

Much has been written regarding the International Exhibition of Modernism that came from its venue at the New York Armory to Chicago in 1913. I was absolutely certain the Art Institute of Chicago would engineer an exhibition to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary; soon to be disappointed. I traveled to New York, twice, to see the retrospective at the New York Historical Society and devoured the 512 page compendium that accompanied this monumental exhibit. Being no stranger to serious art history research, I delved deeply into my archives at the Illinois Historical Art Project, the Ryerson Library, and the Chicago Public Library to give you this account. What you will hear is the product of research where almost all of the information has been footnoted to its original source documentation, the type of research that continues to wake me up in the morning.

“BEDLAM IN ART” ran Harriet Monroe’s headline in the *Chicago Tribune*.<sup>1</sup> The date was Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1913. Little did the Chicago populace comprehend what was about to shake the foundations of everything they knew about art. “Bedlam in Art,” to be sure. This word, “bedlam,” has come into such popular use that the real impact of the word has been lost. Place yourself in the year 1913. Our country and the world was obviously a much, much different place. The impact of the word “bedlam” was quite extreme in 1913. It derives from “Bedlem, Bethlehem” in England. “Bedlam” was the popular name for the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, London; an insane asylum. Now you can picture exactly what Miss Monroe was saying. INSANITY! MADHOUSE!

Harriet Monroe, as our esteemed colleague John Notz has written in an earlier Literary Club paper, was a legendary force; *Tribune* art critic and founder of *Poetry* magazine. She had convinced the *Tribune* to pay her expenses to New York for the opening of the *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, otherwise known as the *Armory Show*, for it was housed in the 69th Regiment Armory located on Lexington Avenue between 25th and 26th.

By Miss Monroe’s own account some twenty-three years later, the *Armory Show* was the “most interesting incident of [her] journalistic career.”<sup>2</sup> The passing of years before writing these words had tempered her art shock, something she mused about in her autobiography, at the age of seventy-five, by stating that while the critics had all agreed it was “the most important event ever held in New York,” she had had a “grand time” with the critics, artists, patrons, and visitors to the show.<sup>3</sup> Monroe would first express alarm, astonishment and dismay, only to reconsider as the days and weeks of evaluation and re-evaluation wore on, to find the exhibition truly revolutionary; kudos to Miss Monroe for evolving her own opinions, and publically so. Let us join Miss Monroe and “BEDLAM IN ART” and see the show through her eyes and those of her fellow art critics.

The American Association of Painters and Sculptors in New York, known as the AAPS, formed early in 1912. Led by their artist president Arthur Bowen Davies (1862-1928) and secretary Walt Kuhn (1877-1949) they had began organizing the Armory show by spending the fall of 1912 in Europe gathering works by artists whom others in Europe considered the most *avant* of the *avant-garde*. The show was held under the auspices of the AAPS, whose mission was to break free of the heretofore strict juries that had little appreciation for the modern – in art. In a pamphlet Davies explained, “the time has arrived for giving the public here the opportunity to see for themselves the results of new influences at work in other countries in an art way.”<sup>4</sup> The king had already lost his closing

when Davies stated that it was only for the “intelligent” to judge for “themselves by themselves;” the implication of course that if you didn’t see this art as symbolic of everything important, then of course you were obtuse.

Their concept for the show was to progress from those whom they considered founders of modern art to those practicing the art in the contemporary scene. Monroe had called Davies “one of the most original and imaginative of American painters.”<sup>5</sup> Three years earlier the Art Institute had purchased Davies’ *Maya, Mirror of Illusions*, a work that is a mystical representation of several female nude figures, but classically rendered; modern thinking, but certainly far from “bedlamic.”



Arthur B. Davies, *Maya, Mirror of Illusions*, courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago, all rights reserved.®

His compatriot, Walt Kuhn, has often been given undue credit for assembling the majority of works from Europe. In fact it was Walter Pach (1883-1958), the European representative of AAPS, who was responsible for corralling the large body of artists located in Paris, and therefore the author of the coming uproar. Kuhn himself wasn’t even clear on the meaning of all this modern art. He readily admitted to his wife he was learning. On the cubists he said they “are intensely interesting... I sum them up mostly literary and lacking in that passion or sex... which is absolutely necessary for me.”<sup>6</sup> He even went so far as to call them freaks.<sup>7</sup> The passion he spoke of was found in London where he had discovered the organizers of a Post-Impressionists exhibit were taking in fifty pound sterling a day just from admission fees, telling his wife “Can’t you see what will happen in New York? ... they only charge a shilling a head. Our average admission will be double that.”<sup>8</sup> Altruism be damned, let’s hear it for the mighty dollar!

To summarize: we have four main characters in this story: Arthur B. Davies, president of the American Association of Painters and Sculptors; his partner in the *Armory*

*Show* and secretary of AAPS Walt Kuhn; their advisor in Paris expatriate Walter Pach, and their most prodigious lens and pathway to the Chicago public at large, Harriet Monroe.

