

Books of Art and Artists

By Florence S. Berryman
Art Editor of The Star

A SELECTION of the year's best books in any category presupposes an acquaintance with the major part of the year's output in that class. Since The Star is for the general reader, only a small part of its review space can be given to books on art; consequently, less than 50 have come to my desk during 1946.

To be named as one of a few "best," an art book should fulfill certain conditions. It should deal with a subject of the first rank, it should be comprehensive in scope, well organized and clearly presented. None of the books I have seen this year meet all these requirements. But many of them are admirable within their limits.

Old Masters

"Vasari's Lives of the Most Eminent Architects, Painters and Sculptors of Italy" appeared this year for the first time in a single volume for the general reader, abridged and edited by Betty Burroughs (Simon & Schuster, \$3.75). If it could be claimed for 1946 (instead of 1550 when the first edition appeared) it would be the year's outstanding art book. Miss Burroughs has cut Vasari's "70 Lives" to about 50, has condensed his narrative and has eliminated his extensive descriptions of works now lost. She has retained his informal, gossipy style. Consequently, these biographies, full of anecdote and human interest, should prove fascinating to the general reader.

Piero di Cosimo was an uncompromising realist of the Italian Renaissance, who happens to be represented in the United States by an unusually large number of important characteristic paintings. An excellent, scholarly book about him by R. Langton Douglas (University of Chicago Press, \$5) provides a biography of the eccentric artist, a critical study of his works and other features of value to art lovers and students.

"Rembrandt, the Jews and the Bible," by Franz Landsberger (the Jewish Publication Society of America, \$3.00) polishes one facet of the art of Holland's greatest master, the important role members of the Jewish race played in his paintings and graphic arts. Works indisputably by Rembrandt and also those attributed to him which have any connection, however tenuous, with the Jewish theme, are analyzed. Rembrandt's life, the circumstances which took him to Amsterdam, and the sociological and economic conditions of 17th Century Holland which made it a haven for Jews are discussed in an interesting and readable way. The author is a German Jewish scholar now teaching in Cincinnati.

American Art

GEOERGE INNESS, one of the few outstanding American painters of the 19th century, is the subject of an important monograph by Elizabeth McCausland (American Artists Group, \$1.50). This artist lived through the period while the vast American frontier was still a reality, on into the post-Civil War era when free land was gone, and industrialism advanced. The author's definitive study of his life, and of his intimate, serene landscape paintings places him against this stirring background in its historic, social and economic aspects.

50 Christmas Books. Winslow Homer enjoys today a greater reputation than Inness, as a 19th century American master. American Water Color and Winslow Homer by Lloyd Goodrich (American Artists Group, \$2) reviews the subject from early days when it was an amateur accomplishment, to its development as a major medium, due to its masterful handling by Homer. His contemporaries and a few outstanding recent and living exponents of water color are studied in short chapters, easy to read as well as scholarly.

Contemporary American painters John Sloan, Rockwell Kent, Thomas Benton, Max Weber, Waldo Peirce, Stuart Davis and Eugene Speicher, are the subjects of American Artists Group Monographs which are miniature retrospective exhibitions, each containing about 50 gravure reproductions, a color frontispiece and a foreword by the artist. That by Stuart Davis is the best: A serious discussion of his career and of abstract painting. The little books are not impressive in



Segment of the Triumphal Arch for the Emperor Maximilian, from "The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Durer," edited by Willi Kurth. (Crown publishers; \$3.50.)

format; but they provide authentic introductions to these important men.

For nearly half a century The American Art Annual has embodied the factual record of art in the United States, more completely than any other publication. This unique reference book appeared for the first time in four years because of the war, and picked up the story of American art where it left off in 1941. It also supplies information on museums, societies and art schools in Canada, and Latin America as well as in our country. (The American Federation of Arts, \$12.)

