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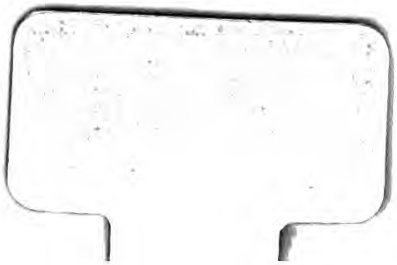

88

THE HOGARTH ESSAYS

Art and Commerce

ROGER FRY

THE HOGARTH PRESS

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ART AND COMMERCE

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ROGER FRY

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ART AND COMMERCE[1]

LIFE cannot be carried on without some science even if it is only that instinctive science which animals possess. But it can perfectly well be carried on without art. It is really very surprising, therefore, to note that, however near men may at times have come to such a condition, they have never, I believe, continued to exist without art of some kind. It must therefore correspond to some fundamental conformation of man's nature.

Let us consider the life of man from this point of view and find out why, wherefore, and when he demands the assistance of this apparently non-essential activity. He can be born without the aid of art, but if he is born into a Christian community his godparents are likely to employ a silversmith on his behalf. He can be fed without the aid of art (it would be wrong here to talk of the art of cooking since the word art is here used in another sense. The word craft would be more appropriate). He can be clothed without art—but he has hardly ever consented to restrict himself to the merely needful in clothing. Personal vanity at once makes appeal to some kind of an artist—an embroiderer or a jeweller. He can be sheltered without art—but again he is not content merely to be sheltered; again he wishes to express to the outside world that sense of his own importance of which he has continually to remind other people. Therefore he calls in an artist to make his house more magnificent, more

[1] The substance of this essay was originally delivered as a lecture to illustrate an exhibition of Posters held in Oxford by the Arts League of Service.

attractive to the eye than the mere satisfaction of the need for shelter would imply.

Then he belongs to some herd or other, some tribe or nation, and this herd will also have its collective vanity and sense of importance which again will find expression through works of art—commemorative statues, public buildings, and so forth. Our typical character, if he lives in a complicated and ancient civilisation like ours, and if he occupies a fairly high position, will become symbolic to some group or another, whether as father of the family, or head of a business, or president of a club; and in all these situations the desire to eternalise his personality will lead to his again calling in an artist to paint or sculpt his portrait. Finally, he dies—and though he can accomplish this act and can even get buried without the artist's help —either he or his family will be likely to call in another artist to commemorate his virtues in a funeral monument. In fact, from the cradle to the grave our typical man, even supposing he himself has not the particular sensitiveness to beauty which incites people to care about works of art, will buy and help buy in the course of his life a good many works of art.

Now in all this account I have talked about artists and works of art as though we all knew exactly what we meant by these words. I have used the words in what one may call their official sense—the sense in which for purposes of income-tax Sir Edwin Landseer; Mr Frith; Mr X., R.A.; Mr Y., R.A.; and Mr Z., R.A., for I do not wish to be personal, sign their declarations as "artists"—the sense in which the Albert and Edith Cavell Memorials are described as "works of art." But we all know that between the persons I have named and certain other gentlemen, also called artists, such as Giotto, Giorgione, Poussin, Daumier, there is so great a difference of degree that we may be excused for regarding them as distinct kinds. We all know that the Edith Cavell sculpture is not

at all the same kind of thing as the Medici tombs or the Gattamelata statue. But we have no words to express these distinctions though we know them to be real. And, indeed, I find myself continually held up by the want of convenient symbols for these ideas.

