

values rise and fall. Their values rest in the pro-
their own criteria and their own goals.

of value or evaluation has tended to survive
versals of taste, belief, and dogma, I imagine
some vague striving for truth. The beliefs in
h change with every generation, with each
or teacher or cataclysmic discovery or deep
or music or drama or poetry. Whatever our
of it may be, it seems as though truth itself is
awakens the purest passion in man, which
d calls forth his heroic endeavors. It is in pur-
hat we are able to sacrifice present values and
s. And I am sure that it is most often in the
ve to be truth that we criticize negatively or
hers.

arate truths achieved are not final; they rep-
ents of enlightenment. I believe that it is such
ment that are formulated and perhaps pre-
that artists are always in pursuit of the ulti-
eir lights—the perfect religious emotion, the
form, or the underlying character of man.

The Education of an Artist

I am going to begin this discussion with a brief outline of a
course of education which I would recommend to a young person
intending to become an artist. And then I will move on to some of
the reasons for this somewhat unusual course of study.

One's education naturally begins at the cradle. But it may per-
fectly well begin at a later time too. Be born poor . . . or be born
rich . . . it really doesn't matter. Art is only amplified by such di-
versity. Young people of both origins may or may not become
marvelous artists. That depends upon factors having little to do
with circumstances of birth. Whether they will become significant
artists seems to depend upon a curious combination of biology and
education working upon each other in a fashion too subtle for the
eye to follow.

But there is a certain minimum program. There are, roughly,
about three conditions that seem to be basic in the artist's equip-

ment: to be cultured, to be educated, and to be integrated. Now let me be the first to admit that my choice of terms is arbitrary; many words could be substituted and mean approximately the same thing. This odd choice of terms, however, has a reason which will perhaps emerge as I proceed.

I LOVE
CAROLYN C.B.
LOVE
CHARLES
FRANK

Begin to draw as early in life as possible. If you begin quite early, use any convenient tool and draw upon any smooth uncluttered surfaces. The flyleaves of books are excellent, although margins of text-books too have their special uses, as for small pictorial notations upon matters discussed in classes, or for other things left unsaid.

My capsule recommendation for a course of education is as follows:

Attend a university if you possibly can. There is no content of knowledge that is not pertinent to the work you will want to do. But before you attend a university work at something for a while. Do anything. Get a job in a potato field; or work as a grease-monkey in an auto repair shop. But if you do work in a field do not fail to observe the look and the feel of earth and of all things that you handle—yes, even potatoes! Or, in the auto shop, the smell of oil and grease and burning rubber. Paint of course, but if you have to lay aside painting for a time, continue to draw. Listen well to all conversations and be instructed by them and take all seriousness seriously. Never look down upon anything or anyone as not worthy of notice. In college or out of college, read. And form opinions! Read Sophocles and Euripides and Dante and Proust. Read everything that you can find about art except the reviews. Read the Bible; read Hume; read Pogo. Read all kinds of poetry and know many poets and many artists. Go to an art school, or two, or three, or take art courses at night if necessary. And paint and paint and draw and draw. Know all that you can, both curricular and noncurricular—mathematics and physics and economics, logic, and particularly history. Know at least two languages besides your own, but anyway, know French. Look at pictures and more pictures. Look at every kind of visual symbol, every kind of emblem; do not spurn signboards or furniture drawings or this style of art or that style of art. Do not be afraid to like paintings honestly or to dislike them honestly, but if you do dislike them retain an open mind. Do not dismiss any school of art, not the Pre-Raphaelites nor the Hudson River School nor the German Genre painters. Talk and talk and sit at cafés, and listen to everything, to Brahms, to Brubeck, to the Italian hour on the radio. Listen to preachers in small town churches and in big city churches. Listen to politicians in New England town

meetings and to rabble-rousers in Alabama. Even draw them. And remember that you are trying to learn to think what you want to think, that you are trying to co-ordinate mind and hand and eye. Go to all sorts of museums and galleries and to the studios of artists. Go to Paris and Madrid and Rome and Ravenna and Padua. Stand alone in Sainte Chapelle, in the Sistine Chapel, in the Church of the Carmine in Florence. Draw and draw and paint and learn to work in many media; try lithography and aquatint and silk-screen. Know all that you can about art, and by all means have opinions. Never be afraid to become embroiled in art or life or politics; never be afraid to learn to draw or paint better than you already do; and never be afraid to undertake any kind of art at all, however exalted or however common, but do it with distinction.

