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LECTURES IN AMERICA

By Gertrude Stein

Here the most famous exponent of subjective realism discusses for Americans the concepts of art which are at the root of her own work. With all the authority of her own seminal influence, she introduces the American reader to the whole field of modern European art, which is the background of his own culture. Ranging widely throughout painting, literature, and music, she describes, in her inimitable style, the things that seem to her important for Gertrude Stein and for America.

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What is poetry and if you know what
poetry is what is prose.

There is no use in telling more
than you know, no not even if you do
not know it.

PICTURES

IT is natural that I should tell about pictures, that is, about paintings. Everybody must like something and I like seeing painted pictures. Once the Little Review had a questionnaire, it was for their farewell number, and they asked everybody whose work they had printed to answer a number of questions. One of the questions was, what do you feel about modern art. I answered, I like to look at it. That was my real answer because I do, I do like to look at it, that is at the picture part of modern art. The other parts of it interest me much less.

As I say everybody has to like something, some people like to eat some people like to drink, some people like to make money some like to spend money, some like the theatre, some even like sculpture, some like gardening, some like dogs, some like cats, some people like to look at things, some people like to look at everything. Any way some one is almost sure to really like something outside of their real occupation. I have not mentioned games indoor and out, and birds and crime and politics and photography, but anybody can go on, and I, personally, I like all these things well enough but they do not hold my attention long enough. The only thing, funnily enough, that I never get tired of doing is looking at pictures. There is no reason for it but for some reason, anything reproduced by paint, preferably, I may even say certainly, by oil paints on a flat surface holds my attention. I do

not really care for water colors or pastels, they do not really hold my attention.

I cannot remember when I was not so.

I like sign paintings and I do regret that they no longer paint the signs on the walls with oil paints. Paper with the things reproduced plastered on the wall does not do the same thing to me, it does not hold my attention. Neither does wall paper although wall paper does sometimes give the illusion of paint. But it does not do so enough, no not enough. I like to look at anything painted in oil on a flat surface although for nothing in the world would I want to be a painter or paint anything.

I have often wondered why I like the representation or the presentation of anything in oil on a flat surface but I have never been able to find out the reason why. It is simply a fact. I even like a curtain or a sign painted as they often do in Europe painted in oil of the things to be sold inside and I like a false window or a vista painted on a house as they do so much in Italy. In short anything painted in oil anywhere on a flat surface holds my attention and I can always look at it and slowly yes slowly I will tell you all about it.

When I look at landscape or people or flowers they do not look to me like pictures, no not at all. On the other hand pictures for me do not have to look like flowers or people or landscapes or houses or anything else. They can, they often do, but they do not have to.

Once an oil painting is painted, painted on a flat surface, painted by anybody who likes or is hired or is interested to paint it, or who has or has not been taught to paint it, I can always look at it and it always holds my attention. The painting may be good it may be bad, medium or very bad or very good but any way I like to look at it. And now, why does the representation of things that being painted do not look at all like the things look to me from which they are painted why does such a representation give me pleasure and hold my attention. Ah yes, well this I do not know and I do not know whether I ever will know, this. However it is true and I repeat that to give me this interest the painting must be an oil painting and any oil painting whether it is intended to look like something and looks like it or whether it is intended to look like something and does not look like it it really makes no difference, the fact remains that for me it has achieved an existence in and for itself, it exists on as being an oil painting on a flat surface and it has its own life and like it or not there it is and I can look at it and it does hold my attention.

That the oil painting once it is made has its own existence this is a thing that can of course be said of anything. Anything once it is made has its own existence and it is because of that that anything holds somebody's attention. The question always is about that anything, how much vitality has it and do you happen to like to look at it.

By anything here I really mean anything. Anything that happens anything that exists anything that is made has of course its own vitality and presumably some one or if not yet then there could presumably be sometime someone who would like to look at it. But does it really, that is is it true of everything does everything that is anything does it hold somebody's attention. Yes perhaps so. One certainly may say so. And so it comes back to the fact that anything having its own existence how much vitality has it and do you happen to like to look at it and does it hold your attention.

