderot, Baudelaire, and nearer to us of Guillaume Apollinaire, are isolated cases; these men were poets and writers, who at times wrote about painting, especially that of their friends, but they were not art critics. Whereas the art critic born with modern art is, except some rare exceptions, a writer who not having managed to write a good book finds it easier to advise and criticise his contemporaries.

Misunderstood geniuses thus found a way of making themselves heard and read, and have contributed significantly to the anarchy and confusion in the minds of art lovers for over half a century. Who is the serious and conscientious man who would like to take upon himself the role of the “art critic”?

Of a masterpiece one can only say that it is a masterpiece, the rest is the secret of the painter who painted it. All that has been said about masterpieces beyond this is empty literature and useless discourse that tell us nothing more than what we can see with our own eyes.

With regards to a fair, but not quite perfect painting, one can explain its qualities and defects in a few words on the condition of being a true painting connoisseur or, better still, a painter of talent. Whereas a truly ugly painting can be summed up in a single phrase: that it would have been better had it never been painted. All that could be of any use to the people involved and to art itself would have thus been said. But instead of speaking about what ought to be said and written, let us rather see what has been said and written.

First of all let us point out that art critics have invented an entire modern phraseology and have managed to see things in certain paintings in which there was absolutely nothing to see. These things are so strange that

had our old great masters read what has been written they would find it daunting to say the least. Certainly the old masters could never have imagined that looking at painting was such a complicated thing to do; they only thought of how difficult it was to paint.

In the art critics' obscure and hermetic discourses, intellectuals found the ideal means to bring about the triumph of intellectualism over real, constructive intelligence.

Thus started the frenzied race of intellectualism towards its occult but implacable destiny, which consists in achieving integral stupidity, the sole cause of its existence.

Intellectualism is closely related to snobbism, another new and negative phenomenon in modern artistic circles.

The origin of the word "snobbism" is "*sine nobilitate*". It came into use in England when young men from the working-class began to attending university. In order to distinguish these students from those of aristocratic origin, on the register next to their name would be written the word "snob", abbreviation of "*sine nobilitate*". These students were the sons of wealthy but simple parents and did not always have perfect manners. Indeed, they often behaved in ridiculous ways that characterise the newly rich. The scandalised aristocrats afforded them with the brief and disparaging appellative of "snob", a word that intellectuals have gone out of their way to use in order to indicate their great refinement.

The wise say that truth will always transpire and will finally triumph; perhaps truth inspired the snobs to give themselves this merited title.

Almost all art critics when writing their articles had but one preoccupation: prove their capacity and intelligence to the world.

They found the means of putting so many obscure things into their writings that they ended up by not understanding them themselves. From such phrases, totally deprived of sense, a part of modern literature was born and also a manner of talking and even thinking (if it can be called thought) proper to intellectual circles.

In the New World or in old Europe, the conversations, opinions and discussions one heard in literary salons were all exactly the same. A well-travelled person had the impression he was dreaming upon hearing in New York an identical phrase he had heard a fortnight before in Paris or some other European capital.

In fact this uniformity of snobs all over the world has given them an aspect of talking robots rather than human beings. Even the simplest, yet alert, man, has a brain that functions, even if only in a coarse way. This is something, however, that is absolutely forbidden to a snob.

What explanation can be found for the appearance in modern life of this mass of intellectuals, whereas formerly there existed only small groups of people who were truly superior, interested by and dedicated to the exalting questions of the spirit and who were called intellectuals? We think this can be explained in the following way: the intellectual of today is a special phenomenon having absolutely nothing in common with the intellectual of yore. The intellectual of today is not only a product of social progress, but above all of the evolution of the world economy.

In the beginning when the caste of nobles lost its exclusive privileges of wealth, people who had gained wealth and achieved material well-being were only preoccupied by the external aspects of life. This can be understood, as the populace had envied and admired the elegant and brilliant life led by nobility and high-placed personages for too many generations.

