

ITALY (2)

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Proposals and suggested methods for a new teaching programme envisaged for Italian academies of fine art.

At present, the Academies are geared to the education of taste and philosophic attitudes in young artists.

Admission is reserved for pupils from secondary and high schools with a bias towards art. Most schoolchildren from such schools show scant cultural background and little technical skill in drawing or painting. On the other hand they do appear well schooled in unrelated disciplines and their education has a bias towards architecture.

From years of experience in teaching painting in the Rome Academy, I would say that we have on our hands a crisis of structure in the life of the Academies of which continue to be tolerated: too few adequately designed and maintained Italy. Every new academic year, varying internal demands arise making changes in the syllabus virtually impossible. Here, at random, are some of the deficiencies which continue to be tolerated: too few adequately designed and maintained studios; overcrowding; the denial to the teacher of discretion to vary his syllabus. It is time legal interference with the powers of the Principal and Senior Common Room, to decide on internal matters, were abolished; above all, these powers should cease to be subject to favouritism and political pressures, which reduce the authority of Principal and teachers alike. Similarly, the arbitrary appointment to the staff of persons who have not been approved by the Governing Body of the Academy, is an abuse which ought to stop.

I repeat with great emphasis that teachers in charge of painting and sculpture courses ought to be free to vary their syllabus according to the leanings of their own artistic personality.

Finally, I come to the question nearest to my own heart: the tasks and aims which the teacher should be free to introduce.

We live in times of great perplexity, and art has not escaped the undermining which has attacked life at the social, moral and creative levels everywhere. The young are the first to suffer, being ill-equipped by experience to withstand outside influences and moving, as it were, blindfold. New critics, self-styled interpreters of artists' intentions, grow up like mushrooms, write up their theories in a lighthearted way; periodicals too, where the art chatter is so tortuous and recondite that the average reader would need a new specialized dictionary for a glimmer of understanding. Some young people resist; others give themselves over body and soul to the undigested ideas of their idols.

Our task is to bring back those young people (who are adrift) to true painting, to a sound and healthy tradition, which is not necessarily into the paths of archaism. The teachers' task is to drive home the purpose of this or that artistic liberty; to inspire in them the courage to paint the obvious, if necessary, without feeling that they are betraying their generation. To draw inspiration from visible realities involves a code of vision which starts from within the self, their transformation in the light of one's own experience and sensibility, looking to the masters and seeking to assimilate their lesson.

And why not? Every teacher of painting ought to place his own art at the disposal of his pupils, going with them over and over the developments which led to his own style and pictorial language. He ought therefore to have a studio for his own use on the school premises where he would paint, while explaining to his pupils how he paints and why he paints in one manner rather than another, and setting out the phases of creativity which go to make a work of art, so that the