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# HISTORY OF ART ILLUSTRATIONS BRICH

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**T**HIS book is intended for all who are interested in a strange and fascinating field. It was written for a general audience without confusing him with some intelligible order into the wealth of material on the pages of more ambitious works, and without consulting specialized books. In planning and writing it I had in mind those in their teens who had just discovered the world of art and never believed that books for young people should be written except for the fact that they must reckon with the demands of critics who are quick to detect and resent any hint of sentiment. I know from experience that the reader is suspicious of all writings on art for the reason that they avoid these pitfalls and to use plain language that is not unprofessional. Difficulties of thought, or of expression, I hope that no reader will attribute my decision to restrict an art historian's conventional terms to an attempt to impress him. For is it not rather those who mislead the reader but to impress the reader, who are 'talkative'?

Apart from this decision to restrict the scope of the book in writing this book, to follow a number of principles which have made my own life as its author's life a little easier. The first of these rules was to make the reader a little easier. The first of these rules was to make the reader a little easier. The first of these rules was to make the reader a little easier. I could not show in the illustrations; I did not use a list of names which could mean little or nothing to the reader in question, and would be superfluous for the reader. The choice of artists and works I could discuss would hold. It forced me to be doubly rigorous in my choice and what to exclude. This led to my selection of works of art, and to cut out anything which might be the work of men of taste or fashion. This decision effected certain effects. Praise is so much duller than criticism. The monstrousities might have offered some light. I am justified in asking why something I found in the book devoted to art and not to non-art, just as I found a masterpiece. Thus, while I do not claim to have set the highest standard of perfection, I did make a decision. I considered to be without a peculiar manner.

The third rule also demanded a little self-denial. I vowed to resist any temptation to be original in my selection, lest the well-known masterpieces be crowded out by my own personal favourites. This book, after all, is not intended merely as an anthology of beautiful things; it is meant for those who look for bearings in a new field, and for them the familiar appearance of apparently 'hackneyed' examples may serve as welcome landmarks. Moreover, the most famous works are really often the greatest by many standards, and if this book can help readers to look at them with fresh eyes it may prove more useful than if it had neglected them for the sake of less well-known masterpieces.

Even so, the number of famous works and masters I had to exclude is formidable enough. I may as well confess that I have found no room for Hindu or Etruscan art, or for masters of the rank of Quercia, Signorelli or Carpaccio, of Peter Vischer, Brouwer, Terborch, Canaletto, Corot, and scores of others who happen to interest me deeply. To include them would have doubled or trebled the length of the book and would, I believe, have reduced its value as a first guide to art. One more rule I have followed in this heart-breaking task of elimination. When in doubt I have always preferred to discuss a work which I had seen in the original rather than one I knew only from photographs. I should have liked to make this an absolute rule, but I did not want the reader to be penalized by the accidents of travel restrictions which have dogged the life of the art lover during the past fifteen years. Moreover, it was my final rule not to have any absolute rules whatever, but to break my own sometimes, leaving to the reader the fun of finding me out.

These, then, were the negative rules I adopted. My positive aims should be apparent from the book itself. It tries to tell the old story of art once more in simple language, and to enable the reader to see how it hangs together. It should help him in his appreciation, not so much by rapturous descriptions, as by providing him with some pointers as to the artist's probable intentions. This method should at least help to clear away the most frequent causes of misunderstanding and to forestall a kind of criticism which misses the point of a work of art altogether. Beyond this the book has a slightly more ambitious goal. It sets out to place the works it discusses in their historical setting and thus to lead towards an understanding of the master's artistic aims. Each generation is at some point in revolt against the standards of its fathers; each work of art derives its appeal to contemporaries not only from what it does but also from what it leaves undone. When young Mozart arrived in Paris he noticed—as he wrote to his father—that all the fashionable symphonies there ended with a quick finale; so he decided to startle his audience with a slow introduction to his last movement. This is a trivial example, but it shows the direction in which an historical appreciation of art must aim. The urge to be different may not be the highest or profoundest element of the artist's equipment, but it is rarely lacking altogether. And the appreciation of this intentional difference often opens