The way in which the show was laid out traced the origins of modern art. Davies thought who else to begin that journey than the enigmatic Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867). Enigmatic because he was quoted as saying “I am a conservator of good doctrine, and not an innovator.”<sup>9</sup> History stole the identity of Mr. Ingres and as far back as the turn of the last century, some thirty-three years after his death, critics considered his work to be the precursor to modern art, much against his wishes. One critic put it more bluntly, “Poor old Ingres, how he must feel to be placed in the company of Matisse and Picasso!”<sup>10</sup>

The *Armory Show* chronology jumped from Ingres to the Post-Impressionists. That’s not to say Monet, Renoir, and Degas were completely ignored, but their works comprised only thirteen of the some thirteen HUNDRED on display. The original Post-Impressionists were praised as the originators of the modern movement in art. Miss Monroe delightfully and disdainfully called them “The three dead painters,” under the sub-headline “Dead Trio Claimed as Founders.”<sup>11</sup>

What a sad lot this Trio: the “shabby French vagabond who was neglected while he lived;” the “half insane Flemish recluse and suicide,” and the “disreputable world wanderer.”<sup>12</sup> Cezanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin. Monroe said “these three dead masters – the sage, the rebel, and the barbarian,” would each be accorded their own gallery space in the armory from among the twenty-seven spaces created through fabric curtains. Matisse and Odilon Redon were also given their own galleries.

It was English artist and art critic Roger Fry who had coined the phrase “Post-Impressionist.” Named Curator of European Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1904,<sup>13</sup> he organized exhibits of the new, new art at Grafton Galleries in London in 1910 and again in 1912. Hence while Post-Impressionism had earlier taken London by storm, it created an outright sensation in New York where some 87,000 people turned out to see the pranks, and it produced a veritable earthquake on its second stop in Chicago with an astounding 188,000 people seeing the bedlam at the Art Institute.

There was plenty of advance notice that something astonishing was about to sweep over the city of Chicago come the March 24<sup>th</sup> opening. Monroe’s headline on February 17<sup>th</sup> from New York read: “Art Show Opens to Freaks: American Exhibition in New York Teems with the Bizarre.” It didn’t take her long to deride Matisse with what today would be considered a cliché when she said he “throws figures and furniture on his canvas with precisely the prodigal impartiality and the reckless drawing of a child.”<sup>14</sup> She did offer her readers a tasty morsel that noted, in summary, “it is fortunate that Chicago is to see part of the exhibition.”<sup>15</sup> Actually Chicago played host to about half the number of works shown in New York. The historical section of the show, those works that were not Post-Impressionist, didn’t travel here;<sup>16</sup> hence Chicago had the pleasure of the most radical of radical, stripped of its calming historical.

Quickly the news of the show in New York began to permeate the newspapers in Chicago. On February 19<sup>th</sup> the regular *Tribune* column “A Line-O’-Type Or Two,” featured verse only two days after bedlam rained down upon New York. It began with a Latin phrase

“Spina etiam grata est ex qua spectatur rosa,” “Even the thorn bush is pleasant if it contains a rose.” Part of the verse went like this:

“How blest am I who’ve lived to see, Art from her ancient bonds set free;  
Like ladye fair in castle shackled, Until some knight the dragon tackled.  
The painter used to learn to draw, That he might paint the things he saw;  
But now the canvas he reveals, Is meant to show us how he *feels*.  
And if the curious things on view, afford the layman any clew [sic];  
They raise the interesting question, Can what he feels be indigestion?”<sup>17</sup>

The next day *Tribune* readers were greeted with a headline exclaiming “Critics of All Kinds at ‘Freak Art’ Exhibition.” Miss Monroe explained that the crowds were flocking first to the Cubists and Futurists “eager to know the worst.” There were three basic responses she observed: laughter, dumbstruck, or deep despair.<sup>18</sup>

One New York visitor, making a prescient comment just prior to the Great War, stated: “No, I can’t laugh at that kind of insanity. It makes me fear for the world; something must be wrong with an age which can put those things in a gallery and call them art.”<sup>19</sup> The constant refrain of the day was that the works must have been produced by the insane.<sup>20</sup>

Miss Monroe was able to ask the organizers themselves the concept behind bringing this body of works together, to which the reply came: “We don’t necessarily agree with every artist to whom we give space; but when a man is accepted in Paris or London or Munich as representative of some phase of the modern movement, we think he is entitled to a hearing in New York.”<sup>21</sup> Of course, this was more self-promotional balderdash, as these Post-Impressionist works were no more acceptable in the European capitals than they were in New York. Miss Monroe quoted Arthur Davies as espousing how current shows in New York were limited by hide-bound juries who would never allow an exhibition that would include the more modern point of view.<sup>22</sup>

Such comments were direct attacks on the annual exhibitions of the National Academy of Design, decidedly the *most* important semi-annual venue of art in the country. More recent scholarship however has shown that the Armory Show was in fact edited by probably the most restricted and narrow-minded jury ever – truly revolutionary in that sense. For it was Walter Pach and Arthur Davies who chose all of the European works for the show and Davies and William Glackens who chose all of the works by Americans for the show. There was no democracy on display here, it was purely dogmatism, masquerading as open-minded, fresh thinking – and was indeed hypocritical at its extreme.<sup>23</sup> And to the point was this comment made by Miss Monroe: “Perhaps the vitality of the show is due to its representing chiefly the choice of one man... Most juries are a compromise, divergent interests being represented.”<sup>24</sup>

