

Dear Butch:

Have been noting your daily progress with satisfaction. Have also been waiting for your pictures but without satisfaction. Well, Butch, how is New York treating you? You should be quite a New Yorker by this time, and a good beef fed New Yorker too, judging from the way those German couple have been feeding you boast beefs. I sure would like to visit the fair over there. I'm sort of fed up with the fair here. Nothing much spectacular here. Judging from the pictures in the Life, the N Y fair seems very interesting. The big exhibitors seem to have put on something more than a mere advertising show as it is here; something worth seeing, gigantic and spectacular. People here are starting to grumble somewhat. They want the admission price lowered. Also some kick about the bridge toll price and the ferry boat price. Gayway is too windy and a concessioner complains people simply aren't coming. Life has it that the fair is in the red. The Anthony Comstocks here are trying to put pants on the Gayway gals. But then visitors are not expected until after the middle of May. So things may perk up yet. Trouble with a show like this is that either it has to be very interesting and spectacular or else a failure. It doesn't do to give show which one may see ordinarily. The point is not that the shows are dull and uninteresting; in fact they may be quite interesting to some. But looking through those exhibits, I find it difficult to evaluate them in proper perspective. They are disconnected, as necessarily they would be, being shows put on, by different concerns. I go through the exhibits and pick up a little fact here, and a little information there, but what do they mean. They simply remain scattered facts, like picking out a dictionary word from here and there in the dictionary, as contrasted with seeing the words in a novel, where they are used as part of a well organized scheme. Facts when they are isolated from their context, lose their meaning. Facts in themselves are of little value; what is more important is what people think of these facts. If one has little - low opinion of the fact that vaccination can prevent smallpox, what good is it. Another thing that tends to degrade a fair like this is a taint of commercialism. Nothing is done for the joy of doing it, but for profit. I look at the statues around the fair but they do not thrill or inspire me. Yet I can recall going through the exhibition of French art at the Palace of the Legion of Honor a few years back and still remember Corot's beautiful views of Rome, or Rodin's lovely sculpture of a hand, Lorain's lovely landscape, Watteau's exquisite painting of comedians. But the statues on the fair ground leave me cold and uninspired. They are good workmanship, artistically done, as art works go, and students and academicians, looking for points of art, may find them even inspiring. But for a poor mortal like me who cares little whether the curve is according to Hogarth or according to Hoyle, who is interested chiefly in their emotional impact, the statues lack emotional content. There is something lacking; whether due to fault in workmanship, my prejudice, or the surrounding in which they are place, I don't know. They seem as if the artist merely what he was commissioned to do, did the work to satisfaction, and there the story ends. They lack the qualities of a great work of art, done for the sheer love of it; a work, however much one may note its defects, still gives forth something of a creative struggle of an artist, breathes forth from it all the emotional struggle that the artist tried to put into it. Paintings of Van Gogh or the "Card Players" of

Cezanne are not masterpieces, comparable to the works of the old masters; and Cezanne would be the last to consider ~~consider~~ himself satisfied with his particular painting. But one cannot deny their esthetic impact. One cannot deny that into their creation has gone something of the personality of the artist, not in the sense of their style of painting, but leave that to the acadecicians, but in emotional content. But then at the fair, the art work is merely for eed decorative purpose, so one should not judge the it too harshly.

It has always seemed to me that the work of art is rather intimately bound with the kind of life an artist lives, his personality. I don't expect to see a great work of art emanating from one whose tastes run into cheap things. Not that one should steer away from rollicking things in life; you can't tell where you may find a great artist. But I think the quality of his mind has a great deal to do with his work. By mind I don't mean just intellect; but I mean more his whole personality.

It was a great day here at the fair on Japan Day. The whole Jap. population turned, and the Americans were pop-eyed at so many Japs; they didn't know there could be so many. But I wasn't there. I was in the dark room fooling around with some negatives. I finally developed the negatives of rhododendrons I took a year ago. Man, what inertia. It had been lying around undeveloped for a year! One turned out pretty good; made an enlargement. I've been spending some of the afternoon in the dark room doing some enlargement; just practicing. I am thinking of going in for some de luxe or salon printing, not just a commercial finishing. I ~~am~~ may be able to line up some private customers, although the entrance to the shop is so full of bums that its rather discouraging. But there may be some interested in good prints who may come around even to a place like that. Rich ones go to well established places like Hirsch & Kaye, even though the prints may not be all that they could be. But its the name that counts. Then there are the amateurs who know salon prints; but they probably do their own printing. But there may be some who want really good prints, the best that can be got out of a negative, and who are willing to pay reasonable prices, but who either haven't the time or the facilities to do their own printing. Commercial finishing doesn't do justice to a good negative because of time and price consideration. What I would like to do is to have the customer come to me and coperate with me working out just the kind of print he wants. I can show him what can be done with the negative; what kind of paper may be best suited; we can look at the composition and decide just how much of the picture we want to include; etc., etc. So with that end in view I've been practicing enlarging. Unless a negative happens to be perfect as re subject matter, kind of a picture ~~which-is~~ whose every step is worked out from the beginning to the end, it usually requires cropping or some sort of control to yield the best print. I made both a straight print and controlled print from the rhodo neg. and there is a difference in result. I'll make another and send them to you if I get around to it. Since I'm practicing just now you might send some negatives that has possibilities and I'll make some enlargements for you. There are different surface textures of paper, and different tones, some "cold" others having "warm" tones. I would like to find out what kind of treatment is best suited for a particular type of picture. This has less to do with technical skill and more to do with developed judgment and fine taste. So if one can master these there may be some possibilities.

One of the obstacles is that, though there seems to be a developing photo consciousness on the part of the public, it hasn't reached to the point where the public is willing to accept photo as work of art, willing to pay good price. Photography is so new comparatively speaking, that the public hasn't as yet been educated to it. It has not been educated to the possibilities of it as a medium of expression. Whether you would consider it as a medium of artistic expression would be subject to debate, for then it would depend upon what you consider art; whether you confine it to painting and literature, or still more narrowly to painting of religious matters as in the Renaissance or earlier period; or broaden its field to include streamlined architecture, poetry of motion, or catching with the lens a fleeting expression or incident, or recording some human event with sympathetic understanding; it must be more than just recording. It is difficult to decide without having explored all the possibilities of the camera. Perhaps one of the difficulties toward recognition of photograph as a work of art has been the influence of painting. Photographer has tried to imitate painting, and the art critics have judged photographs with standards keyed to the criticism of painting. Some day you and I will discover what photography can do, eh, Butch? I don't agree with Rockwell Kent that its sole purpose is documentation. There are still extant these--whe well known photographers who produce ab work of art bastard prints, neither photographs nor paintings, something half way between, usually made from paper negative, with a fence drawn in here and a road drawn out there. They remind me of a medico who flunked out and took up chiropractic.

How's Sakurai's harem coming along. He ought to have quite a collection by now.

By the way my rhododendron done me wrong. Each of the stalks had a bud surrounded by a rosette of leaves. The buds started swelling and I was expecting to see a nice blossom come out; but it broke my heart when they turned into leaves. I was sure they were flower buds. So no flowers this year. Maybe I gave too much N₂.

There is nothing much doing here. The excitement in the Japanese town has died down since the Japan day.

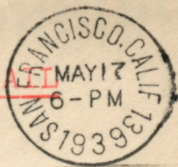
So long, until next time-----

LM

P.S. who's this Noda gal?

AIR

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Robertson

My

BOW
BRI N' 2'