

from *The Art Spirit* pp. 64-65
by Robert Henri

LANDMARKS OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

ALL MANIFESTATIONS OF ART are but landmarks in the progress of the human spirit toward a thing but as yet sensed and far from being possessed.

The man who has honesty, integrity, the love of inquiry, the desire to see beyond, is ready to appreciate good art. He needs no one to give him an art education; he is already qualified. He needs but to see pictures with his active mind, look into them for the things that belong to him, and he will find soon enough in himself an art connoisseur and an art lover of the first order.

Do not expect the pictures to say the expected; some of the best will have surprises for you, which will, at first, shock you. There are many surprises to come to the most knowing, just as Wagner opened new roads in music and disturbed to distraction those who believed no further roads were possible.

There will be new ideas in painting and each new idea will have a new technique.

ART IS THE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCE of growth and is the manifestation of the principles of its origin. The work of art is a result; is the output of a progress in development and stands as a record and marks the degree of development. It is not an end in itself, but the work indicates the course taken and the progress made. The work is not a finality. It promises more, and from it projection can be made. It is the impress of those who live in full play of their faculties. The individual passes, living his life, and the things he touches receive his kind of impress, and they afterwards bear the trace of his passing. They give evidence of the quality of his growth. The impress is made sometimes in material form, as in sculpture or painting, and sometimes in ways more fluid, dispersed, but none the less permanent and none the less revealing of the principles of growth.

Art appears in many forms. To some degree every human being is an artist, dependent on the quality of his growth. Art need not be intended. It comes inevitably as the tree from the root, the branch from the trunk, the blossom from the twig. None of these forget the present in looking backward or forward. They are occupied wholly with the fulfillment of their own existence. The branch does not boast of the relation it bears to its great ancestor the trunk, and does not claim attention to itself for this honor, nor does it call your attention to the magnificent red apple it is about to bear. Because it is engaged in the full play of its own existence, because it is full in its own growth, its fruit is inevitable.