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JOHN SHODEN AND AMERICAN SCULPTURE

The American sculptor and his wife have now completed their altogether too short a visit to Iceland. Because of bad flying conditions a few days were lost of their originally planned schedule, with the result that his exhibition could only last for three days in two different places, and he could only give two of three proposed lectures.

John Shoden brought with him seven small pieces of sculpture which were good examples of his technique and artistic development, and these were surprisingly varied, since five were made of a metal mixture, one from wood and one of aluminum. In addition to this he had a number of excellent photographs showing other works by him. I remember particularly well two heads, one of an elderly Negro, cast in wood, the other of his beautiful wife, cast in metal. These two heads show that the artist has received complete training in the classical form of art, which is necessary for any student of art, whatever style he chooses later on. These heads united two essential points to make them good portraits: to be a true likeness of the subjects and to be works of art, of full value at any time anywhere.

In the piece made of African violet-wood there appears the primitive art of the sculptor's forefathers transposed into the form of modern art. From a technical standpoint, however, the metal figures were the ones that provoked greatest interest with us, for this was something new which sculptors in New York have introduced. Instead of making the original piece in clay, cast it in plaster and then make a sand mold, and finally cast the figure in bronze or copper, as has been done for centuries, they formulate and build the figures directly from the metal. The way they go about this is that they begin by making a sort of a frame from slender metal rods, then they solder metal plates on the frame here and there, after that they fill it in and formulate the figure with molten metal. All this done they scratch figures into the surface or file it wherever they feel it necessary. The finish is remarkably varied and seems to have many possibilities. This technique is ideal for modern art where the form is indicated by outer lines and not by surface areas or materially rich fillings. "Patina" is unnecessary for the sulphur gives endless color shadings to the metal, which add still more to the variability of this technique.

Of the metal sculptures I thought the horse was about the most noteworthy, for it showed best all the advantages of this

technique. Also I couldn't get a photograph of it to accompany these lines. "Two Figures" made of aluminum were also very interesting pieces of work, although made differently than the other pieces.

Everything considered the works of this young artist are about the best of what I have seen of American sculpture.

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the first lecture given by Mr. Rhoden. I did hear his second lecture, where he described his own technique of working and told something of how sculpture is used in modern architecture in America today. The color slides he showed were of very little interest. The first one showed how a piece of sculpture made of an entirely different material was glued onto a plain wall. This was the same lack of taste that appears outside the new Town Hall in Oslo. This can never become anything but a new patch on an old garment. Another slide showed a partition which was used to separate two stores from each other. This partition consisted of metal plates which had been stacked up irregularly, and I couldn't find anything remarkable about it. I hope he had something better in his possession, although this didn't appear.

As we know John Rhoden is a Negro from Alabama, and his wife, Richards, who is a painter, is an Indian from Washington state. It is particularly pleasant that American Government authorities should chose this couple to introduce abroad one phase of American culture, for one is most used to hear about racial hatred and racial persecution in that vast country. After becoming acquainted with this couple I am convinced that their brothers and sisters of the same race can be truly proud of them, and that they will do honor to their country wherever they go, for they are not only good artists but also charming people. They will be travelling to many lands, and wherever they are and wherever they go we wish them every good luck and thank them for their visit to Iceland.

Hagaut A. Arason

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MR. RHOEN'S RESIDENCE

A good guest made a stop-over here when the young American sculptor John W. Rhoden held an exhibition of some of his works

here, unfortunately only lasting for a few hours. However, circumstances had made it impossible for this most noteworthy artist to stay here any longer. As a result many art lovers have undoubtedly missed seeing an exhibition which was of some value to us.

It is instructive to become acquainted with artists who come from far away and get an opportunity to see works that are selected to represent the art of a country no smaller than the world power the United States itself, and one thing is certain that the large nation in the west need not be ashamed of an exhibition of Rhoden's works. He is an excellent sculptor, judging by the few works that were on show here. His use of form is secure and is a clear indication of a highly developed artistic sense and a vivid joy of life. His works are free from any dependence upon solemnity and eccentricity. Never does the artist hesitate to choose his own way, does so completely uninhibited and believes in his own right and power, full of the joy of youth.

It is particularly noteworthy to see the feeling that Rhoden has for the material he works from. His metal pieces are made with technical skill and show clearly how much influence the material has had upon the artist. The same is true when he cuts wood and forms clay. Rhoden is neither a non-figurative artist or a naturalist. He does not seem to be dependent upon whether his works meet with the taste of petty bourgeois. His sense of form and his understanding of sculpture is raised high above the piling up of "old men in tailcoats" and such bric-a-brac. It is easy to see that a highly developed taste has selected works by this artist for the purpose of representation.

One need not speak about this excellent exhibition at greater length, but it was a great pity that it could not last longer and that Icelanders could be given the opportunity of enjoying it fully. It is to be hoped, though, that it has served as an impetus to some of those who are continually throwing their ire upon the development of art in the world and often speak from other ignorance, so that one might expect that they had received their education in the field of art within the walls of Moscow.

Selden has such a good artist in the field of plastic arts visited us here. I would like to thank him for his brief call and hope that other artists are still to come who are equally pleasant to become acquainted with.