

GENERAL NOTES OF INTEREST

ON THE METART SHOW

Clyfford Still recommended to the members of his class at the California School of Fine Arts that they form a gallery of their own. This would free them from the local galleries and museums. They could show who, how, and when they liked, though it should be in the main a gallery for themselves.

An interesting side-note: When the members of the gallery invited Still to show some of his paintings at the Metart, Still told Douglas MacAgy, Director of the California School of Fine Arts, that he was going to accept their invitation. MacAgy's remark, typically, was, "You wouldn't want to have anything to do with that gallery."

The gallery was filled the first day even though the ad the boys sent in to the papers failed to be printed in time for the opening. The attitude of the press in San Francisco was always aggressively hostile toward Still, and it might safely be speculated that the above was not accident. Alfred Frankenstein, Art Editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, pretended illness and so failed to attend the show. He did send down a photographer, but Mr. Nielsen, who was to take care of the gallery that day, did not show up. Hence the absence of a formal record of the exhibition. Frankenstein sent a note to Still suggesting that anyone Still might select could write about it. Still referred the matter to Crehan.

Ad Reinhardt taught during the 1950 summer session at the California School of Fine Arts. He visited the Metart Gallery during this show--note his signature in the register. George Abend, who was attending the gallery at the time, reported to Still that Reinhardt made such nasty remarks -- particularly about the black paintings -- that Abend told him to watch his tongue or get out. It has been remarked in recent articles on Reinhardt that he, with much "originality" began his series of black paintings in 1953.

The following quotation from Still on the fate of the Metart- - - -:

"Hubert Crehan took a proprietary interest in it. Abend and Goya were the ones who asked me if I would permit my work to be shown in their gallery. Among the men in the gallery, dissention had broken out between the Crehan-Goya faction and the others as to whether the gallery would be kept privately or be used as a promotion instrument for their work in the local press and the local galleries. Crehan and Goya were the dictator-organizer types and threw the gallery into the open market. This corrupted its entire function. Competition and resentment followed and the gallery no longer could exist on such terms. It was consistent that Crehan came to New York and pursued the same ambitions, full of envy and arrogance -- the usual authoritarian presumptions -- and tried to kill everything he could not control. Hence his muscling into the New York scene and his venomous assaults in the guise of appreciation on that which he could not understand and chose to repudiate through his journalistic and aesthetic pretensions. My exhibition was a valedictory and so understood by me, to the education-school-boy gallery complex of San Francisco."

Also a letter from Still to Barnett Newman gives another picture of this time: