

and I hope you share my opinion that such a judgment is not only too harsh but incomplete.

The Turkish paintings here exhibited have been mainly criticized as reflecting too faithfully the French accent. What is expected from a young school as a newcomer to the world of western art is clearly a new way of feeling, of seeing which is derived from some original experience. If we have failed to achieve this it is certainly not from lack of nationalism as I hope to show later, but rather from absence of universality, for all great art is the expression of a dynamic culture, and a culture with any vitality always bears a national character. The real question then is this: Is it possible for an original culture to take root and grow in our society in place of our old Ottoman culture? Without attempting to answer this such a fundamental question I should like to start a discussion by making a few remarks about the problems the modern Turkish artist is faced with and the ways he tries to solve them. For the sake of brevity I shall confine myself to painting and I will ask your indulgence if I oversimplify the picture.

In spite of the restrictive effect of the religion Islam

In the 16th & 17th century there was a very lively school of miniature painting in Turkey. It is true that we never attained the richness of colour & texture, the intricacy of pattern of our Persian models, but what we achieved had a distinctly personal quality, the characteristic features being the simplicity of design, the predominance of the essential forms over the details and a freshness in the colouring which recalls our highly original manner in pottery. If we had accepted the western influence before the decline of that school, a new artistic tradition might have been formed. For example in the 15th century the Byzantine influence, far from hindering the development of our own style in architecture, had enlarged its scope, given grandeur

and nobility to it, thus contributing to the formation of the great classical style of the 16th century. In painting we missed our chance. By the time the western representational art established itself in Turkey, the miniature tradition had lost its capacity of integrating a foreign influence. The two idioms coexisted for a time quite independently until the decisive victory of the western style in the 19th century. There was some primitive charm in the meticulous works of our first representational painters. Then a few excellent landscape painters appeared, who brought a very national feeling of immensity and nostalgia in their Anatolian landscapes. Unfortunately these isolated attempts did not prove strong enough to form a new school. After the foundation of the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul in 1883 the representational art soon degenerated into academicism and was worsened by the introduction of a pseudo-impressionism, that depressing compromise between impressionism and academicism with a delay of some 50 years.

Then comes the generation of contemporary painters who, after having studied in Paris in the late twenties and the early thirties founded the modern movement of art in Turkey. Many of them are teaching in the Sc. of F. Arts and they are mainly responsible for the works seen at this exhibition. These artists who had at last caught up with European painting did sincerely want to produce original work. Their immediate predecessor had tried to give the illusion of a local flavour by painting mosques and hills overlooking the Bosphorus in a conventional postcard style. The painters of the new generation not only enlarged the repertoire of Turkish subjects but also realized that their style should fit their subjects.

with the subjects they treated. Hence their selection of French models was limited to those who like Bonnard, Dufy or Matisse were more concerned with formal problems of style and colour and with decorative effect, and in their content showed a pure enjoyment of life. Again the rejection of cubism as too abstract, of the german expressionism as too violent, of the surrealism as too fantastic was certainly in line with our traditional taste for common sense simplicity, variety of colour and pattern, a seriousness, non intellectual ~~and~~ ^{but} of the ~~universe~~ ^{universe}, a serious limitation in that narrow restrictive approach by which ^{conscious or unconscious} our artists have selected local subjects and western styles appropriate to our temperament and in conformity with our traditional taste. Even when, as in Bedri Rahim Ciyiboglu the borrowed idiom is enriched by the addition of folklore motives, or as in Princess Fabiani's case by the subtle quality of the ~~local~~ ^{of London} atmosphere and light, a french accent still remains in their vision. A childhood and longing away with the French taste would go back to our miniature school, go and try to develop it where it had begun to decline. ~~and~~ ^{indeed} a miniature section has been founded in the Academy of Fine arts, as well as a section for ancient calligraphy. Unfortunately we cannot ignore all that has happened in the last two centuries. As I hinted ~~at the beginning~~ of this talk this would have been possible as a result of a slow evolution, the western spirit being gradually integrated in our visual art. As it is ^{the traditional} ~~the modern~~ ^{and popular} ^{by bringing them} ^{and popular} ^{so limited to us that we could only destroying this if we tried} ^{beauty} ~~classical~~ ^{our modern} as ~~the ancient~~

Collage work:
Such arts with a broken tradition as our modern
civilization or architecture or our old ~~folk~~ ^{classical music} are just
unsuitable of being restored directly. They can only
under undergo ^{under} renascences of anatolia in my view.

with the subjects they treated. Hence their selection of French models was limited to those who like Bonnard, Dufy or Matisse were more concerned with formal problems of style and colour and with decorative effect. ~~and in their content showed a pure enjoyment of life.~~ Again the rejection of cubism as too abstract, of the german expressionism as too violent, of the surrealism as too fantastic ~~was~~ is certainly in line with our traditional taste for common sense in poetry, ~~for its intellectual and aesthetic~~, variety of colour and pattern, a ~~universe~~ non intellectual ~~expression~~ grasp of the ~~universe~~ ~~but it seems~~ serious limitation to me that there is a ~~feudalized~~ in that narrowing restrictive approach by which ~~we have selected local subjects~~ ~~in conformity with our traditional~~ and western styles appropriate to our temperament ~~and taste~~ Even when, as in Bedri Bahadir's *Cigibagchi*, the borrowed idiom is enriched by the addition of ~~folklore motives~~ ~~and local color~~ ~~and atmosphere~~ or as in Princess Fabrini's case by the subtle quality of the ~~local~~ ~~atmosphere and light~~ ^{in London before} ~~the~~ ~~local~~ ~~atmosphere and light~~ ~~of London before~~ ~~a fresh accent still remains in their vision~~ ~~seen through eyes of the imagination~~ ~~and less~~ ~~A childish and boyish~~ ~~doings away with the French taste~~ ~~and experience~~ ~~which would be~~ ~~to go back to our miniature school, go and try to develop it where it had begun to decline.~~ ~~Indeed~~ ~~as this~~ ~~earlier~~ ~~in the last two centuries. As I hinted at the beginning~~ ~~of this talk this would have been possible as a result~~ ~~of a slow evolution, the western spirit being gradually~~ ~~integrated in our visual art. As it is the media seem~~ ~~so limited to us that we could only destroy them if we had~~ ~~the traditional~~ ~~and fragile~~ ~~by trying to change them~~ ~~and~~ ~~destroying them if we had~~ ~~beauty.~~

Such arts with a broken tradition as ~~the ancient painting~~ ^{our music} ~~modern~~ ~~or slackness~~ ^{classical music} ~~or our old juggling~~ and most unsuited of being restored directly. They can only

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help the individual artist by their spiritual ~~separation~~ ^{impact}
throwing light on some aspect helping him to rediscover
his traditional taste, throwing light on some aspect
of his own character, helping him to rediscover his
virtues and limitations. Now if this inner experience
is not strong enough it will not induce ~~the artist to~~ ^{instead}
invent new forms for its expression. He will content
himself with choosing one of the western styles at his
~~disposal which distorts~~ ^{though} his emotion ^{with} least distorted
and you will get the average picture in this exhibition.

But suppose we deal with an artist who has found some
difficulty in assimilating alien idioms. He admires
gothic cathedrals, but there is something hard in
him which refuses to like the mystic darkness, the
feverish flour of their architecture. Although he has lost his
faith he can only love the spacious brightness, the static
beauty of full rounded forms, the serene peace of our
~~How could he great mosques.~~ ^{With this state of mind} ~~which~~ ^{expresses} ~~in the two dimensional~~
~~microscopic world of~~ ^{He finds} the traditional oriental painting?
~~expresses~~ ^{Is it strange} ~~On the other hand~~ ^{he considers} ~~he does not~~
~~if he can not assimilate the style of~~ ^{Picasso} ~~Madame~~ or
Rouault as what he cares about has not found its
~~expression in~~ ^{before?} ~~which~~: He will therefore feel compelled
to ~~assimilate~~ put on the canvas full, spacious, cleanly,
coloured forms ^{and well balanced} ~~in perfect equilibrium~~, and you will get
something like the Carpet weavers of Tengut Lain,
~~Harangozo~~ ^{one of the few pictures in this exhibition} where the emotional experience has burst the conventions
of the french idiom and has created its own language.