Slowly Miss Monroe was warming to the thought that these new ideas might be something new indeed, not something insane. She felt the organizers were giving American art a “much needed shaking up” with a show that was “sure of far reaching influence.”<sup>25</sup> It was almost as if she was torn asunder by the radical show, at once praising it and again panning it with some level of disgust in the same commentary: “... if the little groups of theorists have any other significance than to increase the gayety of nations your

correspondent confesses herself unaware of it. As to Matisse, “If the fifteen pictures here shown represent him fairly he is an unmitigated BORE.”<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, in Chicago, word of the show was spreading. When the McWilliamses organized a cubist ball they hired William Penhallow Henderson (1877-1943) to drape their apartment walls in black fabric and splatter the fabric with paint. Guests were requested to attend in costume. “Most guests went in costumes reflecting the new ‘block’ system of art interpretation.” The society page stated “‘cubists’ they call themselves – a costume which requires the artistic services of a carpenter rather than a gown builder.”<sup>27</sup> The columnist covering society news exclaimed “Cube Gowns Worn At Freak Party.”<sup>28</sup>

With enough intelligence to be knowledgeable about the modernist writings of Paris art collector Gertrude Stein “A Line-O-Type or Two” featured this ditty:

*“I did a canvas in the post-impressionistic style. It looked like Scrambled Eggs on Toast; I, even, had to smile. I said, ‘I’ll work this Cubist bluff,’ With all my might and main, For folks are falling for the stuff, No matter how inane.’ I called the canvas ‘Cow With Cud,’ And hung It on the line. Altho’ to me ‘twas vague as mud, ‘Twas clear to Gertrude Stein.”<sup>29</sup>*

This was followed a day later in the same column with an “Ode To Summer: Post-Impressionist Poem” consisting of complete babble in verse, random banging on the typewriter, followed by the annotation: “The foregoing poem is apparently a Cubistic attempt to express the inexpressible, which is the best thing that Cubists do.”<sup>30</sup>

The humor at the expense of the art was in full force, and the opening in Chicago was some three weeks away. Front page headlines such as this from the *Evening Post*, “Freak Art Exhibit of Modern School To Be Brought Here: Sensation Expected,” were appearing more frequently, and of course stirring up interest and controversy well in advance. Nothing has changed, the museums want tickets sold and revenue walking through their doors. In 1913 Art Institute Executive Newton H. Carpenter was deliberately stirring things up as quoted in the same article: “Certainly the best of all the sensational experiments of post impressionist, futurist and cubist schools will be here. Not one will be left behind. It is to be a great day for the Art Institute and... our policy of giving the people what they want in the way of excitement. ...I cannot describe a cubist ...but I told one of the girls in the sculpture class if she built a group of clay and let me...hurl bricks at it... it would be a cubist piece of sculpture.”<sup>31</sup> Carpenter added that after visiting the New York show he had never been so excited in his whole life. Running concurrently at the Art Institute would be the American annual exhibit of watercolors and the annual horticultural show of live flowers. Carpenter noted these shows would make the visitor glad for “a quiet hour” and that “the screaming colors and puzzles and big pictures and little pictures, impressions and no impressions, would make you glad to enjoy the watercolors [and flowers].”<sup>32</sup>

The most famous, or infamous quote, from the entire experience in New York came from the poet Charles Harrison Towne who said one painting resembled “an explosion in a shingle factory.”<sup>33</sup> He was referring to the painting that to this day was and is the most famous of the exhibition, *Nude Descending a Staircase*, by Marcel Duchamp; the very first illustration in the exhibition catalog.<sup>34</sup>



A few weeks before the Chicago opening, an exhibit of *Contemporary Scandinavian Art* was shown at the Art Institute. One critic decried: “Weird, colorless, absolutely lacking in everything that is usually associated with the original conceptions of art; hideous delineations which look as if they were conceived in a nightmare and executed in a delirium...”<sup>35</sup> Many of these same catchphrases were soon to come into use, and quite frequently. A critic decided some education was in order for his public. “Listen, my children, and you shall hear Of the which and the why of the daub and smear” was his tagline, as he attempted to make sense of the modern element of the Scandinavian show. In reference to this tagline he insisted, tongue in cheek, that understanding these artists was really quite “simple.”<sup>36</sup> During that exhibit a painting by Norwegian artist Bernhard Folkestad was removed from the walls as being “suppressed on moral grounds.” Director of

the museum William French stated, “I won’t talk about it. The less said about such subjects the better...The art committee ordered it down.”<sup>37</sup> This little non-comment by director French foreshadowed his underlying feelings regarding what was soon to explode in Chicago at his own dearly beloved Art Institute.

