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FAILING ART SALES DEBATED IN PARIS

Teachers, Critics, Dealers
and Painters All Accused

By JEAN-PIERRE LENOIR

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, Dec. 17—The tide of criticism aimed at the Paris School of painters began to rise with the triumph of pop art at this year's Biennale. The criticism shows no sign of having reached its high water mark.

In Paris almost every aspect of teaching, painting, selling and reselling art has been under attack in recent weeks. The teaching academies through the mill in recent weeks. The teaching academies have been criticized for their outdated methods, the critics have been taken to task for being nonconstructive, and the dealers have been accused of strangling up-and-coming painters to further their own dark interests. Everything from the weather to the Chinese atomic explosion has been blamed for the sinister state of affairs.

Blame is Widely Distributed

A sure sign of the gravity of the situation is the fact that the French are now beginning to back up British critics of the Paris school. Instead of producing an indignant rebuttal, as it would have done a year or two ago, a "Paris Post Mortem" that appeared in The London Observer a few weeks ago was picked up, quoted and even praised here as a sober warning that the end was near—unless something were done soon.

What should be done and who should do it, however, remain matters for discussion. Most of the painters say the crisis is the fault of the galleries.

"There are too many of them in this city and they worry more about their income tax than their art," is a typical appraisal by painters.

The gallery owners spread the blame between the painters and the collectors. Many artists in Paris are losing touch with changes in tastes in the outside world, they charge. When Daniel Cordier closed down his art gallery here after the summer recess, his plaint that many collectors were going through an anti-French phase was taken up by a good number of his colleagues.

The art auctioneers have begun to blame London and New York.

London Sale Impressive

"It's getting far too easy to travel these days," the representative of one of the city's biggest auction offices said bitterly.

"A big sale of paintings at Sotheby's gives our clients an excuse for a weekend junket they wouldn't get at Versailles."

The recent two-day sale at Sotheby's, where nearly \$4 million was paid for paintings at a time when an international rescue mission had to be organized for the pound, depressed Paris auctioneers greatly. It seems now that even the strict guarantees of authenticity that Paris offers at its sales are not a sufficient offset to the tax charges that have to be paid here.

A change in the tax system would help, but it would probably not be a lightning cure. The market slump shows every sign of being long-drawn-out.

A few years back, anybody who had more money than was respectable put the surplus either into gold or into art. Those who thought of it first have made a good deal now by resale.

However, a few of these instant connoisseurs find themselves with cellars full of second-rate canvases, and these help depress the market.

23. Nov. 1964

4. Biennale in Paris

Mit Generalkommissar Grochowiak

Der Direktor der Städtischen Museen Recklinghausen, Thomas Grochowiak, ist von der Kulturabteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes beauftragt worden, als Generalkommissar für die Bundesrepublik die deutsche Abteilung der 4. Biennale in Paris einzurichten. Sie findet im Oktober 1965 im Musée d'Art de la Ville de Paris statt. Vertreten sind die Sparten: Malerei, Plastik, Graphik, Bühnenbild, Musik, Filme über Kunst und künstlerische Teamarbeit. Die Biennale wird Werke von jungen Künstlern zwischen zwanzig und fünfunddreißig Jahren zeigen. An der letzten Biennale 1963 waren fünfundfünfzig Nationen beteiligt.

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Galeria Lacleche w Paryżu, plac Vendôme, ekspozycja malarstwa Jana Lebensteina, wysoce już notowane na rynkach zagranicznych. Recenzent plastyczny „Le Monde” zauważył: „Figuralność u Lebensteina małej koresponduje z rzeczywistością bezpośrednią: ona sięga dalej, drąży w materiale wizje, które ten polski malarz nosi w sobie głęboko... U Jana Lebensteina fantastyka, wydaje się, wywodzi się wprost z koloru, z samej materii. Pióro umoczone w tuszu proponuje nam najczęściej zwierzęta nasakcowane kreską precyzyjną, dokładną, chciałoby się powiedzieć skrupulatną”. ■ Spór między Francuzami a Amerykanami o hegemonię we współczesnej plastyce, rozgorzały od ostatniej Biennale Weneckiej, na której Francuzi ponieśli klęskę, co dało powód jednemu z dzienników amerykańskich do zatytułowania artykułu o Biennale „Paris post mortem”, został ciężcwo osłabiony na skutek przyznania przez amerykańską fundację „Prix Carnegie” dwu wysokich wyróżnień artystom francuskim. Otrzymał je: Jean Arp (wybitny rzeźbiarz) i Pierre Soulages jeden z najświetniejszych malarzy współczesnych. ■