The newly rich, whose education was quite elementary, saw only the superficial, luxurious, comfortable and entertaining side of noble life, which became their ideal. They thought erroneously that in this and in

this alone consisted the superiority of nobility over the populace. The new classes, formed by those who came from the masses, strove to show its superiority through the richness of their clothes, the possession of horses and carriages, in a word, by means of an elegant and enviable lifestyle.

Gradually these new classes of merchants and later of manufacturers became more educated, as a certain level of instruction was necessary in order to carry out their affairs. They also created a “society lifestyle”, which they tried to make analogous to that of the nobility. But their efforts were still concentrated only on an elegant tenor of life.

Through the rapid development of commerce and industry, material comfort became available to ever widening circles. It became normal for a great number of people to live on a substantially high level. The need arose for ever-greater fortunes and an immense effort in order to create an impression on others. But people possessing great wealth were rare whereas the number of those who felt an absolute need of seeming superior to their neighbours was ever greater. So men took into account that spiritual qualities could eventually serve as a means to make an impression on people and thus gain importance in their eyes.

A passion for intelligence, although considered not as being a superior quality of the human spirit but rather as a useful means for presumptuous men (in reality stupid men) to seem intelligent, began towards the end of the last century and developed even further in the present one. This is the origin of modern intellectualism.

It is curious today to note how the so-called “spiritual” element in art, such as primitive painting, deformed painting and invented painting, etc., is in great demand of pretentious, foolish and provincially minded people lacking in culture.

“To be beautiful one must suffer” used to be a saying among elegant people of the past. But the intellectuals of today ought to say that in order to seem intelligent, one must suffer even more. One must also add that among intellectuals and snobs (one and the same thing) reigns the severest discipline. One is not allowed to do what one wants (admitting that the intellectuals should still want to do something), as uncompromising laws are in place. Everything is foreseen down to the smallest detail: the manner of speaking, thinking, dressing, living and even eating.

Naturally, “pleasures of the spirit” are the most highly controlled. These are entirely different from the pleasures of people not belonging to this caste and who could never understand them. Who is the non-intellectual man capable of listening for an entire evening to modern music? ... And yet the snobs stand it to perfection, pretending enthusiasm and return regularly to these concerts, the halls of which would be absolutely empty without them.

The system in literature is identical; truly modern books are admired and sometimes read only by intellectuals.

We need not speak of painters and sculptors, the greater part of whose very existence is own to intellectuals.

Let us not forget all those literary salon reunions, which were seemingly immensely beneficial to the progress of the spirit, the arts and even of science. Without snobs humanity would never have understood that the clowns in the circus are Shakespearean, the singers in music-halls come straight from Dostoevsky, that one must always speak about Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, even if ignorant of what it means, and of Freud’s books even if one has not read them. Many well-behaved intellectuals, always ready to sit on the ground with their backsides on the hard floor even when good chairs and comfortable sofas are at their disposal, frequented these salons. Even angels felt at home in these salons; those same angels who for many years had been led

into the society of snobs by “Jean” (Jean Cocteau). Such a recommendation was so sure that one was received with open arms and accepted immediately by the intellectuals. Everybody without exception could love those angels in their neutral, sexless state. One must add that these angels were preferred to other personages whose way of dressing conveyed something hermaphroditic or amphibian such as spahis, cowboys, builders, jockeys, chimney-sweeps, etc., who were also very much loved, especially by homosexual intellectuals. Angels were preferred for the decorativeness of their white wings and were also an element often represented in primitive paintings, which the snobs had always had a weakness for.

Another great quality of intellectuals is their love for the people. If fair booths would not lack visitors even without them, one thing is for sure, that the true greatness, simplicity and purity of a fair would have remained unobserved without their assistance.