Now most of us live in ourselves that is to say in one thing and we have to have a relief from the intensity of that thing and so we like to look at something. Presidents of the United States of America are supposed to like to look at baseball games. I can understand that, I did too once, but ultimately it did not hold my attention. Pictures made in oil on a flat surface do, they do hold my attention, and so to go further into this matter.

The first thing I ever saw painted and that I remember and remembered seeing and feeling as painted, no one of you could know what that was, it was a very large oil painting. It was the panorama of the battle of Waterloo. I must have been about eight years old and it was very exciting, it was exciting seeing the panorama of the battle of Waterloo. There was a man there who told all about the battle, I knew

a good deal about it already because I always read historical novels and history and I knew about the sunken road where the french cavalry were caught but though all that was exciting the thing that was exciting me was the oil painting. It was an oil painting a continuous oil painting, one was surrounded by an oil painting and I who lived continuously out of doors and felt air and sunshine and things to see felt that this was all different and very exciting. There it all was the things to see but there was no air it just was an oil painting. I remember standing on the little platform in the center and almost consciously knowing that there was no air. There was no air, there was no feeling of air, it just was an oil painting and it had a life of its own and it was a scene as an oil painting sees it and it was a real thing which looked like something I had seen but it had nothing to do with that something that I knew because the feeling was not at all that not at all the feeling which I had when I saw anything that was really what the oil painting showed. It the oil painting showed it as an oil painting. That is what an oil painting is.

Later when I was about eighteen I saw the actual battle field of the Battle of Gettysburg and the difference in emotion in seeing the actual battle field of the battle of Gettysburg and the panorama of the Battle of Waterloo is a thing that I very well remember. I knew of course I knew all about the battle of Gettysburg. When we were there it was a wonderful

early summer day, and it was an entirely different thing from an oil painting. There were so many things back present and future, and a feeling of enjoying oneself and there it was and the whole thing was very complicated. I know what the battle field of the Battle of Gettysburg looks like in general and in detail and I know what I felt and I know what was said by us and what we said and the states that were represented but I do not know exactly what it looked like as I know exactly what the battle of Waterloo looked like at the Panorama of the battle of Waterloo which was an enormous circular oil painting. Do you begin to see a little bit what it is to be an oil painting. I have always liked looking at pictures of battle scenes but as I say I always like looking at pictures and then once after the war I saw the battle field of the battle of Metz. For a moment as I looked at it, it was a grey day and we were on our way back from Alsace to Paris and we had seen so many battle fields of this war and this one was so historical, it almost it did almost look like an oil painting. As I say things do not generally look to me like an oil painting. And just then into this thing which was so historical that it almost did look like an oil painting a very old couple of people a man and woman got out of an automobile and went to look at a grave at the way-side and the moment of its existence as an oil painting ceased, it became a historical illustration for a simple historical story. In connection with the Panorama of

the Battle of Waterloo there was a description of the battle of Waterloo as told by Victor Hugo. If it had not rained on the twenty-sixth of March 1814 the fate of Europe would have been changed. I never really believed this because of course I had read so many English novels and so much English history about the battle of Waterloo but it was a perfectly definite picture of the battle of Waterloo and it had nothing whatever to do with an oil painting. It was the complete other thing of an oil painting. And now to go on with what an oil painting is.

The next thing I remember about an oil painting were the advent, in San Francisco I was still a child, of two very different paintings. One was by a man I think named Rosenthal who had been sent to Europe to develop his talent and he came back with a very large painting of a scene from Scott's Marmion the nun being entombed in a wall as a punishment. The other painting was Millet's Man with a Hoe. Both the pictures interested me equally, but I did not want a photograph of the Rosenthal picture but I did of the Man with a Hoe. I remember looking at it a great deal. And then we that is my brother and myself very moved not knowing exactly why but very moved showed the photograph to my eldest brother and he looked at it equally solemnly and then he said very decidedly, it is a hell of a hoe, and he was right.

