

HENRY HAIR MATTRESS AND OTHER STORIES OF THE ARMORY SHOW

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As I found myself halfway through writing this part two of the story I realized there were so many quotes from so many newspaper and magazine articles that all I needed to do was set up my Cubist Scorn and Cubist Quote artificial intelligence machines, link them together with an optical cable, turn them on high vitriol, and the paper would write itself. And so it has.

When we left off the story, it was said, *and still the show was not open. Dozens upon dozens of newspaper articles heralded the advance of what was rapidly becoming a gigantic affair in Chicago. The Evening Post pleaded with a public who had not yet seen anything save a few images, to be open-minded. "Chicago ought to give to 'the greatest exhibition of insurgent art ever held' a fair bearing and a serious consideration." Harriet Monroe finally, breathlessly weighed in. "The foreign extremists...have aroused so much comment as to overshadow the other nine-tenths of the exhibit. Whether they please, or amuse, or disgust us, they should not obscure the fact that this is the most comprehensive and interesting international modern show which has been held...in this country, or according to some critics, in the world."* This was a fitting final say-so, the day before the show opened, by the critic who had first introduced Chicago to the Armory Show.

And then, it happened. The hotly anticipated show opened. Rather it exploded - into a million pieces almost exclusively all sharp Cubistically edged. Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* had been called an "explosion in a shingle factory" and once Chicagoans had a look at it, they were in pointed agreement.

The Chicago exhibition contained 634 works, only half the number shown in New York. Gone were the Impressionists and many of the more subtle American artists. Why bother to ship

all that art to Chicago when it was sensationalism the organizers were after, a lesson learned from the well greased turnstiles in New York? However, the New York show was organized in chronological fashion in an attempt to explain the advent of past art movements. This attempt at art education though, was completely ignored by the public. Harriet Monroe commented as much on the impact lost with the absent historical part of the show. She noted the radical aspects “overbalanced” the exhibit, and the context of the 19th century was completely lost.ⁱ She also noted the Chicago show was only half the size of that in New York, and many of the beautiful – otherwise implied acceptable – canvases had been left behind. With diminished size, and the entire post-modern collection intact, the art that was most disagreeable in New York grew in impact and importance.

The Armory Show occupied nine galleries on the second floor of the Art Institute: three galleries for American art; one for the French symbolist Odilon Redon; one for the Cubists; one for French Modernists such as Henri Matisse; and one for Post-Impressionist artists such as Gauguin, van Gogh, and Cézanne. The remaining three galleries were filled with works from England, Ireland, and Germany. Harriet Monroe noted, however, that it was Gallery fifty-three that would “draw the crowd, for here [were] gathered the enigmatic Cubists.” She went on to say, “...one may amuse oneself by searching for the elusive human beings in Picabia’s [work] or Duchamp’s ‘Nude Descending the Stair,’ or by wondering why Picasso’s lady is so contorted in contemplating her pot of mustard.”ⁱⁱ

The opening night reception was a one dollar per person fund raiser for the Municipal Art League to benefit art students in need. It was a society opening. McCormick, Butler, Aldis, Blair, Shaw, Brewster, they were all there, the bluest of the bluebloods.ⁱⁱⁱ Even in 1913 one dollar wasn’t altogether that much. Given today’s value of our currency it would amount to twenty-five

dollars. It's curious why the wealthiest men in Chicago we asked for so little to support young artists. The *Chicago Examiner* made light of the opening by stating: "A Dainty feast was served...when the exhibition of Cubist and futurist canvases was turned loose upon a selected and unsuspecting portion of society... those who were not convulsed by unholy shrieks of demonic laughter looked as if they were suffering excruciating pain as they passed from [gallery] to [gallery]."iv

There was much fun to be had by the press as they simply scoffed at the art, claiming it was little better than a ruse shoved into the public's face. The *Inter Ocean* ran a headline stating, "Cube Art Staggers Institute Members. International Exhibition Opened to Chicago Patrons Amid Ohs and Ahs of Deep Bewilderment."v The *Tribune's* A Line-O'-Type or Two column had this humorous poem about the paintings by Modernist Arthur Dove:

"I cannot tell you how I love, The canvases of Mr. Dove...
At first you fancy they are built, As patterns for a crazy-quilt;
But soon you see that they express, An ambient simultaneousness.
This thing, which you would almost bet,
Portrays a Spanish om-e-lette,
Depicts instead, with wondrous skill,
A horse and cart upon a hill!..
It's all as simple as can be; He paints the things you cannot see."