Anyone may observe that such an art education has no beginning and no end and that almost any other comparable set of experiences might be substituted for those mentioned, without loss. Such an education has, however, a certain structure which is dictated by the special needs of art.

I have been curious and have inquired from time to time about the objectives toward which the liberal education is pointed. I have been answered in different ways—one that it hopes to produce the cultured citizen, or some hold that it simply wants its graduates to be informed—knowledgeable. And I think that the present ideal is to produce the integrated person. I myself can see no great divergence between these objectives and the ones necessary to art.

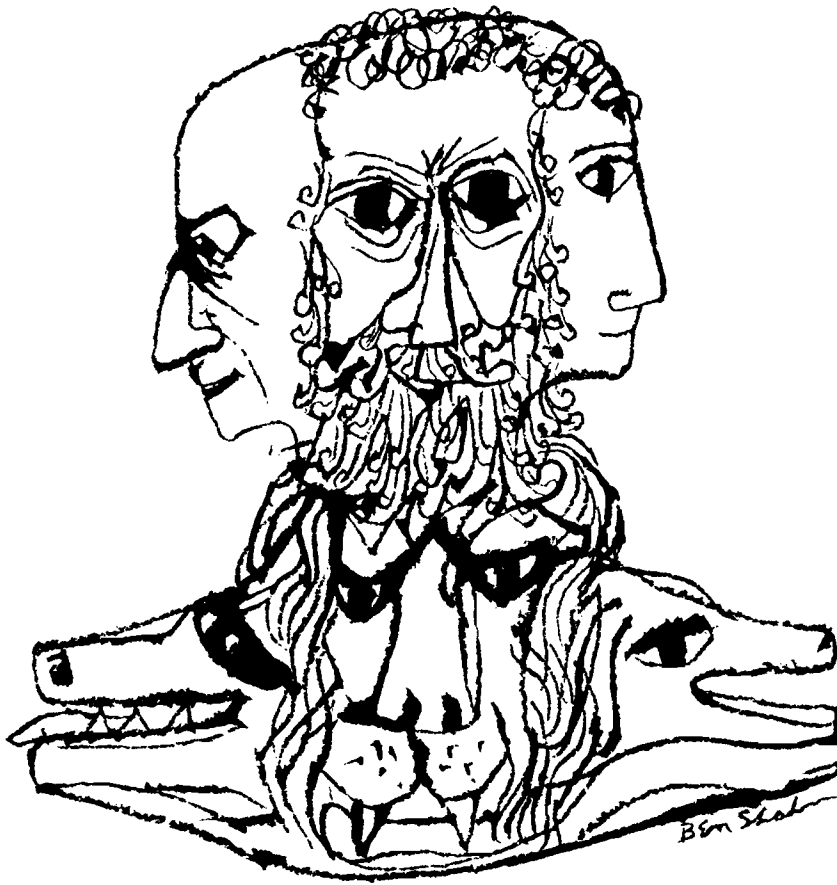
I think we could safely say that perceptiveness is the outstanding quality of the cultured man or woman. Perceptiveness is an awareness of things and people, of their qualities. It is recognition of values, perhaps arising from long familiarity with things of value, with art and music and other creative things, or perhaps proceeding from an inborn sensitiveness of character. But the capacity to value and to perceive are inseparable from the cultured person. These are

indispensable qualities for the artist too, almost as necessary as are his eyes—to look and look, and think, and listen, and be aware.

Education itself might be looked upon as mainly the assimilation of experience. The content of education is naturally not confined to the limits of the college curriculum; all experience is its proper content. But the ideal of the liberal education is that such content be ordered and disciplined. It is not only content, but method too, the bridge to further content. I feel that this kind of discipline is a powerful factor in any kind of creative process; it affords the creative mind means for reaching into new fields of meaning and for interpreting them with some authority. The artist or novelist or poet adds to the factual data the human element of value. I believe that there is no kind of experience which has not its potential visual dimension or its latent meanings for literary or other expression. *Know all you can—mathematics, physics, economics, and particularly history.* As part of the whole education, the teaching of the university is therefore of profoundest value.