up the easiest approach to the art of the change of aims the key of my narrative, a imitation or contradiction to what has gone I have referred back for the purpose of distance which artists had placed between is one pitfall in this method of presentation which should not go unmentioned. It is the change in art as a continuous progress. has surpassed the generation before him made progress beyond anything that was stand a work of art without being able to stand which the artist felt when he looked at his that each gain or progress in one direction subjective progress, in spite of its importance increase in artistic values. All this may seem abstract. I hope the book will make it clear.

One more word about the space allotted to some it will seem that painting is unduly architecture. One reason for this bias is in painting than in that of a round sculpture no intention, moreover, of competing with tectural styles which exist. On the other could not be told without a reference to the to confine myself to discussing the style of I tried to restore the balance in favour of pride of place in each chapter. This may ledge of each period and see it as a whole.

As a tailpiece to each chapter I have chosen artist's life and world from the period covered of this book these pictures form an independent social position of the artist and his public very high these pictorial documents may concrete picture of the surroundings in which

\* \* \*

This book would never have been written if it had not received from Elizabeth Senior, London was such a loss to all who knew Ettliger, Dr. Edith Hoffmann, Dr. Otto Sweetman, to my wife and my son Richard and to the Phaidon Press for their share

past. I have tried to make this constant and to show how each work is related by before. Even at the risk of being tedious, of comparison to works that show the themselves and their forerunners. There tion which I hope to have avoided but e naive misinterpretation of the constant It is true that every artist feels that he and that from his point of view he has known before. We cannot hope to under- share this sense of liberation and triumph s own achievement. But we must realize n entails a loss in another, and that this nce, does not correspond to an objective ound a little puzzling when stated in the ear.

ed to the various arts in this book. To favoured as compared to sculpture and that less is lost in the illustration of a , let alone a monumental building. I had th the many excellent histories of archi- hand, the story of art as here conceived e architectural background. While I had only one or two buildings in each period, of architecture by giving these examples help the reader to co-ordinate his know-

osen a characteristic representation of the n concerned. Together with the frontispiece ndent little series illustrating the changing c. Even where their artistic merit is not y help us to build up, in our minds, a hich the art of the past sprang to life.

en without the warm-hearted encourage- whose untimely death in an air-raid on her. I am also indebted to Dr. Leopold Kurz, Mrs. Olive Renier, Mrs. Edna for much valuable advice and assistance, in shaping this book.



1. RUBENS: *Portrait of his son Nicholas*. Drawn about 1620. Vienna, Albertina



2. DÜRER: *Portrait of his mother*. Drawn in 1514. Vienna, Albertina



3. MURILLO: *Street arabs*. Painted about 1670. Munich, Alte Pinakothek



4. PIETER DE HOECH: *Interior with a woman peeling apples*. Painted in 1663. London, Wallace Collection

**T**HERE really is no such thing as were men who took coloured earth the wall of a cave; today they b Underground; they did many things in these activities art as long as we keep i different things in different times and pla a capital A has no existence. For Art with bogey and a fetish. You may crush an a done may be quite good in its own way, anyone enjoying a picture by declaring t something different.

Actually I do not think that there are picture. Someone may like a landscape or a portrait because it reminds him of a All of us, when we see a painting, are bo things which influence our likes and disl enjoy what we see, we need not worry. makes us prejudiced, when we instincti of an alpine scene because we dislike clim the reason of the aversion which spoils There *are* wrong reasons for disliking a

Most people like to see in pictures wha is quite a natural preference. We all like artists who have preserved it in their w have rebuffed us for our taste. When t drawing of his little boy (Fig. 1) he was p to admire the child. But this bias for t become a stumbling block if it leads us to ing subject. The great German painter A (Fig. 2) with as much devotion and lov truthful study of careworn old age may g from it—and yet, if we fight against our fi for Dürer's drawing in its tremendous s soon discover that the beauty of a pictu subject-matter. I do not know whether painter Murillo liked to paint (Fig. 3)