The column ended by stating: "A FRIENDLY word of warning: Don't pretend to see more in any of the pictures than you actually do see. You might happen on a hoax instead of the real thing and make a sublime donkey of yourself."vi

One of the organizers, Walt Kuhn, was trying to explain the Cubist art to a writer by saying: “I want a picture of [my friend] Mike O’Brien, and I draw a simple square. I can look at that and visualize my friend without trouble.” The reporter was obviously baffled so Kuhn went on with another example. “Suppose I want a picture of [a] Lady... Here she is,” “and Mr. Kuhn drew a quarter circle.” “I think, and I see the lady.” When asked if he thought all portrait painting would come to this fifty years hence he stated, seriously mind you, “Yes. It will require education and thinking, but it will come.”^{vii}

Mayor Carter Harrison had sent his vice squad on indecency to the exhibit where Sergeant O’Connor proclaimed he could find no fault in Duchamp’s painting *King and Queen Surrounded by Nudes*, for “there was no impropriety visible – or much of anything else.”^{viii} This was a somewhat out of character action for the mayor. Harrison, educated in Germany, came home to Chicago to help his brother run the *Chicago Times*. The newspaper was ardently Democratic. Mayor Harrison did not believe in trying to legislate morality. He was quoted as saying the major desire of Chicagoans was to make money and to spend it. He actually turned a blind eye to Chicago’s vice districts, which blossomed during his five terms in office. During his tenure there were even private maps printed to enable tourists to find their way from brothel to brothel.

On opening day, ten artworks had already been sold, which mused the *Tribune* critic, “They were of the type that requires the purchaser to furnish the imagination as well as the price.”^{ix}

The *Record-Herald* went deep with its mockery, comparing the art to a carnival side-show: “Here, here, here we have the famous one-eyed lady, brought from the wilds of France; the human skeleton carrying a heliotrope owl and leading a camel with elephant ears; the horse

with legs like a bullfrog; the greatest galaxy of... abnormal nudes ever assembled on this or any other continent.”^x When one on-looker pulled out his *Tribune* newspaper clipping showing the outline of Duchamp’s nude another said, “That’s the idea, why don’t they furnish diagrams to go with these things?”^{xi}

Where exactly are we now in the timeline of this show? After hearing the voluminous and acerbic press accounts it’s hard to come to the realization that this was only opening night. Yes, the rich and famous, the literary and artistic, many members of this club and of the Cliff Dwellers were first to attend the opening in Chicago; the public hadn’t yet had the opportunity, yet only opening night, and the press had no intention of letting up on its ardent criticism. The whole city was abuzz.

The very next day a *Tribune* headline blared, “Chicago Artist Starts Revolt. Charles Francis Browne Opens Fire on Futurists; Public Crowds Hall to Hear Attack; then Throngs Galleries.” Seriously, if you were the organizers setting out to turn a profit by attracting mobs of people to your show, could you have possibly planned for a better turn of events? Here we have esteemed Art Institute professor and lecturer Charles Francis Browne speaking to a standing room only crowd in Fullerton Hall. Browne stated somewhat dismissively, “IT’S trying to prove ITSELF by ITS own ITNESS.” And this fusillade was met with “thunderous applause.”^{xii} Thunderous. Browne went on to recount a fictitious story about Matisse. One day the artist went out for lunch and in came his child who scribbled paint upon the half finished artwork sitting on the easel. Upon returning Matisse was said to “exclaim ‘That’s It!’ and a new school of art was founded.”^{xiii} As preposterous the story was, the audience no doubt gobbled it whole. “Willie is right in it now; See his picture of a cow. Willie’s up to Cubist tricks. Ain’t he cute! He’s only six.”^{xiv} This from “A Line-O’-Type or Two.” The highly respected Reverend Simeron Gilbert

wrote a terse letter to the Art Institute to say, “The cube exhibition is a big, jolly piece of artistic fooling. If really done at Dunning [the insane asylum in Elgin] it would have some topical, psychological interest.”^{xv}

Now that Browne had opened the attack, other conservative Chicago artists, which included pretty much everybody practicing art in the city, were emboldened to step forward. In thinking about Chicago and art in 1913, in hindsight, it was a period that was decidedly pre-modern. Chicago was a conservative city, still working off strict Victorian values, especially in all things artistic. We know how the world changed post World War I, the roaring twenties, a decided loss of societal naiveté, events that opened channels for all things modern. But this was 1913. Here are some of the events of that year: The National Woman’s Party was formed, and women still didn’t have the vote. Josef Dzhugashvili adopted the last name “Stalin” meaning man of steel. New York City’s Grand Central Station was opened. Federal Income tax was ratified by congress and the IRS was formed – leaving us to ponder our respective fates four days from now. The very first prize was inserted into a box of Cracker Jacks. Senators were elected now rather than appointed by corrupt state government. Romania, Serbia and Greece declared war on Bulgaria. Stainless steel was invented. The first ever parachute jump was made. A patent for the zipper was filed, elastic still didn’t exist. Henry Ford installed the first assembly line. And, Charlie Chaplin began his film career. It was a slow moving, naïve, agrarian country. Less than one in five households in the United States had an indoor toilet. Cubism and Post-Impressionism would be rather shocking to everyone.

