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The pepper in the fashion news... how to use it the young way

"How to Manage a Woman." By Abe Burrows

"The Young Unlovables"

CAPE COD NOTES ABOUT A MUSEUM THAT KNOWS WHAT IT LIKES

BY ROSEMARY BLACKMON

In early June of this year a curious combination of circumstances swept me from Manhattan—my confirmed habitat—to Provincetown, Cape Cod. By curious I mean only that a captive painter I know who has mastered a number of minor crises in my life recently took on the insurmountable effort of extracting my husband from the vegetable ecstasy of routine, and compelling—by a matter of neat timing—a weekend beside the sea.

A lethargic, uncommercial traveller by nature, I was enchanted to find that the real salt at Provincetown these days—and I confess I was, before this, inadequately aware of it—is the labyrinthine pleasure of a new show at the Chrysler Art Museum, "The Controversial Century, 1850-1950." Other people, not so lashed to the mast of Manhattan domesticity as I, have been on to the Museum since it opened in 1958.

A Methodist church-structure designed, in point of fact, very close to the beginning of the Controversial Century, it is now reformed. Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., a man of catholic taste in art, took over the shell in 1958, turning it by fast stages into what more than one observer has called "a museum director's dream"—floors of American Vermont white marble, superb lighting, walls covered with a sort of hemp-coloured fabric, scooped-out sections of earth for that variety of planting unfortunately known as "natural."

And—this is important—he has retained an architectural quality that spells locale; the "organ-loft gallery," for example, is as firmly New England as the courtyard galleries are French in the Museum Réattu at Arles, which was once a questionably luxe stronghold of the Knights of Malta.

The show that hangs there now (and will go later to the National Gallery of Canada) is One Man's Art; every painting, drawing, every piece of sculpture belongs to the sprawling collection of Mr. Chrysler, accumulated since he began collecting at Hotchkiss in 1924. On the first of the two floors (packed with roughly 200 paintings and drawings, 90 pieces of sculpture), one starts with the salon painters, the Barbizon school, the sentimental sculpture that seems to the current eye low-fi. With some surprises. Gerôme's electric-blue canvas, "Diana and the Huntress," a prize painting in the Paris salon of 1870, may not be anyone's drawing-room dream (or should I say "family-room" dream?) of the moment; yet it has a clairvoyance not recently on exhibition about the later direction of painting.

Moreau's "King David" of 1870, at first glance super-photographic, gives out other interesting inklings, notably in the small section of landscape in the background. Daubigny's "Sea Shore Sunset" (1873, and impressive in its own top-Barbizon realm) verges on prophecy at the sea's edge, a fact which Mr. Chrysler, as we walked through the show, only partially touched on by saying, "It wasn't necessarily fashionable to paint mud flats."

Opinionated as all get-out, Mr. Chrysler affords to the lucky museum-snooper a mine of information, a happy coup reserved for rather more than the minority who deserve it. For others, there may be a special, solitary relish in glimpsing this figure—a man with an inescapable sense of direction, turbulent pale-brown eyes, and emphatic speech, the owner—and strangely generous sharer—of an art collection that can only be described as gargantuan.

In one of the alcoves be-

yond Daubigny, a distinguished large Boudin gave me less of a thrill than two minute (about 4″ x 6″) sketches-in-paint that hung on either side of it—both beach scenes, one with those deliciously calm and well-turned-out people sitting in folding chairs at Deauville, or what I presumed to be Deauville. (Though I think he was shocked by my lack of discrimination, Mr. Chrysler let fall that, at a recent sale, a similar small Boudin checked out for $48,000.)

To a contemporary eye that came late to painting, the excellent Bouguereau on the opposite wall and the Jacquet picture of an unshod girl with a lute are perhaps just "refeened"; however, one knowledgeable visitor commented that Jacquet "certainly knew how to paint feet."

Fresh thrills begin at the Manet section, opening with a darkly stylized study of card players painted when Manet was in his early twenties and a troupe of Spanish players appeared in Paris. Next to it is another Manet—Spanish cavaliers in the theatrical manner—signed "Manet d'après Velasquez." The impulse that led to his interest in Goya and in Spain might well interest the casual visitor so that, without guidance, he could miss one of the delightfully tangled webs that make this show a rare pleasure; diagonally across the room are several pictures by Manet's student, Berthe Morisot.

No one, however, is likely to miss the Monets, the Van Goghs, and the generous grouping of Degas paintings and sculpture, or for that matter, the Gauguins and Renoirs. Suckers for the documentary, of whom I am one, will probably share my sudden shaft of pleasure over Monet's smallish, orderly painting of Renoir's garden (luxuriant floral borders and immaculate walks) and the Degas portrait of Everybody's model, Suzanne Valadon, brunette and spirited with one ample bosom bared in that pleased unconcern the Freudians have rarely been able to induce. One of Suzanne Valadon's own pictures (flowers and fruit) turns up later in the show, and also two, one typical, one atypical, by her son, Utrillo.