But I still know exactly how the picture of the Man with a Hoe looked. I know exactly how it looked

although having now lived a great deal in the french country I see the farmers constantly hoeing with just that kind of a hoe. The hoeing with just that kind of a hoe as I see them all the time and meet them all the time have nothing to do with Millet's Man with a Hoe but that is natural because I know the men as men, the hoe as a hoe and the fields as fields. But I still do know Millet's Man with a Hoe, because it was an oil painting. And my brother said it was a hell of hoe but what it was was an oil painting. Millet's pictures did have something that made one say these things. I remember not so many years ago at Bourg going through the monastery next to the cathedral of Brou. There unexpectedly in a little room was a cow, almost a real cow and it was an oil painting by Millet, and it did not startle me but there it was it was almost a cow but it was an oil painting and though I had not thought of a Millet for years, I did like it.

After this experience with Millet's Man with a Hoe and the Rosenthal picture I began to become educated aesthetically, first etchings, they were in those days reproduced in magazines and we used to cut them out and then we began to collect real etchings, not many but still a few, all this was still in San Francisco, Seymour Hayden, Whistler, Zorn and finally Meryon, but these two were much later, and Japanese prints. I took on all this earnestly but inevitably as they were not oil paintings they did not hold my attention. I do

remember, still in San Francisco, a sign painting of a man painting a sign a huge sign painting and this did hold my attention. I used to go and look at it and stand and watch it and then it bothered me because it almost did look like a man painting a sign and one wants, one likes to be deceived but not for too long. That is a thing to remember about an oil painting. It bothered me many years later when I first looked at the Velasquez's in Madrid. They almost looked really like people and if they kept on doing so might it not bother one as wax works bother one. And if it did bother one was it an oil painting, because an oil painting is something that looking at it it looks as it is, an oil painting.

All this has to be remembered but to go back again.

The next thing that interested me in the way of an oil painting, still in San Francisco, were some paintings by a frenchman named Cazin. Of course perhaps none of you have ever heard of him.

He was one of the then new school of painters who being accepted officially in the salons were the commonplace end of the then still outlawed school of impressionists. Cazin made a field of wheat look almost like a field of wheat blowing in the wind. It did look like a field of wheat blowing in the wind and I was very fond of looking at fields of wheat blowing in the wind. In a little while I found myself getting a little mixed as to which looked most like a field of wheat blowing in the wind the picture of the field of

wheat or the real field of wheat. When that happens one naturally gets discouraged. I may say one finally gets discouraged. One is not discouraged at first, one is confirmed in one's feeling about a field of wheat blowing in the wind and then gradually one is less pleased and at last one is discouraged. One does not like to be mixed in one's mind as to which looks most like something at which one is looking the thing or the painting. And so I rather lost interest in both.

There was another painting also by Cazin called Juan and Juanita or at least that is what I called it to myself because at that time I was reading a story that had these two names, I think actually it was called something biblical. Anyway it was a picture of two children lost in the desert and the desert was like the California desert. I knew. The desert this painted desert looked very like the desert but the children did not look really very much like children and so finally I preferred that picture to the field of wheat. I suppose I concluded that since the children did not really look as children looked to me probably neither did the blowing wheat nor the desert. All this of course was very dim inside me.

The next thing that impressed me in the way of oil painting was in Baltimore at the Walters Art Gallery the pictures of the Barbizon school, not Millet any longer but Daubignys and Rousseaus. Here once more the blue sky behind the rocks was the blue sky I knew behind rocks, and particularly the Rousseaus solidi-

fying for me the blue sky behind rocks held me. As the pictures were small and the blue sky was small the question of the real sky did not bother me, and beside although it pleased me and I liked it it did not really excite me. Then I went to Boston and there I saw the first big Corots. The one in the Boston Museum the evening star. There again I felt peaceful about it being a sky because after all it was filled with association, it was not a thing in itself. It looked like the evening star it looked as Tannhauser felt and more than that one could feel how it looked and so there was no bother. Later on, Corots always pleased me but that I think was largely because they were so gentle. I never was much troubled by anything in connection with them.

Then I bought myself my first oil painting. It was painted by an American painter called Shilling and I wanted it because it looked like any piece of American country and the sky was high and there was a cloud and it looked like something in movement and I remember very well what it was like, and then again it bothered me because after all which did I like most the thing seen or the thing painted and what was a thing in movement. I began to be almost consciously bothered.

Then I went to Europe first Antwerp then Italy then France then Spain and then later again France. Of course all this in successive years, I naturally looked at a great many pictures.