The Chicago Society of artists gathered at their rooms in the Art Institute just two days after the public opening to stage a Cubist play. The “throng” consisted of Art Institute employees, art students, alumni, artists, architects, and university professors. “Each was dressed

in a futurist costume.” The crowd then filed into Fullerton Hall where music by Ravel and Schoenberg was parodied as likened to the disgusting modern art. One item that caught my eye was sarcastic remarks made by highly respected artist Pauline Palmer that Art Institute Secretary Newton H. Carpenter had worked tirelessly to bring the Armory Show to Chicago. It would seem the artists and intelligentsia gathered understood he was up to finding a profit, rather than art, as his motive.^{xvi} Hoping to generate an outpouring of interest and sell admission tickets, Carpenter was doing his best to portray the show as a sensation. He told one newspaper that, “people are growing more [sic] angry every day. I have seen them leave the institute in a rage, calling down maledictions on all artists, and Cubists in particular.”^{xvii} That same day Mayor Carter Harrison was asked his opinion of the art after viewing the show a second time and said, “Oh, it’s only another kind of degeneracy.” You can imagine what impact that would have on the public. Who wouldn’t clamor to see degeneracy in public, in a respectable museum no less? It was noted public school children might be asked by their teachers to stay away from the exhibit. “Nasty, obscene, indecent, immoral, lewd and demoralizing” were a few of the adjectives an art instructor at Waller High School, rained down upon the art.^{xviii} This high school today is known as Lincoln Park High School.

Arthur Jerome Eddy, a successful attorney, and avid collector of artist James Abbot McNeill Whistler, was asked to give his view of the exhibition in Fullerton Hall on the 28th, just three days after Browne had incited most everyone. You’ll remember it was Eddy who outlined for the newspapers the figure in Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase*, and had it published for the edification of everyone.



Eddy had supported Whistler through the worst and best of times in the artist's career. Today you can see a full-length portrait of Eddy by Whistler in the Rice wing at the Art Institute along with a number of other Whistler paintings Eddy donated to the museum. The Cubist movement said the attorney was "like the Progressive party. It is a protest against existing conditions in art." Eddy went on to say "President Wilson I am sure, is a Cubist.



He is drawn on square planes and straight lines, etc., and I know Colonel Roosevelt is a Futurist; he looks it. The trouble with most persons and particularly museums is that they are about thirty years behind the times.^{»xix} Of course, not that anyone was receptive to his ideas, he was absolutely correct. Hardly anyone can spot a lasting trend, that's what makes trends, especially in art, near impossible to identify, and why early collectors of any school of art have fantastic fortunes hanging on their walls today. While the *Chicago Examiner* reporter who covered the speech poked fun at Eddy saying he was such a smooth talker “that he will prove some time the moon really is made of green cheese,” Eddy was in fact adroit at making his point. He had noted the Paris Salon of 1860 rejected everything by Corot, Millet, Turner, Monet and

Whistler and one critic in London said Turner's works looked as though they had been painted with currant jelly, chocolate cake, tomatoes and gravy. Noting that all of the paintings in the present exhibit could be purchased for relatively little, and that they would prove to be invaluable some day, he was, of course, correct again. But who wanted to hear someone predict the future when it was about art they could never approve?

Leaving no opportunity to poke fun unmet the *Chicago Examiner* critic said of Eddy's talk before the packed house, "These pictures which can be explained, he explained, and the ones which cannot be explained, he explained why they cannot be explained. In fact, he explained his explanations, and with each explanation bewilderment increased."^{xx}

Harriet Monroe also commented on the future value of the works and voiced what was a very common view, "These Cubist pictures are all theory; they are so completely the product of a theory that there is no picture left... they try to express the pictorially inexpressible... and so these canvases are probably of no... permanent value."^{xxi}

Probably the most severe detractor of the art was George Breed Zug. A graduate of Amherst College he came to Chicago as a professor at the University of Chicago and was a frequent lecturer at the Art Institute. He was also the art columnist at the *Chicago Inter Ocean*, writing the regular Sunday column "Among The Galleries." His scathing remarks are unequalled, and his conservative stance was unwavering. "I assert that Matisse is an impostor, that his pictures are lacking in all the elements of true art, and that the Cubists are just exactly nothing. One may have a mind as 'open' as a Western prairie, one may seek far and wide in books... but one will nowhere find an explanation which explains. Surely if a painting is not understandable on its surface, and if a piece of sculpture does not explain itself, there is something wrong with the 'art' of it.... I have yet to meet [an artist] great or small, who is satisfied with all he does,

who would not, if he could, seek to improve many a picture... Not so Matisse, in all his paintings he ‘would do nothing differently [or so he says.]’^{xxii}

On Sunday March 30th, the Art Institute stayed open until 10pm to accommodate the throng of visitors. That day set an all-time weekend attendance record with close to 18,000 people paying admission to see the Cubists and other Modernists on display.^{xxiii} Even by today’s standards that would aptly be termed a “throng.” To actually see the nude on the staircase it was suggested, “Take a careful survey of the picture, study the purported idea, whirl around three times, close your eyes, count twenty, bump your head twice against the wall, and if you bump hard enough the picture of the nude descending the staircase will be perfectly obvious.”^{xxiv} This quote was accompanied in the *Tribune* with photos of exhibit goers standing shoulder to shoulder smiling for the camera as well as a photo of the steps of the Art Institute crowded to the street.

