

The **A**RT DIGEST

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A
Compendium
of ART NEWS
and OPINION

REJECTED! "Christ," by Boris Deutsch of Los Angeles. Submitted to Carnegie Institute and turned down by its All-Eastern American Jury. See article on page 7.

MID-OCTOBER 1930

25 CENTS



"The Blizzard Rider," by Clivette, Nassauer Collection.



"Sea Cod," by Merton Clivette.

GUSTAVE NASSAUER COLLECTION of PAINTINGS BY CLIVETTE, 100 Central Park South, New York City, Sept. 24, 1930.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ART DIGEST:

Pray accept my sincerest thanks for your unsolicited article "Extravagant?" in your September issue.

I have been too conservative up to now ever to utter a statement that Clivette is the "greatest artist the world ever produced," in spite of my firm belief in his unexcelled greatness as an artist of all times.

I have a scrap book before me now which I only started a few months ago. I read:

"Having studied art for half a century, I candidly believe Mr. Clivette is the greatest technician that has ever lived."—Sir William Balford, London, England.

"Clivette's work I can only repeat, has struck me as the most powerful note in modern art (or should I say merely art?)."—Frederick Roth, former president of the National Sculpture Society.

"The other large picture of 'Goldfish' is, frankly, a painting that I would just as willingly own as the big 'Matisse' in the Quinn collection."—Maurice Sterne.

"A portrait as fine as anything by Van Gogh."—Kisling, the French painter.

"On the level with Corinth."—Adolph Wuester, Paris.

"Franz Hals could not put more life and color in his paintings."—Claude Buck.

"Clivette was the forerunner of Soutine apparently."—New York American.

"The most astounding painting of motion in the history of art."—George H. Ainslee.

"There are doubtless those who will go to his exhibition and, looking at his large canvases filled with swirling masses of paint, will recall Ruskin's famous criticism of Whistler."—Carlyle Burrows.

A painter, who at the same time will be compared to Matisse, Van Gogh, Corinth, Franz Hals, Soutine, Whistler, must be amazing.

"There is even the suspicion that you may be in some positive danger as you stand there before these flamboyant compositions," said the New York Times. Can anything more be said about paintings? They said that in the two greatest paintings of classic times, one artist deceived the birds to pick the painted berries and the other caused the artist to try to lift

the painted curtain! But "suspicion that you may be in positive danger" has never been said about a painting in history.

"His paintings communicate joy, power, enthusiasm, hope. Nothing is sad or melancholy; nothing is hesitant in these paintings. Clivette is direct, and above all he is the master of his metier to a degree that is disconcerting to us other artists. Clivette opens your eyes; he gives you the desire to paint just as he gives you the desire to enjoy life, without being in the least preoccupied with the wish to please you. He paints for himself, but his work is a refreshment and an inspiration. Surprise, stupefaction, awaits the visitor before these walls covered by the works of Clivette. . . . He is profoundly wise . . . his art is absolutely his own, his harmonies of color, his composition, are exclusively his own. He seems to paint for giants."—Francois Verleyden, famous Belgian painter.

"God! how beautiful—fantastic—wonderful."—Paul Manship.

"That man can paint!"—Eugene Higgins.

"Great! And amazing in his vitality."—Carl Sprinchorn.

"At his best, he is stupendous."—Paul Burlin.

"Goddam magnificent."—Waldo Pierce.

"A fantastic capacity for movement and color."—Edward Bruce.

"An American superman."—Michel Georges-Michel in *Le Quotidien*.

"Astonishing spontaneity and richness of his colors which owe nothing to any school."—Marcel Sauvage, Paris.

"Clivette manifests in each of his paintings a strange power, like a primal force that always stirs and sometimes frightens."—*Comœdia*.

The Paris Times devoted a special article to Clivette entitled "The Man of the Day."

All these unstinted, "extravagant" (?) praises by fellow artists with the wonderful absence of professional jealousy are so much more effective since Clivette never mixes socially in artist societies and these criticisms are not the expressions exchanged in mutual adoration societies. And yet none of these men have seen 5 per cent of Clivette's creations.

I have lived for two years with 150 of his paintings; I have seen nearly a thousand, which no eyes but mine saw. Never in the history of art did it happen that a man painted 40 years without showing or selling a picture.