It was the snobs who had the idea of bringing culture into the *bals musette* (popular Parisian dance halls). The advantage was mutual, for the snobs came away refreshed and renewed in spirit by their contact with ruffians, be they real or pretend. And who discovered those “little places”, those horribly dirty, formerly absolutely unknown taverns where one could eat “divinely” for incredibly modest prices? Certainly the proprietors did not insist for long on keeping to such ridiculous prices; on the contrary, as their intelligence developed rapidly from direct contact with intellectuals, they ended up making a splendid livelihood.

But let us return to serious things. I must speak again about intellectuals for they have played, and still play even today, alas, a disastrous role in modern artistic life.

From the very beginning of their commercial activities art dealers have used intellectuals and art critics to make money, just as artists without value have done to make themselves known.

Snobs, who lacked knowledge, artistic comprehension and true intelligence, were steered and used by dealers, critics and artists who, not being able to base their activity on true value, took advantage of the foolishness of others.

Speculators in modern painting did shady business by selling paintings of no artistic value at very high prices.

They thus created artificial values after much persuasion, even using corruption when necessary and managed to sell the worst possible paintings at the price of museum pieces. These speculators sought out paintings and painters whom it would be logically impossible to take seriously, and these paintings continued to be highly quoted only because those who speculated upon them were constantly administering morphine shots to the modern art public. They had on their payroll art magazines in which they published long articles and printed large reproductions of the paintings in question.

They also published magnificent monographs on the painters under their protection and, in a word, practised the system of continually driving hard into their public that the works described and reproduced were of “undisputable value”.

All this “bluff” was based on so-called invented or stylised painting. The value of these paintings did not consist in the acknowledged values that have existed since the very beginning of painting up until the middle of the 19th century when decadence set in, such as the painting’s quality, drawing, modelling and materials, in a word the painterly value of a work. Instead, it was based on intellectual invention, the expression of abstract ideas, surrealist strangeness and even dementia, infantilism, occultism, etc., all of which are directly opposed to what constitutes great painting, a tangible art that is positively achieved to its fullest.

In order to avoid misunderstanding one must precisely define here that the true value of an invented

painting is in the revelation that urged the artist to paint it. But it is still very debatable whether revelation, which in itself is an incomplete event in the case of painting, suffices to make a painting into masterpiece. A painterly masterpiece must contain not only the factors of idea and subject, but above all the “inspiration” of its making and its physical material. We do not know whether the “idea” is more important in music and in philosophy, but we would say that in these arts it is more sufficient and requires less integration.

A painting executed after a revelation possesses indubitable value although this value is relative, whereas a painterly masterpiece has an absolute value, as it is a form of art that is pure and complete.

In analysing the causes for the popularisation of the modern painting, one cannot conclude that this is due to the phenomenon of revelation contained in some modern works. In the masses of paintings that pass as extraordinary works, those based on true revelation are extremely rare. In all works deprived of this phenomenon, one can only discover the terrible effort made in substituting true revelation with a search for originality and ideas.

One can see objects or lines in these paintings put together without any spiritual or artistic reason.

There is no revelation in these paintings, only great foolishness and an absolute void and complete absence of talent.

Certainly one cannot suppose that modern painting lovers are even able to see revelation in a painting.

Revelation is a phenomenon extremely difficult to perceive and to understand by someone whose comprehension, intelligence and sense for art are not at the level of those of a connoisseur.

The art lover of today does not even see the poor quality and execution, which are so evident in modern paintings not based on revelation.

People have become so used to ugliness in painting that they have come to consider it as almost indispensable.

One can often observe in people interested in modern painting, who when standing in front of a painting of good quality that is well painted and of indisputable painterly value, they remain silent and do not express an opinion. They become suspicious by the mere fact that they “sincerely like it”.

The long habit of seeing horrible paintings that are however considered as masterpieces and sold for very high prices has deprived these people of any confidence in their own judgment.

In their mind the opinion has been formed that a really good modern painting cannot “be liked” and if one does like it, it means that it is not good, that it is “Art Pompier” (which is despised by the modernists).

