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So much of what Merton writes is good!

Only on p. 199 does he show that he does not yet understand.

He misunderstands Picasso, Matisse + Rembrandt.

He thinks they are good painters — artists. ^{But} Painters are only artists when they paint well. What separates artists from non-artists is not prophesy or ecstasy or "creativity" or sensitivity or genius or recognition or lack of recognition, it is the REER RATIO, the ability to make well.

Not being a painter himself, + being still in the process of exorcising himself from the coils of the "art world", he has no way of judging whether these men are the real thing or not. He is not willing to desert the idea that they may be. In any case he believes that people should be allowed to do as they like, that good art demands a certain boldness. True, true. He goes further + asks that they should be given respectful attention. It almost seems as if he wished us to give up our critical faculty and accept their work at the valuation placed on it by themselves and their business backers. Their freedom is unfavorably compared to the servitude of those men who painted portraits of Hitler + Stalin. "Boob-lickers" he calls them, introducing a moral note of disapproval. Maybe they were. What of it? Did they or did they not know how to paint pictures? Do the three that Merton so admires know how to paint? We should compare the paintings to judge. None of his 3 could paint well enough to make a ^{good} portrait, so it is ^{natural} easy for them to jeer. As T.D. said "It takes quite a bit of doing to paint even a ^{reasonable} bad picture." There is a repetitive + dull sound as if the flogging of dead horses in all this.

Why not stop comparing the works of the fauves with those of the worst of the period that preceded them, + compare them with works, ancient or modern, which are manifestly good.

"ART" is a disease, not recognized by those who are its victims.
 It is a diseased condition of mind, kept in being by those financial experts
 who derive profit from it. The "modern" or "contemporary" style (never defined)
 is not what people today want.

Foto's
 T.O.
 Dukes
 Jo Smith
 Sinterham

Even a really bad picture takes a lot of clarity.
 Slocum was an artist + when he ~~talked~~^{wrote} of his art he was worth listening to.
 If I wrote about sailing I would make myself ridiculous.

Those who write about "painting" without knowledge of it make themselves ridiculous.
 They keep ~~too~~ right on. They often excuse ~~themselves~~ themselves by saying that they are
 quoting those who are experts. They do not know which "experts" to choose, because
 they persist in talking about matters in which they have no experience.

If "Chestnut" is a hopelessly equivocal word, let's stop using it, + use plain
 univocal words.

The Cure for the disease is at hand in the thought + simple univocal words of St
 Thomas. If we accept his idea we can find our way back to artistic sanity. We'll
 have to stop talking about what we like. "I like Picasso". who cares?

If art is a universal activity, then it is useless to equate art with
 painting of a peculiarly morbid mind, + think one is arriving at conclusions of
 truth or value. Our leaders have made just this ^{tragic} mistake.

All Minton seems to say is that he would like painters to be free to paint as
 they will. Who disagrees with that admirable idea? Who prevents, or tries to prevent
 Pablos from doing exactly what he likes? Does Minton ask that there should be
 no dissent from his opinion? Is that what he wants? That no one shall judge
 the work of Picasso, Matisse + Rembrandt on its merits? He himself was strong
 language in judgment book-keepers

It seems to me that the three men whose names you mention quite obviously are, in the class whose moral and intellectual procrement you deplore throughout your article, but as long as you admit their activity (if not its results) (page 199) ~~then~~ your exact meaning is not clear to me, and I am very glad to let the passage pass, for moral judgements are always difficult and are forbidden in any case unless there is a grave necessity for them which here there is not. The point I wish to make does not involve moral judgements. It is simply that these men are not good painters but bad painters, and are therefore, if we ~~give~~ ^{traditionally} give to the word art its clear and univocal meaning, not artists at all. I realize that they are generally accepted not only as artists, but as unusually eminent artists, but if we examine their opinion we will find that it rests on assertions rather than evidence and that the assertions of excellence were first made either by the artists themselves, their friends or by people who were financially interested. Renoir, for example, was a little known and quite unpopular painter when he ~~made~~ ^{signed} his famous contract with Vollard. The dealer gave him a considerable sum of money down and undertook to buy his whole stock of finished works for the rest of his life. Obviously M. Vollard's first job was to get his investment back, so that he could begin to realize a profit. He did this in the only way possible which was by building Renoir up as a recently discovered genius. He was so successful in doing this Renoir was actually "laundered", much as real estate in Florida was "laundered" shortly before the great depression. As Renoir's sales prices rose, the whole "art world", on its financial side, became interested, & it was seen that M. Vollard had indeed picked a winner. But the cool

for Rembrandt's success must go to the artist's skill rather than to the painter. I say this with some confidence on the basis of the paintings themselves.

What is a painting, and in what way can we judge it objectively?

A painting is an arrangement of pigments on a surface, usually applied with a brush, which reveals its source in a besetting imagination and serves some useful purpose. ~~And of all its kind~~ ^{An excellent} ~~great~~ painting must be excellent in each of its four causes, final, material, efficient and formal, and in all these together as a single integrated thing.

FINAL CAUSE. It must have some use, and this use must be a ~~real~~ service to normal man, to his body, mind + spirit, and it must succeed in fulfilling that service effectively. It must have something to say which is important in proportion to the labor that has gone into it, and it must say that something well. In comparing Rembrandt's work with that of ~~Atterbury~~ famous men of other times + cultures, or with other men of his own, I do not feel either that his message is very important, or that it is effectively conveyed. It is not news that clerics may be pathetic as well as funny, that beauties may be repulsive as well as attractive, and that we should try to dissociate ourselves from the brutes that marked the Mass of Sorrows.

Meaton's theoretical statements are excellent, but when he comes to apply them to cases (which he felt impelled to do) he could not shake off his old loyalties. The result is a very confused and confusing page (199)