But that is not to dismiss self-education as an impressive possibility, and one illuminated by a number of the greatest names in literature, art, and a good many other fields, not excluding the sciences. There is no rule, no current, about self-education any more than there is about advantages or disadvantages of birth. It is historically true that an impressive number of self-educated individuals have also been brilliantly educated: widely read, traveled, cultured, and thoroughly knowledgeable, not to mention productive. The dramatist who has had perhaps the greatest influence upon the contemporary theater stopped school at the age of thirteen. The painter who has set world taste in art is almost entirely self-educated. That does not mean *uneducated*, for each of these two people is almost unmatched in versatility of knowledge.

And that brings us to the third item in our minimum program for the education of an artist: to be integrated. (My sixteen-year-old daughter takes issue with this term. Whatever she may be she does



not want to be “integrated.” Perhaps I can persuade her.)

Being integrated, in the dictionary sense, means being unified. I think of it as being a little more dynamic—educationally, for instance, being organically interacting. In either sense, integration implies involvement of the whole person, not just selected parts of him; integration, for instance, of kinds of knowledge (history comes to life in the art of any period); integration of knowledge with thinking—and that means holding opinions; and then integration within the whole personality—and that implies holding some

unified philosophical view, an attitude toward life. And then there must be the uniting of this personality, this view, with the creative capacities of the person so that his acts and his works and his thinking and his knowledge will be a unity. Such a state of being, curiously enough, invokes the word *integrity* in its basic sense: being unified, being integrated.

In their ideal of producing the person of integrity—the fully integrated person—colleges and universities are somewhat hampered by the very richness and diversity of the knowledge content which they must communicate. Development of creative talents is allowed to wait upon the acquisition of knowledge. Opinion is allowed to wait upon authority. There may be certain fields in which this is a valid procedure, but it is not so in art. (*Draw and draw, and paint, and learn to work in many media.*)

Integration, for the person in any of the creative arts, might be said to be the organic relating of the thousand items of experience into form, for the poet, into tonalities and cadences and words with their many allusive senses and suggested images. The thinking of the poet must habitually be tonality and cadence thinking, as with the artist it is color, shape, image thinking. In each of these cases the discipline of formulation is inseparable from the discipline of thinking itself.

I hope that I have not too badly stretched these commonly used terms, to be cultured, to be educated, to be integrated. In any case, in the sense in which I have used them they are and have been the basic equipment of artists.

I sometimes find myself viewing with great nostalgia the educational procedure by which such artists as Leonardo were initiated into art. When the young man of the Quattrocento decided to pursue a career of art, he simply put together his most impressive pieces of work, showed them to a number of people and ultimately became apprenticed to one of the known Masters. There he began his service and education by grinding colors and mixing them, by

preparing surfaces, and probably even making brushes. (What a fundamental kind of training that seems to us today when so many of us do not even know what our paints are made of!) The young artist probably was permitted first to paint in backgrounds. He was no doubt advanced in time to skies and landscapes, draperies, a face or so, and ultimately matriculated into angels. As he learned the use of his hands, and how to see things in shapes and colors, other changes were taking place in him. Perhaps his rustic manners were becoming a little more polished so that he could take part in the conversations of the atelier, even venture an opinion or so. He gradually became acquainted with the larger problems of the painter: composition, construction, qualities of spirituality or beauty, meaning in pictures. There was constant talk about art, about form; and there were the great artists who came in and out of the atelier (those who were on speaking terms with his employer). The young painter gradually mastered iconographies, Christian and pagan and personal.

But then there was music too, and poetry read and discussed, and the young artist not infrequently became both musician and poet. There was the conversation of learned men, talk of science, the excitement in the revival of ancient learning, mastery of the humanities. Of course there were the new buildings, too, palaces and fountains, and always the interest in the great spaces to be filled by paintings, the open courts to be occupied by sculpture, the façades and domes and bridges to be ornamented with beautiful shapes.

The day came, of course—the famous day—when the young painter executed a foreground with an angel which far surpassed in beauty the work of the Master. Then of course he was very much in demand, the master of his own atelier.