The subject of immorality was soon to literally go on trial in Chicago, and in such close timing to the *Armory Show* opening it couldn’t be helped that it washed over charges of immorality cast upon the modernists. A reproduction of the painting by French artist Paul Chabas (1869-1937) entitled *September Morn*, winner of a gold medal at the Paris Salon, was shown that month at a local art store. Mayor Carter Harrison ordered his city art censor to march over to the Jackson and Semmelmeier<sup>38</sup> art store and remove the offending work. The official municipal code stated: “No person shall exhibit...or sell...any lewd picture or other thing whatever of an immoral or scandalous nature.” Famed Chicago sculptor and de facto senior member of the artist’s community Lorado Taft (1860-1936) was quoted to say in disgust, “The person who can see indecency in ‘September Morn’ is to be pitied.”<sup>39</sup>



Paul Chabas, *September Morn*, c.1912, courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, all rights reserved©

Still eight days before opening in Chicago, Gertrude Stein’s study of Matisse in prose was quoted in the *Tribune* under the headline “Futurist Literature.” It would be safe to say that even today most of her verse is unintelligible, but the impact upon those who quoted her in 1913 was nothing short of bemusement. After giving the long study a reasonably full measure of space, one columnist smirked, “...if the reader will partly close his eyes, bending over so as to bring into play the usually unemployed lower half of the retina, and holding the [newspaper] about three feet to the left...it becomes perfectly clear.”<sup>40</sup> On the same date Miss Stein’s verse appeared in the *Tribune* Miss Monroe wrote a lengthy half page column

in an effort to get her readers ready for what was about to descend upon the metropolis. She gently told her audience: "It may be proper to prepare our minds for the point of view of the modern French radicals, who will be largely represented."<sup>41</sup> The society pages credited two of their own for bringing the exhibition to Chicago, urging readers to get educated beforehand.<sup>42</sup> University of Chicago professor and art critic George Breed Zug said no one understood the works anyway and that it would be interesting to see how Chicagoans addressed the "freakish performances" of the art.<sup>43</sup>

Professor Zug made one important note that was lost on fairly well all of the other critics. The fine point was that "futurists" were in fact a group of Italian post-impressionists of the "extreme type" and actually, none were represented in the show. However, the word Futurist took hold and was applied throughout to this futurist-less group.<sup>44</sup> Zug had some very sharp-edged comments. He said of Guaguin: "Whatever may have been his life's romance in [Tahiti], he was as a painter in the class with the unskilled. We are told that towards the end he began to doubt his powers as an artist. He would have done better to have begun by doubting."

Cubist dresses were another humorous subject where some clothiers were likely equal parts tongue-in-cheek and part trying to catch a trend. In a news item titled "Cubist Gown Comes To Town," it was noted two styles were offered in the conservative and extreme fashion with the latter supposedly the envy of any cubist.<sup>45</sup> As per Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Stair Case*:

"You've tried to find her, And you've looked in vain. Up the picture and down again, You've tried to fashion her of broken bits, And you've worked yourself into seventeen fits; The reason you've failed to tell you I can, It isn't a lady but only a man."<sup>46</sup>

Audiences in New York had actually been angry that in this painting they could find neither the nude nor the staircase!

Chicago was yet six days prior to the anticipated opening. Acerbic humor would mingle in the press until given no room to breathe it soon would become outright rage. A scathing headline accused the show as a "Barnumized" effort and "Leering Effrontery." The critic said the art was "Barnumized" because it was a blatant effort to create a "sensational and profitable" exploit. "Some of the painters themselves [were] a queer lot, almost as queer as their pictures." The works not yet even displayed were, "utterly unintelligible," "an absurdity," "a physiological curiosity," and just plain "weird."<sup>47</sup> Very much like the sideshows at a circus.

The artwork was now in Chicago and being unpacked in the basement of the Art Institute. The show organizers had also arrived with their beloved paintings. Several members of the AAPS were wearing buttons with their logo. It was commented their logo looked like an "untrimmed Christmas tree." "It's a pine tree," explained one member. "It is a symbol of liberty – of liberty of thought." "We have tried to symbolize the artistic spirit in the treetop, far above the mean levels of life."<sup>48</sup>

A schedule for the opening was published in the *Evening Post*, announcing the press would have their own viewing, unencumbered by the masses followed a few days later by the official public opening at one p.m. on Monday March 24<sup>th</sup>. There was sure to be a



“throng” on opening day so thick that actually viewing the works of art would be out of the question!<sup>49</sup> The schedule was later adjusted to accommodate museum members and their guests on the 24<sup>th</sup>, followed by the general public on the 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>50</sup> The museum was to stay open until 10 p.m. each evening to accommodate those waiting in line. One critic said of the paintings by Marcel Duchamp that should someone look at his pictures for more than twenty minutes he would go mad trying to understand their meaning.<sup>51</sup> A curious side note was added that the Director of the Art Institute, William French and Mrs. French, would be on their way to California by the time of the opening.

