VARIETIES OF AMERICAN REALISM

An Informal Selection from the Syracuse University Art Collections

Feb. 26 - April 13, 1975

JOE & EMILY LOWE ART GALLERY

College of Visual & Performing Arts

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
"Realism" is one of the oldest, most widely used and relative terms in the language of art. The reliance upon similarity to nature in the depiction and analysis of art may have its explanation in the physiological necessity to recognize and adapt to the outside world simply through the habitual use of sight. In any event, Western art, criticism, perhaps instinctively by clue, following this habit, have applied the term "realist" to art forms from Greek and Roman antiquity to modern times, generally going on to point out the differences of quality and content that underlie the seeming fidelity to outward appearance. Within this millennial tradition, which ranges through Roman portraiture, late Gothic stone carving, the inspired Baroque canvases of Caravaggio and Le Tour, through the "programmatic" realism of Courbet and the "spiritual" naturalism of Mexico's Velásquez, American Realism has won a legitimate if not quite internationally honored place.

Yet, considering all the relativities of this long progression of realism, the only way to look and listen to the record from the home perspective of the native American artist and student of art can only be to try with precision what American realism actually is.

From the Syracuse University Art Collections the faculty and students of the Graduate Museum Training Program have selected 43 paintings from the last seventy years of this unbroken and constantly self-renewing tradition in American art. They were chosen from perhaps sixty pictures considered related in some way to what has become accepted as a broadly defined American realist category — truth to observed life of the period and in several stunning cases uninhibited selection and innovative treatment of their human subjects presented in unconventional activities and/or settings. In the course of the review several outstanding works came to the fore again, such as Eers Slotnik's Tambour (No. 22, illustrated), Moses Soyer's Studies for a Portrait of Ben Shahn (No. 35, illustrated), Elsbethen Nadel (No. 18), Wayman Adams' Not a Member of the Club (No. 1, illustrated), Couton Wagh's Burel (No. 39), and a splendid group of town, city and shorescapes by David Burliuk (Nos. 8 & 9). These joining this "varieties" of American Realism — to combine to produce, despite the lack of certain major figures, probably the second strongest unit within the overall University Collection and a painting collection of stature as a unit in itself. The "varieties" of American realism of the period which this exhibition presents are as various as one may consider in the definition of "realist." The "realist" spirit of the thirties that quietly identities with their everyday subjects. For want of a better term, I would identify this as "social" or "empathic" realism. On the other hand the "varieties" also comprise more generalized concepts of so-called aspects of American popular life, in the country and the city, which Bradley Nichols has shown represents the artist superimposing concepts of social, historical regional or political meaning on his subjects as a way of creating popular interest in art and of giving a popular popular consciousness into humanitar­

The 20th-century American pictures in the collection dealt with were unusual in the number of works of better than "average" quality by lesser-known artists who worked in the mainstream of American social observation during the 1930's and 1940's. Particularly did their work show interesting facets of life of the period and in several stunning cases uninhibited selection and innovative treatment of their human subjects presented in unconventional activities and/or settings. In the course of the review several outstanding works came to the fore again, such as Eers Slotnik's Tambour (No. 22, illustrated), Moses Soyer's Studies for a Portrait of Ben Shahn (No. 35, illustrated), Elsbethen Nadel (No. 18), Wayman Adams' Not a Member of the Club (No. 1, illustrated), Couton Wagh's Burel (No. 39), and a splendid group of town, city and shorescapes by David Burliuk (Nos. 8 & 9). These joining this "varieties" of American Realism — to combine to produce, despite the lack of certain major figures, probably the second strongest unit within the overall University Collection and a painting collection of stature as a unit in itself. The "varieties" of American realism of the period which this exhibition presents are as various as one may consider in the definition of "realist." The "realist" spirit of the thirties that quietly identities with their everyday subjects. For want of a better term, I would identify this as "social" or "empathic" realism. On the other hand the "varieties" also comprise more generalized concepts of so-called aspects of American popular life, in the country and the city, which Bradley Nichols has shown represents the artist superimposing concepts of social, historical regional or political meaning on his subjects as a way of creating popular interest in art and of giving a popular popular consciousness into humanitar­

Special thanks are extended to the following for generous contributions which made possible this catalogue, and the invitations and reception for the exhibition's opening: Associates of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Sallie Bailey, Katinka Brigham, James Carroll, Barbara M. Collum, Mary Lilly, Harry Mellor, Michael Recht, Karen Slotnik.

