

Strange Debut of Society's Newest Women Artists

Consuelo Vanderbilt's and Young Mrs. Tower's Charming First Attempt at Sculpture Shown Beside Weird Cubist and Futurist Creations at the Very Democratic Art Exhibition Where Everybody's Welcome



"Ariadne," a bronze by Consuelo Vanderbilt which her friends think should have had its first showing at a fashionable salon



"The Last Rose of Summer," by L. Labaust—typical of the ultra-modern works which surrounded Miss Vanderbilt's and Mrs. Tower's statuary at the Independent Artists' Exhibition



"South Wind," one of the admired bronzes which Mrs. Tower is exhibiting with her cousin Consuelo's

MRS. HARRY PAYNE WHITNEY, famous as a society woman who has won distinction in art, will have to look to her laurels as a sculptor from now on. Her rivals are two members of her own family, her daughter, Flora, Mrs. Roderick Tower, and her cousin, Consuelo Vanderbilt.

The first intimation that the public had of the existence of Mrs. Whitney's rivals was in five small bronze figures shown at the annual exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York.

And now society is amazed! Not that Consuelo and Flora are ambitious to be sculptors, but that they should have chosen to display their work at such a democratic—and some call it anarchistic—exhibition as that of the Independent Artists.

How much more fitting it would have been, their friends are saying, if the two had made their artistic debut at Mrs. Whitney's studio in Washington Mews, where a select group could have viewed their work comfortably over a cup of tea. Or they could easily have gained admission to some fashionable Fifth avenue gallery, where the atmosphere, to say the least, would have been more conventional.

Instead, they elected to display their work at the Society of Independent Artists' exhibit where anybody who can pay the admission fee is welcomed. So the haughty dowagers who want to see what Flora and Consuelo have been at in that queer studio down in Greenwich Village all these months have to ascend to the Waldorf roof and mingle with the crowds who come to view the pictures and sculptures of "just anybody."

The Society of Independent Artists is the most democratic art association in existence. There is no jury, or committee to judge whether work is suitable for display. The untrained artist is as free to exhibit here as the artist of established reputation.

No restraint is placed on the creative imagination. Some of the exhibitors are very independent indeed. Pieces of soap nailed on a board have been submitted as some sensitive soul's reaction to modern life.

Since it is the policy of the society to exclude no artist, no matter how unknown or how bizarre his work, Greenwich Village, of course, furnishes a large quota of wild-haired "Cubists," "Futurists" and "Vorticists."

The exhibitors are of almost every nationality. This year's exhibit includes the work of many negro artists. "Adam and Eve," favorite subjects with the modernists, are depicted as negroes, following an anthropologist's statement that the Garden of Eden was situated at the head of the Nile.

Extreme youth is no barrier to exhibition in the galleries of these very independent artists. Among the painters who have work on display are a twelve-year-old girl and a thirteen-year-old boy.

It is, indeed, impossible to guess at the age of any of the exhibitors from their paintings or sculpture. A few

weird scratches and strokes, which might have been made by an eight-year-old child, may prove to be a serious portrait of a celebrity by some bearded, middle-aged artist. So visitors to the galleries hurriedly consult their catalogs before venturing an opinion on the works of art.

The hurried spirit of the modern age is reflected in much of the work. One tired sculptor, evidently pressed for time, modeled half of a reclining figure, and labeled it "From the Rocks."

So many and so varied are the subjects treated that the committee has arranged them in several galleries. The first gallery is filled with "representative" paintings, calculated not to shock overmuch the conservative. These give way to works of "semi-abstract" character, and finally in the last gallery the visitor is confronted with "pure abstractions"—brilliant splotches of color in weird geometrical designs, which may symbolize anything from "A Sudden Noise" to "Lady With a Fan."

Some of the modernists have given up color as too ordinary a medium, and work only in black and white, achieving very startling effects.

A few artists, bent on pleasing, offer paintings and sculptures which each person can interpret for himself. Among these is the bizarre "Crystal Gazer," a futuristic orgy of massive proportions, by Merton Clivette, "the mystery man of Washington Square."

Clivette dresses always in black. Nobody knows his history, and also nobody has yet succeeded in deciphering the meaning of any of his paintings. He hopes that every one will see different things in "The Crystal Gazer," and so he has painted to identify as belonging to his chief enemies. It is reported that no two people have ever interpreted the painting alike—nor has a purchaser for it yet been found.

In the midst of this orgy of modernism stand five modest statuettes in green bronze—the most expensive of all sculptural media—executed in the conventional manner which artists call "academic." "Chrysis," one of the characters in "Aphrodite," is the work of Mrs. Tower. It portrays the nude figure of a young girl, seated, with her hands raised to her head in an attitude of despair. Another figure, with blown back hair and outstretched arms, is called "The South Wind." Miss Vanderbilt has on exhibit a small study in bronze, entitled "Ariadne," and a bronze torso.

The work of these extremely modern young women is the most conservative in the whole exhibit.

"But certainly," says their teacher, Salvatore Bilotti, himself a famous sculptor, "my pupils' work does not show any traces of modernism. I would not permit it. They must be good craftsmen first—then if they want to be Cubists I cannot help it. But," continues Mr. Bilotti slyly, "a good craftsman seldom becomes a Cubist. He does not have to."

And now some people are wondering if clever Mr. Bilotti did not choose the so very democratic and so very modern Society of Independent Artists' Ex-



Miss Consuelo Vanderbilt resting at Palm Beach from her labors as an art student

hibit because he foresaw that his pupils' charming statuettes would appear to advantage against the background of "modern art."

