

Sport and art, source of inspiration in France

Gleanings from the 'Works Artists mirror of their times', and 'Sport'

Thanks to the kindness of Mlle Marie-Thérèse Eyquem, Head inspector of the Executive Board of the Department of Youth and Sports in France, this catalogue or rather this 'work' which was published in France in 1957 on the occasion of the 6th Exhibition of Art and Sport in Paris, has come to our knowledge although somewhat late.

Mr. Maurice Herzog, High Commissioner, wrote its preface in the following terms: 'Fine Arts express and perpetuate the spiritual value of sport, symbol of pure physical gesture'.

It is quite impossible to allude to all the works of the numerous artists who devoted their art to illustrate sport in their paintings, we propose however to publish a few remarks made to this effect:

Since the days of Impressionism, sport has never ceased to be a source of inspiration to artists. Horse racing, Boxing, Rugby, Regattas and Sports manifestations have never ceased to appeal to the imagination of the best artists' said JEAN CASSOU, Chief Curator of the National Museum for Modern Art in Paris.

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Let us mention the painting of YVETTE ALDE illustrating basket-ball, a lyric song praising the love of lost beauty.

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MICHAEL ARGOV, born in Vienna in 1920, draws his inspiration from Ice-hockey which he practised at the same time as swimming, rowing, and football.

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The Greek Discobolus at the Olympiads inspired JEAN-CLAUDE BIDARD who painted a most successful picture on this subject.

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RODOLPHE CAILLAUX painted a realistic strong picture of the *Gaol-keeper*.

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JEAN COMMÈRE with his picture *The Ring* gave a vivid illustration of the prevailing ambiance at the Winter Velodrome, (demolished since. *Ed.*) during a boxing match. This artist had to make 200 drawings before

he was satisfied and completed the picture.

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The picture entitled: *A Boxer with his seconds* by LUCIEN FONTANAROSA, is a beautiful conception of this subject, it is painted in warm colourings reminiscent of sunkissed lands.

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YVES GIBEAU says:

'It was at the Olympic Games in Berlin that I first discovered what athletic sports really stood for I saw their peerless brilliancy, their perfection, their strictness. It has a staggering effect and influence on my sporting career, I changed course. The Olympic Games! These two words evoked in me such a wealth of feelings, beauty, poetry, they fill me with an overwhelming enthusiasm which I can hardly subdue. I am today thinking of the Games in Rome in 1960 which may well prove the most sumptuous manifestation of all times.'

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MAURICE GOUDEKET writes in this vein: 'What has sport brought into my life? Undoubtedly, it has been a force acting as a governor-valve, providing me with set rules. Goudeké went in for boxing, a sport he practised most successfully, after an overdose of reading and trying to assimilate various philosophical systems which led him nowhere.'

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ARMAND LANOUX admits that when he becomes depressed through the arduous task of writing, he finds comfort and relaxation in contemplating the flow of the river, and the permanency of the ocean acts as a tonic and cheers him up. He was very fond of canoeing and speaks of it in passionate terms. The river for him is a live thing, it speaks to him, it tells him that it is at its best when the evening lights reflect the orange glow of a sunset and the fast approaching night casts its shadows over the river. He also says further: 'Nobody can guess what is going to happen after three days canoeing down a river. Not only has one experienced endless fun but one has acquired a better knowledge of nature, also of ones fellowmen and better still of oneself.'

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In a picture of *Volleyball* ROGER MONTANÉ who loves generous and lavish forms and hates half-measures, expresses himself in a recreative form in preference to depicting sport. However, the physical effort is shown in his painting.

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JACQUES LAURENT thinks that 'training for sport can be transcribed in a work of art and of charcoal sketching. There is an affinity of feelings between the athlete and the artist. In modelling his body by repeated active drilling, the athlete shares the feelings of the artist, concerned as he is with the need to correct a faulty line, to attenuate a corpulence, despairing to ever acquire the line or the curve so ardently desired'. Laurent is right when he says that the sportsman differs from the artist or the writer, when he insists that style yields an achievement which can be measured in metres and seconds, whereas the work of art is amenable to opinion and critique only. Chronometry and time recorders are things which artists and writers will never have to assure them of the purity of their style.

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GEORGES MAGNANE writes: 'the day sport reaches the aim certain organizers of spectacular shows wish it to assume, that is to substitute the cult of the publicity star to that of the private hero, sport will cease to exist. Sport will only be a way to kill time like other things.'

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HENRY DE MONTHERLAND: 'I do not believe that international sport confrontations will secure Peace in the world. The effect of the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games will be to make us feel in a striking manner the absurdity of sacrificing such fine specimen of humanity to worthless ends.'

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KOSTIA TERECHKOVITCH, born in Moscow on May 1st 1902 and who lives in Paris, is the best known among the sport artists. He

is passionately fond of horses and horseracing subjects. He owns a racing stud and his picture: *Water Jump* pictures his own horse ANTHEOS leading the field. This work is full of life and colour. He was the artist who was commissioned by the regretted Gaston Mullegg to paint a water-colour depicting rowing. This picture was wanted as the Challenge to be competed for by the Associations of International Rowing Federation. This is a competition which is held every year since 1958, date of the donor's death, as Mr. Gaston Mullegg was killed in an air crash. His object was to link sport and art.

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Equestrian Sports Competitions by CAMILLE HILAIRE (Football and Rugby player) is a work of great beauty, a delightful harmony of colouring, blending shades of green and red.

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JEANNE LAILLARD went in for tennis and swimming. Her work: *The Regattas* offers a fine contrast of beautiful shades of black balanced by greys and rather dark shades of blues. In the background of the picture figures a city which illuminates the whole work.

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HENRY PLISSON, artist in ceramics, has executed some of his works on the subject of *Athletics*. His art is far from being conventional, he does not create vases where no flowers could ever be put! On the otherhand, he depicts an art of living vested with the radiant qualities of the mind.

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Extract of PAUL VIALAR: 'We artists and writers bespeak of our times, when we are so often inspired by movement, controlled strength, the grace and beauty of gesture and effort. Because of these we must give sport the place it deserves since it is also a means to train the mind, a school teaching loyalty and courage to its adepts, sport plays an important part in our lives.'