

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
Doré Dante Swift Pushkin Alcott
Newton



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, tredition offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. tredition is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

TREDITION CLASSICS

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series. The creators of this series are united by passion for literature and driven by the intention of making all public domain books available in printed format again - worldwide. Most TREDITION CLASSICS titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades. At tredition we believe that a great book never goes out of style and that its value is eternal. Several mostly non-profit literature projects provide content to tredition. To support their good work, tredition donates a portion of the proceeds from each sold copy. As a reader of a TREDITION CLASSICS book, you support our mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion. See all available books at www.tredition.com.



The content for this book has been graciously provided by Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg is a non-profit organization founded by Michael Hart in 1971 at the University of Illinois. The mission of Project Gutenberg is simple: To encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks. Project Gutenberg is the first and largest collection of public domain eBooks.

**Artist and Public And Other
Essays On Art Subjects**

Kenyon Cox

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Kenyon Cox

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-8205-0

www.tredition.com

www.tredition.de

Copyright:

The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations, such as Project Gutenberg, worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.



From a photograph by Braun, Clement & Co. Plate 1. — Millet. "The Goose Girl." In the collection of Mme. Saulnier, Bordeaux.

TO
J.D.C.
IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF UNFAILING KINDNESS
THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

PREFACE

In "The Classic Point of View," published three years ago, I endeavored to give a clear and definitive statement of the principles on which all my criticism of art is based. The papers here gathered together, whether earlier or later than that volume, may be considered as the more detailed application of those principles to particular artists, to whole schools and epochs, even, in one case, to the entire history of the arts. The essay on Raphael, for instance, is little else than an illustration of the chapter on "Design"; that on Millet illustrates the three chapters on "The Subject in Art," on "Design," and on "Drawing"; while "Two Ways of Painting" contrasts, in specific instances, the classic with the modern point of view.

But there is another thread connecting these essays, for all of them will be found to have some bearing, more or less direct, upon the subject of the title essay. "The Illusion of Progress" elaborates a point more slightly touched upon in "Artist and Public"; the careers of Raphael and Millet are capital instances of the happy productiveness of an artist in sympathy with his public or of the difficulties, nobly conquered in this case, of an artist without public appreciation; the greatest merit attributed to "The American School" is an abstention from the extravagances of those who would make incomprehensibility a test of greatness. Finally, the work of Saint-Gaudens is a noble example of art fulfilling its social function in expressing and in elevating the ideals of its time and country.

This last essay stands, in some respects, upon a different footing from the others. It deals with the work and the character of a man I knew and loved, it was originally written almost immediately after his death, and it is therefore colored, to some extent, by personal emotion. I have revised it, rearranged it, and added to it, and I trust that this coloring may be found to warm, without falsifying, the picture.

The essay on "The Illusion of Progress" was first printed in "The Century," that on Saint-Gaudens in "The Atlantic Monthly." The others originally appeared in "Scribner's Magazine."

KENYON COX.

Calder House, Croton-on-Hudson, June 6, 1914.

CONTENTS

- essay
- I. Artist and Public
 - II. Jean François Millet
 - III. The Illusion of Progress
 - IV. Raphael
 - V. Two Ways of Painting
 - VI. The American School
 - VII. Augustus Saint-Gaudens

ILLUSTRATIONS

Millet:

1. "The Goose Girl," *Saulnier Collection, Bordeaux*
2. "The Sower," *Vanderbilt Collection, Metropolitan Museum, New York*
3. "The Gleaners," *The Louvre*
4. "The Spaders"
5. "The Potato Planter," *Shaw Collection*
6. "The Grafter," *William Rockefeller Collection*
7. "The New-Born Calf," *Art Institute, Chicago*
8. "The First Steps,"
9. "The Shepherdess," *Chauchard Collection, Louvre*
10. "Spring," *The Louvre*

Raphael:

11. "Poetry," *The Vatican*
12. "The Judgment of Solomon," *The Vatican*
13. The "Disputa," *The Vatican*
14. "The School of Athens," *The Vatican*
15. "Parnassus," *The Vatican*
16. "Jurisprudence," *The Vatican*
17. "The Mass of Bolsena," *The Vatican*
18. "The Deliverance of Peter," *The Vatican*

19. "The Sibyls," *Santa Maria della Pace, Rome*
20. "Portrait of Tommaso Inghirami," *Gardner Collection*

John S. Sargent:

21. "The Hermit," *Metropolitan Museum, New York*

Titian:

22. "Saint Jerome in the Desert," *Brera Gallery, Milan*

Saint-Gaudens:

23. "Plaquette Commemorating Cornish Masque"
24. "Amor Caritas"
25. "The Butler Children"
26. "Sarah Redwood Lee"
27. "Farragut," *Madison Square, New York*
28. "Lincoln," *Chicago, Ill.*
29. "Deacon Chapin," *Springfield, Mass.*
30. "Adams Memorial," *Washington, D.C.*
31. "Shaw Memorial," *Boston, Mass.*
32. "Sherman," *The Plaza, Central Park, New York*

ARTIST AND PUBLIC

I

ARTIST AND PUBLIC

In the history of art, as in the history of politics and in the history of economics, our modern epoch is marked off from all preceding epochs by one great event, the French Revolution. Fragonard, who survived that Revolution to lose himself in a new and strange world, is the last of the old masters; David, some sixteen years his junior, is the first of the moderns. Now if we look for the most fundamental distinction between our modern art and the art of past times, I believe we shall find it to be this: the art of the past was produced for a public that wanted it and understood it, by artists who understood and sympathized with their public; the art of our time has been, for the most part, produced for a public that did not want it and misunderstood it, by artists who disliked and despised the public for which they worked. When artist and public were united, art was homogeneous and continuous. Since the divorce of artist and public art has been chaotic and convulsive.

That this divorce between the artist and his public—this dislocation of the right and natural relations between them—has taken place is certain. The causes of it are many and deep-lying in our modern civilization, and I can point out only a few of the more obvious ones.

The first of these is the emergence of a new public. The art of past ages had been distinctively an aristocratic art, created for kings and princes, for the free citizens of slave-holding republics, for the spiritual and intellectual aristocracy of the church, or for a luxurious and frivolous nobility. As the aim of the Revolution was the destruction of aristocratic privilege, it is not surprising that a revolutionary like David should have felt it necessary to destroy the traditions of an art created for the aristocracy. In his own art of painting he succeeded so thoroughly that the painters of the next generation found themselves with no traditions at all. They had not only to work for a public of enriched bourgeois or proletarians who had never cared for art, but they had to create over again the art with

which they endeavored to interest this public. How could they succeed? The rift between artist and public had begun, and it has been widening ever since.

If the people had had little to do with the major arts of painting and sculpture, there had yet been, all through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a truly popular art—an art of furniture making, of wood-carving, of forging, of pottery. Every craftsman was an artist in his degree, and every artist was but a craftsman of a superior sort. Our machine-making, industrial civilization, intent upon material progress and the satisfaction of material wants, has destroyed this popular art; and at the same time that the artist lost his patronage from above he lost his support from below. He has become a superior person, a sort of demi-gentleman, but he has no longer a splendid nobility to employ him or a world of artist artisans to surround him and understand him.

And to the modern artist, so isolated, with no tradition behind him, no direction from above and no support from below, the art of all times and all countries has become familiar through modern means of communication and modern processes of reproduction. Having no compelling reason for doing one thing rather than another, or for choosing one or another way of doing things, he is shown a thousand things that he may do and a thousand ways of doing them. Not clearly knowing his own mind he hears the clash and reverberation of a thousand other minds, and having no certainties he must listen to countless theories.

