

HABITAT 9

ENGLISH SUMMARY

changed his Venetian waiters of St. Mark's square into birds and pigeons into human beings. Steinberg talks little. He learned many things in Italy including what he does not use, that is architecture. But he did not learn to talk or gesticulate. Only his right hand tentatively gesticulates as if it were holding a pencil. We say tentatively because when he begins to gesticulate he does hold a pencil in his hand. Then he draws. His movement runs freely and surprisingly. People do not know where the line will take them. We laugh then, surprised by his gestures and by their absurdity. We are children again playing hide and seek. Steinberg amuses himself, he goes on moving loosely, keeping us and the world in constant cheerfulness. At this point, we pledge what could be called "hegemony of indolence". What a delight are those unrestrained lines, the inventiveness of this man, the irresponsibility — hygienic irresponsibility — of his characters who do not take heroes and heroines and the saviors of our civilization seriously. Everything and all are equal. Everything and all become childish. The world of Steinberg could be a kind of democracy originated in Milan and fulfilled in New York — originated in Milan because he studied there, because in the most industrial Italian city Steinberg lived the conflict between industrialization and the great tradition of the past. He learned to cherish the remnants of a world of craftsmen, to value them with a new critical and satirical understanding. This is a peculiar "Milanese" emotion slightly charged with the atmosphere of retrospective pages devoted to the "fin de siècle" which are becoming systematic in magazines such as "Oggi", "L'Europeo", "Candido". Thus attempting to destroy the last remnants of the "fin de siècle" humor and of Dannunzian epic. Having overthrown bad taste and replaced it with the dread of the decorative, the personal, the temperamental, and the romantic, man, in this case a "Milanese", ends his days outspokenly joining the technical, impersonal, "rational", industrial and anti-romantic. He then lands in New York: mass-production, action for action's sake, dynamism, healthiness, international language, practical sense, objectivity, victory of the anti-romantic, victory over the great remnants of Occidental culture; victory over the "Milanese" spirit. That is why — as many Neapolitans say — Milan is not Italy. It is the São Paulo of Italy. And São Paulo is not Brazil. It is, in fact, the Milan of Brazil. In the end, we are all brothers. And we fight, according to this spirit, for what we call democracy. Steinberg is happy in this world of loose lines. He does not work to order. He lives free, free as a bird, because he has found his world. We, of course, identify ourselves with this feeling of freedom and live instants of happiness. But, later, we go back to our world.

Hedda Sterne and her machines

Modern man is still bewildered by his relation with the machine in the history of the complex destiny of contemporary humanity. Machines have always existed, since the very existence of man: utensils, trappings, harnesses, tools are machines.

brilliant future of a cultural spirit is to avoid every superficiality which always sprouts when soul of a nation drifts in the wind of changeable improvisations.

At this point we ask ourselves: how should the making of Brazilian culture behave within the complex and rather chaotic organism of international culture? Should it accept international patterns or energetically refuse them in self-defense? Or accept their method and technique, enriching them with new content? In the present impasse we think that an initial, fundamental work capable of bestowing the necessary unity on such a difficult task, would be a source of basic authoritative and reliable information, that is, a Brazilian Encyclopedia.

All the above reflections compel us to consider an Encyclopedia not the last event of a long historical and cultural process, but the initial means for a cultural organization. An Encyclopedia is like the consecration of a national culture, or more, of a world-wide culture seen and understood from the angle of a particular nation, which thus asserts itself along with the major cultured nations.

We feel certain that, not only in the realm of arts but all others, there are among us men capable of organizing an Encyclopedia and of coordinating the activities of national and foreign collaborators. Such an Encyclopedia would establish an outlook on public consciousness and at the same time prepare a whole category of experts qualified to give a direct contribution to a cultural elaboration: it would outdo static views easy dilettantism and precarious bases.

We think to be the most profitable moment to start the task of directing the young generation which does not yet suffer from the sickness of unilateralism and exclusiveness. We are aware of the enormous difficulties lying ahead, but such an Encyclopedia would make Brazil a big workshop of culture. This is not a new "Magna Charta" of a cultural undertaking: it is only a suggestion of what we consider useful and capable of bringing those responsible from ideas to action.

Saul Steinberg in Brazil

Steinberg came to Brazil to the opening of his exhibition at the Museu de Arte of São Paulo. There was a certain curiosity to meet the author of well-known drawings. Some do not consider the presence of the artist essential when his art is shown. Steinberg himself avoids interviews saying he is only a match: — "Naturally he says — my person is not interesting. You could put a match in front of the camera and it would be the same". Nevertheless he is not right. His person, his aspect are interesting. He looks like his drawings. Thick lenses conceal his eyes, he chases into one of his characters with pupil-less look, those characters with empty eyes who do not see anything. He walks with a hand in his pocket, his coat forms a kind of wing. With raised shoulders, in the center of the exhibition room watching the public, Steinberg looks like a bird. People go by contaminated by his way of thinking. It was he who taught us to change men into animals, because it was he who

A Brazilian Encyclopedia

Ancient human knowledge based on illimited experience has established certain and practical rules which apply to all spheres: it is necessary to build from the foundations upwards. A different procedure although possible, would certainly be considered a paradox. We can compare the human spirit to architecture; all things must have solid foundations standing firmly on them. Culture should be regarded with those same principles.