How integrated indeed was the growing artist of that time, and cultured, and educated!

There have been efforts to revive the apprenticeship system, but not very successful ones. I believe that if such a revival ever is ac-



complished it will be preceded by integration of a different sort from that which I have been talking about—by the integration of art itself into the common life of the nation, as it was so integrated during the Renaissance in Italy. Since there is such rising interest in the setting and the look of the new great buildings—not just in their size, but also in their beauty and their placement—it seems not im-

possible that there may take place a resurgence of art upon a vast scale, of mural painting and mosaics, great out-of-door sculpture, and the ornamentation of public places.

The artist of the Renaissance had no great problems of style comparable to those which plague the young artist of today. He might simply follow the established manners of painting as most artists did. If his powers were greater or his vision more personal he expanded the existing manners of painting to meet his needs. But the artist today, and particularly the young one, feels challenged to be unique.

Such a condition, such a challenge, strikes at the security of the painter; it may sometimes press artists to exceed the bounds of good sense, simply to be different. But such a challenge has much to do with the character and the function of today's art, and despite its hazards it is also an advantage and an opportunity.

It is in the nature of today's art to draw upon the individualness of the painter and to affirm the individualness of perception in the audience or viewer of art. The values of art rest in the value of the person. Art today may be as deeply subjective as it is possible for man to be, or it is free to be objective and observant; it may and it does examine every possible human mood. It communicates directly without asking approval of any authority. Its values are not those of set virtues, but are of the essential nature of man, good or bad. Art is one of the few media of expression which still remains unedited, unprocessed, and undictated. If its hazards are great, so are its potentialities magnificent.

It seems to me that this particular function of art—to express man in his individualness and his variety—is one that will not easily run out. It may have its low points, but the challenge and the potentiality remain high. The accomplishments of modern art in this individualistic direction are already impressive, of course. There have been quite remarkable psychological probings and revelations in painting; there are a dozen or so schools which one might mention

—the Surrealists, the German Expressionists, and so on. There have been the sociological efforts—Social Realism and some others. The poetic sense has been brilliantly exploited—Loren MacIver and Morris Graves and so many contemporary artists. We have the love of crumbling ruins in one painter, Berman, the return to myth in others, many others. Art has probed the mysteries of life and death, and examined all the passions. It has been responsible and irresponsible, and sympathetic and satiric. It has explored ugliness and beauty and has often deliberately confused them—much to the perplexity of an often lagging public. (*Listen to Brahms and Brubeck and the Italian hour on the radio.*)

All such probing and testing of reality and creating of new realities may result from different kinds of educational focus, different kinds of content, but they always require the three basic capacities: first, of perceptiveness, a recognition of values, a certain kind of culture, second, a capacity for the vast accumulation of knowledge, and third, a capacity to integrate all this material into creative acts and images. The future of art assuredly rests in education—not just one kind of education but many kinds.

During the past decade I have taken part in a great number of art-oriented symposiums, the general object of which seems to be educational. Since the telltale traces remain in my file cabinet, I have scanned some of the titles just to be refreshed upon what the main problems are that perplex the young, and that concern the art-interested public.

Titles set forth for the artists, architects, museum directors, and the like to discuss read like so many sermons. "Modern Art and Modern Civilization," "If I Had My Art Career to Begin Today," "Artistic Creation in America Today," "Creative Art During the Next Twenty-Five Years," "Creative Art During the Past Fifty Years," "The Artist's Credo," "Relation of Morals to Art," "How Can the Artist Contribute to an Industrial and Scientific Age?" (I think I told them that it couldn't), "Why Does the Artist Paint?"

(Why, indeed!), "Responsibility for Standards of Taste in a Democratic Society," "The Search for New Standards" (Aren't we standardized enough?), and then three or four such discussions devoted to the education of the professional artist.

When all the questions have been asked and all the opinions are in, there seem to be about three major problems which concern the young artist, not lofty ones, but rather earthly and practical. They are simply: "What shall I paint?" "How shall I paint it?" and "What security can I have as a painter?" It seems pertinent to this discussion to consider these questions.