Thus it happens that art lovers are prudently silent before a fine painting. They think it better not to expose themselves and do not dare speak of sincerity, climate, emotion or mystery. To use certain terms like arabesque, which comes so easily to their lips before a painting by Matisse, seems dangerous to them in this case. Their great fear is to seem stupid and ignorant in speaking well of a painting, which according to modern opinion must surely be a bad one, if they do indeed find pleasure in looking at it. This is how art-lovers and collectors understand painting today.

Many critics are not only uninterested in painting but positively detest it and hence prefer not to look at a painting shown to them.

They have found a way of looking at paintings from above, underneath, or laterally, but never towards its centre. The more famous the critic the more virtuosity he deploys in writing the most obscure and complicated articles about paintings he has scarcely seen. It is his personality and his intelligence that count in the article not the painting, which is simply a pretext for him to put himself on show.

The majority of art critics say the most unexpected things in their articles that have nothing to do with the painting in question.

Generally speaking, the greater part of an article consists in a chain of phrases and words that do not give a single clear idea of the painterly value of the work. These vague discourses resemble more closely feverish delirium than a logical and serious analysis of the artistic value of a work of art. Then comes a shorter part of the article in which, however, the sense is clearer, where the critic expresses with stupefying ingenuity an opinion of this sort: in a painting where the outlines are traced with large brush strokes two fingers wide and in black, instead of speaking of the coarseness and roughness of its execution he sees "strength". But it is especially when voluminous personages with hypertrophic arms and legs are represented that the critic finds "great strength in the painting". Logically speaking this would mean that the size of the figures and of their limbs determine the power with which the picture is painted.

In other words, the Rubens' paintings have great strength because he paints stout women. The painting of Raphael would be of medium strength because his paintings represent people of an average build. And the works of Botticelli with his slim and slender women ought to be defined as positively "weak".

One must add that Michelangelo has always been called a "titan" and a "giant" because his sculptures and paintings represent muscled figures expressing physical power. It is certainly for peripheral reasons that he is defined a titan and with no thought as to his talent or the greatness of his artistic personality.

If the definition "titan" were of a spiritual origin then there would be no reason not to call Phidias a "titan" for his talent was no less gigantic and powerful than that of Michelangelo and yet in speaking of Phidias the terms "titan" and "giant" are never used.

Likewise the word "strength" is never used by people in speaking of Francois Boucher and Fragonard for they think that the force of talent cannot be expressed in a painting representing, for instance, a rural idyll or beautiful naked women. We have in our judgments on art an ingenuous freshness; rather excessive even, if one thinks that from an artistic point of view we are, after all, not total virgins. A walk through the interminable halls of museums would suffice in order to realise that by now we should really have a more correct means of judgment that is closer to the truth than current talk and writing on art.

Art critics also often speak of resemblance and affinities between a modern painter and an old master. This comparison is invariably based on unexpected but actually very simple reasons, for instance when a modern painter and an old master come from the same city or country. This is sufficient to justify the comparison.

As we have already said, the only existent value of modern painting is that of revelation (when this phenomenon does in fact exist, which is extremely rare). In classical painting "inspiration" is the existent value.

In order to avoid any confusion we must now make it clear that inspiration in an old master painting is not, as some very naive people think, a question of composition, of subject or of "images" in a painting, but only and above all a question of the beauty of the paint itself, the superior skill of its execution and its plastic force; in a word, the exceptional qualitative value of the work.

We must also say that inspiration and revelation are two mysterious phenomena that are difficult to define and which the artist cannot force or called forth by strength of will.

They are phenomena that appear in the artist's spirit without his being able to say with precision whence and how they came.