For the purposes of this essay the need of proper symbols becomes so pressing that I find myself forced to invent them. We have a word, "artifact" [1] for any object made by man as opposed to objects of natural formation, but we have no word for any object made by man for other purposes than the necessities of life, nor have we a word for the class of men who make such objects. For want of any better words I propose here to adapt from the Latin "opifex" the words "opificer" and "opifact." An opifact, then, is any object made by man not for direct use but for the gratification of those special feelings and desires, those various forms of ostentation of which I spoke. All such objects I will—for this occasion—call opifacts, and I will use the word opificer for those who make them. I will then pick from the classes of opifacts those objects in which we can trace a quite particular quality, the quality of expressing a particular emotion which we call the esthetic emotion, and I will call those objects, works of art. And I will pick out from the large class of opificers those workmen who having this emotion very strongly seek to express it in their work, and I will call them artists. Now what I want to make plain is that, whilst human beings are so constituted that they always require a great many opificers to produce a great variety of opifacts, society can get along quite comfortably, and for an indefinitely long time, without the existence of artists or works of art, in the special sense which I now give to these words.

[1] Had the archæologists hit upon the more exactly descriptive word "manufact" for this purpose, "artifact" and "artificer" would have been left free for the ideas here indicated.

Our brief analysis of those occasions and situations in the life of our private citizen, when he calls in opificers and orders opifacts, showed that the impulse to these actions was generally that of the exaltation in one way or another of his personal worth either in his own or still more in others' eyes. Veblen's remarkable book on the *Theory of the Leisured Class* throws a great deal of light on this procedure. According to him, the warrior caste in any primitive society had a right to the biggest spoils of successful warfare. A man was known as a member of that caste by the trophies he was able to display on his own person and the persons of his womenkind and dependents. Modern societies have not altogether forgotten these facts, and, consequently, the gentleman is known by the hints—sometimes blatant, sometimes subtle—which he throws out to all the world that he possesses spoils and is one of our conquering class. Opifacts of all kinds, from the gold bangles on the negro chieftain's wife to the splendid liveries of a lord's footmen, are the readiest means to make the situation plain. And the rarer and more expensive they are the better they answer their purpose. In fact, the opifact is primarily an advertisement.

Societies of all kinds no less than individuals have recognised this fact. They behave, indeed, almost exactly like individuals in this respect. Big banking firms encase their offices in marble, and load their doors with chased bronze; town councils expand the façades of their town-halls, and have frescoes advertising the glory of the town's history painted on their walls; nations flaunt their Law Courts and pile up expensive national memorials in their capitals; and when kings stood for the nation, they advertised in innumerable ways the pre-eminence of their persons and the splendour of their reigns. Finally, all religious societies have appealed largely to the opificer to glorify their temples and increase the hypnotic effect of their ritual. It may seem incorrect to classify ritual

as a branch of advertisement, but from our point of view they are at least closely allied. Both aim at creating by suggestion a heightened sense of worth and importance in the minds of the people. We see, in fact, that advertisement in one form or another has been one of the greatest of social forces throughout human history, and that it has almost always found in the opificer its best executant, and in the opifact its chief weapon of attack. And it is due to the genuine social need of advertisement that human societies have almost always produced opifacts.

And since artists are a particular kind of opificer, and works of art are a kind of opifact, this great social system accounts for the fact that, incidentally, artists and works of art occur. If we could only tell exactly why, when, and wherefore these sports occur, we should know a great deal more about the history of the human spirit than we do. One fact is fairly apparent. The opificer is, as a rule, a fairly good member of society. He conforms without much difficulty. The artist is an intolerant individualist claiming a kind of divine right to the convictions of his peculiar sensibility. Consequently we may say that some margin of personal liberty and some consciousness of personal worth are probably essential to this curious by-product of social life, and besides this there must be opportunity to work.

In fortunately placed savage societies, where the sheer necessities of life are easily obtained, the opportunity for creating opifacts or works of art during the long leisure hours is shared by almost every member of society. So that if any man happen to have creative invention he is likely to become an artist. The more so that, although the tyranny of social custom is very strong in certain directions, it has not generally elaborated any decided esthetic prejudices; besides which the artist, as like as not, works for himself. The result is that although the opifacts of such peoples are rather elementary and do

not imply the ambition to express any complex ideas, the proportion of genuine works of art to opifacts is generally very high. But even here there are as yet inexplicable waves of greater and less creative power, as, for instance, in the case of negro art which had long been declining in quality, even before the blighting influence of European civilisation had made itself felt.