Superbly placed before the Degas pictures is a cluster of bronze dancers, no less enjoyable because one is used to Degas sculpture. Gauguin sculpture, though, one is not very used to, and there are four examples juxtaposed with Gauguin paintings, which are in turn juxtaposed with "The Yellow Christ" of Maurice Dénis, painted the same year that Gauguin painted his Yellow Christ. In between: an Émile Bernard "Landscape in Brittany" that might be—and has often been taken by scholars for—early Gauguin. Near the Renoirs, which include his portrait of the dealer, Ambroise Vollard, plumply got up as a toreador, stands a serene bronze figure by Déjean, Renoir's teacher. Nearby, one of the Maillol heads of Renoir wears a hat that clothes-happy Cape Codders may respond to as haberdashery in the Sou'wester vein. . . . See what I mean by documentary? And some of it—the sculpture, for instance—will be seen only in Provincetown, although the paintings and drawings will go later to the Canadian museum in Ottawa.

Chronologically, one should go next to the East gallery on the second floor where the mixture becomes a little blurred. No matter; there's a corner set apart for small Seurats, one of them the *croqueton* for the "Grande Jatte," and you might as well enjoy these without stopping to quibble over the omission of, say, John Marin, an American who might seem to some critics just the boy for this New England spot. In any case, if Seurat is at all your dish, linger for a bit with his sun-drenched composure; there's stronger stuff to come.

Six paces away, just over the threshold of the big central gallery even the most casual clay-footed tourist is likely to be stopped, p*o*w, in his tracks. Cavorting—there's no other word—with outrageous bliss all over the far wall are the famous Matisse dancers, a 9′ x 12′ study (1909) that preceded *The Dance* (1910) commissioned by Shchukin and housed now in The Hermitage in Moscow.

Next to the Matisse Mr. Chrysler has placed, with intent to stimulate, even perhaps to irritate, Picasso's 1907 portrait of one of the Demoiselles d'Avignon, one of the later ones (*très sauvage*) at the right of the group portrait, painted, supposedly, after a stretch of telling enthusiasm for

(Continued on page 47)

CAPE COD MUSEUM NOTES

(Continued from page 43)

African sculpture. The intrepid visitor who wishes to challenge the implications here can be fairly sure of a good fight, but let him be well boned up. (Five will get you ten he doesn't last three rounds.)

Offhand I can't remember what delightful pair of unsentimental English gentlemen reported looking at a long-anticipated picture and finding that their eyes filled simultaneously with tears. (At least one of them was definitely Establishment.)

In any case, this particular Matisse-Picasso combo is likely to leave you either wrought or fraught, and my personal suggestion is that, without looking behind you towards the small organ-loft gallery, you duck into the next room and cool off with a little bit of this and that. You may even work up a small, therapeutic mad when you find that there's only one Chirico. (*Who's* controversial?)

But if they get the label up, or you're just naturally smart, you'll be amused and pleased by the fact that the only Kandinsky is a 1909 street scene in which the houses look an awful lot like houses. No Kupka? No Dali? No crazy-mixed-up Chagall? No.

Surrealism, along with dadaism, Mr. Chrysler apparently considers a controversy apart from controversies, attuned to mystic affiliations, a not totally untenable point of view.

How about Duchamp and Brancusi who slapped up some historic brawls? Both missing. There isn't any Miró either, but there's a great Malévitch and a honey of a Blue Period Picasso of jaded, shoulder-bladed women seated at a bar. And hanging coolly at the very end of the room (this is the throwaway chic department) are about half a dozen Modiglianis; among them, a small charmer you'll miss if you're not sharp—it's early and dreamy, soft around the edges, and a touch too affectionate to have the impact of the late greats, but it's got something. . . . So who's complaining?

Restored by this lull—and by the way, it's a very *big* show, you need time—head back for the organ-loft gallery, where narrow painted stairs and two white fluted pillars puritanically lead up to abstract expressionism. Riopelle, Hans Hofmann, a superb Franz Kline, bought from his Provincetown studio in 1958, and Picasso's "The Charnel House," bought from his Paris studio roughly ten years ago. Here, for the first time in this show, the North American painters come into their own—brash, vigorous, ready and able to lick their weight in wildcats.

Logged in the same area is Braque's "Painter and Model," which has several rather special claims to tug the mind that likes a story-line. A "one-picture retrospective," it was commissioned by Mr. Chrysler in 1937 as a result of a conversation in which Braque admitted a half-resolved desire to do a picture with an easel. As an experienced artist, he should have realized the inevitable fate in store when the word is out; committed, he was then more or less expected to paint that picture, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say he had to live with the idea of expecting himself to paint it. In any case, though Mr. Chrysler seems to feel things might easily have happened just the same way with or without a commission, the painting was delivered to him in 1938.

After a second comprehensive walk-through of "The Controversial Century," it suddenly struck me that I had quite enjoyed seeing it in a way I'd normally deplore. The over-all coverage has never been much good for me, and since the time roughly ten years ago when a friend told me he never "managed more than one case" in a single visit to the Victoria and Albert, I find my horizons have contracted even more sharply.

Quite often I sulk in the one gallery of my choice (right or wrong) while energetic friends gallop determinedly through acres of mixed objets. For this show it would be a great mistake. Skip some of those early ladies lolling on immaculate grass if you like (and I do), but don't miss the fun of the hodgepodge. All those little $48,000 Boudins and such will send out their charm even more ebulliently when you go back to them. . . . What's more: the cold beer and lobster up the block at the Flagship will still be there, and very reviving you'll find them.