We must begin by defining the difference between inspiration and revelation. Inspiration is a grace of God granted to a man chosen to be the instrument for the unveiling the expressions of Universal Talent to

humanity. How can we imagine that the talent of man alone without any superior influence could create paintings like that of Tintoretto, Rubens or Velasquez, or music like that of Chopin, Shubert or Bellini? Whence else could come such a constant streak of inspiration except from the existence of a Universal Talent, a true creator of Art?

A great artist is chosen in order for Universal and Divine Talent to manifest itself in an ideal form that is comprehensible to humanity. It is from Divine Talent, which one could also call Cosmic that inspiration reaches the artist. But revelation is quite another phenomenon and is not linked to Superior Talent and hence is not in direct relation with art.

Revelation expressed in works of art is a phenomenon unknown to artists of yore, except in a fragmentary way in Dürer's oeuvre. In some of Poussin's paintings one can identify a phenomenon near to revelation, but it is better to define it as a talented interpretation of legend.

The phenomenon of revelation began to manifest itself in the 19th century in the works of various painters, philosophers and poets.

We would define the moment in which man receives a revelation as the moment in which he perceives the existence of a world beyond that which is known to the human spirit. This is a moment that human logic cannot grasp and which does not exist for mortals because we only know what we know or at least what we can conceive the possible existence of. The metaphysical world, which for us is nonexistent, in other words, a world completely beyond human knowledge and conception, and of which our brains perceive nothing, is the world that Nietzsche and Höelderlin gave us glimpses of in some of their poetry and fragments of writing. In various painted works, Böcklin, Max Klinger, Previati, Picasso and Giorgio de Chirico have traced some aspects of it. It is an inexplicable world which intelligence can only feel through intuition but that cannot be understood by logic.

A painting executed by a painter following a revelation shows an aspect of a world unknown and strange to us. The execution of such a work could be limited to the correct tracing of the image, as the value of such a work does not consist in the quality of the painting but in its spiritual substance.

I repeat, revelation is difficult to see and understand for a person not endowed with great intelligence and this is why so-called "invented" or "spiritual" painting took on an aspect that is not only foolish and ridiculous but also absurd.

People think that it is enough to bring together the most diverse and incongruous subjects, as well as numerous, bizarre lines in a painting for it to acquire spiritual value.

Mediocre painters, seeing the success of paintings representing a truly strange world, which had been glimpsed by their authors, do not understand that such paintings are the fruit of revelation received by the artist. Thus they think they can substitute revelation by an effort to appear odd and original.

Revelation has allowed us to see a metaphysical world, beyond things seen, whereas this effort toward the odd and original has brought into existence a world that is silly, absurd and "manmade".

A lack of comprehension of a supernatural and inexplicable world and the impossibility for mediocre people to conceive such a world allowed for the development of this pseudo-spiritual and invented painting (very badly invented indeed).

These shabby and pitiful ideas, created by the meagre fantasy of men who are not real artists, managed to take the place of the metaphysical world for ignorant people, for those who follow the trend of intellectualism. What a sad result for artists who have had contact with the metaphysical world to see it confused with

the idiotic and terrestrial world that mediocre painters, very distant from things metaphysical, have busied themselves in reproducing in innumerable paintings; meanwhile intellectuals have taken integral stupidity for superior intelligence, accepting pseudo-spiritual painting without understanding or rather not even supposing the existence of the phenomenon of revelation.

We shall now analyse other aspects of modern painting.

As far as the quality of their respective painting is concerned, "Art Pompier" and modernism do not differ in any way. Both of these movements, which consider themselves as being very different one from another, have the ugliness of the paint in common. It is not material from a painterly point of view but just dried oil paint.

"Pompier" painters are often able but have no feeling whatsoever for the paint itself, an element on which the quality of an artwork depends. They have been less able than others to adapt to modern taste, which in reality is a reaction to the 19th century style in a search for simplicity and sobriety that aims to escape from ornamental bad taste. The modern eye has become used to a lack of decoration. Men now prefer to see straight lines, smooth surfaces, not having any confidence in the artistic capacities of their contemporaries. This is why lovers of art now prefer modernism, leaving Art Pompier to the bourgeois who do not readily separate themselves from the past.