In hindsight, it was a promotional coup of the organizers to fill the newspapers with anticipatory newsworthy items, which like today, took on a life of their own, and needed little prodding thereafter. Now just four days before opening the paintings continued to be unpacked and a news item announced “Cubists Invade City Today.” And while the organizers were busy trying to justify the works in the show as not all “freakish” in an obvious attempt to attract the conservative audiences of Chicago, their efforts by now went unheeded.<sup>52</sup>

It was clear the press was having an advance, advance view as on Thursday and Friday before the opening, and throughout the weekend, the newspapers were alive with shrill commentary. “Cubist Art Is Here, Clear As Mud” announced the *Record-Herald*. On how to appreciate the art: “Eat three welsh rarebits, smoke two pipefuls of ‘hop’ and sniff cocaine until every street car looks like a goldfish and the Masonic Temple resembles a tiny white house.” The same critic added “preparations are being made to care for additional patients at [the] Dunning [insane asylum].”<sup>53</sup> To this was added the “cure for Cubism was two grains of potassium cyanide.”<sup>54</sup>

Picasso’s painting *Woman With A Mustard Pot*, caused out right mirth, with a headline blaring “Antics Of Pot Thrill Critics Of Newest ‘Art’” with “Art” in quotation marks for added effect. “The lady sat beside the pot of mustard and mused. This much was very clear. The lady was deeply affected by her musings – or by the pot of mustard. The pot of mustard seemed in a hilarious mood. It had hurled itself about the scene with perfect abandon. Much of itself had landed in the lady’s left eye.”<sup>55</sup>



Still the show had not opened. The press was adamant that the star of the show, the most intriguing work of all, was in fact Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*. One hundred years later, this remains the case. The painting was bought from the Armory Show for three hundred dollars by a dealer in San Francisco. Eleven years later Duchamp's friend, industrialist Walter Arensberg, purchased the work and donated it to the Philadelphia Museum where you can see it today. Chicago sculptor and Art Institute professor, and Cliff Dwellers club member Lorado Taft had constructed scaffolding to work on a monumental sculpture. He invited a reporter in to see this effort and then remarked that the scaffolding looked exactly like a cubist painting.<sup>56</sup>

Three days until opening, and dealer Robert W. Friedel, who owned a gallery in the Garland building, attacked conservative painter Kenyon Cox, whose negative views of post-impressionism he had read in a New York newspaper. Before the "uninitiated lay public" had a chance to form their own opinions, Friedel felt the *Evening Post* was generating prejudice by quoting Cox. He made a particularly salient comment in stating "The artists of the past have worked out many a great problem, but there are still as many more that remain obscure, and if we are going to go on repeating what are now commonplaces only, art is dead, and our modern artists are little better than parrots."<sup>57</sup>

Probably the most extraordinary occurrence of all was the departure of Art Institute Director William French on the 21<sup>st</sup>, three days before the opening. Can you imagine? An exhibit that was hailed by many as the most important ever to open at his museum, and he leaves town! Certainly he was avoiding the coming rush of furor. He tried to persuade the press it was nothing, no matter of any sorts, he had planned to be in California anyway. The

headline was disbelieving: “Director French Flees Deluge of Cubist Art: Boards Train for California Just in Time to Dodge New Pictures and Escapes Late Crop of Literature.”<sup>58</sup>

And French couldn’t possibly escape the following that accompanied the headline:

The cubists are coming, ho, ho, ho, ho!  
The cubists are coming, ho, ho, ho, ho;  
The cubists are coming from stately Manhattan;  
The cubists are coming, ho, ho  
The art director has gone before,  
He’s said good-bye for a month or more;  
The cubists are coming, and that’s enough;  
He cannot stand the futurist stuff.

The literature alluded to in the headline was verse by Gertrude Stein, made available to the press as her attempt at modern poetry. There were countless references to this haughty piece of literature in the press, and perhaps you can see why with this excerpt:

“A walk that is not stepped where the floor is covered is not in the place where the room is entered. The whole one is the same. There is not any stone. There is the wide door that is narrow on the floor. There is all that place. There is that desire and there is no pleasure and the place if filling the only space that is placed where all the piling is not adjoining. There is not that distraction. Praying has intention and relieving that situation is not solemn. There comes that way. The time that is the smell of the plain season is not showing the water is running.”<sup>59</sup> The verse drags on, but you get the point.

Stein was described as the first cubist writer in the world. “It was explained that to express in print cubism and what it means requires a cubic style of writing...Two reporters edged from the room, convinced. One of them was more [convinced]. ‘In that place where running water is not there,’ he murmured, thoughtfully, ‘and where the bar is where it is where – I’ll buy a drink.’”<sup>60</sup>



*Chicago Record-Herald, 3-21-1913, p.1*

Now just two days before opening, the public had seen some images in the newspaper. President Wilson had been illustrated as a cubist figure made of square and rectangular envelopes, yet only the press had a peak at the riot of color, this in an age where people could only imagine from black and white until they saw the real thing in person. This little ditty was printed:

“Those pictures, Ernst Penwell said,  
They knock me all kerflummick,  
For some of them upset my head,  
The rest upset my stomach.”<sup>61</sup>

The *Tribune* announced, that apparently the “master hangers” at the museum were having a difficult time determining which side of the paintings was right side up, noted as causing considerable “debate” among the installation crew. A headline said that the local art critics were claiming post-impressionism a “Crime Against Nature.”<sup>62</sup>

During the same period as the paintings were arriving and being unpacked the case of indecency against the painting *September Morn* was thrown out of court by the jury. Senior artist statesman Oliver Dennett Grover (1861-1927), subject of my very first *Literary Club* paper, stated his opinion, “I can see absolutely nothing in this picture that is lewd and immoral.”<sup>63</sup> I’ll posit to guess that had the jury not overturned the censoring immorality police Chicago would have been a significantly different world for art.