As to the first—"What shall I paint?"—the answer is a pretty obvious one, "Paint what you are, paint what you believe, paint what you feel." But to go a little deeper, such a question seems to indicate an absence of opinion, or perhaps it indicates a belief, not an uncommon one, that painting ought to be this or ought to be that, that there is some preferred list of appropriate subjects. Again I think that many young people if they were asked "What do you believe, or hold most dear?" would reply honestly, "I do not know." And so we again go back to our first outline for an education: "*In college or out of college, read, and form opinions.*"

In the absence of very strong motives and opinions, the solution arrived at by the student or young artist who does not know what to paint is that he simply copies or produces a replica of what some other artist has painted before. Ultimately, however, even in this process there seems to take place a kind of self-recognition—if the young person continues to paint at all. He finds certain elements among his eclectic choices which are expressive and meaningful to him. Gradually his own personality emerges; he develops beliefs and opinions. One might say, through his own somewhat stumbling creative efforts he gradually becomes an integrated person.

The second question—"How shall I paint?"—is a stylistic one and is not unrelated to the foregoing content question. Again there is the suggestion of an absence of opinions and values—beliefs.

Some years ago when the painter Max Beckmann died suddenly, I was asked to take over his class at the Brooklyn Museum School. I did so . . . reluctantly. On my first morning with the students I looked over their work and it appeared to me that the most conspicuous fault in it was a lack of thinking. There seemed to be no imaginative variety or resourcefulness. It was mostly just Beckmann. I certainly was not going to go on teaching more Beckmann however greatly I may admire his work—and I do. I remember sitting on the edge of the model stand to have a sort of exploratory talk with the students. It seemed to me desirable to uncover some long-range objective, if there was any, and to find out what sort of people they were. We talked about all sorts of things, and I probably talked quite a little—I usually do.

In the midst of our discussion one of the students walked up to me and said, "Mr. Shahn, I didn't come here to learn philosophy. I just want to learn *how* to paint." I asked him which one of the one hundred and forty styles he wanted to learn, and we began to establish, roughly, a sort of understanding.

I could teach him the mixing of colors, certainly, or how to manipulate oils or tempera or water color. But I certainly could not teach him any style of painting—at least I wasn't going to. Style today is the shape of one's specific meanings. It is developed with an aesthetic view and a set of intentions. It is not the *how* of painting but the *why*. To imitate or to teach style alone would be a little like teaching a tone of voice or a personality.

Craft itself, once an inexorable standard in art, is today an artist's individual responsibility. Craft probably still does involve deftness of touch, ease of execution—in other words, mastery. But it is the mastery of one's personal means. And while it would be hard to imagine any serious practitioner in art *not* seeking craft and mastery and deftness, still it is to be emphasized that such mastery is today not measured by a set, established style, but only by a private sense of perfection. (*Paint and paint, and draw and draw.*)



I have mentioned our great American passion for freedom. And now, let me add to that the comment that freedom itself is a disciplined thing. Craft is that discipline which frees the spirit; and style is the result.

I think of dancers upon a stage. Some will have perfected their

craft to a higher degree than others. Those who appear relatively more hampered and leaden in their movements are those of lesser craft. Those who appear unimpeded, completely free in all their movements, are so because they have brought craft to such a degree of perfection. The perceptive eye may discern the craft in many varieties of art. The nonperceptive eye probably seeks to impose one standard of craft upon all kinds of art.

Last year I visited the painter Morandi in Bologna. He expressed to me his sympathy with the young art students of the present day. "There are so many possible ways to paint," he said, "it's all so confusing for them. There is no central craft which they can learn, as you or I could once learn a craft."

The third question which emerges from our symposiums is that concerning how the artist is to earn his living in art. Well, I shall not pretend to be able to answer that. Some artists manage to live by their art alone. Some do commercial work, some teach, some do completely unrelated work in order to support their art. And there are many kinds of professions associated with art—editorial work, designing, and so on. But they have no bearing upon the possible education of an artist.

But some of these problems of living are at least revealing. One young man has told me that he fears the insecurity of art. A second has confessed that he wants to live graciously—and there is certainly nothing wrong with that. A third young man feels that art is actually not a profession in the sense in which the law or medicine are professions. "As an artist," he says, "you cannot hang out a shingle and be in business. You may finish a number of years of study and still not have the means to a livelihood."