In Antwerp I only remember the colour of the Rubens' and that they were religious. I liked their colour. I liked pretty well liked their religion.

Then we went through France to Italy.

The Louvre at first was only gold frames to me gold frames which were rather glorious, and looking out of the window of the Louvre with the gold frames being all gold behind within was very glorious. I always like, as well as liked looking out of windows in museums. It is more complete, looking out of windows in museums, than looking out of windows anywhere else.

Then we went to Italy and my brother and I spent a long hot summer in Italy, in Florence and in Venice and in Perugia and I began to sleep and dream in front of oil paintings.

I did look out of the windows of the museums but it was really not necessary.

There were very few people in the galleries in Italy in the summers in those days and there were long benches and they were red and they were comfortable at least they were to me and the guardians were indifferent or amiable and I could really lie down and sleep in front of the pictures. You can see that it was not necessary to look out of the windows.

In sleeping and waking in front particularly of the Tintoretts the Giotto's and the Castagnas, the Botticellis were less suited to that activity, they little as one can think it they bothered me because the

Italian flowers were just like the flowers in the Botticelli pictures. I used to walk in the country and then I concluded that the Botticellis being really so like the flowers in the country they were not the pictures before which one could sleep, they were to my feeling, being that they looked so like the flowers in the country, they were artificial. You know what I mean artificial flowers. And I literally mean just that. At least that is the way I felt then about it. I liked Mantegna then because he made me realize that white is a colour, and in a way he made me feel something about what oil paintings were that prepared me for much that was to come later.

As I say in sleeping and waking in front of all these pictures I really began to realize that an oil painting is an oil painting. I was beginning after that to be able to look with pleasure at any oil painting.

I had another curious experience concerning oil painting at about that same time.

I went into Italian churches a great deal then and I began to be very much interested in black and white marble. Even other colored marbles. I went in Rome to Saint John without the walls and I did not like the marble and then I looked at the marble I did like and I began to touch it and I found gradually that if I liked it there was always as much imitation oil painted marble as real marble. And all being mixed together I liked it. It was very hard to tell the real from the false. I spent hours in those hot summer

days feeling marble to see which was real and which was not. I found that granite pillars if they were four were some of them make believe if they gave me pleasure, some could be real but some had to be painted, of course they did, if it was all marble or if it was all granite there was nothing to content the eye by deceiving it. Of course anybody could come to know that.

And so I began to look at all and any oil painting. I looked at funny pictures in churches where they described in a picture what had happened to them, the ex-voto pictures. I remember one of a woman falling out of a high two wheeled cart, this a picture of what happened to her and how she was not killed. I looked at all oil paintings that I happened to see and not consciously but slowly I began to feel that it made no difference what an oil painting painted it always did and should look like an oil painting.

And so one comes to any oil painting through any other oil painting.

Then we went to Spain and there I looked and looked at pictures. I do not think there were any windows to look out of in the Prado museum in those days. Any way I only remember looking and looking at pictures. The gallery was not arranged in those days and you found your pictures. It was my first real experience in finding pictures. I then for the first time really began to think about them. I liked Rubens landscapes because they all moved together, people

landscape animals and color. I liked Titians because they did not move at all and as they did not move they were noble. The Velasquez bothered me as I say because like the Cazins of my youth they were too real and yet they were not real enough to be real and not unreal enough to be unreal.

And then I found Greco and that really excited me.

There the oil painting was pure it neither moved nor was still nor was it real. I finally came to like them best. I liked them because every thing in them was so long and I liked them because they were so white. I have never forgotten what white is since.

Then I came back to France and there at once I forgot Greco because there was the Louvre and somehow there with the gold frames and all, there was an elegance about it all, that did not please me, but that I could not refuse, and in a way it destroyed oil paintings for me.

I completely for a while forgot about oil paintings.

I did not care at that time for elegance and since oil painting, so the Louvre had decided for me, were fundamentally elegant I lost interest in oil paintings. I did not get back any interest in them until the next year.

To finish a thing, that is to keep on finishing a thing, that is to be one going on finishing so that something is a thing that any one can see is a finished thing is something. To finish a thing so

that any one can know that that thing is a finished thing is something.

