



New York City Ballet

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and their colleagues dance as if they never did anything else.

Stravinsky himself conducted the last ballet, "Apollo," and who would not travel 500 or so miles to hear Mozart conduct "Cosi fan tutte"? Or perhaps "Idomeneo," for "Apollo," created originally for Diaghilev but now seen in the perspective of history, was the first of modern ballets. It should be called "Terpsichore Unbound." Lovingly danced by the supreme Mr. Jacques d'Amboise, Miss Kent, Miss Patricia McBride, and Miss Neary, it offers a choreographic brave new world of marvels. It is the gateway of modern ballet, just as surely as Balanchine is the architect.

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Is a Lollipop Tree Worth Painting?

(We asked Wayne Thiebaud for a statement about his paintings of pies and cakes and pinball machines, now on view at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, to use as an aid in our review of his exhibition. The artist replied with the subjoined statement, which is so interesting and so inclusive that we publish it in full and dispense with the review.)

By Wayne Thiebaud

AT present I am painting still lifes taken from window displays, store counters, supermarket shelves, and mass produced items from manufacturing concerns in America.

I try to find things to paint which I feel have been overlooked. Maybe a lollipop tree has not seemed like a thing worth painting because of its banal references... more likely it has previously been automatically rejected because it is not common enough. We do not wish it to be the object which essentializes our time. Each era produces its own still life. Painters use the objects as elements and units of their



'AROUND THE CAKES' BY WAYNE THIEBAUD

compositions. It seems to me that we are self-conscious about our still lifes without good reason. It is easier to celebrate the copper pots and clay pipes of Chardin or to pretend that our revolutions are the same as the ones expressed in the apples of Cezanne. We are hesitant to make our own life special... set our still lifes aside... applaud or criticize what is especially us. We don't

want our still lifes to tattle on us. But some years from now our foodstuffs, our pots, our dress, and our ideas will be quite different. So if we sentimentalize or adopt a posture more polite than our own we are not having a real look at ourselves for what we are. My interest in painting is traditional and modest in its aim. I hope that it may allow us to see ourselves looking at ourselves.

THE SPECIFIC esthetic and philosophic problems which fascinate me are:

Light: Today the idea of light is tremendously variable. Strong display lights have been developed which can do all kinds of goofy and wonderful things... make an object cast colored shadows, change its local color before your eyes, glow and develop a halo or imbue it with a pulsating effect. Often these things have 10, 20 or more light sources to heighten them... used cars, diamonds and candied apples are displayed and sold to us in this way. Foods and costume jewelry, in cafes and stores, are visual feasts for the eyes if they can be captured. The problem of catching some of this keeps me going. I have tried several manners to help me... cubism, expressionism, surrealism and others were studied and used in earlier works. For some years I used metallic paint and metallic leaf in an effort to produce this kind of lively light.

Lately I have used a kind of head-on directness—placing the object somewhere near the middle of the can-

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The Philosophic Viewpoint of a Row of Cakes

was format in a plain or simple background. This is where I am today. My procedure varies. I have worked from the actual objects, from photos I have taken, from commercial advertising photographs and from memory. This last method (memory) has been my main one during recent years. Theoretically I try to work out what is most memorable about the subject at hand and get it down. My time spent as an

advertising art director, cartoonist and illustrator some years ago are partly responsible for the look of some of the things.

Space: The tradition of sustaining the picture plane interests me right now. My surfaces are activated and brushed heavily to try and keep them visually available. The heavy linear activity formed by ridges of paint helps to "lock in" the planes and make them "flatter." This is one practical reason for the impasto . . . another I will mention later.

The space inference that I want is one of isolation: Ultraclear, bright, air-conditioned atmosphere that might be sort of stirred up around the objects and echo their presence. For this reason uninterrupted single colored backgrounds are used and this allows the brush marks to be seen more clearly and play their role. This background also suggests a kind of stainless steel, porcelain, enameled, plastic world that interests me now.

Color: I don't think I am much of a colorist. My main interest is with contrast of great intensity. This effect exemplifies the idea of starkness and glare which I am trying for. So I don't think much about color in terms of hue. The real color of the object is paramount in this series and so in my paintings a lemon pie is that yellow and breads are the closest color to the dough that I can get.

I depend upon line a great deal. My pictures are painted and drawn in several intense hues, one over the other, to make them as lively and as strong as possible. Later on in the painting I may obliterate them in part or repaint them as needed.

Philosophic Viewpoint: Painting a row of cakes the way they are displayed on a lunch counter suggests some rather obvious notions about conformism, mechanized liv-



"MOTHER AND CHILD," portrait by an unknown artist of the 1840s, is one of the paintings in the exhibit of American folk art (along with weathervanes and a cigar-store Turk) which is currently on view at Gump's.

ing and mass-produced culture. In addition there are some surprising things which are also present. . . . How alone these endless rows can be . . . a kind of lonely togetherness . . . each piece of pie has a heightened loneliness of its very own . . . giving it uniqueness and specialness in spite of its regimentation. (None of us can escape our responsibility however totalitarian or utopian our world may be.)

EARLIER in this discussion I mentioned the use of impasto in painting this series. This is employed for a specific purpose. It alludes to the tradition of illusionistic painting. In my case an experiment with what happens when the relationship between paint and subject matter comes as close as I

cake to "become" frosting. It is playing with reality . . . making an illusion which grows out of an exploration of the propensities of materials . . . an approach to "actualism." And while it is clearly in the line of "trick of the eye" painting where the artist is like a magician, I would like to show my hand and expose the trick, allowing the thrill of self-discovery and the ability to see oneself having the illusion.

Of course I hope that the paintings speak better for themselves than I have.

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