No one can promise success to an intended painter. Nor is the problem of painting one of success at all. It is rather one of how much emphasis one places upon self-realization, upon the things that he thinks. I believe that the individual whose interests are measurable primarily in terms of money, or even of success, would

do well to avoid a lifetime of painting. The primary concern of the serious artist is to get the thing said—and wonderfully well. His values are wholly vested in the object which he has been creating. Recognition is the wine of his repast, but its substance is the accomplishment of the work itself.

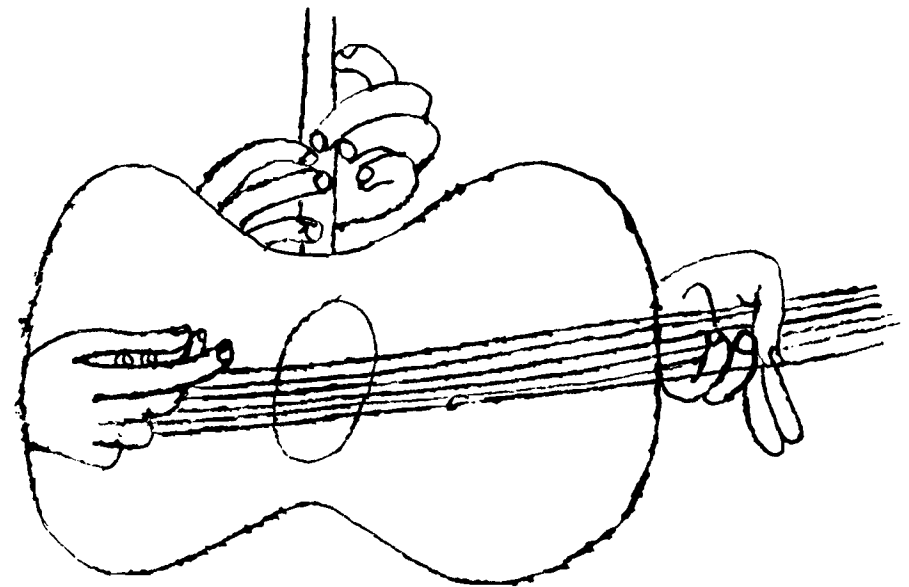
There are many kinds of security, and one kind lies in the knowledge that one is dedicating his hours and days to doing the things that he considers most important. Such a way of spending one's time may be looked upon by some as a luxury and by others as a necessity. It may be security and it may be gracious living. (*Go to Paris and Rome and Ravenna and Padua, and stand alone in Sainte Chapelle.*) (*Talk and talk and sit at cafés, and listen . . . and never be afraid to become embroiled . . .*)

As to its degree of professionalism, art is I suppose as professional as one makes it. Some painters work very methodically, observing an eight- or more-hour day, dispensing their work through galleries, placing pictures in every current exhibition, and having representatives in many parts of the country. Others are very haphazard about all this detail, and paint when the mood strikes them. But I suppose that almost any artist today whose major occupation is art has some more or less business-like connection with a practical world through one or another kind of agency or individual. Perhaps it is not customary to hang out a shingle as the lawyer is supposed to do, but it might be an interesting experiment.

Besides these questions of what to paint and how to paint and the one which I cannot attempt to answer—how to live—there is a further question which I often ask myself. That is, for whom does one paint?

Oh yes, for oneself; that is obvious. The painter must fulfill his own personal needs and must meet his own private standards. But whom actually does he reach through his painting?

I suppose that the tangible public of any artist is confined to a circle of persons of like mind to himself, perhaps never a very large



circle. They are a rather special public: those who know art, who comprehend the formal means—the short-hand—of any particular painter, those who are in sympathy with his aims and views.

