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The Armory Art Show – III

Lead: While the works therein displayed stunned the audiences and shifted American art, not everyone was thrilled with the contents of the Armory Show.

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

Content: The International Exhibition of Modern Art opened on February 17, 1913 in New York. Its theme? The New Spirit. American modernist poet William Carlos Williams joined in with the ninety thousand who attended saying, “I went to it and gasped with all the

rest.” In New York the press was generally sympathetic to the display of Cezanne, Picasso, Gauguin, Matisse, Van Gogh, yet others were not so sanguine.

In Chicago the press cranked out vituperative adjectives such as “profane,” “obscene,” “vile,” “blasphemous,” and the students of the Art Institute burned in effigy Walter Pach (Pak), one of the exhibition’s organizers. Even Harriet Monroe, the critic for the Chicago Tribune and one of the Armory’s chief defenders, couldn’t resist calling van Gogh, “the half-insane Flemish recluse and suicide” or labeling Matisse “fundamentally insincere.” Duchamp’s “Nude Descending a

Staircase” was rudely, if colorfully described as an “orderly heap of broken violins,” or with legendary derision, “an explosion in a shingle factory.”

In the end it was Monroe who presciently concluded about what happened in the Armory. The artists she said, “...represent a search for new beauty, impatience with formulae, a reaching out toward the inexpressible, a longing for new versions of truth observed.”

**From Richmond Virginia, this is
Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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**Stavitsky, Gail. *New Spirit: American Art in the Armory
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