To make a pretty thing so that any one can feel that the thing is a pretty thing is something.

To begin a thing that any one can see is begun is something. To begin a pretty thing so that any one can see that a pretty thing has been begun is something.

PORTRAITS AND PRAYERS—PAGE 54—RANDOM HOUSE.

I remember much later than that being very bothered by Courbet. I had commenced looking at later oil paintings, that is later than old museum pictures. I liked David then because he was so dry and Ary Sheffer because he was so tender and Greuze because he was so pretty and they all painted people to look like people that is more or less to look like people, to look like people more or less, and it did not make any difference.

But Courbet bothered me. He did really use the color that nature looked like that any landscape looked like when it was just like itself as you saw it in passing. Courbet really did use the colors that nature looked like to anybody, that a water-fall in the woods looked like to anybody.

And what had that to do with anything, in fact did it not destroy a little of the reality of the oil painting. The paintings of Courbet were very real as oil paintings, they existed very really as oil painting,

but did the colors that were the colors anybody could see trees and water-falls naturally were, did these colors add or did they detract from the reality of the oil painting as oil painting. Perhaps and most likely perhaps it did not really make any difference. There was a moment though when I worried about the Courbets not being an oil painting but being a piece of country in miniature as seen in a diminishing glass. One always does like things in little. Models of furniture are nice, little flower pots are nice, little gardens are nice, penny penny peep shows are nice, magic lanterns are nice and photographs and cinemas are nice and the mirrors in front of automobiles are nice because they give the whole scene always in little and yet in natural colors like the receiver of a camera. As I say one does quite naturally like things in small, it is easy one has it all at once, and it is just like that, or in distorted mirrors when one has it even more all at once, and as I say I worried lest Courbet was like that. But soon I concluded that no, it only seemed so, no the Courbets were really oil paintings with the real life of oil paintings as oil paintings should have. Only the Courbets being nearly something else always keeps them from being really all they are. However. To come back to pictures that is oil paintings.

I began to feel that as a different thing from Courbet, nobody or nothing looked now any more like the people in the old pictures in the museums and the old

pictures were alright. Did anything one saw look really like the new pictures and were they alright.

You see it gets to be a bother but still if oil paintings are oil paintings and you really like to look at them it is not really a bother.

Should a picture look like anything or does it, even a Courbet, or a Velasquez, or does it make any difference if it does or if it does not as long as it is an oil painting.

And if it is less like anything does it make any difference and if it is more like anything does it make any difference and yet if it is not like anything at all is it an oil painting.

You see it does get complicated because after all you have to like looking at an oil painting.

And then slowly through all this and looking at many many pictures I came to Cezanne and there you were, at least there I was, not all at once but as soon as I got used to it. The landscape looked like a landscape that is to say what is yellow in the landscape looked yellow in the oil painting, and what was blue in the landscape looked blue in the oil painting and if it did not there still was the oil painting, the oil painting by Cezanne. The same thing was true of the people there was no reason why it should be but it was, the same thing was true of the chairs, the same thing was true of the apples. The apples looked like apples the chairs looked like chairs and it all had nothing to do with anything because if they did not

look like apples or chairs or landscape or people they were apples and chairs and landscape and people. They were so entirely these things that they were not an oil painting and yet that is just what the Cezannes were they were an oil painting. They were so entirely an oil painting that it was all there whether they were finished, the paintings, or whether they were not finished. Finished or unfinished it always was what it looked like the very essence of an oil painting because everything was always there, really there.

CEZANNE

The Irish lady can say, that to-day is every day. Caesar can say that every day is to-day and they say that every day is as they say.

In this way Cezanne nearly did nearly in this way Cezanne nearly did nearly did and nearly did. And was I surprised. Was I very surprised. Was I surprised. I was surprised and in that patient, are you patient when you find bees. Bees in a garden make a specialty of honey and so does honey. Honey and prayer. Honey and there. There where the grass can grow nearly four times yearly.

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This then was a great relief to me and I began my writing.

This sounds as if it might have been an end of

something as being in the nature of a solution but it was not it was just something going on.

Up to this time I had been getting acquainted with pictures I had been intimate with a number of them but I had not been really familiar with them.