It seemed as though the critics were having a battle to see who could heap the most sincere insults upon the show, the art, the artists, the concepts, and anything within reach. *Chicago Examiner* critic Effa Webster vomited that the Art Institute had been “desecrated;” the show was a “blasphemous innovation;” the walls were filled with “pollution;” the pictures were an “insult to a self-respecting Chicago public;” it was a showing of “dishonor;” she wanted to know who was responsible for the “atrocities.”^{xxv} Seriously, have you ever heard such a diatribe? I think all of us would be hard-pressed to string together a series of insults as biting and as vociferous as this.

In these very same rooms, well just down the street, with the vaulted Howard van Doren Shaw ceiling, the Cliff Dwellers “satirized” the Cubists by creating comical paintings to parody Picasso, Brancusi, Matisse, etc. It was noted that almost to a man, for it was a men’s organization at the time, the Cliff Dwellers were “violently opposed” to the exhibition. Who might have been

one of the three members of the Cliff Dwellers Art Committee? None other than Charles Francis Browne. Renown sculptor Lorado Taft apparently “captivated everyone with a picture of ‘A Nude Eating Soup With a Fork.’”^{xxvi}

A weekday attendance record only four days later from the previous weekend record Sunday was set on April third. The show attracted some 16,000 persons. Fanfare and photos were everywhere in the newspapers. However, those sixteen thousand visitors weren’t at the Art Institute to see the Cubists, they were instead there to affirm the true conservative nature of Chicagoans. The annual floral show under the auspices of the Horticultural Society of Chicago had opened. Quite a change from Modernist art.^{xxvii}

With the show in its second week the state vice commission was called in. An investigator reported his findings to Lieutenant Governor O’Hara who immediately called for an examination of the entire exhibition. While somewhat conciliatory in his comment by stating “We are not condemning... without an impartial investigation...” He noted seriously that “I have received many complaints... and we owe it to the public that the subject be looked into thoroughly.” A number of the pictures, OF COURSE, were found to be “immoral and suggestive.”^{xxviii}

After all the vitriol and divisive news reports, the outrage of the public, the calling into question sanity and insanity; morality, what is and is not art, what is beautiful, what is a hoax and what is a real attempt at change, Harriet Monroe stepped into a calm period where little was being written about the show, because so much had already been said. She had been an outstanding opponent of the new art, calling into question most serious issues of genuine art. These earlier comments make her more reasoned approach all the more intriguing.

Our esteemed colleague John Notz wrote of Harriet Monroe in his last paper. Something that struck me was her extensive travel and how this should have tempered and opened her mind to things that were altogether interesting, unfamiliar and new. Mr. Notz said of her travels: “In May, 1910, Harriet started a ‘round-the-world, steamship and rail trip, with her youngest niece, Polly. They went by ship across the Atlantic, to London and by train to St. Petersburg, where they visited the Minister to Russia... From St. Petersburg, the new Imperial Russian Railroad took Harriet and Polly... across Siberia. From there, they proceeded by other rail service into Manchuria and on to Peking in Imperial China... arriving in the early Fall... By late November, Harriet and Polly were out of China and in Japan. By January 11, 1911, Harriet was back at work at the *Tribune*.”

Two years hence she was in New York to see the Armory show. As I mentioned in part I of this paper, she had a fairly violent reaction towards the art. While this relaxed over time, nothing displayed this temperament as clearly as her article in the *Sunday Tribune* entitled “Cubist Art a Protest Against Narrow Conservatism.” Here she displayed remarkably forward thinking and open minded consideration of art that everyone had ridiculed. This public stance was both brave and insightful. She put forth the following. “One might construct a syllogism [deductive reasoning]. Either these pictures are good or they are not. If they are good, they will make their way in spite of objections; if not, they will perish without the aid of objections. Meantime all of us, conservatives and radicals, Philistines and anarchists, Republicans, Progressives, and middle of the road Populists, have the pleasure and benefit of intellectual exercise. We are discussing, even to the point of excitement, a question which has nothing to do with money, floods, reforms, clothes, or any of the usual trials and preoccupations of our little corner of the world. We are fighting one of those battles of the intellect – those of us who have

any – which are common enough in Paris, but altogether too rare in our provincially shortsighted and self-satisfied community... American art, under conservative management, is getting too pallid, nerveless, coldly correct, photographic. Better the wildest extravagances of the Cubists than the vapid works of certain artists who ridicule them. Better the most remote and mysterious symbolism than a camera-like fidelity to appearances. We are in an anemic condition which requires strong medicine, and it will do us good to take it without kicks and wry faces.”^{xxix}

That very same day, Sunday April 6th, George Breed Zug came out with a significantly more thoughtful review than his previous outpouring. It was almost as if Monroe and Zug arrived at the same place, at the same time through some sort of mystical serendipity. While he yet maintained the Cubists were only a passing fad, and in some respects history shows this to be true, albeit a hugely impactful phase in art, he accepted the Post-impressionists to a great extent. He even accorded Matisse some semblance of margin when he noted perhaps the artist was working at something that may be valuable but not quite fully formed.

