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The Armory Art Show, 1913 - I

Lead: In February and March 1913 an art exhibition in the 69th Regiment Armory in New York exploded what many considered to be the complacency of American Art. It was the Armory show.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: American art in the 19th century was quite traditional, a form of realism that was almost descriptive, often termed narrative art. Images were recognizable, designed to inspire, not necessarily to challenge the viewer. The typical American artist produced

works, whether in portraiture or landscape, that were recognizable and comfortable, especially to the uninitiated.

In Europe, however, significant changes were taking place. Influences that reached back to the 18th Century Enlightenment and the time of the French Revolution had tossed away assumptions about art and a changing financial pattern of compensation was causing an artistic revolution. Many successful artists prior to this period worked on commission from wealthy individuals whose approach to life and art was decidedly conservative. With the disappearance of the ancient regime, particularly in France, that source of income from wealthy patrons

went away along with its suppressive influence. Freed from this system, the “starving artists” of the European ghettos began to approach their craft in a decidedly exotic, even striking fashion.

By the late 19th century, a movement known as Impressionism had begun to transform the European art world away from realism and narrative to abstract images. The age of Modern Art had arrived with the pioneering works of Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cezanne, Paul Gauguin, Georges Seurat and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. They were followed by innovators such as Pablo Picasso whose original cubist works flowed from the idea of Cezanne that nature

need only be depicted by sphere, cone and cube.

While the vast majority of Americans, even American artists and their academically based teachers, were largely found on the periphery of these developments or even hostile to them, not all in the United States were immune from this influence. Next time: the Ash Can School and the Armory Show.

From Richmond Virginia, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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