## DUCTION

## and Artists

s Art. There are only artists. Once these  
n and roughed out the forms of a bison on  
uy their paints, and design posters for the  
between. There is no harm in calling all  
n mind that such a word may mean very  
nces, and as long as we realize that Art with  
n a capital A has come to be something of a  
artist by telling him that what he has just  
only it is not 'Art'. And you may confound  
hat what he liked in it was not the Art but

any wrong reasons for liking a statue or a  
painting because it reminds him of home,  
friend. There is nothing wrong with that.  
und to be reminded of a hundred-and-one  
likes. As long as these memories help us to  
It is only when some irrelevant memory  
vely turn away from a magnificent picture  
nbing, that we should search our mind for  
a pleasure we might otherwise have had.  
work of art.

at they would also like to see in reality. This  
e beauty in nature, and are grateful to the  
works. Nor would these artists themselves  
he great Flemish painter Rubens made a  
proud of his good looks. He wanted us, too,  
he pretty and engaging subject is apt to  
reject works which represent a less appeal-  
Albrecht Dürer certainly drew his mother  
e as Rubens felt for his chubby child. His  
give us a shock which makes us turn away  
rst repugnance we may be richly rewarded,  
sincerity is a great work. In fact, we shall  
re does not really lie in the beauty of its  
the little ragamuffins whom the Spanish  
were strictly beautiful or not, but, as he



5. MELOZZO DA FORLÌ: *Angel*. Detail of a fresco. Painted about 1480. Vatican, Pinacoteca

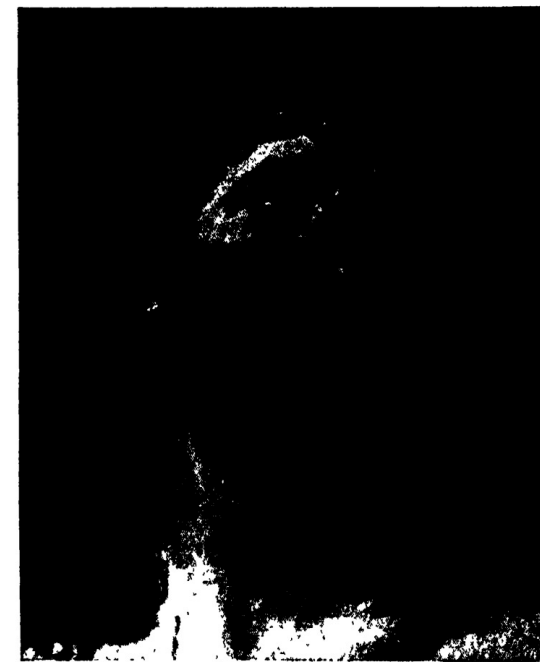


6. MEMLING: *Angels*. Detail of an altar. Painted about 1490. Antwerp, Museum

painted them, they certainly have great charm. On the other hand, most people would call the child in Pieter de Hooch's wonderful Dutch interior (Fig. 4) plain, but it is an attractive picture all the same.

The trouble about beauty is that tastes and standards of what is beautiful vary so much. Figs. 5 and 6 were both painted in the fifteenth century, and both represent angels playing the lute. Many will prefer the Italian work by Melozzo da Forlì (Fig. 5), with its appealing grace and charm, to that of his northern contemporary Hans Memling (Fig. 6). I myself like both. It may take a little longer to discover the intrinsic beauty of Memling's angel, but once we are no longer disturbed by his faint awkwardness we may find him infinitely lovable.