Cubism had now become very popular in Chicago. There were recipes for Cubist food, several illustrations and photographs of the latest in women’s Cubist fashions, Cubist balls, Cubist parties, and Cubist music. Cubism had indeed become a fad, of the public’s making. The *Tribune* had a full page display of society women illustrated in Cubist gowns. “Are you a feminist or a suffragist?” the article asked. “If you are, step right in line and get a Cubist or a futurist, an impressionist or a secessionist to build you a nice little dress of blocks, or a costume of circles.”

There had been such a furor in New York that the organizers representing the American Association of Painters and Sculptors decided they had better print a pamphlet to support their efforts (for sale at the exhibition of course), and also in a matter of fairness, to present an

opposing view. Entitled *For and Against*, it was published shortly after the show opened in Chicago. The Art Institute and the organizers had produced the pamphlet jointly and shared in the profits. The 64-page booklet included Arthur Davies's statement regarding the exhibition's objective; articles by Walter Pach and Frederick James Gregg defending the exhibition; a reprint of a review from the *Chicago Evening Post*; two negative reviews by noted artist and critic Kenyon Cox and Princeton art historian Frank Jewett Mather; and an article on Cubism by artist Francis Picabia. According to Newton H. Carpenter, the museum's executive secretary, this pamphlet sold extremely well. What I found most striking about the pamphlet, however, was its first page – the dedication – where authors typically give thanks to those who inspired and supported them through their efforts, and pay homage to others they would like to give some modicum of credit. However, the obviously self-fulfilled, conceited organizers stated: “Respectfully Dedicated to Ourselves.”

In the pamphlet, conservative artist Kenyon Cox, a society painter in New York and former guest instructor at the School of the Art Institute, mused about the modern artists claiming to have put their souls into the works by saying: “They maintain that they have invented a symbolism which expresses their individuality, or as they say, their souls. If they have really expressed their souls in the things they show us, G_d help their souls!” “These men have seized upon the modern engine of publicity and are making insanity pay.”^{xxx} Delightfully Mr. Cox quoted the Hans Christian Anderson story of the King who had no clothes by concluding, “They have nothing on! They have nothing on!”^{xxxi}

It was blatantly obvious how full of themselves were the organizers. They wrote all kinds of flowery, supposedly insightful and deeply meaningful words to explain the new movements in art. Self aggrandizement was their friend and they pointed at anyone who did not side with them,

and that was almost everyone, claiming in the face of those others that they the organizers were the only ones who possessed any intelligence. The most outlandish comments I found were from one of the organizers Walter Pach. This self-wized, thirty year old man, thought to instruct everyone in the world. His hyperbole was unparalleled. In the pamphlet he made several outlandish comparisons. It was his thought that these new modern art movements were as important as the abolition of slavery and the Emancipation Proclamation. That the new art was the same as the elimination of human suffering and bondage, the inhumanity of enslavement. He continued to claim that modern art was as important as the discovery of America – or non-discovery if you will – by Columbus; equivalent to the theories of Darwin, as important as the writings of Socrates. To him the entire human race was to benefit from the new art. The millions of years of development of human language was in his view equivalent to the ten years development of modern art. And finally he stated: “A considerable residence in Paris and exceptional opportunities to become acquainted with the glorious life and growth of the French people to-day makes me feel that the present age in France is the equivalent, for that country, of the Renaissance in Italy.”^{xxxii} What a load of GARBAGE. What a CONCEITED piece of claptrap. We have the benefit of looking back one hundred years on this writer and can say without question that modern art is in no way equivalent to the abolition of slavery and the renaissance was about the entire change in the human condition, not some brief art movement.

Personally I was appalled at reading Walter Pach’s drivel. And further to my own personal tastes, I happened to LOVE Cubist art, modern art, as well as Impressionism, and Renaissance painting. I think the general museum-goer today has been fed a steady diet of Impressionism and that’s generally all they know. If you enter the Metropolitan Museum in New York and head over to Rembrandt, Titian, and Vermeer, you’ll have these paintings all to

yourself. But enter the room of Impressionists, and you'll be three-deep. However important the Modernist movement today, people still flock to beauty, this is an assured fact.

When Princeton Professor Frank J. Mather had his turn in the pamphlet to support or disparage the show, the latter was his choice. His essay was by a good margin the wordiest, and it was the last essay, and correspondingly then, he had the last words, all 2,200 of them. Known to have a sharp wit and a tongue to match, he wrote an essay that to this day is rather humorous: "At any rate, this new art is very living and interesting... and something like that might be one's feeling on first visiting a lunatic asylum. The inmates might well seem more vivid and fascinating than the every-day companions of home and office... Post-Impressionism is mostly ignorant splurge, and Cubism merely an occult and curious pedantry... Post-Impressionism, then, is the feeblest imaginable reform for real artistic evils deeply based in the hesitancy of the present social order."^{xxxiii} Quite frankly I'm not sure I understand the wording he used in that last sentence. I agree strongly with him when he said Post-Impressionism was a cult of the individual. After all, the publishers of the pamphlet dedicated it to themselves. How much more telling could that possibly be?