Yet it is for completely superficial and totally inartistic reasons that the art lover supposes that modern painting is an art more real than Art Pompier.

Among so-called modern painters there are artists of talent who are actually truer artists than the Pompier painters, but the real reason behind the artistic element found in their paintings is talent in itself and not the summary execution characteristic of their work.

Art lovers and critics have not understood in what the artistic value of these paintings consists and consider their defects as qualities. They think that simplicity is a quality found in painting and have taken poverty and roughness for simplicity. Besides, there is nothing to prove that a good painting must be simple. The contrary is evident in the most beautiful old masters works.

A small number of painters have become famous because they have talent and not, as happened with many others, because of the manoeuvring of art dealers. Guided by their talent, this small group of painters understood that they could achieve nothing beyond a sketch because they did not possess the secrets of painting. They understood that without finding a new painterly material that would allow them to really paint, with which they could have painted well, it was better to limit themselves to sketches in order to preserve at least a more or less artistic aspect in the image.

Most modern painters, deprived of talent, thought they could imitate famous modern artists and their qualities by substituting finished paintings with sketches. But from the way in which a particular sketch is made, one sees clearly that it is not the sketch that determines the artistic aspect of a painting but the talent with which it was made.

The reason that a great number of painters exist today in every country is due to fact that among art lovers and those who want to be painters, real comprehension of painting is very rare. Men who dedicate themselves to painting are generally urged, not by their talent, but because they consider the painter's profession to be lucrative and at the same time easy and not strenuous.

In fact from the look of the majority of modern paintings one can deduce with certainty that neither talent nor the skill of an artisan were needed for their making. Man's hands have lost their ability and the human brain has lost both artistic and creative intelligence. Modern pictures are not fine painting, for without

good paint material fine painting cannot exist. The material with which a painting is made is not something vague but is instead a concrete body the quality of which can be already perceived on the pallet the painter has prepared for his work.

Art lovers and also a good part of modern painters have no idea of the real significance of the substance of paint and hence cannot even imagine the elements with which these materials are composed. But true artists, conscious of the necessity of finding once again the secret of painterly matter, without which painting cannot return to perfection, search for it with intense ardour.

In this research, nothing but their talent and their work can help them, as painting tradition was interrupted towards the middle of the 19th century and it is necessary to start all over again.

The great interest that invented painting initially held for those who first understood the phenomenon, has diminished because this interest could not replace for very long the real aim of a painter, which is to paint well.

The door to the metaphysical world but rarely opens, whereas great painting is bound to Universal Talent and is the fruit of artistic inspiration and of serious, human and concrete work.

One of the reasons, perhaps even the principal one, for decadence in art is the industrialisation and mechanisation of everything that can possibly be industrialised or mechanised. The industrialisation of paint was most harmful for painting. Machines take man's intelligence away from him. Man's hands are no longer required to fulfil the important task of producing all that is invented by the human brain. They have lost and will lose ever more their craft and ability.

Cerebral gymnastics are being reduced to less and less movement and the brain, not having to guide the hand, stiffens, goes to sleep or finds vent in sterile and negative forms of intelligence based on malignity and indiscreet observation which have so powerfully contributed to the universal success of Freudianism and its surrogates.

When we think of how human intelligence, which is so superior to that of animals, began and was able to develop thanks to the human hand's ability to construct things and that if the human hand had the form of a dog's paw or a horse's hoof, nothing that has been created could have existed, we must admit that the effect of mechanics diminishing the hand in its important task of creation diminishes and will diminish our spiritual capacities ever more.

Manual work in which the human hand is watched over and guided by our intelligence provoking continuous and concrete creation is necessary for the continuation and development of the creative capacities of our intellect and the activity of our hands is indispensable both for the blossoming of real intelligence and of true painting.