I would like to express the gallery's sincerest thanks to the Community Board of the Friends of Lowe Art Gallery and their Chairperson, Mrs. Kenneth A. Sears for their contributions to the public presentation of this exhibition and for their support throughout the period of its organization; to Dr. Alfred M. Collette, Administrator and Mary Ann Calvi, Registrar of the University Art Collections for their cooperation and assistance in preparing the extensive materials drawn from the Collections for the exhibition; and to Professor Mary Tokach and the graduate students in the Museum Training Program for their integral part in the organization of this second phase of the Syracuse University Art Collection review series.
Above: No. 5, Arnold Blanch. Flower Makers, detail.

Right: Ben Shahn. 1943 A.D., detail.

Below: No. 41, Harold Weston. Searching, detail.
Wayman Adams (1883—1959). Not a Member of the Club. oil on canvas. 32 1/2 x 27 1/2 inches. signed lower and upper left. gift of Mrs. Wayman Adams. SU 5902

Boris Artybasheff (1899—1965). Llewellyn Thompson. gouache. 12 3/4 x 9 inches. signed middle right. gift of the artist. SU 65.425

Boris Artybasheff (1899—1965). Television Actresses. gouache. 14 x 12 inches. signed lower right. gift of the artist. SU 65.407

Peggy Bacon (1895— ). Henry McBride. 1934. pastel. 24 x 20 1/4 inches. not signed. gift of the artist. SU 64.376

Arnold Blanch (1896-1968). Flower Makers. 1923. oil on canvas. 36 1/4 x 20 inches. signed upper right. gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Henry Harriman. SU 61.19

Aaron Bohrod (1907— ). Two Dancers. oil on canvas. 32 1/2 x 16 inches. signed lower right. purchase: Jalonack Fund. SU 68.156

Charles Burchfield (1893-1967). Not a Member of the Club. 1916. oil on canvas. 29 inches. signed and dated lower left. purchase: Jalonack Fund. SU 65.16

David Burliuk (1882—1967). Fish Woman-Cortez. oil on canvas. 20 x 24 inches. signed lower right. gift of Martin Foundation. SU 64.03

David Burliuk (1882—1967). South Ferry. 1925. oil on canvas. 32 x 45 1/2 inches. signed and dated lower left. on permanent loan from Frank Kleinholz. SU 72.581L

Marvin Cherney (1925—1966). Annie's Dreams. 1964. oil on canvas. 42 1/2 x 35 1/2 inches. signed upper right. gift of Mr. Joseph Kahn. SU 64.149

Nicola Cikovsky (1894— ). Two Dancers. oil on canvas. 32 1/2 x 26 inches. signed lower right. purchase: Jackson Fund. SU 68.156

Charles Coker (1891— ). Comenarra Churchyard, Ireland. acrylic on board. 25 x 33 1/2 inches. signed lower right. SU 66.109

Robert Cottingham. 1971. American III—F. oil on canvas. 77 x 77 inches. not signed. partial University purchase. SU 71.294

Lee Brown Coye (1807— ). A Friend has Passed Away. gouache. 19 x 28 inches. signed lower right. gift of Alfred T. Collette. SU 66.220

Alfred Crimi (1900— ). Key West Fisherman, 1934—1935. fresco. 40 1/2 x 30 1/2 inches. signed lower right. gift of the artist. SU 71.15

John Stuart Curry (1897—1946). The Gospel Train. 1929. oil on canvas. 40 x 52 inches. signed lower left. gift of Henry Crown. SU 57.01

John Stuart Curry. (1897—1946). Hogs Killing a Rattlesnake. 1925. watercolor. 29 x 30 inches. signed lower right. gift of Harry Wickey. SU 64.06

Louis Ebeneemus (1964—1943). Nude. oil on canvas. 36 x 20 inches. gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Schaeffer. SU 66.86