It might be of interest that the Methodists refused to meet in the Art Institute Building for a lecture on ecclesiastical architecture as the Armory show was still be on view. Esteemed Reverend Charles Mitchell said "I would move that the mangers of the Art Institute be censured for prostituting the walls of the institute to such purposes as the present exhibit of cubist art. These pictures would not be allowed by the police authorities [in Paris] to be hung on the walls of the lowest barrooms of the city."^{xxxiv}

Most everyone in the audience tonight knows the landscape architect Jens Jensen and his marvelous works. His idea was that inadequate housing, the flat building, flat walls, flat roofs,

was responsible for the Cubists and their art. “The weird looking paintings by the cubists and futurists now in the Art Institute, he said, are an example of degeneracy due to inadequate housing. The painters of those pictures are descendants of generation after generation who lived in the flats of Paris.”^{xxxv} WHO KNEW? Jensen had a really practical idea for land strapped cities. Ideally, he thought a city should be comprised of one and two story cottages with plenty of room to breathe.

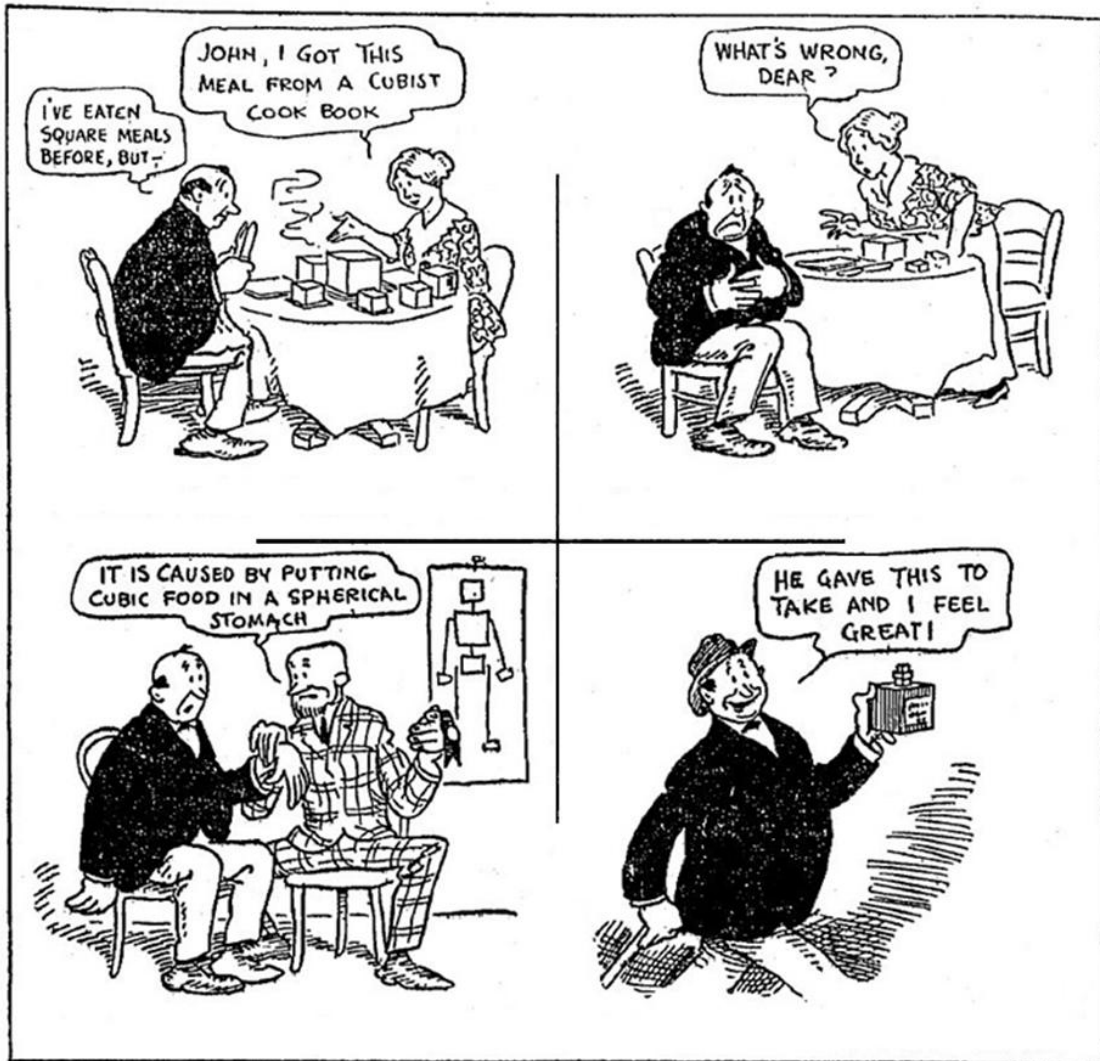
As the furor quieted down in the press, it was only a brief respite for the finale. The exhibit closed on Wednesday April 16th. While 87,000 people had viewed the show in New York, it brought 188,000 patrons through the turn-styles in Chicago. To put this number in perspective, the show was open for three weeks. Attendance today at the Art Institute runs, for a full year, 1.4 million. This Armory show figure is nothing short of astounding. Newton H. Carpenter had indeed accomplished his goal; the show had everyone talking and everyone paying to see it.