Mr. Vedder has spoken of a certain "home-made" character which he considers the greatest defect of his art, the character of an art belonging to no distinctive school and having no definite relation to the time and country in which it is produced. But it is not Mr. Vedder's art alone that is home-made. It is precisely the characteristic note of our modern art that all of it that is good for anything is home-made or self-made. Each artist has had to create his art as best he could out of his own temperament and his own experience—has sat in his corner like a spider, spinning his web from his own bowels. If the art so created was essentially fine and noble the public has at last found it out, but only after years of neglect have embittered the existence and partially crippled the powers of its creator. And

so, to our modern imagination, the neglected and misunderstood genius has become the very type of the great artist, and we have allowed our belief in him to color and distort our vision of the history of art. We have come to look upon the great artists of all times as an unhappy race struggling against the inappreciation of a stupid public, starving in garrets and waiting long for tardy recognition.

The very reverse of this is true. With the exception of Rembrandt, who himself lived in a time of political revolution and of the emergence to power of a burgher class, you will scarce find an unappreciated genius in the whole history of art until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The great masters of the Renaissance, from Giotto to Veronese, were men of their time, sharing and interpreting the ideals of those around them, and were recognized and patronized as such. Rembrandt's greatest contemporary, Rubens, was painter in ordinary to half the courts of Europe, and Velazquez was the friend and companion of his king. Watteau and Boucher and Fragonard painted for the frivolous nobility of the eighteenth century just what that nobility wanted, and even the precursors of the Revolution, sober and honest Chardin, Greuze the sentimental, had no difficulty in making themselves understood, until the revolutionist David became dictator to the art of Europe and swept them into the rubbish heap with the rest.

It is not until the beginning of what is known as the Romantic movement, under the Restoration, that the misunderstood painter of genius definitely appears. Millet, Corot, Rousseau were trying, with magnificent powers and perfect single-mindedness, to restore the art of painting which the Revolution had destroyed. They were men of the utmost nobility and simplicity of character, as far as possible from the gloomy, fantastic, vain, and egotistical person that we have come to accept as the type of unappreciated genius; they were classically minded and conservative, worshippers of the great art of the past; but they were without a public and they suffered bitter discouragement and long neglect. Upon their experience is founded that legend of the unpopularity of all great artists which has grown to astonishing proportions. Accepting this legend, and believing that all great artists are misunderstood, the artist has come to cherish a scorn of the public for which he works and to pretend a greater scorn than he feels. He cannot believe himself great *unless* he

is misunderstood, and he hugs his unpopularity to himself as a sign of genius and arrives at that sublime affectation which answers praise of his work with an exclamation of dismay: "Is it as bad as that?" He invents new excesses and eccentricities to insure misunderstanding, and proclaims the doctrine that, as anything great must be incomprehensible, so anything incomprehensible must be great. And the public has taken him, at least partly, at his word. He may or may not be great, but he is certainly incomprehensible and probably a little mad. Until he succeeds the public looks upon the artist as a more or less harmless lunatic. When he succeeds it is willing to exalt him into a kind of god and to worship his eccentricities as a part of his divinity. So we arrive at a belief in the insanity of genius. What would Raphael have thought of such a notion, or that consummate man of the world, Titian? What would the serene and mighty Veronese have thought of it, or the cool, clear-seeing Velazquez? How his Excellency the Ambassador of his Most Catholic Majesty, glorious Peter Paul Rubens, would have laughed!

It is this lack of sympathy and understanding between the artist and his public—this fatal isolation of the artist—that is the cause of nearly all the shortcomings of modern art; of the weakness of what is known as official or academic art no less than of the extravagance of the art of opposition. The artist, being no longer a craftsman, working to order, but a kind of poet, expressing in loneliness his personal emotions, has lost his natural means of support. Governments, feeling a responsibility for the cultivation of art which was quite unnecessary in the days when art was spontaneously produced in answer to a natural demand, have tried to put an artificial support in its place. That the artist may show his wares and make himself known, they have created exhibitions; that he may be encouraged they have instituted medals and prizes; that he may not starve they have made government purchases. And these well-meant efforts have resulted in the creation of pictures which have no other purpose than to hang in exhibitions, to win medals, and to be purchased by the government and hung in those more permanent exhibitions which we call museums. For this purpose it is not necessary that a picture should have great beauty or great sincerity. It *is* necessary that it should be large in order to attract attention and sufficiently well drawn and executed to seem to deserve recogni-