Never were 1,000 paintings of one man kept together in one place. No painter ever painted

1,000 paintings of which not two are alike. Take five Rembrandts, three Franz Hals, two Corots, one Raphael, one Velasquez or Rubens or Titian or Michelangelo, Tintoretto, El Greco, Whistler, and you know the master! Take 50 Clivettes and you do not know him, and I will show you many more and each will surprise you!

I also claim that Clivette can copy any painting, old or modern, and nobody will be able to make a copy of his paintings!

"Clivette the Incomparable paints like a house on fire. There is a flame-like swiftness to his brush strokes and the rush and roar of the flames is in his color, which illumines the canvases of house-like proportions. One can not bring to the paintings of Clivette any of the critical standards of conventional usage, whereby paintings are judged, classified and put into convenient pigeon holes. Nor can one, for the same reason, place the painter himself in any movement, give him the label of a school or group. And the reasons for this are that Clivette and his work defy such easy and pat tags and that Clivette and his work are both, by virtue of their peculiar qualities, in a class by themselves."—Lilian Semons, *Brooklyn Times*.

"I visited the studio of an American painter, a friend of my brother, Clivette is his name, a Buffalo Bill figure, a giant in spite of his 82 years. His paintings are powerful as he himself and full of splendor."—Siegfried Nassauer, Frankfort (Germany) *Kleine Erlebnisse*.

"A new phenomenon has appeared at last in America. Perhaps 'new' is not precisely the word, for Merton Clivette is 84 years old and has been painting for 70 of them. In any event his work, which can best be seen at the Gustave Nassauer gallery, at 100 Central Park South, has a quality which marks it off from anything that has gone before. There are those who will find the influence of Greco or Van Gogh in these pictures (and indeed there is something of Greco in the cool, minor color scheme and the dissolution of forms in light, as there is of Van Gogh in the impetuous brush work and thick impasto,) but essentially and primarily Clivette's work is original. His fish quiver in the blue green translucency of sea, his stork is not a stork at all but an astral bird projected against an eerie purple background, his portraits are less transcriptions of physical appearance than penetrating pictures of a soul."—Katharine Sterne, *Gotham Life*.

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Clivette's work, I can only repeat, has struck me as the *most powerful* note in *modern Art* (or should I say merely *art*). It has almost the effect of a clarion call!

There is a certain ruthless truth about it that is almost superhuman.—FREDERICK G. R. ROHR, former President of the National Sculpture Society.

His paintings communicate joy, power, enthusiasm, hope. Nothing is sad or melancholy; nothing is hesitant in these paintings. Clivette is direct, and above all he is the master of his métier to a degree that is disconcerting to us other artists.

Clivette opens your eyes; he gives you the desire to paint just as he gives you the desire to enjoy life, without being in the least preoccupied with the wish to please you. He paints for himself, but his work is a refreshment and an inspiration.

Surprise, stupefaction, awaits the visitor before these walls covered by the works of Clivette... He is profoundly wise... his art is absolutely his own, his harmonies of color, his composition, are exclusively his own. He seems to paint for giants.—FRANÇOIS VERLEYDEN, famous Belgian painter.

The other large picture of "Gold Fish" is, frankly, a painting that I would just as willingly own as the big Matsise in the Quinn Collection. There is fire and emotion, and a world of beauty in this painting. The man paints with a kind of demonic quality.—MAURICE STERN, the famous sculptor.

God! how beautiful—fantastic—wonderful.—PAUL MANSHIP.

That man can paint!—EUGENE HIGGINS.

Great! And amazing in his vitality.—CARL SPRINCHORN.

At his best, he is stupendous.—PAUL BURLIN.

Goddam magnificent.—WALDO PIERCE.

A fantastic capacity for movement and color.—EDWARD BRUCE.

An American superman in Le Gouti dieu.—MICHEL GEORGES-MICHEL, Paris.

Astonishing spontaneity and richness of his colors which owe nothing to any school.—MARCEL SAUVAGE, Paris.

Clivette manifests in each of his paintings a strange power, like a primal force that always stirs and sometimes frightens.—COMOEDIA.

Devoted a special article entitled "The Man of the Day"—*Paris Times*.

Clivette paints movement and the color of movement and assuredly, *no one could do it better*.—CAUDIENNE, Paris.

Incredible intensity with which the fish painted by Clivette dart and plunge (the horses gallop).—*Journal des Peuple*.

Mr. Clivette's art is extremely independent and cannot be understood by everybody but everyone who may visit the exhibition will feel the charm of his brilliant color and tumultuous movement... and his extraordinary fishes have the sparkle of precious gems. In another special article Clivette was spoken of as "a painter whose vogue in Paris is steadily building towards a climax and whom French and American critics unite in honoring".—GEORGE BAR, *Paris Herald*.

A portrait as fine as anything by Van Gogh.—KRISLING, Famous Modern Painter.

Amazing—a genius—almost everything is great.—LUCIEN LABOUR, Paris.

Especially admired the fish series.—RAOUL DUFRY, Paris.

Placed Clivette on a level with Louis Corinthe, perhaps the greatest of modern German painters. ADOLPH WUERTER, Paris.

Claude Buck, whose unusual talent has already made him the subject of a little book, recently joined the group of artists who speak in superlative terms of Clivette. Mr. Buck said: "Franz Hals could not put more life and color into his paintings. *Amazing. Wonderful. There isn't in the history of art any person who has developed that intensity. He is a unique figure that will never be forgotten.* His way of putting on the paint is so damned electric and dazzling. He creates a philosophy that you can't criticize and an art too. Clivette's work comes out of himself. You don't feel any modernism in it. You don't feel any academic element. He can't start a school because nobody could do these things. He's just a phenomenon."

Clivette has been climbing art's ladder and seems to have reached the top rung in an exhibition of startling pictures now hanging in the main gallery at the Art Centre. The public has heard more or less of his sporadic appearances as a painter in rather obscure shows for a few years. He has now become full-fledged, with the prestige of a visit to Paris, where one writer called his work that of a superman and the French Government was



said to be clamorous for him. Also he has a patron, Gustave Nassauer, one of them a Nassauer portrait eight feet high, and who believes he has made the greatest find of the time. It is said he has booked this show for Munich, Paris, London and Berlin.—*New York World*.

Enormous canvases by Clivette fill the walls of the main gallery in the Art Centre at present where they will remain on view until the end of the month. Clivette was the forerunner of Soutine, apparently, for many of the Greenwich Village painter's canvases belong in the same métier and genre as that of Paris' latest "discovery," Soutine. Most of Clivette's figures are of heroic size and never let the spectator forget for a moment they are fashioned out of paint.—*New York American*.

I saw at some little club exhibition his painting entitled "Outriding the Blizzard." I was swept off my feet by that sheaf, almost demonic power of the canvas. I went to his attic studio in an old house in West Broadway; saw some more of his work; began to buy it, and bought and bought. Then all of a sudden I said to myself: "But is there a chance that you are wrong? Is this old fellow as amazing a genius as you think he is?" I decided to get the opinion of men who, as professional artists, would be able to answer the question authoritatively. So I asked a number of painters—in each instance an artist who had achieved sufficient reputation to have been given a one man show in one or another of the distinguished galleries of New York. Their verdict coincided with mine; and in the whole

course of my years among artists, I have never heard such superlative epithets used by fellow craftsmen concerning one of their number. Nor did these men stop at praise: Maurice Sterne, Paul Manship, Edward Bruce, and others immediately bought Clivette paintings.

Quite apart from qualifications that go to make up a really important painter—imagination, experience, color sense, sense of rhythm, of form, Clivette has physical and mental attributes which really seem to me to render him unique. In spite of his more than seventy years, he is one of the strongest of men and the power of his muscular arm accounts for the rushing force of his brush work. He has the eye of the magician; unparelled knowledge of the effect of light; a thousand experiences in illusion. His telling of fortunes and reading... of character have contributed to his sometimes almost terrible insight into human nature, with the result that his portraits are intense psychological documents. His intimacy with nature in almost every land of the globe, and his life among the Indians, have widened his range of subject matter. The total result is that such paintings as "Outriding the Blizzard" and "Tiger" become, as the very essence of animal force, metaphysical, spiritual masterpieces; his sagas are in a class by themselves; his portrait of Rodin, whom he personally knew, is the greatest of all portraits of the famous sculptor; and his watercolors of tropical fish are magical achievements, marvelous in their beauty of color, in their arrangement of planes, in their light within water.—GEO. S. HELLMAN.