

New York (City), Macbeth gallery

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1947/48

PAINTINGS BY
ALLEN TUCKER

1866 - 1939



OUTDOORS (Self-Portrait)

OCTOBER 13 - NOVEMBER 1
1947

MACBETH

11 East 57th Street

GALLERY

New York 22, N. Y.

FOREWORD

If I were asked to state what element in art appealed most strongly to Allen Tucker I should answer creative warmth. It was his own special genius and he responded to it quickly in the work of other artists, that and deep sincerity. He had a sure eye for both.

He understood that the more we know and care about an art the less we can say about it. It is as if the deeper we get into the feeling of the medium of painting or sculpture the more foreign the medium of words becomes. And yet in his little masterpiece, *Design and the Idea*, he uses words about painting in the very way in which he thinks words should be used — as stimulants to the vision.

The temperature of analysis is certainly cooler than the welding heat of synthesis. We speak of the coldly critical mind but never of the cold creative artist. But the creative critic is no more frozen food than the creative artist. In the whole process of a work of art from its inception to its departure from the artist's workroom, and thence forward to the halls of fame or of oblivion, the coldest moments that it knows are given to it by its own creator.

It is he who makes the awful decision whether the work is what Cézanne called "realized". It is he who decides whether it expresses the "little sensation". And no one in the world can help him make this decision. He is there, alone with the object of his making, to send it forth or slash it, to make that difficult change which may spoil all or to leave it approximately right. This is what I call creative criticism, criticism at its highest and hardest, the artist's criticism of his own work. This is the moment when the maker of art measures himself. How hard he is upon himself makes the difference between the compromising and the genuine.

Allen Tucker was genuine, pure, undefiled by the chaffering of the market-place, ignorant, for a lifetime, of the meaning of compromise.

A passionate ascetic he loved ardently those civilizations which produced great art and his knowledge of their art was profound. He was not, however, an eclectic. He was of his own period when liberal artists were making each in his own way the transformation from Impressionism to Expressionism.

He was a sympathetic Francophile and well over age went to France to do hospital work in World War I. He knew the great art galleries of the world. His reactions to art were intense and generous. He was a rare teacher always on the liberal side and at the same time always on the side of cultivation.

I have never known an artist more inspiring and helpful to those who cared and less helpful to the commercially minded. He was religious in the great sense. He never discussed the subject. It was his own.

An architect, a painter, a poet, a teacher of painting at The Art Students League, you might meet him at the Century Club, at the Coffee House, in Italy, in France or in Spain; it really did not matter where you met him. You were brought intensely closer to art. That was his passion. It was ascetic, or if you prefer, sublimated. So unadulterated a passion for art, so generous an attitude toward his fellows, so complete a faith in the civilizing powers of art and so much gift brought him to a point where he led as an outstanding American exponent of expressionism. He has a place in the history of American painting not yet fully recognized. But it will be.

FORBES WATSON

direct 11/14/47

The following quotations are from Allen Tucker's book, DESIGN AND THE IDEA.

The great things are unprovable — they are only apprehendable, but in that apprehension we become much more sure of them than of lesser things which are, as we say, provable.

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Talent alone is not enough. Beside talent there must be character and there must be mind. It seems to me that that most beautiful of tools, the American axe, is a symbol of the combination of talent, character and mind. The cutting edge is the talent; without that cutting edge nothing can be accomplished, of course; the head of the axe, the weight, is the character and without that weight to drive the talent the talent will not cut deep; and the heft is the controlling mind — the intelligent, critical, careful mind that directs the whole enterprise.

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An attempt to be original results only in affectation. All that a painter can try to be is sincere. I am inclined to think that sincerity is the bedrock of the whole effort. To be one's self, to be honest with one's self, to do as one thinks, to follow one's own vision and to develop that talent, that vision continually all one's life, is the way to learn to paint.

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Real sentiment is a hard, definite thing.

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We said, the larger the mass the better, so also the fewer the color values and the light and shade values the stronger will be the painting. The more concisely the idea can be expressed the stronger will be the work. Any detail that does not directly strengthen a design can only weaken it. There is no such thing in the world, and never was, as a neutral. A thing is either for or against, either helps or hinders, so unless a detail helps the design it is better omitted.

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As for "inspiration," if there is such a thing, it is apt to come only while one is working. Waited for it usually keeps one waiting.

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The more subtle the balance the more subtle the rhythm, the longer we can look at the picture. We say there is more in it — we are right, there is.

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The only way to strengthen the creative faculty is to use it, use it continually and stretch it continually — that is, keep on trying to make what is hard to make; keep always trying to do the impossible.

- 1 OUTDOORS (SELF PORTRAIT, 1924)
- 2 SNOW IN THE CITY
- 3 NAVESINK RIVER
- 4 MT. PASSACONAWAY
Lent by The Brooklyn Museum
- 5 THE HARBOR, CASTINE
- 6 THE PLAZA
- 7 MISS RAPHAELLA OTTIANO
- 8 MEMORIAL DAY
- 9 THE BURIAL
- 10 SIGNALS
- 11 LE VIEUX CORDES WITH CRUCIFIX
- 12 DON QUIXOTE AND SANCHE PANZA
Lent by Stephen C. Clark, Esq.
- 13 THE BOOK OF VERSE
- 14 MOVING HILLS
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John S. Sheppard
- 15 MT. CHOCORUA
- 16 RED BARN
Lent by Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington, D. C.
- 17 DOGWOOD AND CEDARS

NOTE

All of Allen Tucker's work remaining in the studio when he died has been given by Mrs. Tucker to The Allen Tucker Memorial, a trust empowered to use the proceeds of sales "to encourage and extend the practise, understanding and appreciation of art" in such ways as may be expedient.

FORBES WATSON, *Chairman*
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