When we come to highly organised civilisations such as those of Mesopotamia and Egypt, to take early examples, individual self-esteem is probably far less wide spread. The great wealth and size of such communities gives to the ruler who symbolises in himself the whole social organism a far greater notion of his own pre-eminence and the ambition and power to advertise it in vast, complicated, and costly opifacts. This implies that the opificers are set apart from the rest of the community, and tend to be organised esthetically. The continuity of a style no longer depends merely upon habits of imitation and similarity of reaction, but is actually inculcated by precept and habits of training. The result is that after a comparatively short period of real creative effort, during which the sensibility of artists establishes definitive forms, there follows a very long period when these forms are stereotyped. This stereotyped period lasted in Egypt for many centuries. During this time the production of opifacts was more and more voluminous; they became more and more elaborate and magnificent, and yet true works of art hardly ever make their appearance. There was no need for them; the opificers supplied all that was required by society. After many centuries, in the reign of Akn-aten, a spiritual upheaval took place which again allowed of that particular free play of sensibility which produces works of art. This vital impulse, however, quickly disappeared and the organised production of opifacts with no trace of artistic feeling went on as regularly as before.

The Mesopotamian civilisation started with an even more powerful esthetic interest than the Egyptian, but, after a certain number of clearly marked types had been established, it too settled down into traditional repetition which went on with only slight variations for many centuries; such changes as the Assyrians produced being indeed all in the direction of more literal representation and towards the neglect of all other aspects of form.

It would take too long to give even in the barest outline a summary of the various moments in different civilisations when this peculiar activity of esthetic creation emerges and then disappears into the never-ceasing stream of opifacture. But two or three periods are of interest to our inquiry. The Roman was a highly organised commercial civilisation, but it is noteworthy that not only did it have an immense output of opifacts with hardly the faintest gleam of esthetic creation, but its leading citizens actually gloried in their want of esthetic sensibility, regarding it, without any adequate psychological inquiry, as a proof of moral superiority.

On the other hand, the great towns of Italy, such as Florence and Siena, had likewise an essentially commercial civilisation, and yet here during the Renaissance we get the extremely rare phenomenon of a people who actually preferred the artist to the pure opificer, so that the whole production of opifacts was for a time at least controlled and directed by artists who actually conceived the idea that all opifacts should be works of art and all opificers artists.

The nineteenth century in England and France was again a period of extraordinary commercial development and organisation, but here we meet with a situation which is probably new in the history of art.

The great wealth acquired by this civilisation encouraged an enormous production of opifacts, but unlike the great commercials of the Renaissance those of the nineteenth century showed a marked predilec-

tion for opifacts that did not even resemble works of art. In an earlier civilisation this would have led to the total submergence of artists; we should have had a state of things like that which obtained generally in Egypt and Rome. But in the nineteenth century the sense of individual worth and independence had been highly developed in the middle classes, and we have the curious phenomenon of the artist refusing to be suppressed, persisting in continuing his activities in spite of any discouragement, and in the face of the organised body of opificers. For the first time the opificer and artist recognised their respective differences of nature and purpose, although this distinction has not hitherto been sufficiently recognised to become enshrined in language.

We find, then, that it is almost the rule of civilised life to produce a great many opifacts and to be quite indifferent to works of art.

Just as organised religion can get along for ages without saintliness, so this vast social affair of opificers making opifacts can go on for ages without the special inspiration and the uncompromising conviction which denotes the artist and the work of art. And just as organised religion is generally highly suspicious of the saint, when he appears, so the opificers are generally very much perturbed when the artist appears. We may carry the analogy still further and say that, just as religions finally come to accept the saints and to use their creative force to heighten their own prestige, so the organised opificers finally accept the artist, and even come to believe that he was one of themselves, and to treat his memory as part of their inheritance. In fact, dead saints and dead artists are used as bulwarks of defence against living saints and living artists.