He himself explains the mystery which is puzzling New York social and artistic circles, of why two young sculptors chose this particular exhibit, very simply.

As soon as they have had their break-



Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, Mrs. Tower's mother and one of the world's best known women sculptors

"I suggested that they enter their work there," he said, "because I thought it was a good thing for them to start with the rest. They thought it was a wonderful idea. They have enough talent to gain recognition anywhere. It is not usual for sculptors to exhibit until after seven or eight years, but their progress is so remarkable that I urged them not to wait."

These two young members of the Four Hundred show great promise of becoming great sculptors, according to Mr. Bilotti.

"But they are so different in their tastes!" he exclaims. "Miss Consuelo always wants to make small, dainty figures. She has a delicate, sure touch in modeling. Her work is always deft and distinguished."

"But Mrs. Tower likes to model large statues. Already she has the facility in modeling of a student of seven or eight years, and the strength and movement of her fingers is remarkable. Never have I seen such progress, not even in five years of instruction at the Beaux Arts. Mrs. Tower has done a little modeling at her mother's studio at Newport, but Miss Vanderbilt had had no practice whatever when she came to me. Her work, too, is extraordinary."

In order to make the most of their talents, these two poor little rich girls have to submit themselves to a rigid routine that would appall most young women of fashion. No lying in bed until noon for them. No matter how late they have danced the night before they must be up bright and early, ready for a day's work in the studio. For the life of an artist is an exacting one, full of hard work, and the morning hours, when the brain is freshest, are the most precious.

As soon as they have had their break-

WHEN IT RAINS INK

Some time ago a shower of black rain in Hampshire, England, occupied the attention of scientists. Such an event is not without precedent. In November, 1819, ink-black rain fell steadily for several hours in New York, and at least twice during the last century a similar phenomenon has been observed in England.

Red rain is fairly common, and in May, 1885, there was a heavy fall of blood-red hail at Castlewellan, in Ireland. The red hue was not merely on the surface, for when one squeezed the ice pellets, the fingers were deeply stained. On one occasion there was a shower of red rain in London. When it was analyzed it was found that the pecu-

liar color was due to the presence of a minute water plant.

Black snow has been reported in the Alps, and red snow in Germany, the Tyrol, and in the Arctic regions. A learned professor states that the red snow occasionally noticed in the Alps bordering on the Mediterranean is due to the presence of minute particles of Sahara sand blown across by gales.

Showers of small frogs have very often been reported, but science is still skeptical concerning this phenomenon. It is certain, however, that thousands of tiny frogs have been observed on many occasions hopping about after a heavy shower of rain, and the mystery has never been solved as to whence and how they came in such numbers.

fasts, Miss Vanderbilt and Mrs. Tower are driven to the Bilotti studio on the edge of Greenwich Village, where they work for four or five hours, molding, patting and smoothing into shape the blocks of plaster. Their teacher, beside them, criticizes, while he works on his own sculptural figures and portraits.

Two young women so much sought after as these cannot disappear regularly each morning for hours at a time without arousing some curiosity. Some of their friends, discovering at last what Flora and Consuelo were up to, formed the habit of dropping in occasionally at the studio.

But Salvatore Bilotti believes that hard work is the making of a sculptor. Conversation is all right in its place, but art is art. These gay young butterflies soon found that during the morning hours sculpture was the only thing of interest in the studio. Some of them became so imbued with enthusiasm that they consented to take the place of the professional models and pose for their friends.

One lovely bronze figure adorning the Bilotti studio is that of a young woman prominent in social life in New York. As a concession to her modesty—since all work is done from the nude—only her torso has been modeled.

Miss Vanderbilt and Mrs. Tower have as yet found no diversion interesting enough to lure them very often away from their day's work in the studio. They allow themselves only occasional brief vacations, for they understand that the hand of a sculptor will lose its cunning if separated too long from the clay.

To be a successful artist in any line means years and years of hard work and self-denial. These young women have wealth enough to satisfy any desire. They were born into the exclusive circles where social and family obligations are regarded as highly important. Will they continue to have time for art as these obligations become more pressing?

"Certainly," says Salvatore Bilotti, "for both of them have extraordinary talent. They will be sculptors first and society women afterwards."

According to Mr. Bilotti, Mrs. Whitney must indeed look to her laurels, for her daughter is a formidable rival.

"Mrs. Tower, in particular, I regard as a genius," he said. "She has the capacity to execute the heroic conception—something found very seldom in women sculptors. I believe she is going to excel her mother, Mrs. Whitney. Miss Vanderbilt also has remarkable talent. 'They will both be heard from!'"

So it seems likely that the names of Consuelo Vanderbilt and Flora Tower may be added to the lists of famous sculptors in the next few years.

If the smart get's two newest women artists live up to their teacher's prediction and become sculptors first and society women afterward, they will be sadly missed in fashionable circles.



Mrs. Roderick Tower, who is following in her mother's artistic footsteps

Mrs. Tower is one of the most popular of society's younger matrons and is noted for her charm as a hostess.

Consuelo Vanderbilt and her older sister, Muriel, are among the most admired and sought after of fashionable heiresses. For years the gossips have been discussing the sort of love matches that would be worthy of two such charming, wealthy and well-born girls.

But what will happen if Consuelo Vanderbilt continues to devote herself to a sculptor's career?

Will she remain a bachelor maid, a woman wedded only to her art?

Or will she give her heart to some fellow artist instead of to the European nobleman or wealthy young American she had been counted on to select for a husband?