I once wrote something called *Made A Mile Away*, which was a description of all the pictures that had influenced me, all the pictures up to this moment the moment when I became familiar with pictures.

From this time on familiarity began and I like familiarity. It does not in me breed contempt it just breeds familiarity. And the more familiar a thing is the more there is to be familiar with. And so my familiarity began and kept on being.

From that time on I could look at any oil painting. That is the essence of familiarity that you can look at any of it.

Having thus become familiar with oil paintings I looked at any and at all of them and I looked at thousands and thousands of them. Any year in Paris if you want to look at any and all paintings you can look at thousands and thousands of them, you can look at them any day and everywhere. There are a great great many oil paintings in Paris.

Once a picture dealer told me and he knew that there were sixty thousand people in Paris painting pictures and that about twenty thousand of them were earning a living at it. There are a great many oil paintings to be seen any year in Paris.

Gradually getting more and more familiar with oil paintings was like getting gradually more and more familiar with faces as you look very hard at some of them and you look very hard at all of them and you do all of this very often. Faces gradually tell you something, there is no doubt about that as you grow more and more familiar with any and all faces and so it is with oil paintings. The result was that in a way I slowly knew what an oil painting is and gradually I realized as I had already found out very often that there is a relation between anything that is painted and the painting of it. And gradually I realized as I had found very often that that relation was so to speak nobody's business. The relation between the oil painting and the thing painted was really nobody's business. It could be the oil painting's business but actually for the purpose of the oil painting after the oil painting was painted it was not the oil painting's business and so it was nobody's business.

But still one always does like a resemblance.

A resemblance is always a pleasurable sensation and so a resemblance is almost always there.

That is not the business so to speak of the oil painting, that is just a pleasant human weakness. Anybody and so almost everybody pleasantly likes anything that resembles anything or any one.

Then there is another thing another pleasant human weakness. There is another thing about an oil painting. It makes you see something to which it is

resembling makes you see the thing in the way it the oil painting resembles it. And that too and that again is a pleasant thing. But then really and this everybody knows, very soon anybody that is everybody really forgets about this resemblance. They naturally do so because things change at least they seem so to do or any way they look as if they did change that is they look different and so the resemblance of the oil painting that is to anybody that is to anything is only a thing that has become historical.

And so we are once more back to the life in and for itself of an oil painting.

As I say having in this way become more and more familiar with any kind of an oil painting I of course became more and more familiar with many particular oil paintings with a great many particular oil paintings, and as I say when you have looked at many many faces and have become familiar with them, you may find something new in a new face you may be surprised by a different kind of a face you may be even shocked by a different kind of a face you may like or not like a new kind of a face but you cannot refuse a new face. You must accept a face as a face. And so with an oil painting. You can now see that when it came first to Matisse and then to the cubism of Picasso nothing was a bother to me. Yes of course in a way it was a bother to me but not the bother of a refusal. That would not have been possible being that I had become familiar with oil

paintings, and the essence of familiarity being that you can look at any of it.

MATISSE

One was quite certain that for a long part of his being one being living he had been trying to be certain that he was wrong in doing what he was doing and then when he could not come to be certain that he had been wrong in doing what he had been doing, when he had completely convinced himself that he would not come to be certain that he had been wrong in doing what he had been doing he was really certain then that he was a great one and he certainly was a great one. Certainly every one could be certain of this thing that this one is a great one.

PORTRAITS AND PRAYERS—PAGE 12.

IF I TOLD HIM

A COMPLETED PORTRAIT OF PICASSO

If I told him would he like it. Would he like it if I told him.

Would he like it would Napoleon would Napoleon would would he like it.

If Napoleon if I told him if I told him if Napoleon. Would he like it if I told him if I told him if Napoleon. Would he like it if Napoleon if Napoleon if I told him. If I told him if Napoleon if Napoleon if I told him. If I told him

would he like it would he like it if I told him.

Shutters shut and open so do queens. Shutters shut and shutters and so shutters shut and shutters and so and so shutters and so shutters shut and so shutters shut and shutters and so. And so shutters shut and so and also. And also and so and so and also. Let me recite what history teaches, History teaches.