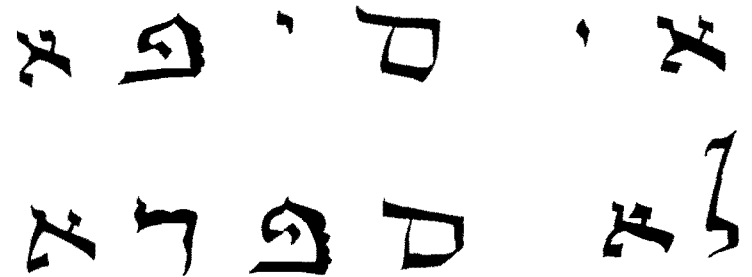
Then there is a wider, implied public, that which the artist himself deems fundamental, the people whom, ideally, he would like to reach, or whose realities are encompassed by his work. And then there is the whole public. However abstruse may be the forms of a work of art at the time of its creation, it seems as though ultimately the public does catch up, and does come to understand meanings. Looking backward, one might be justified in saying that if what any artist has to say is fundamentally human and profound the public will ultimately take his work unto itself. But if his own conceptions are limited and narrow in their human meaning it seems likely that time will erase his work.

Kandinsky views this process of the widening understanding of art as a sort of triangular one; the tip of the triangle always occupied by the originators, the innovators, whose work is little under-

stood. As the triangle of taste moves onward, an ever-widening public comes to understand it, until the base of the triangle is reached (or approximately the whole public) and the work is widely accepted. By this time, of course, new ideas and new ways of painting form the apex of a new triangle, unacceptable again to the major part of the public, but probably destined for its ultimate enjoyment and understanding.

The sense of reality and meaning in any person's life and his work is probably vested in a community of some sort wherein he finds recognition and affirmation of whatever he does. A community may, of course, be only the place in which someone lives; or a community may consist in a circle of admirers (such as that which I have mentioned above), or again it may be some area of self-identification, the place of one's birth, or some way of life that appeals to him. There is a considerable loss of the sense of community in present-day life. And I think that one of the great virtues of the university lies in its being a community in the fullest sense of the word, a place of residence, and at the same time one of personal affirmation and intellectual rapport.

The young artist-to-be in the university, while he may share so many of the intellectual interests of his associates, and has a community in that respect, is likely to be alone artistically. In that interest he is without community. And as a result he suffers keenly the absence of the sense of reality in art. Even though his choice of a life's work may meet with complete approval among his fellows, he still is without the give-and-take of well-informed, pointed, and experienced conversation pertinent to what he is doing. But then it is not at all unlikely that his ambitions may be looked upon by some of his friends as a sort of temporary derangement. Almost all the other young people around him will be turning their energies and conversations toward work of a seemingly more tangible order, toward professions or toward the business world.



One's future intentions are intangible things at best; they have always some flavor of unreality. There are few college students who would presume to look upon themselves as presidential candidates or Nobel Prize winners. The writer who has not written or the painter who has not yet painted seems, even to himself perhaps, to be grasping at wisps of smoke or to be deluding himself with romance. For such a person, there are as yet no such certainties. Artistically speaking, he does not yet know who he is or will be. More than anyone else, the young person embarked upon such a career needs a community, needs its affirmation, its reality, its criticism and recognition. (Or, as I put it a little earlier in that highly compressed description of an artist's education: *Know many artists. Go to an art school, or two or three. Look at pictures and more pictures. Go to all sorts of museums and galleries and to the studio of artists.*)

In the case of an older artist, one who has done a great deal of painting, his own work may in a strange sort of way come to constitute for him a certain kind of community. There is some substance and affirmation in what he has already done. It at least exists; he has found that he can cast a shadow. In relation to what he has done the new effort is no longer an unreality or an uncertainty. However small his audience, he has some sense of community.

The public function of art has always been one of creating a community. That is not necessarily its intention, but it is its result—the religious community created by one phase of art; the peasant community created by another; the Bohemian community that we enter into through the work of Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec and Manet; the aristocratic English community of Gainsborough and Reynolds, and the English low-life community of Hogarth.

It is the images we hold in common, the characters of novels and plays, the great buildings, the complex pictorial images and their meanings, and the symbolized concepts, principles, and great ideas of philosophy and religion that have created the human com-

munity. The incidental items of reality remain without value or common recognition until they are symbolized, recreated, and imbued with value. The potato field and the auto repair shop remain without quality or awareness or the sense of community until they are turned into literature by a Faulkner or a Steinbeck or a Thomas Wolfe or into art by a Van Gogh.