The United States' northern neighbor has had less attention from the esthetic standpoint, than the dynamic Mexicans. "Canadian Painters," edited by Donald W. Buchanan (Oxford University Press, \$6.50) goes far toward dispelling our ignorance on the subject. This handsome Phaidon edition is primarily a picture gallery with approximately 90 large plates, 4 in colors. The story of painting in Canada is carried from its beginnings a century ago, to about 1930 in a concise preface. A second volume will deal with the moderns of the past 16 years. It is regrettable that the scope was not enlarged to include them all in one comprehensive history.

European Modernism

CONTEMPORARY painting of radically different character is that of Marc Chagall, subject of an admirable Museum of Modern Art monograph by James Johnson Sweeney (Simon & Schuster, \$3). This Russian Jewish artist, long prominent in the "School of Paris" paints highly imaginative compositions in which representational or naturalistic elements are arranged without reference to nature or logic. For nearly 30 years Chagall has been the subject of a succession of publications. But Mr. Sweeney's monograph is the first comprehensive evaluation in English.

Oriental

CONTEMPORARY art is an uncharted sea compared to the strongly traditional art of China, which is more extensively collected and appreciated in the United States, than that of any other Oriental nation. "Chinese Culture in the Arts," by Stanley Charles Nott (Chinese Culture Study Group of America; \$9.75) endeavors to explain the meaning of the designs and symbols which decorate the art of China. It also records facts about the cultural development

of the Chinese, where these are embodied in the forms and designs of Chinese art. Nearly 200 line drawings illustrate these symbolic devices, and more than 60 large plates reproduce jade ritualistic objects embellished with them.

Ritual plays a strong part, too, in primitive art. "Arts of the South Seas," by Ralph Linton and Paul S. Wingert, in collaboration with Rene d'Harnoncourt (Simon & Schuster, \$5) is the first comprehensive survey in English, of the South Pacific Islands area, which was almost the entire theater of war from Hawaii to the Philippines. The volume contains little known but important examples of primitive art, which have had considerable influence in the modern art movement. The text deals with races, origins, geography, social organization and many other aspects of the subject. Although the authors call it merely a preliminary survey, it covers a lot of territory.

Caricature

LINCOLN IN CARICATURE assembled and described by Rufus Rockwell Wilson (Primavera Press, Inc.; \$7.50) is the most comprehensive collection of Lincoln cartoons I have seen; 165 of them. They are supplemented with political and historical comment. The book is particularly interesting because it shows Lincoln through the eyes of his contemporaries.

Latin America

(Continued From Page 14.)

detail and local color, the above sketched panorama is true of all Latin America, though not so somber in well-fed, happy and prosperous Argentina, whose population is now intoxicated with the heady wine of nationalism.

Always in Search Of Idols and Gods

Latin American writers are aware of the fact that the destiny of the world depends on Great Britain, the United States and Russia. They know very well that in the big orchestra of the United Nations, Latin America does not play even second fiddle, but only a noisy, out-of-tune



ERICO VERISSIMO.
—Sketch by Newman Sudduth.

marimba. They also know that whenever they try to interpret, analyze or simply write about world political and economic problems, they are handicapped from the start by a lack of complete and sound information. They never can get the real "inside dope." And they are sure that no matter what they may say, they will hardly have a chance of being heard beyond the boundaries of their own countries. The most they can do for the time being—and I think that is much—is to focus in their books and articles their home problems. In brief, their local trees prevent them from looking too much at the dreadful, entangled and vicious jungle of international affairs.

On the threshold of the atomic era, Latin American writers, painfully conscious of their needs and shortcomings, have a realistic outlook on the world around them, and they are all craving for social justice and a real peace. For that, some trust in God. Some trust in Stalin. Some used to trust in Roosevelt.

Isn't it funny that no matter how materialistic you may be, you are always in search of idols and gods?



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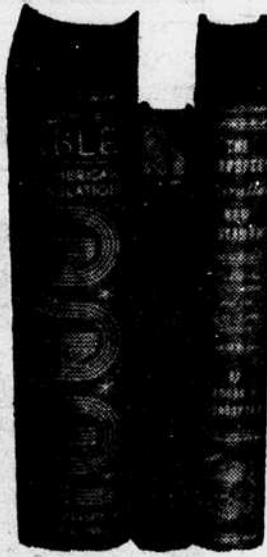
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