There have been periods when, for some reason or other, the organised opificers were not so fixed in their ideas as to oppose vigorously the artist; they accepted him without very much difficulty and adopted his ideas rapidly, and

these are the great periods of creative activity. At such periods men create partly because they believe creation possible. But there are other times when tradition has hardened and grown dull, and when the creation of form seems to be a desperate venture—when it appears like a wanton attack on the system of society itself. At such times artists are accused of Bolshevism and moral depravity, and society begins to talk of calling in the police. In America they do call in the police, and even here they would step in if we tried to act certain well-known plays.

There is one curious thing about artists and works of art—we have seen that they are not necessary to society, that the world can get along perfectly well without them, that they are generally unwelcome disturbers of the established harmony, spoilers of the feast ; but they are very difficult to forget. If their works remain these tend to become centres of disturbance, they exercise a violently stimulating action on a few spirits in each generation, making them in turn question the values of society, making them often discontented and what is called unpractical. It generally happens that the maladies thus provoked do not last long, and the victim generally forgets in middle age that he had it in his youth. You are many of you already inoculated by this feverish interest in spiritual things, but it is probable that society will help you to get over it and forget it ultimately altogether. You may be now in doubt whether Matisse or the winner of the Derby is the more important person ; when you have once settled down, merely to put such a question will appear the mark of an unbalanced character and a rather scandalous reputation.

Much may be done by society to check the spread of this infection by making past works of art into what are called classics ; this is in effect a process of mummification —the great poems are wrapped up in learned treatises and annotations, the pictures and statues are treated as sacred

objects and gather gradually an appearance of unreality—they become objects of archæological research and, as such, almost entirely innocuous. It is well known, for instance, that it is possible for archæologists to handle the greatest masterpieces of sculpture without feeling any esthetic emotion whatever. All these discoveries have been of great value to the world in preventing the too frequent occurrence of artists, and in avoiding the trouble of contemplating works of art.

The École des Beaux Arts is one of the most admirably equipped of these laboratories for inoculation against art. The youthful aspirant, who is generally a quite innocent schoolboy, arrives and for several years he works every day in a large building crowded in every part with huge copies of all the great masterpieces of the past. The greatest works of Greek sculpture become daily familiar to him in the shape of extremely dirty brown plaster casts ; Piero della Francesca's Arezzo frescoes are revealed on the walls by copies originally made by some artist who had been already well inoculated; they therefore attenuate whatever is sharply accented and vital in the original, and, in the course of many decades, they have become in addition dusty, foxy and fly-blown. Raphael, Michelangelo, Mantegna are likewise brought before his daily notice in similar travesty. What wonder that at the end of his course he has become proof against any spiritual stimulus from the originals of these mummified remains. At the end of that time he is endowed with the highest opificer's skill, and is spiritually prepared to produce opifacts which can be guaranteed entirely devoid of the esthetic virus. He becomes a highly popular painter and fit to meet the President of the Republic at official functions.

Let me give you another instance of how admirably society has learnt to protect itself. This week my university has conferred the honorary degree of Doctor

of Letters on an art critic who is a distinguished member of your university. The public orator recounted his services to art in what I believe was impeccable Ciceronian prose, but he let the cat out of the bag at the end when he wondered what one who had written so well of nineteenth century art could make of some of the modern works of art which are without head or tail; "*quibus nec pes nec caput.*" This writer when he was a young man showed the greatest spirit and courage by championing Whistler and Degas against the virulent attacks of the opificers of the day. Neither university then thought of conferring a degree on him. But now that Whistler and Degas have been slowly absorbed into the social system, and no longer exercise the dangerous fascination they once did, their champion is rightly honoured for holding the fort against Whistler's and Degas' successors. All this is as it should be, and shows how admirably the social system works. Society wants opificers, but not artists—it needs opifacts but not works of art.

I need not remind you that the picture I have here drawn is very schematic. I have spoken of saints and artists as though they were a distinct species, easily recognised by some patent and well-authenticated markings. I need hardly remind you that this is not the case—that they are only types, more or less fully realised by a few individuals, only partially realised by others. There is, of course, every degree of shading between the pure opificer who is entirely immune from esthetic feeling and the pure artist who has no possibility of compromise with commerce and the existing order. It is the same with opifacts and works of art. The whole business of the critic is to try to distinguish between them, and to isolate the work of art. We can recognise the extremes—we have little doubt that most modern official portraits are pure opifacts, and that Raphael's Baldassare Castiglione is a work of art. In between, all sorts of intermediate states

are possible. But the fact that we cannot ever draw a definite line between the two is no more an argument against recognising the opposing types than it is to say that we cannot draw the line between blue and green.

We have seen that the *raison d'être* of opifacts is that in one way or another they confer prestige. Prestige on the individual who owns them, or on the community that orders them. In the early Middle Ages this prestige was acquired almost exclusively by the Church. We can see how clearly it recognised the importance of opifacts by the extent to which it devoted its wealth to the erection of extremely magnificent and imposing opifacts, the cathedrals and abbeys and churches which, when one considers the relative poverty of the time, must have absorbed an immense proportion of all the available wealth of the population. It so happens that many of these opifacts are works of art. Non-esthetic opifacts are curiously rare in the work of the twelfth century, though even then they existed in greater quantities than people often suspect.

With the constant growth of individual wealth and individual power the aristocracy began increasingly to acquire prestige by means of opifacts. In the seventeenth century in Holland the bourgeoisie also began to acquire quantities of elaborate opifacts, and that movement spread throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the nineteenth century a new phenomenon appears. The use of machinery led to an unexampled power of production, and it was gradually discovered to be worth while to produce immense quantities of objects at very low prices so as to attract a very large clientele—it was found to pay more to sell great quantities, at low prices, to poor people than to sell small quantities, at high prices, to rich. Then with the advent of the Prince Consort, and a new interest in the history of past art, there came the delightful dream that the finest opifacts

(even the finest works of art) could be produced mechanically on so vast a scale that everyone might own a masterpiece. That dream flowered in the great exhibition of the mid-century, and left the Crystal Palace as its visible symbol. It is all that is left of the dream. For it was, alas ! a pure dream—a hallucination.

It was false because it started from the assumption that people (even all the people) want works of art. I hope I have shown that this is not the case—they want opifacts which confer prestige. But an opifact that anyone can possess does not confer prestige, and is therefore useless. Rarity, and the fact that other people want and cannot have the rare object that you possess, is essential to the whole business.

Probably no one, however keen their love of esthetic beauty, is quite free from the egoism which thus becomes associated with our idea of the opifact and even with the work of art. We see this in the case of bronzes which are capable of perfect mechanical multiplication. No one, however much he admires a bronze on purely esthetic grounds, fails, if he is going to purchase it, to find out how many exactly similar pieces the artist purposes to make. Its rarity is part of its value to almost any owner.

But the dream was also deceptive because it is very hard to harness machinery to the production of works of art. In the case of bronzes, I have shown that within limits it may be done. Etching is another case, though here the limits of multiplication are very narrow. Still, it would be untrue to say that machinery is fatal to the work of art. Its effect is to substitute an ideal exactitude for a felt approximation. Wherever the machine enters, the nervous tremor of the creator disappears. The creator may adapt himself to this as in the case of the potter's wheel. A pot made entirely by hand without a wheel shows that nervous tremor, that sensi-

bility, in all its dimensions. The horizontal sections may approximate to a circle—none of them will ever be a true circle. It will be the artist's felt approach to a circle. The vertical section, the galb, will likewise show only an approximation to some mathematical curve. If, however, the potter uses a wheel, the horizontal sections will presumably be true circles from top to bottom, but the galb will still express the artist's sensibility. In this case we have come to allow for thus much of mechanical exactitude, and we concentrate our appreciation on the subtlety of esthetic feeling which is shown in the galb and in the general proportions.