tion. And so was evolved the salon picture, a thing created for no man's pleasure, not even the artist's; a thing which is neither the decoration of a public building nor the possible ornament of a private house; a thing which, after it has served its temporary purpose, is rolled up and stored in a loft or placed in a gallery where its essential emptiness becomes more and more evident as time goes on. Such government-encouraged art had at least the merit of a well-sustained and fairly high level of accomplishment in the more obvious elements of painting. But as exhibitions became larger and larger and the competition engendered by them grew fiercer, it became increasingly difficult to attract attention by mere academic merit. So the painters began to search for sensationalism of subject, and the typical salon picture, no longer decorously pompous, began to deal in blood and horror and sensuality. It was Regnault who began this sensation hunt, but it has been carried much further since his day than he can have dreamed of, and the modern salon picture is not only tiresome but detestable.

The salon picture, in its merits and its faults, is peculiarly French, but the modern exhibition has sins to answer for in other countries than France. In England it has been responsible for a great deal of sentimentality and anecdotage which has served to attract the attention of a public that could not be roused to interest in mere painting. Everywhere, even in this country, where exhibitions are relatively small and ill-attended, it has caused a certain stridency and blatancy, a keying up to exhibition pitch, a neglect of finer qualities for the sake of immediate effectiveness.

Under our modern conditions the exhibition has become a necessity, and it would be impossible for our artists to live or to attain a reputation without it. The giving of medals and prizes and the purchase of works of art by the state may be of more doubtful utility, though such efforts at the encouragement of art probably do more good than harm. But there is one form of government patronage that is almost wholly beneficial, and that the only form of it which we have in this country—the awarding of commissions for the decoration of public buildings. The painter of mural decorations is in the old historical position, in sound and natural relations to the public. He is doing something which is wanted and, if he continues to receive commissions, he may fairly assume that he is doing it in a

way that is satisfactory. With the decorative or monumental sculptor he is almost alone among modern artists in being relieved of the necessity of producing something in the isolation of his studio and waiting to see if any one will care for it; of trying, against the grain, to produce something that he thinks may appeal to the public because it does not appeal to himself; or of attempting to bamboozle the public into buying what neither he nor the public really cares for. If he does his best he may feel that he is as fairly earning his livelihood as his fellow workmen, the blacksmith and the stonecutter, and is as little dependent as they upon either charity or humbug. The best that government has done for art in France is the commissioning of the great decorative paintings of Baudry and Puvis. In this country, also, governments, national, State, or municipal, are patronizing art in the best possible way, and in making buildings splendid for the people are affording opportunity for the creation of a truly popular art.

Without any artificial aid from the government the illustrator has a wide popular support and works for the public in a normal way; and, therefore, illustration has been one of the healthiest and most vigorous forms of modern art. The portrait-painter, too, is producing something he knows to be wanted, and, though his art has had to fight against the competition of the photograph and has been partially vulgarized by the struggle of the exhibitions, it has yet remained, upon the whole, comprehensible and human; so that much of the soundest art of the past century has gone into portraiture. It is the painters of pictures, landscape or genre, who have most suffered from the misunderstanding between artist and public. Without guidance some of them have hewed a path to deserved success. Others have wandered into strange byways and no-thoroughfares.

The nineteenth century is strewn with the wrecks of such misunderstood and misunderstanding artists, but it was about the sixties when their searching for a way began to lead them in certain clearly marked directions. There are three paths, in especial, which have been followed since then by adventurous spirits: the paths of æstheticism, of scientific naturalism, and of pure self-expression; the paths of Whistler, of Monet, and of Cézanne.