To honor closing day, the students of the School of the Art Institute held a mock trial of one “Henry Hair Mattress.” He was charged and convicted with “artistic murder, pictorial arson, artistic rape, total degeneracy of color, criminal misuse of line, general esthetic aberration and con-tum-acious abuse of title.”^{xxxvi} To bring him to a fitting end, the students constructed an effigy, which they then stabbed multiple times and dragged around the front of the museum on Michigan Avenue to the cheers of a very large crowd. The executioner stated in pronouncing the dummy dead, “We regret that you have only one life to give for your principles. You were a living example of death in life; you were ignorant and corrupt, an insect that annoyed us, and it is best for you and best for us that you have died.”^{xxxvii} It was reported that Secretary Carpenter had obtained a court injunction to prevent the students from constructing an executioner’s post and

hanging the poor effigy.^{xxxviii} Park police were on hand, for you may not know it but the Art Institute is actually on Chicago Park District grounds, the reason why they are compelled by the District to offer free admission every Thursday evening of the year to Illinois residents. With a threat of arrest if they left the museum terrace, the students complied and the whole scene was thereby controlled.^{xxxix} While the Art Student's League band played, three paintings by students in mockery of the Cubist works were then burned.^{xl} Organizer Walter Pach was on hand for the debauchery. His parting words were "Ten or twenty years from now... these students will be eating crow."^{xli}

For Chicagoans Cubism had a lingering effect. The Edgewater Catholic Woman's Club held a Cubist Food Exposition, which was humorously parodied with a cartoon showing a

husband with indigestion after eating a square meal.



Pasadena, which coincidentally began two days before the show opened and ended a day after the show closed. “I am afraid that [the] bad influence of this exhibition will be felt in Chicago,” said Mr. French, “The unartistic manner in which the majority of the pictures were painted and the low, and in some cases, immoral subjects, will not be for the best, I fear.”^{xliii} He mused, “I guess I’m getting too old to enjoy these things,” then promptly deflected any responsibility for bringing the show to Chicago, as had those who were left to explain in his absence. Funny that, no one would claim responsibility for the Chicago showing.

The Chicago Symphony was “keeping pace” with the Futurists and new music. When conductor Frederick Stock returned after the summer of 1913 spent in Europe he announced a variety of new programming features of composers noted as “novelties” by one writer. Among the composers new to Chicago audiences he listed Mahler, Bruckner, Scriabin, Debussy, Elgar and Delius, all regular parts of today’s repertoire.^{xliii} When the orchestra performed Schoenberg’s “Five Small Pieces” the house was packed. Society was quite interested in hearing the “Cubist” music.^{xliiv} On hand for that concert was Frederic Clay Bartlett, a Cliff Dweller Member, and the person responsible for donating the greatest post-Impressionist collection at the Art Institute including George Seraut’s *La Grande Jatte*.

In the end, about \$45,000 worth of art was sold, over a million dollars today. If in today’s value each piece was sold for \$5,000 on average, then close to two hundred works would have been sold. Hence, the passion Walt Kuhn so ardently sought in the Post-Impressionists, along with the fifty pound sterling a day in admittance fees he lusted after in London, was more than amply rewarded. In disgust at the absence of a financial account some six months later, most of the key members of the American Association of Painters and Sculptors resigned. Arthur Davies, ever quick with a quip, accused those who left the group of being focused on commercial self-

interest. Unfortunately for organizers Davies and Kuhn, their net income came to some \$90,000 and their expenses somehow totaled about the same. Whether there were any financial shenanigans at play is to this date unknown. In 1916 the organization passed quietly into an ignominious grave.

But what of the value of these Post-Impressionists? Does market value signify some type of acceptance or validation? A local collector and friend Pete Bakwin inherited a Van Gogh his parents had acquired in 1929, paying at the time a five figure sum, about \$500,000 in today's currency. A tidy sum, but by no means outlandish. Twenty years after the inheritance Pete felt the work would best be suited to a collection with ample security. It sold in 2006 for Forty Million Dollars. Just a year later the Chicago Gidwitz family sold a Picasso they had acquired in 1963 for \$106,000 or \$800,000 in today's currency. That painting brought an astounding Ninety Five Million Dollars. Ahh, the rich get richer, and Walter Pach was indeed posthumously vindicated.

Today we marvel at the bold approach the Cubists and Modernists took towards their art. It was groundbreaking. Some of it, today, is priceless. Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* was purchased by Walter Anneberg and subsequently donated to the Philadelphia Museum of Art where it can be seen today along with several other Cubist works he purchased and donated. Marvel as we will, we may still be perplexed upon encountering a Cubist painting or one of Matisse's compositions. I close with this Cubist poem, in honor of Harriet Monroe, jokingly so, who first introduced Chicagoans to the Armory show in the pages of the *Tribune*.

