

**"Ordered experience of permanence"**

# Canada must review place of arts in education

The following is the text of a paper given by Fine Arts Dean Joseph G. Green at the Geneva Park Conference last August. The paper was entitled "The Place of the Arts in the Life of a Nation."

The act of art is, according to one modern commentator, an act reaching toward permanence in a world which is ever-fluid, never fixed. For civilized man lives really in three worlds: the external world of the instant, the internal world of memory, and the world of art.

**INTELLECTUAL BOUNDARIES**

In the world of the instant, art serves a function similar to our reflexes and instincts, which on a lower and more immediate level help to regularize our responses to situations which we meet. Here art serves to keep us from too complete and too constant participation in the world of the immediate — in that seeming all-pervasive fluidity of which so many contemporary philosophers have spoken. In the midst of the world's flux, man is enabled — through art — to set up moral and intellectual boundaries, to establish quasi-absolutes which serve man's purposes and enable him to live — for a time at least — as though some things were fixed, changeless, and dependable.

**PHENOMENA**

The services of art minister to man's need for permanence, to his need to retire from the endless succession of immediate phenomena — for works of art do not change and, within limits, do not pass. The things they represent have been fixed — rescued from the flux; the object or the event is no longer in time but out of it; it no longer occurs but is always occurring

and, to that extent, it is eternal. Man needs eternity — as the whole history of his aspiration bears witness — but the eternity of art is, in all probability, the only sort he will ever get.

Closer than the external world of the instant to the world of art is the internal world of memory. Memory does provide man with a shadowy kind of permanence without which man would not likely be human at all. But memory is only a shadow which we recognize as such and it carries with it an awareness that the object or event recalled is past.

The work of art, on the other hand, is memory objectified — a moment, together with all that defines and shapes it, so arrested and recorded that we may return to it as often as we like with the assurance that it is permanent — that it will always be there. The work of art does not, like a memory, grow dim and then dissolve.

**ORDERED VISION**

Thus, the world of art is a synthesis of the external world of the instant and internal world of memory. In the process of synthesis the function of any work of art is to present a coherent, ordered vision of some aspect of human experience in a world which is largely chaotic and quite indifferent to man's needs, either physical or spiritual. The artist selects and classifies what nature mingles in apparent confusion; in so doing, the artist is, in one of his many ways, adapting the universe to our minds in an order which our emotions — if not always our intellect — can follow.

Perhaps we inhabitants of today's disordered world require an adequate art more acutely than most have needed it. The more an age or

a people are out of joint, the more dissonances are struck — and the more obviously that people or age needs to be able to look at things in ordered and organized ways. For man's art has always been and still is largely an attempt to discover or to read into the generally disinterested universe outside himself something which corresponds to certain things he finds in himself. The creator reshapes the world to form for the viewer new and comprehensible images of it. With some notable exceptions, much of the contemporary world has been unable to achieve that harmony, that resonance, that order which is the hallmark of great works of art.

If art is indeed the ordered experience of permanence — the alternative to the immediate — that man seeks in a world devoid of order or permanence, then what must a nation do to cultivate its art to the highest, most profound, and most widely shared potential?

Through its social agencies (governments, councils, foundations, and philanthropies), a nation must seek to encourage the flowering of the arts. And Canada has taken admirable steps in this direction. The creation and development of the Canada Council, provincial arts councils, the Canadian Film Development Corporation, the National Film Board, the general thrust of the Broadcast Act as it pertains especially to the CBC, and the impulse behind the Council for Business and the Arts in Canada are all positive steps in the establishment of a healthy ambience in which the arts might flourish.

**ARTISTIC MOTIVITY**

Needed now are two major undertakings. One, we must soon embark on a major



York Fine Arts Dean Joseph G. Green spoke at the Geneva Conference this August. He said that Canada should review her social agencies to further encourage the flowering of the arts.

review of those very agencies which have given this nation its first step toward artistic maturity. Two, we must undertake an extensive examination of the place of the arts in Canadian education.

**COHESION AND PERMANENCE**

Since the very act of making art is an act affirming man's need for order and cohesion and permanence, Canada must reconsider the order and cohesion and permanence of those agencies designed to support the growth of the arts. The development of bureaucracies — in any field

of endeavour — tends toward self-justification. Agencies created to minister to public needs frequently become more concerned with self-service and self-perpetuation. Accountability to the public they are charged to serve tends to dwindle. A sense of creeping arrogance pervades — natural in bureaucratic structures which fail to undergo periodic and external review. It is not uncommon for operational officers in such agencies to become the policy makers rather than implementers (though no one would deny such professional officers a significant

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Victory and  
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