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THE LIFE OF JUAN GRIS

As a Spaniard he knew cubism and had stepped through into it. He had stepped through it. There was beside this perfection. To have it shown you. Then came the war and desertion. There was little aid. Four years partly illness much perfection and rejoining beauty and perfection and then at the end there came a definite creation of something. This is what is to be measured. He made something that is to be measured. And that is that something.

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Anything may be a surprise to you even a shock to you but nothing can be a bother to you if you are really familiar with it. This is a natural thing.

And then having gotten so far I began often to think a great deal about oil paintings. They were familiar to me they were never really a bother to

me but sometimes they were an annoyance to me.

Having now accepted all oil paintings as oil paintings I naturally sometimes began to feel something else about them. I wondered what they would be if some day they would be different. But could they be different. I often wondered in those days if oil paintings ever could be different.

This led me back to the question in oil paintings the question one might call it the eternal question for painters of oil paintings the question of the subject of the oil painting.

I naturally did not talk to painters about what they painted in their oil paintings. Painters real painters never really ever talk about that. But I told about how every picture affected me. And in a way that is what I can say. But now to go on with the difficult question why when and in which way can a painter have a subject for his pictures. And if he does and of course he does why does he. Why does he paint what he does paint.

There are first of all three things, people, objects which include flowers and fruits, landscapes which included the sea and complications of these things which may if you like be called painters' thoughts.

Beside this there are all these things staying still and then there are all these things not staying so still, even sometimes almost moving, and somehow sometime almost any painter paints them all.

And if he does is it annoying.

And is it really that that which the painter paints that in an oil painting is its element of annoyance.

Yes I think so.

Most people think that the annoyance that they feel from an oil painting that annoys them and a great many oil paintings annoy a great many people, the annoyance then that these people that anybody feels from an oil painting they think comes from the way the oil painting represents these things, the things represented in the oil painting. But I myself do not think so. I think the annoyance comes from the fact that the oil painting exists by reason of these things the oil painting represents in the oil painting, and profoundly it should not do so, so thinks the oil painting, so sometime thinks the painter of the oil painting, so instinctively feels the person looking at the oil painting. Really in everybody's heart there is a feeling of annoyance at the inevitable existence of an oil painting in relation to what it has painted people, objects and landscapes. And indeed and of course as I have already made you realize that is not what an oil painting is. An oil painting is an oil painting, and these things are only the way the only way an oil painter makes an oil painting.

One might say almost all oil painters spend their life in trying to get away from this inevitability. They struggle and the result is what everybody naturally likes or dislikes depending upon whether

they think the struggle is hopeless or whether it is not. And then everybody almost everybody likes a resemblance even when there is none. Does the painter like the resemblance, oh yes he does. He does like a resemblance. That is a naturally pleasant human thing, to like a resemblance. And does this naturally pleasant human thing the liking a resemblance make everything difficult very difficult. Yes it certainly does. And it makes an oil painting annoying.

You see how this brings one to anything, to everything that any one has ever tried to do in painting.

And then there is another trouble. A painting is painted as a painting, as an oil painting existing as an oil painting, it may be in or it may be out of its frame, but an oil painting and that is a real bother always will have a tendency to go back to its frame, even if it has never been out of it. That is one of the things that an oil painting any oil painting has a very great tendency to do. And this is a bother sometimes to the painter and sometimes to any one looking at an oil painting.

Does an oil painting tend to go back into its frame because after all an oil painting belongs in its frame.

Or does it not.

It does and does not. But mostly it does and that may make for elegance that, that it does belong in its frame but it may also be a bother to the quality in it that makes it an oil painting.

And if it does belong in its frame, must it the oil painting be static.

If it tries to move and there have been good attempts to make it move does it move. Leonardo, in the Virgin child and Sainte Anne tried to make it move, Rubens in his landscapes, Picasso and Velasquez in their way, and Seurat in his way.

The trouble is always, is it the people in it who move or does the picture move and if so should it. I myself like it to do so but then I like a picture, that is an oil painting to do anything it likes to do.