I used to write my verses in the old, old fashioned way. But soon I found they would not sell of course, that did not pay. I wrote of love, and law, and life, and of the azure sky; no matter what I wrote about, no editor would buy.

I tried the stately epic and a limerick or two, it was no use; they all came back; I found they would not do.

I hit upon a happy plan, I'll tell you and be terse – I saw that cubist art had come, why not the cubist verse? I quickly sold a lot like this – these editors are rubes – where once my verses were all gems, just now you'll find them cubes.^{xlv}

ⁱ Harriet Monroe, "A Live Exhibit at the Art Institute," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/30/1913, part 2, p.5.

ⁱⁱ Harriet Monroe, "Art Exhibition Opens in Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/25/1913, p.7.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Society Rushes to See Cubists," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/25/1913, p.7.

^{iv} "Chicago Society Has Private View of 'Cubist Art,'" *Chicago Examiner*, 3/25/1913, p.5.

^v "Cube Art Staggers Institute Members," *Chicago Inter Ocean*, 3/25/1913, p.5.

^{vi} "A Line-O'-Type Or Two," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/25/1913, p.8.

^{vii} "Cubist Art Baffles Crowd," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/25/1913, p.7.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x "Step In! No Danger! Cubist Show Now On," *Chicago Record Herald*, 3/25/1913, p.1.

^{xi} Op. cit., *Chicago Tribune*, 3/25/1913, p.7.

^{xii} "Chicago Artist Starts Revolt," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/26/1913, p.15.

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} "A Line-O'-Type Or Two," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/29/1913, p.6.

^{xv} Op. cit., *Chicago Tribune*, 3/26/1913, p.15.

^{xvi} "Artists Give Cubist Play," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/27/1913, p.15.

^{xvii} "Cubist Art Severs Friendships," *Chicago Examiner*, 3/28/1913, p.10.

^{xviii} "May Bar Youngsters From Cubists' Show," *Chicago Record-Herald*, 3/27/1913.

^{xix} Joan Candoer, "In the World of Society," *Chicago Examiner*, 3/28/1913, p.9.

^{xx} Op cit., *Chicago Examiner*, 3/28/1913, p.10.

^{xxi} Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 3/30/1930, part 2, p.5.

^{xxii} George Breed Zug, "Among The Art Galleries," *Sunday Inter Ocean*, 3/30/1913, p.M5.

^{xxiii} "Throng To See Cubist Art," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/30/1913, p.7.

^{xxiv} "Sunday Crowds See Cubist Art," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/31/1913, p.3.

^{xxv} H. Effa Webster, "Moderns Here On Exhibition Called Art Desecration," *Chicago Examiner*, 4/1/1913, p.8.

^{xxvi} "Cliff Dwellers' Satirize the Cubist Art in Pointed Caricatures," *Chicago Examiner*, 4/2/1913, p.3.

^{xxvii} "Flower Show Sets Record," *Chicago Tribune*, 4/3/1913, p.3.

^{xxviii} "New Art Shocks Chicago," *The New York Times*, 4/3/1913.

^{xxix} Harriet Monroe, "Cubist Art a Protest Against Narrow Conservatism," *Chicago Tribune*, 4/6/1913, part II, p.5.

^{xxx} Kenyon Cox in, *For and Against: Views on the International Exhibition held in New York and Chicago*, (New York: Association of American Painters and Sculptors, Inc., 1913), pp.35-36.

^{xxxi} Ibid, p.40.

^{xxxii} Walter Pach in "The Cubist Room," op. cit., *For and Against*, 1913, pp.52-54.

^{xxxiii} F. J. Mather, Jr., "Old and New Art," in *For and Against*, 1913, pp.56-64.

^{xxxiv} "Pastors Flail Cubist Show," *Chicago Tribune*, 4/8/1913, p.7.

^{xxxv} "Says Bad Housing Causes Cubist Art," *Chicago Tribune*, 4/10/1913, p.10.

^{xxxvi} "Cubists Depart; Students Joyful," *Chicago Tribune*, 4/17/1913, p.3.

^{xxxvii} Ibid.

^{xxxviii} "Art Institute Students 'Kill' Cubist In Effigy," *Chicago Examiner*, 4/17/1913, p.9.

^{xxxix} Ibid.

^{xl} Ibid.

^{xli} Ibid.

^{xlii} "Director French Fears Cubists' Chicago Effect," *Chicago Examiner*, 4/27/1913, p.3.

^{xliii}

Glenn Dillard Gunn, "Keeping Pace With the Futurists in Music," *Chicago Tribune*, 10/5/1913, part 2, p.5.

^{xliv} "Society Hears 'Cubist' Music," *Chicago Examiner*, 11/3/1913, p.11.

^{xliv} "A Cubist Poem," *Chicago Examiner*, 5/4/1913, p.49.