Throughout the run up to the opening, Miss Monroe was curiously quiet. Nothing under her byline had appeared in the *Tribune* for more than a week, while the rest of the press was absolutely breathless in their outpouring! Chicago was aghast, and the exhibit

was not yet installed. The press had only seen a few of the unpacked works and yet they were the most taken aback. One of the organizers in from New York, Frederick James Gregg, lamented forlornly on how it could be so, how no one could see the genius in his show. He publically stated that he forgave Chicago for its laughter, as if he was seriously affronted. "When you are shown the entire collection, then, perhaps, you will learn to know its value."<sup>64</sup>

On March 23<sup>rd</sup> the *Sunday Tribune* featured an article with four illustrations taking almost half a page under the heading "Futurist Pictures – Two of Them from Dunning. Which Are Which?" Yes, it was bedlam again, asking readers to choose between art by post-impressionists and art by the institutionalized insane. The headline article accompanying the images stated one of the patients claimed the futurist works were his own and yelled "Plagiarism."<sup>65</sup>

It was reported Mayor Carter Harrison had, with the head of the *Tribune* art department, been granted an advance viewing. He met with Chicago art patrons Arthur Aldis and Arthur Jerome Eddy, who was an important patron of Whistler and would later assemble one of the greatest post-impressionist collections in the country.<sup>66</sup> Mayor Harrison, it was reported, was decidedly befuddled after viewing the art. Aldis and Eddy, who had seen many of the works in Paris, and had viewed the show in New York, were apparently, by the account, "still thirsting for punishment!"<sup>67</sup> Other critics had gained early access to the show including one who noted that the arrangement of galleries was such that the visitor would be led gently through "the various stages of art mania and left high and dry and with only partially impaired intellect in the last corridor." She advised the reader keep his address handy on a scrap of paper "because your mind and memory may be gone when you come out of the exhibition."<sup>68</sup> In referring to the works of art it was said, "Seven hundred and fifty states of mind – no two alike... The Futurist will reply that his art as expressed on canvas is a state of mind, a spiritual insurrection, an aesthetic revolt against fettering conventions, and that those who do not understand him merely admit their own shortcomings."<sup>69</sup>

Noting the press was confused by the cubists – Arthur Jerome Eddy made an outline of the nude in Duchamp's painting, published in the *Tribune*.<sup>70</sup> In New York, *American Art News* had offered ten dollars to anyone who could find said lady.<sup>71</sup> The painting did however look like a composite of film or photographs run in sequence and one reporter in Chicago ably brought that to the attention of his public.<sup>72</sup>



Eddy's outline of the nude

And still the show was still 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."<sup>73</sup> 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."<sup>74</sup> 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.

In part II of my paper, with the willingness of the committee on arrangements and exercises, next year, I will detail the events, and even insanity that gripped Chicago as this extraordinary show finally opened, and reached the populace. You will hear stories of intrigue, desperation, vanity, moral ethics, and incredible public displays of emotion by

indignant artists, students, patrons, teachers, businessmen, homemakers and all the rest of the general public. Stay tuned for more “Bedlam in Art.”

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<sup>1</sup> Harriet Monroe, “BEDLAM IN ART: A Show That Clamors,” *Chicago Tribune*, 2/16/1913, p.G5.

<sup>2</sup> Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life. Seventy Years in a Changing World*, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1938), p.215.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *A Poet's Life*, 1938, p.211.

<sup>4</sup> “Statement,” *For and against: Views on the International Exhibition held in New York and Chicago*, (New York: Association of American Painters and Sculptors, 1913), p.11.

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/16/1913, p.G5.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Walt Kuhn to Vera Kuhn, 11/6/1912, Kuhn papers, Archives of American Art.

<sup>7</sup> Gail Stavitsky, “Walt Kuhn: Armory Showman,” *The Armory Show*, (New York Historical Society, 2013), p.45.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Walt Kuhn to Vera Kuhn, 11/6/1912, Kuhn papers, Archives of American Art.

<sup>9</sup> Condon, Patricia, et. al., *In Pursuit of Perfection: The Art of J.-A.-D. Ingres*, (Louisville: The J. B. Speed Art Museum, 1983).

<sup>10</sup> George B. Zug, “Among the Art Galleries,” *Sunday Inter-Ocean*, 3/30/1913, p.M5.

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/16/1913, p.G5.

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/16/1913, p.G5.

<sup>13</sup> He held the post until 1908.

<sup>14</sup> Harriet Monroe, “Art Show Open To Freaks,” *Chicago Tribune*, 2/17/1913, p.5.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/17/1913, p.5.

<sup>16</sup> “Crowds Flock To See Art Institute Circus,” *Chicago Evening Post*, 3/26/1913, p.7.

