

# BOLSHEVIKI STERN

## CRITICS OF ART

**Discourage Mediocrity by Making Painters Scrape Off Pictures Exhibitions Reject.**

### FUTURISM FIRST RAN RIOT

**Free Lessons for All Who Want Them Furnished by Moscow Art Commission.**

By **WALTER DURANTY.**

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Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

PARIS, March 11.—The Russian Futurist sculptor Archipenko, one of the leading exponents of the Modernist movement in Paris, has given THE NEW YORK TIMES a remarkable account of artistic development under the Bolsheviks. He said:

"One of the results of the revolution was a great stimulus to painting and sculpture, especially of Futurist tendencies. There were three reasons for this. Firstly, every untrained youngster who felt the spur of artistic impulse seemed to think that futurism meant nothing but splashing a lot of brilliant color together on canvas—or any other available surface. Self-expression along these lines was easy, and friends of mine who were in Russia during the first year of the revolution say that some towns were a regular riot of vivid decoration. Walls, doors, roofs, palings, and even trees rivaled the rainbow with their variegated blaze of color.

"The second reason was psychological. Many artists who formerly abhorred futurism were caught by the wave of change and novelty that the revolution brought in its train and set themselves to rival the Futurists in wild and startling compositions.

"The third reason was a practical one. During the early days it was not certain whether artists would be considered workers or bourgeoisie, and many well-known members of the old school of court-painters and so on were harshly treated or imprisoned. Accordingly, to be a Futurist became a sort of guarantee of good revolutionary standing and old-fashioned painting was at a discount.

"Later there came a change for a rather simple reason. The Bolsheviks wanted to have portraits of their best-known leaders hung everywhere, even in small villages, to replace pictures of the Czar and royal family. Much as I admire futurism, I must admit that a futuristic portrait of Lenin or Trotzky would hardly be recognized as such by the average Moujik. So there was a sudden eager scouring of the country for painters whose pictures would resemble the subject.

"From dungeons, hovels and concentration camps old-school artists were summoned to the Kremlin and set to work. It was a veritable triumph for them. And since then they have been treated on an equality with the moderns and an allowance of food and painting materials was given to them.

"Art is greatly encouraged by the Bolsheviks. There are frequent exhibitions, each containing about 1,000 pictures. Therefrom 300 of the best are selected and bought by the State at a handsome price for distribution throughout the country. The rest are burnt—an effective but somewhat drastic method to discourage mediocrity. At least that was the original practice, but recently owing to the shortage of canvas, &c., I am informed that painters of rejected pictures now get them back with orders to scrape off their wretched daub and try to accomplish something better next time.

"A sign of the changed times is the great interest taken by the masses in art. One of my friends wrote that literally hundreds of people crowded round him while he was painting a futuristic picture of the market in Moscow. One Philistine, who declared the artist was making fools of them because the picture resembled nothing on earth, was ducked in a nearby horse-trough. Evidently futurism has come to stay in Russia.

"But, seriously speaking, the Bolsheviks seem to deserve some credit. One of my old friends is Director of the Central Art Commission, though a painter of the old-school. He writes that the money put at his disposal by the Government is relatively ten times greater than under the old régime. He is able to provide good free teaching for all who want it in Moscow, and the promise has been made to him that when things settle down, similar schools with all materials free will be established in the principal cities."

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