

Swiss news from the world of art: visual arts

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SWISS NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ART: VISUAL ARTS

To give readers a true picture of what has happened in Switzerland this summer is quite impossible. There were literally dozens of art exhibitions in all parts of the country, displays arranged to show the work of Swiss artists, or shows organised to present foreign artists to the Swiss. Every field of painting, drawing and sculpture was covered in one or another of the exhibitions. Only a few can be mentioned at random.

At Castle Jegenstorf, which houses a museum for the old art and culture of living, 87 pictures by the Basle painter Emanuel Handmann (1718-1781) were shown. The "Kunsthalle" in Berne exhibited the work by four American painters; several works by the famous Swiss artist Cuno Amiet were exhibited at the "Altstadtgalerie Verena Mueller". The valuable paintings and sculptures of the "Art of Tibet" were shown in Zurich, Basle and Berne in aid of Tibet refugees. Also in Basle was presented "The Art of New Guinea", whilst "Latin-American Art before Columbus" was exhibited in Neuchâtel. A Show, "Prestige de Montmartre", was arranged at the Castle of Boudry, showing pictures by Braque, Picasso, Utrillo and others — all devoted to vine and wine. During the "Rencontres Internationales" in Geneva, works representing French painting for the last sixty years were shown at the Athée Museum.

A retrospective exhibition of book illustrations and religious works by the Ticinese painter Pietro Chiesa took place at Sorengo. Even at a small town like Schwyz one of several exhibitions arranged was of oil paintings by Bruno Nizzola (Locarno) and of "plastics" by Rudolf Limacher (Lucerne). An exhibition of Swiss book illustrators took place at Thun, and for the first time Klosters organised "Art Weeks" during which works by Grisons painters and sculptors were shown. The exhibition was supported by concerts at which works by living Grisons composers were performed. Lucerne showed three paintings each by some 100 young artists who had applied for a scholarship of the Kiefer-Habluetzel Foundation. At the Jenisch Museum at Vevey 250 water-colours were shown "From Cézanne to Picasso".

The fourth Art and Antiques Fair took place in Berne, and paintings from the fabulous Robinson Collection were on show in Zurich. At Castle Valangin precious tapestries from many castles in France are being shown until 30th November. Two other exhibitions still open are those at the "Galerie Walcheturm" in Zurich where the contemporary art of Dr. h.c. Edouard-Marcel Sandoz (Lausanne/Paris) is on show, and at the "Kunsthau" in Zurich where works by the English painter Francis Bacon, born 1909 in Dublin are presented. Bacon is described as "one of the English artists who favour realism with surrealist tendencies".

In connection with the Rousseau year several exhibitions have taken place, one in Aarau, "Painters discover the Alps", one at the Museum of Fine Arts in Berne, "The Lesser Masters of Berne and the Beginning of Travel Souvenirs". At Montreux, etchings, books and portraits depicting Rousseau's wanderings around the Lac Léman were shown. The oldest house in Lugano, "La Piccionia", dating to 1400, has been renovated and now houses an art gallery. It was opened with a showing of

"Personaggi e Figure", works by artists of the last thirty years, including two bronze figures by Henry Moore. At the Musée Rath in Geneva, Marc Chagall had a strange experience when he visited the exhibition of his own works, "Chagall et la Bible". He found himself face to face with members of his own family whom he had portrayed in works in 1914 and of whom he had seen no more since.

An exhibition was held in Lucerne devoted to the Schoeck family. Alfred Schoeck (1841-1931) was an important painter, his son Paul was a writer, Walter wrote musical essays, and Othmar, the youngest son, became a well-known composer (1886-1957). By the fourth son Ralph, who is still alive, a drawing, the portrait of his mother, was exhibited. Incidentally, the composer's daughter Gisela is a pianist.

An open-air exhibition of plastic art (150 works by seventy artists) took place in Bienne, during which a storm destroyed a figure by Heinz Schwarz. Another, by Hans Aeschbacher, was broken on erection through carelessness, causing damage of Fr.30,000.—. Before the official opening, students of the local technical college "exhibited" their own "works" constructed from bedsprings, sewer tubes and other pedestrian materials which many premature visitors took for *objets d'art*!

Three hundred years ago Basle University took over the "Amerbach Cabinet" which the Council of Basle had previously purchased for 9,000 guilders. With it the famous Basle Art Collection was started. To commemorate this acquisition a special exhibition was held at the Basle Art Museum at which some of the most beautiful and precious drawings by the two Holbeins, Urs Graf and others are exhibited. The Basle Art Museum was enriched early in the summer by five large Spanish murals which had been transferred to canvas. The permanent loan was made by the family of the late Dr. Arthur Wilhelm, director of CIBA.

Sixty-one drafts for a General Guisan monument had to be judged by the adjudicators of the competition. No first prize could be awarded, but seven subsequent prizes were given and the models exhibited in Lausanne. The successful sculptors now have to compete again for the final choice. Over one million francs have been collected for the monument for the Swiss general of the second world war.

An unusual art auction took place in Zurich in aid of the Jewish National Fund. Some 200 valuable objects were auctioned, amongst them a Renoir picture (value Fr.40,000) which realised Fr.17,000, and a volume of original lithographs by Marc Chagall specially autographed by the artist for the auction.

Another remarkable event in the art world was the return to the Valais of a "St. Peter's Head Reliquary" of special archaic stamp, in chiselled silver and partly gilt, on its original base to which a Gothic crucifixion group had later been added. The reliquary, some 45 cm. high, originates from the goldsmiths' workshop of the Abbey of St. Maurice. The *objet d'art* was given to the church of Bourg-St. Pierre in the fifteenth century by the Prior of the Great St. Bernard. In 1909 it found its way into the collection of a Swiss living in France, in whose family it remained until recently. As soon as it was known that

this rare piece of art was on the market the Gottfried Keller Foundation together with the Canton of Valais and various industrial and banking concerns combined to make possible the return of this reliquary to the Valais, where it will be on permanent show at the Museum Valéria at Sion.

Finally, three exhibitions outside Switzerland should be mentioned. On 5th November a considerable show of works by the great Swiss artist Ferdinand Hodler opened in Vienna. Various organisations, amongst them the "Pro Helvetia" Foundation, supported the venture. In Paris, at the Musée d'Art Moderne an exhibition of the works of the Swiss architect Le Corbusier has been on show. It was announced as the most important retrospective exhibition of his work ever to be presented in France.

The last artist to be mentioned is not a Swiss, but he has been living at Villeneuve on the Lake of Geneva since 1953 and has many ties with Switzerland, though born on the Danube in 1886, of Czech and Austrian parentage, and a British subject for 15 years — Oskar Kokoschka, whose spectacular exhibition at the Tate Gallery in London has recently come to an end. All those who have seen it will agree that it was indeed one of the most notable comprehensive shows ever arranged by a living artist.

*Based on news items by A.T.S.,
S.N.T.O., "Genève", etc.*

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