We have yet to find out what machinery can and cannot do in conjunction with the artist's sensibility. I believe it may be used far more successfully than it has been, but the main fact emerges, that the Victorian effort to produce works of art by machinery led to a terrible deception. And it was worse than this in its effect on the possibility of artistic creation. The fabrication by hand of all the minor objects of daily use had kept a number of people occupied, not indeed as artists but as skilled opificers, and the mere fact of being a skilled opificer, though it by no means implies any esthetic sense, does tend to develop any latent esthetic sense which a man possesses. There is more chance that a hand weaver may develop a real sense of design than there is for one who manipulates the handles of a modern power loom.

So that gradually all creative effort has been taken from the workman. Whatever creative effort there is, is all concentrated in the trade designer, and he too is handicapped by machinery. The machines once set up are capable of producing enormous quantities of goods very rapidly, but it is a very costly business to set up any particular design. The manufacturer therefore is almost obliged to play for safety. That is to say, his design must be one that is likely not to offend any one—it must

therefore look as like what people are already accustomed to as possible, and yet just have a suggestion of novelty. A really creative designer is therefore the last person whom a manufacturer can safely employ. He wants an opificer capable of either attenuating the design of some artist, or dishing up afresh the designs of past opificers of the same kind as himself. The manufacturer soon discovers that a really creative design has a certain violence and insistence, a spiritual energy, which is disquieting to people at first sight however much they may come afterwards to like it, and this disturbing, disquieting character puts the buyer off. Even if he likes it at first he wonders what others will say of it—whether the carpet or curtain he likes will add to his social prestige; and generally his wife knows at once that it won't do, and he falls back on safety, by preference a safe novelty, for snobbery has more subtleties even than love. Again we see that people want opifacts and not works of art.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century commerce made a new discovery of the greatest importance, and one which affects our lives at every turn. The big industrialists discovered advertisement. This is not literally true; advertisement, as we have abundantly seen, is as old as opifacts, which are indeed, generally speaking, advertisement in one way or another—the statues of the Pharaohs were advertisements—but they discovered the enormous power of the trade advertisement. With increasing wealth and increasing population, and therefore the possibility of an almost unlimited clientele, they found that every £1000 put into advertising brought in much more than £1000 worth of increased profits. Of course this must be a diminishing return, since when all your competitors advertise as much as you do all start again at scratch.

Trade advertisement is, of course, economically wasteful, and no society that produced its goods by co-operation

for the general good would be likely to adopt it. But apparently the demand for goods is so elastic, people's ideas of what they want are so capable of education, or perhaps I ought to say hypnotic suggestion, that advertising has become an ingrained habit of commercial undertakings. I suspect many of them of continuing to advertise from purely romantic reasons and without hope of direct reward. I suggest this because in many cases, where advertising still goes on as merrily as ever, all the apparently competing concerns are united in a single trust which has the whole business of producing a given article, say soap, in its own hands. In such a case advertising can only pay by making people buy more soap than they need. Since apart from that, the successful advertising of one kind of soap can only transfer a certain number of purchasers to that branch from another branch of the same business. These are, however, mysteries into which such a layman as myself has no right to pry. What I constate is the fact that advertisement has, in recent times, taken on a new complexion. It is tinged with a new poetry—a new romance. It is no longer the severely practical affair it once was; it brings about a new relation between the public and the great limited liability companies. There is a note of affectionate zeal for the public in their communications. The big companies pose as the friends and advisers of the public, they appear filled with concern for their welfare, they would even educate them and show them the way to higher and better things. The Underground tells the slum dweller of the beauties of nature in the country, it reveals the wonders of animal life at the Zoo, it inspires the historical sense by pictures of old London. The great railway combines tell of the glories of provincial England, and inspire an enthusiasm for the grandeur of modern locomotives. In fact, each of these great concerns tries to build up in the public imagination an image of something almost personal—and as such they

begin to claim almost the loyalty and allegiance of the public they exploit.