<sup>17</sup> “A-Line-O-Type Or Two: Art Insurgent,” 2/19/1913, p.6. The remainder of the verse: “Now, I’m only obstinately blind, I view things with an open mind; I do not say that Futurism, May merely be astigmatism. I do not urge the Futurist, To hasten to an oculist; If this or that I can’t divine, It’s eight to five the fault is mine. The point of view – no that won’t do, There simply is no point of view; Since with sensation we are dealing, We’ll have to say ‘the point of feeling.’ Tell me, where’s the new art bred, “Or in the heart or in the head?” Is it engender’d in the eyes, Or from the liver doth it rise. You ask what ails these men Who Knows? Their pea-green pangs and purple throes; Might be set right with calomel, As Bunthorne wails, “I cannot tell!” Two explanatory notes; calomel is Mercury Chloride, used frequently in the day as a purgative for when you might need to empty your stomach; Bunthorne refers to the despicable character in Gilbert and Sullivan’s opera *Patience*, which was a satire on the English aesthetic movement of the 1880s that emphasized aesthetic values over moral or social themes in fine art.

<sup>18</sup> Harriet Monroe, “Critics of All Kinds at ‘Freak Art’ Exhibition,” *Chicago Tribune*, 2/20/1913, p.14.

<sup>19</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/20/1913, p.14.

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/20/1913, p.14. There were those who accepted this change in art, and in the world, and held the point of view that perhaps the art was “modern psychology... scientific analysis, destroying old standards [and] revitalizing art. The concentration of the power-color and form reduced to their simplest terms, the fundamental rhythms of motion.”

<sup>21</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/20/1913, p.14.

<sup>22</sup> See for example, op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/20/1913, p.14.

<sup>23</sup> Kiberly Orcutt, “Arthur B. Davies – Hero or Villain?,” *The Armory Show*, (New York Historical Society, 2013), p.39. For views about the jury contemporary to the exhibition see Harriet Monroe, “New York Has at Last Achieved a Cosmopolitan Modern Exhibit,” *Chicago Tribune*, 2/23/1913, p.B6.

<sup>24</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/23/1913, p.B6.

<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/23/1913, p.B6.

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 2/23/1913, p.B6.

<sup>27</sup> “Cube Gowns Worn At Freak Party,” *Chicago Tribune*, 2/26/1913, p.3.

<sup>28</sup> Op. cit., *Chicago Tribune*, 2/26/1913, p.3.

<sup>29</sup> “A Line-O-Type or Two,” *Chicago Tribune*, 2/28/1913, p.6.

<sup>30</sup> “A Line-O-Type or Two,” *Chicago Tribune*, 3/1/1913, p.6.

<sup>31</sup> “Freak Art Exhibit of Modern School To Be Brought Here,” *Chicago Evening Post*, 3/8/1913, p.1. “Hit Mud With Brick; Result, Cubist Art,” *Daily Inter-Ocean*, 3/9/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol. 30, p.42.