Here we have a perfect example of how a real spiritual
communion with the past ~~has~~ ^{can} forced the artist to break
his altitude of restrictive choice and ^{to create} ~~evolve~~ an original
~~style~~ ^{property} ~~idiom~~ which ^{as twentieth century} belongs to the twentieth
century as much as Dufy's.

If we are to have more artists of this kind clearly what we need do is not to import a greater variety of suitable western styles that we would try to modify but rather to increase the opportunities of going through similar experiences by analysing with greater care and sincerity our reactions whenever we come into contact with western influence or with the remains of our tradition. At the same time at the same time we should learn to purify and develop such emotions and to extract from them their proper means of artistic expression.

These different stages of sincere analysis of emotional concentration and of methodic organization will require from our modern artist a westernization in the truest sense, for, as I see it, the ^{dynamism} ~~superiority~~ of the western mind lies precisely in this spirit of research and enquiry with which it can conceive ideas to manufacture ideas.

Another ^{union} ~~gap~~ or a quality in our art and literature may be the indifference to moral problems and the lack of ^{lack of sympathy towards characters and characters} ~~humanism~~. That explains why the art of portrait has never been very popular with us and why we can write good poems but not ^{so} ~~many~~ good plays or novels. If the Turkish artist of the future wants to rediscover his fellow men as well as his tradition he ^{may} well have to be more ^{inquisitive} ~~curious~~ about them and analyse their character and behaviour with ^{deeper} ~~more~~ sympathy and understanding.

In short with method and humanism combined we may hope to free ourselves from the domination of ^{a superficial subject in painting} to our French masters. Besides the beautifully balanced and symmetrical mould of our ancient architecture and calligraphy we may well see the lusher landscapes of Anatolia interpreted by artists who will have to create desolate

shapes, savage neutral colours and a harsh accent in order to convey the infinite sadness and grandeur of those barren lands. We may also discover a new side of universal pity ~~of the man~~
under land in the pride and the generosity, the poetical gifts of the Turkish peasant in the middle of his great poverty. Our art

Our art has everything to gain from becoming an art of character rather than one of decoration. and I believe the youngest generation of artists is already taking this orientation.

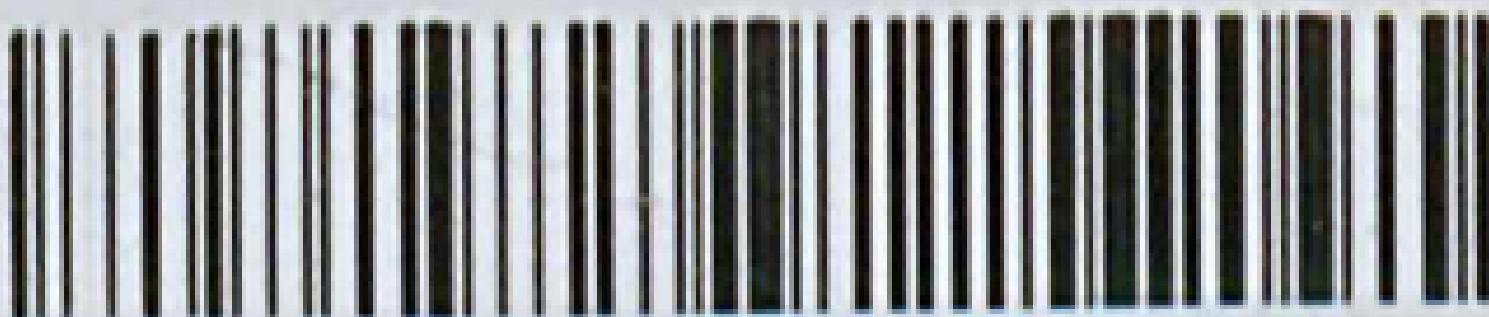
All these are possibilities for the individual artist. Unfortunately a national tradition artistic tradition is not the sum of such isolated successes. as a living organism it is the reflection of a way of life and of a general moral outlook. It is not simply by recreating the past or by analysing ourselves that we shall found ^{new culture} ~~as tradition~~, but precisely by creating a ~~new~~ dynamic society with a need for a new culture. As long as the artists have to work amid public indifference, solely relying on State support we can have solitary talents but no living school of modern Turkish art.

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

Arşiv ve Dokümantasyon Merkezi

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