Phillip Evergood (1901—1973). All in a Day's Work. oil on canvas. 25 x 39 1/2 inches. signed lower left. gift of Harris J. Klein. SU 69.171

Phillip Evergood (1901—1973). Portrait of the Kleinholz Family. 1953. oil on canvas. 42 3/4 x 34 inches. signed and dated lower right. on permanent loan from Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kleinholz. SU 72.579L

Phillip Evergood (1901—1973). Self Portrait. 1920. oil on paper. 13 3/4 x 10 inches. signed "To Herman Baron my first Self Portrait with deep affection." gift of Mrs. Ella Baron. SU 64.366

Ernest Fiene (1894—1965). Tambour. oil on canvas. 44 1/4 x 34 3/4 inches. signed lower right. purchase from the artist. SU 64.226

Bernard Karfiol (1866—1951). Bebette. 1934. oil on canvas. 36 x 54 1/2 inches. signed lower right. University purchase. SU 64.52

Ernest Lawton (1873—1939). Spring. oil on canvas. 25 x 30 inches. gift of Huntington Harris. SU 62.19

Reginald Marsh (1899—1954). Three Figure Composition; Two Figure Composition (verso). watercolor. 23 1/2 x 18 inches. signed lower left. gift of Rodney L. White. SU 66.179

Glenn A. Rody-Nordhausen (1901— ). Ballerina in Gold Chair. 1963. oil on canvas. 48 1/4 x 24 inches. not signed. gift of Mr and Mrs Theodore Newhouse. SU 64.299

A. Henry Nordhausen (1901— ). Model Resting. oil on board. 19 x 14 inches. signed lower left. University purchase. SU 69.52

Nathan Olivia (1928— ). Running Woman. 1960. oil on canvas. 42 x 40 inches. gift of Norman Rose. SU 65.270

Philip Pearlstein (1924— ). Two Models. oil on canvas. 40 1/4 x 56 inches. signed lower left. gift of Benjamin Weiss. SU 64.115

Henry Varnum Poor (1871—1959). Portrait of Ruth Reeves. 1943. oil on canvas. 62 1/4 x 30 inches. signed upper right. gift of the artist. SU 68.301

Philip Reitman (1904— ). Jewish Fish Market. 1932. oil on board. 27 x 40 inches. signed lower right. gift of Henry and Maria Wickey. SU 66.479

Ben Shahn (1898—1969). 1943. oil on canvas. 40 1/2 x 30 inches. signed upper right. gift of Chancellor William P. Tolley. SU 60.34


Moses Soyer (1899—1974). Men of the Waterfront. 1942. oil on canvas. 10 x 24 inches. signed lower right. gift of Mr and Mrs Harry Stieffler. SU 66.85

Moses Soyer (1899—1974). Studies for Portrait of Ben Shahn. oil on canvas. 36 x 30 inches. signed lower right. gift of Julius Pinelis. SU 69.137

Raphael Soyer (1899— ). Young Couple at a Table. oil on canvas. 30 x 30 inches. signed lower right. gift of Julius Pinelis. SU 65.152

Eugene Speicher (1883—1962). Nude. oil on canvas. 30 1/2 x 24 1/4 inches. signed lower right. gift of Blanche Austen. SU 66.179

Robert Vickeroy (1926— ). Old Woman, egg tempera on canvas. 25 3/4 x 19 3/4 inches. signed lower left. gift of the artist. SU 68.298

Coulton Waugh (1896— ). Burlesk. oil on canvas. 30 1/2 x 24 1/4 inches. signed lower left. gift of the artist. SU 66.125

Leslie Weiner. Portrait of H. Rapp Brown. 1968. oil on canvas. 88 x 33 inches. retained from Student Show. SU 69.07

Harold Weston (1894— ). Model Resting. 1949. oil on canvas. 24 x 29 inches. signed lower left. gift of artist's estate. SU 72.29

Andrew Wyeth (1917— ). Schooner Aground. ca. 1940. watercolor. 16 1/2 x 29 inches. gift of Mrs. Dudley W. Rockwell. SU 67.79