<sup>32</sup> Op. cit., *Chicago Evening Post*, 3/8/913, p.1

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- <sup>33</sup> In the Francis M. Naumann essay "An Explosion in a Shingle Factory," *The Armory Show at 100*, (NY: New York Historical Society, 2013), footnote 8, page 485, this quote is attributed to Joel E. Spingarn a former Columbia University professor, as quoted in "Talk of the Day," *New York Tribune*, 3/5/1913, p.8. The exact text of the quote is "That picture looks most, but not much, like and explosion in a shingle factory." The quote regarding Mr. Duchamp's painting is arguably the most famous quotation of the entire event. Towne was quoted in op. cit., *Chicago Evening Post*, 3/8/1913, p.1.
- <sup>34</sup> *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, exhibition catalogue, (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1913), n.p.
- <sup>35</sup> Amy L. Paulding, "Futurists' Startle By Hideous Lines: Devoid of Color and Charm," *Daily Inter-Ocean*, 2/27/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol.30, p.29
- <sup>36</sup> "Mysteries of Cubist and Radical Art Dissolved by Understanding," *Daily Inter-Ocean*, 3/14/1913, p.5.
- <sup>37</sup> "Cast Out Picture; Stir Norwegians," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/11/1913, p.3.
- <sup>38</sup> The exact name of the store is found in Harriet Monroe, "Davidson Sculpture Proves That Artist Has Ideas," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/23/1913, p.B5.
- <sup>39</sup> "When is Art Art? When Wicked," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/14/1913, p.
- <sup>40</sup> "Futurist Literature," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/16/1913, p.H4.
- <sup>41</sup> Op. cit., Monroe, *Chicago Tribune*, 3/16/1913, p.B8.
- <sup>42</sup> Mme. X, "News of the Society," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/16/1913, p.H3: "It is entirely due to the efforts of Arthur Aldis and George Porter that the exhibit of modern impressionists, post impressionists, and futurists, which has been attracting attention in New York, is to be brought here and placed on view at the Art Institute next week. These two fellow citizens of ours do a great deal for this community in keeping it up to the times in art, literature, and drama, so we shall all have to read up everything we can about Matisse, Picasso, Gauguin, Cezanne, Van Gogh, Augustus John, and the rest whose efforts at breaking away from tradition, from classicism, and all the chains that interfere with entirely free self-expression we are called upon to view."
- <sup>43</sup> George B. Zug, "Among the Galleries," *Sunday Inter-Ocean*, 3/16/1913, p.M5.
- <sup>44</sup> Op. cit., Zug, *Sunday Inter-Ocean*, 3/16/1913, p.M5.
- <sup>45</sup> "Cubist Gown Comes To Town," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/18/1913, p.3.
- <sup>46</sup> Op. cit., Zug, *Sunday Inter-Ocean*, 3/16/1913, p.M5. This was in fact the winning entry from *American Art News*, in their competition to spot the lady in the picture, published in the 3/8/1913 issue.
- <sup>47</sup> "'Barnumized Art' Critics Call The Cubist Pictures: As 'Leering Effrontery'," *Chicago Evening Post*, 3/18/1913, p.2.
- <sup>48</sup> "Artist Paint Puzzles Arrive. Look Like a State of Mind," *Chicago Examiner*, 3/19/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol. 30, p.57
- <sup>49</sup> "Big Crowd Expected At Freak Art Exhibit: Art Institute Forces Preparing for Great Crush on Opening Day to View Cubists, Futurists and the Rest: Most of Novelties Sold," *Chicago Evening Post*, 3/19/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol. 30, p.56.
- <sup>50</sup> "Famous Cubists' Collection Here," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/22/1913, p.3.
- <sup>51</sup> "Recent Example of Cubists' Art," *Chicago Record-Herald*, 3/19/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol. 30, p.58.
- <sup>52</sup> "Cubists Invade City Today," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/21/1913, p.12.
- <sup>53</sup> "Cubist Art Is Here as Clear as Mud," *Chicago Record-Herald*, 3/20/1913, p.1.
- <sup>54</sup> "Know What Cubist Art Is At Last Here's Definition," *Wichita Eagle*, 3/25/1913, in AIC Scrapbook, vol. 30, p.70.
- <sup>55</sup> "Antics Of Pot Thrills Critics Of newest 'Art': Mustard Receptacle Apparently Real Busy While Woman Muses in Picture at Impressionist Show," *Daily Inter-Ocean*, 3/20/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol. 30, p.58.
- <sup>56</sup> "The Cubists Outcubed; A Statue Frame," *Chicago Daily News*, 3/20/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol. 30, p.59.
- <sup>57</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Chicago Evening Post*, 3/21/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol. 60, p.59.
- <sup>58</sup> "Director French Flees Deluge of Cubist Art: Boards Train for California Just in Time to Dodge New Pictures and Escapes Late Crop of Literature," *Chicago Record-Herald*, 3/21/1913, p.1. "'Friends of Mr. French assert that he very diplomatically, very delicately and quite confidentially whispered that there was something about the post-impressionistic art that irritated him.'"
- <sup>59</sup> Quoted from Gertrude Stein, *Portrait of Mabel Dodge at the Villa Curonia*, Florence, privately published, 1912. A multitude of Chicago newspapers quoted various parts of this.
- <sup>60</sup> "Cubist Art Is Explained Cleary by a Post-Impressionist Writer," *Daily Inter-Ocean*, 3/21/1913, p.5.
- <sup>61</sup> "A Line-O'-Type or Two," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/22/1913, p.6.
- <sup>62</sup> Op. cit., *Chicago Tribune*, 3/22/1913, p.3.
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- <sup>63</sup> "September Morn' Wins Case," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/22/1913, p.3.
- <sup>64</sup> "Forgives Chicago For Cubist Mirth," *Daily Inter-Ocean*, 3/22/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol. 30, p.62.
- <sup>65</sup> "Futurist Pictures--Two of Them from Dunning. Which Are Which?," and "Dunning Cubist Art Center," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/24/1913, p.3.
- <sup>66</sup> Unfortunately when Eddy met an untimely death some seven years later the Art Institute did not receive his collection, subsequently purchasing a small body of works.
- <sup>67</sup> "Splash! Sploch! Cubist Art Here," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/23/1913, p.1.
- <sup>68</sup> Mollie Morris, "Weird Art Is Shown: Mollie Morris Sees Exhibit at Art Institute and Advises Precautions Before Visit," *Chicago Daily News*, 3/23/1913, p.4.
- <sup>69</sup> Herman Landon, *Chicago Record-Herald*, 3/23/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol. 30, p.66.
- <sup>70</sup> "Here She Is: White Outline Shows 'Nude Descending a Staircase,'" *Chicago Tribune*, 3/24/1913, p.5.
- <sup>71</sup> *American Art News*, March 1, 1913, vol. 11, no. 21, p. 3. Footnote courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- <sup>72</sup> *Chicago Examiner*, 3/23/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol. 30, p.65.
- <sup>73</sup> "Fair Play For Insurgent Art," *Chicago Evening Post*, 3/24/1913, in AIC Scrapbooks, vol.30, p.67.
- <sup>74</sup> Harriet Monroe, "Davidson Sculpture Proves That Artist Has Ideas," *Chicago Tribune*, 3/23/1913, p.B5.