The first thing that ever interested me in that way as the picture moving was the Leonardo in the Louvre, the Virgin, the child and Sainte Anne. Before this the moving in a picture was the effect of moving, but in this picture there was an internal movement, not of the people or light or any of these things but inside in the oil painting. In other words the picture did not live within the frame, in other words it did not belong within the frame. The Cezanne thing was different, it went further and further into the picture the life of the oil painting but it stayed put.

I have thought a great deal about all this and I am still thinking about it. I have passionately hoped that some picture would remain out of its frame, I think it can even while it does not, even while it remains there. And this is the problem of all modern painting just as it has been the problem of all old

painting. That is to say the first hope of a painter who really feels hopeful about painting is the hope that the painting will move, that it will live outside its frame.

On the other hand most elegant painting does not move does not live outside its frame and one does like elegance in painting.

I wonder if I have at all given you an idea of what an oil painting is. I hope I have even if it does seem confused. But the confusion is essential in the idea of an oil painting.

There it is the oil painting in its frame, a thing in itself. There it is and it has to look like people or objects or landscapes. Besides that it must not completely only exist in its frame. It must have its own life. And yet it may not move nor imitate movement, not really, nor must it stay still. It must not only be in its frame but it must not, only, be in its frame. This whole question of a picture being in its frame returning to its frame or not returning to its frame is the question that has latterly bothered me the most. Modern pictures have made the very definite effort to leave their frame. But do they stay out, do they go back and if they do is that where they belong and has anybody been deceived. I think about that a great deal these days.

You see it is difficult to describe exactly what an oil painting is, it is difficult for those who like to look at oil paintings presumably also difficult for

those who paint oil paintings and it leads painters to the thing the last thing of which I wish to speak, the literary ideas so called of the painter.

I hope you all begin to feel with me what an oil painting is and granted that an oil painting is that that one likes to look at it and granted that one likes to look at it even if it is not that. Also that you do understand that what really annoys people that is anybody who is at all annoyed by an oil painting is not its being an oil painting, but the subject that is to say what it paints as an oil painting. I know I myself and mostly I am not bothered about what an oil painting has to look like am bothered by certain things oil paintings do that is by the things oil paintings always have to paint. For instance taking all the later oil paintings. Is it true that they are alright when the painting is the painting of objects and are they not alright when they are the painting of people. In spite of everything can that be a bother. May it not be a bother to you. May it not bother you. I remember so well some one saying of Van Gogh, it was a great many years ago, I like his pictures of people but not of flowers, and then adding reflectively, because of course I never do look at people and so I do not know what people look like but I do look at flowers and I do know what flowers look like. As I say persistently the thing that really annoys that deeply annoys people, that is, anybody who is annoyed by oil paintings, is not the way they are

painted, that they can always get accustomed to more or less and reasonably quickly, but the subject of the oil painting. Of course it is always the same subject but even so it takes so much longer for the one looking at an oil painting to accustom himself to the subject in spite of it always being the same subject than to accustom himself to the oil painting itself. At least that is the way I feel about it.

And now there is one more subject in connection with oil paintings, the literary ideas painters have and that they paint.

The literary ideas painters have and that they paint are not at all the literary ideas writers have.

Of course the best writers that is the writers who feel writing the most as well as the best painters that is the painters who feel painting the most do not have literary ideas. But then a great many writers and a great many painters do have literary ideas. The thing that has often interested me is that the painters' literary idea is not the same kind of an idea as the writers' literary idea although they call it the same thing.

The painter has an idea which he calls a literary idea and it is to him that is he thinks it is the same kind of an idea as a writer has but it is not. And its being not makes the essential thing that makes an oil painting.

A painter's literary idea always consists not in the action but in the distortion of the form. That

could never be a writer's literary idea. Then a painter's idea of action always has to do with something else moving rather than the center of the picture. This is just the opposite of the writer's idea, everything else can be quiet, except the central thing which has to move. And because of all this a painter cannot really write and a writer cannot really paint, even fairly badly.

All this is very important because it is important. It is important not for the painter or for the writer but for those who like to look at paintings and who like to know what an oil painting is and who like to know what bothers them in what an oil painting is. I hope I have been making it slowly clear to you. I might have told you more in detail but in that case you would that is to say I would not have as clearly seen as I do now what an oil painting is.

PLAYS