No doubt this has got to do with another interesting recent discovery of commerce. The early industrialist believed in increasing output and decreasing price. For some reason the modern industrialist finds his advantage in restricting output and increasing price. Advertisement is used not so much to induce us to buy as to make us willing to pay far more for things than they cost to produce. Thus the railway companies give us progressively worse and worse accommodation but, by advertisement, they produce in the public a non-critical state of romantic enthusiasm for the line. More and more the whole thing takes on an air of romance and unreality.

In all this matter of hypnotism on a large scale the poster has become the great weapon of the industrial companies, and the poster designer their great ally. We have here a vast new business of making opifacts, with its own special technique and its own special methods of appeal to the imagination through the eye.

What is interesting to me in this new business is that I see a possibility of commerce doing something to redress the balance in favour of art—that balance which it so ruthlessly upset in the other direction by driving all artists out of the business of designing for the textiles, pottery, etc., of ordinary use.

For the poster is not a very expensive object. It is possible here for the industrialist to take risks which he would never take in setting up a textile design, or a design for linoleum, or for any of the objects of large scale production.

Obviously, human nature being what it is, posters will very rarely be works of art. But there is a chance here and there that a work of art might pass muster both with the employer and the public. This chance is increased by the fact that in its present stage poster technique is in

a condition of steady and continual growth. New experiments in the possibilities of printing, and in the effect of colour arrangements, are continually being tried. As yet these things have not hardened into too rigid a tradition. With a new opifact industry, and one which is still growing and as it were plastic, there is a greater chance for the artist than in one which has become ossified and fixed in its habits. Even the reaction of the public is more appreciative and less negatively critical in any form of expression which is comparatively new. This effect has often been observed. The sudden emergence of any new form of opifact generally provokes an effort at esthetic creation, because, after all, the pure opificer can never imagine anything but a recombination of the old material. It requires the artist to conceive and materialise new formal matter. Thus it is that, generally speaking, new arts or newly revived arts begin straight off with a high potential of creative energy. It was so when the possibility of stone vaulting led to the great outburst of energy which created the Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals. It was so again with the discovery of printing. It was so that the Elizabethan age produced almost at a single blow the greatest masterpieces of English drama. On the other hand, the theatre has now become so highly stereotyped that new forms have to fight a long and exhausting battle against the organised opificers before they can get a hearing. The same applies to the painted picture where the opificers' organisation is particularly strong and well developed, and is even backed by the State. But there is as yet no Royal Academy of Poster Designers, there is no fixed and traditional notion of the kind of thing a poster ought to be. There is as yet no pedantry, no culture, no lecturing, until to-night, to hamper and harass the man who happens to have a gift for expression in this medium. For all these reasons the art of poster design holds out opportunities of a kind that

are all too rare in modern life. This exhibition tells me how far they have been realised.

I fear that the ideas I have tried to outline in this lecture will strike many of you as consisting too much of the atrabiliar grumblings of a disgruntled elder. We are as much accustomed to the assumption that society encourages art as we are to the idea that religion ensues saintliness. In both cases we cling to these assumptions with a certain tenacity. We are nearly as much shocked when we realise that the academies are commercial undertakings as we are when it is forced upon us that many of the clergy are worldly-wise and self-seeking. Perhaps we could save ourselves a good deal of painful and unnecessary emotion if we were less exacting in our ideals, if we recognised that the real and pressing needs of society are not even in what are called works of art concerned with the higher spiritual adventures. It is well occasionally, even for the sake of the temper, to take a cold douche.

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