Were we to analyze the present aspect of Brazilian culture, we could immediately detect much dilettantism in many of its manifestations. We do not merely wish to criticize the present situation, but on the contrary, endeavour to understand it in relation to the historical circumstances which have determined it. First of all, we can point out that the lack of knowledge of what is going on throughout the world impels us to misunderstand the real values of what is happening among us. Due to this, everything remains as if drifting in space, without authentic roots capable of securing the future of each manifestation. Erudition is not the same as culture: we can frequently notice how things are undervalued when not properly understood or when not included in the program of readable matter. We shall try to explain it with facts that often distort "public opinion", or that of so-called cultured people.

It happens that professors of philosophy are writing essays on — let us say — a German thinker. They cannot have access to the original source, and their work is based on second-hand translations. Furthermore, it is not possible to criticize, for instance, Existentialism without a thorough knowledge of Jaspers or Heidegger. Study is not mere superficial general information to keep conversation alive. Not long ago we were looking through a "dictionary" of philosophy, full of oversights and mistakes. Fortunately enough there are among us persons of real culture who clearly see the present situation, and try to straighten out the distorted outlook of our culture. That means that after all, there is a national culture developing in an organic and qualitative way. At this turn of its history Brazilian culture should reflect upon itself: a conscious understanding of its problems would take it to an effective and lively field.

Internal contradictions usually shaking a culture in process of formation are well known. The lack of authentic ideological foundations, the difficult development of a technique of language capable of expressing itself free from external influence, are the main facts which prevent a culture from standing by itself and from being unattained owing to continuous European overwhelming.

Brazilian culture must not make its choice between different trends, as Europeanism and North-American influences and the indigenous outlook: in any of those cases, the chosen cultural trend would be compelled to fight or at least to challenge the others. Furthermore, there already exist proofs of organic internal and ethnological elements of a Brazilian structure. The first condition for a

But in recent times the machine has become a startling object, an active character of an ironic and hellish world. Some glorify it, while others hate it as if it were a devil. This problem has attracted the attention of all, from philosophers to artists and industrialists: nobody agrees on the way of handling this creature, which in the meantime keeps growing and developing, threatening the very existence of the world. Machines are overwhelming our civilization, stronger than man who in less unhappy epochs has declared himself the absolute champion of the universe. If this situation is to continue, man will become an insignificant figure of the world. But this problem does not interest us at present. We wanted only to point out that an American artist, Hedda Sterne, has chosen the machine as the fundamental object of her attention. Hedda Sterne has shown her paintings in the Museu de Arte along with the works of Saul Steinberg. She considers the machine as a creature which should be studied and understood as a whole. She attempts unknown balances, lights which are not real, unimagined energies, forces not existing in mechanics, absurd atmospheres. Her machine is throughout a dream, a mere spiritual adventure. This challenge between biological and mechanical elements is to be regarded as a constant occurrence in contemporary North-American painting. The works of Hedda Sterne show unmistakable proofs of the North-American artistic international, the international of the so-called "irascibles". From an historical point of view it is easy to understand how New York is slowly substituting for Paris through its association of pictorial and poetical instincts directed toward a vital and stylistic aim. The "irascibles" grew up there: anguish, exile, despair, frenzy and idyls are in North-American painting which has not rejected daring contacts with psychoanalysis and oneiric diagrams. It is a reality of contemporary painting, even more solemn and touching. Hedda Sterne occupies an authentic and qualified position in North-American poetics.

Psychiatry and painting

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Psychiatry besides being an observation system of mental processes, is a deep and rich emotional experience. Psychiatrists use scientific information and data when observing their patients: the relation between their knowledge "a priori" and the facts given them by their patients, lead them to a conclusion, that is, to diagnosis of the specific case. Nevertheless, this kind of work is accompanied by a profound emotional response to each case, as the object of their observation is a human being. This kind of relation between psychiatrist and patient, involving a comprehension of human situations on the part of the doctor, awakens in him a special form of sensibility which is the object of this article.

Starting from this point of view, the problem is to translate this emotional experience into a non-scientific language. We therefore asked the painter Sambonet to help us solve this problem.

This experience has been facilitated by the natural sensibility of the artist, although he had to become familiar with some psychiatric culture. We believe it to be the first experience of psychiatry-painting. Since its roots are profoundly human, we hope for a future collaboration between an abstract science like psychiatry and plastic possibilities of artistic expression. The drawings we are publishing confirm the thesis that this is an essentially human problem based on reality.

Novelli

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Habitat is publishing the recent works of Gastone Novelli, a young Italian painter who has been residing in São Paulo for the last two years. The Brazilian landscape has had a deep influence upon him and led him to a continuous search and progress. His ceramics bear the mark of this emotional process.

Pieces of the Pigorini Museum in Rome

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Continuing the publication started in the previous number of Habitat, we now show other pieces of the Pigorini Museum in Rome: wooden sculptures, fetiches, ritual objects, bone-combs, pottery.

All folk have their particular way of communicating with divinity. Fetiches and ex-votos are the most common devices for it, being the monuments of all religious art of the past and of the present. Fundamental continuity of man reveals itself through those small documents of religious, artistic and historical life. Uncivilized men and animistic cultures in general believe that the spirit resides in telluric realms: divinity in the air, fire, stone and wood. Originally, a mere stone or a piece of wood — were it manipulated or not by man — was the dwelling of deity, of spirits. Woods were a whole population of gods: from stone and trunks of trees rose sculpture.

Sculpture was a religious, mystic or magic and animistic fact, always related to mysterious and sacred forces. All masterpieces from Greece to Egypt to Gothic baroque in Europe have their origin in this inherent will to represent and imagine the superior spheres of the spirit. Those idols have been selected from the collection of the Pigorini Museum in Rome: six of them are of "caduvea" origin; the club is of Gês-Tapuya origin. The first six show a more primitive make although it clearly appears a progressive elaboration of sculpture from a primitive emblematic form to an attempt to represent a female figure.

The Gês-Tapuya idol reflects a more developed cultural stage: the symbolic gestures of the crossed hands are signs of symbolic-expressive sculpture.

A third kind of religious and cultural object, the wooden beater, shows at the same time fantastic anatomical geometrical and architectural forms: it has a ritual use and is similar to the objects of the ethnographical zones of Oceania, Polynesia etc.

The manufacture of wood originated those extraordinary archeological and ethnographical Brazilian documents: anthropomorphically figurative pipes for ritual use, of "caduvea" origin. Their contingent relation with the phallic element is clear. Not so intelligible is the hypothesis of the relation between "smoke" — which is the objective of those implements — and the mysterious magic forms capable of healing by means of fetishism. We publish also this arrow, proceeding probably from Amazonian regions. Its curious make shows a human face made with fragments of shells reminiscent of the arrows and lances of New Guinea. We cannot establish any historical relation between those facts, we merely want to stress two different ways of sculpture: the Oceanic one, schematic and symbolical; and the Amazonic one, more swift, more artistic.

Bahia

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Bahia is an everlasting, deep Brazilian sickness, awakening in every Brazilian his fantasy and dreams. Everyone thinks of Bahia, dreams of Bahia and when

possible goes to Bahia. It has an extraordinary appeal and its ethnographical, exotic and pictorial wealth is used also for tourist purposes. Two continents, two stages of different cultures live there together. They do not live like fragments of an isolated world, but with the same freedom and dignity as in human relations. History and pre-history are intermingled as if there were not an abyss between them which humanity is striving to fill with centuries of attempts and work.

It is perhaps this magic atmosphere which attracts so many Brazilian and foreign artists who will never again be free from its magic spell. The richness of Bahia is unexhaustible, there is an aspect of it for each one. Since the time of Debret, artists feel the urge of capturing this secret atmosphere or even only its decorative side.

Of recent, three of them, Carybé and Kantor from Argentine and Plattner from Italy have exhibited their paintings of Bahia and of Brazil in general in a São Paulo gallery.

An experimente with national fashion

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Many people were rather skeptical about the efforts of the Museu de Arte with its experiment in the establishment of a national fashion. Although all of them were aware that the moment had come for such an attempt. It is usually an impelling urge that drives a collectivity to create by itself what it was accustomed to receive from foreign countries. It has happened in Switzerland, in Italy and in the States. We must look at the problem of a national fashion from the point of view of the masses. Not of the few who can choose their way of life independently from the larger phenomenon. The Brazilian woman cannot dress herself according to the history of the past, she must on the contrary live up to date, in the most modern cities of the world. She is usually very refined and likes everything that appeals to her sense of elegance and womanliness. Women in general will learn to be fashionable within limits of simplicity more adequate to modern ways of life. What still is essential is the necessity of reaching the goal, and objectives change according to necessities, which in their turn are different in every country and latitude.

The efforts of the past to adapt foreign fashion to Brazilian necessity should on the contrary be directed to using local folklore for our national one. It is superfluous to point out the importance of this fact even from an economic angle. For a long time the Museu de Arte has been studying the problem of national fashion and has established for this purpose a school of artistic weaving. Artists of this Institute have designed the dresses which were shown in Venice at the inauguration of the International Centre of Costume. Furthermore, the Museu de Arte has recently started a course for models who were able to participate in the first show of exclusively Brazilian fashion, held in the large gallery of the Museu de Arte. This event has marked a turning point for the problem: commercial and industrial firms have understood its importance and largely contributed to its success. Various artists have designed the dresses and patterns for materials and have even painted some. Many of the materials employed were woven in the Museu de Arte itself. Every simple detail was studied with a new spirit, from the buttons to the shoes and jewelry. The Museu de Arte has thus opened a new path for the fashion of this country which is proud of ranking in the vanguard of young nations.