What is true of beauty is also true of expression. In fact, it is often the expression of a figure in the painting which makes us like or loathe the work. Some people like an expression which they can easily understand, and which therefore moves them profoundly. When the Italian seventeenth-century painter Guido Reni painted the head of Christ on the cross (Fig. 7), he intended, no doubt, that the beholder should find in this face all the agony and all the glory of the Passion. Many people throughout subsequent centuries have drawn strength and comfort from such a representation of the Saviour. The feeling it expresses is so strong and so clear that copies of this work can be found in simple chapels and far-away farmhouses where people know nothing about 'Art'. But even if this intense expression of feeling appeals to us we should not, for that reason, turn away from works whose expression is perhaps less easy to understand. The Italian painter of the Middle Ages who painted the crucifix



7. GUIDO RENI: *Head of Christ*. Detail of a painting, about 1640. London, National Gallery

(Fig. 8) surely felt as sincerely about the  
learn his methods of drawing to understa  
understand these different languages, w  
expression is less obvious than Reni's. J  
words and gestures and leave something t  
paintings or sculptures which leave them  
the more 'primitive' periods, when artists  
faces and human gestures as they are now,  
they tried nevertheless to bring out the f

But here people are often brought up  
admire the artist's skill in representing th  
paintings which look 'like real'. I do not de  
consideration. The patience and skill wh  
visible world are indeed to be admired. G  
labour to works in which every tiny det  
colour study of a hare (Fig. 9) is one of  
patience. But who would say that Rembr  
necessarily less good because it shows few  
a wizard that he gave us the feel of the  
of his charcoal.

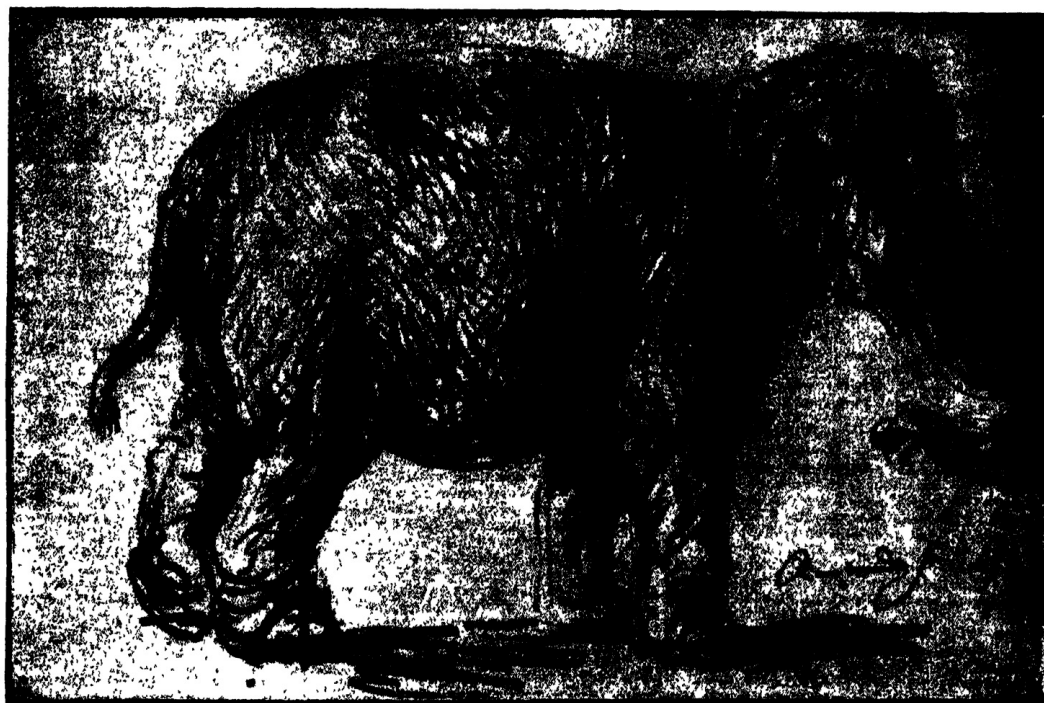
But it is not only sketchiness that offer



8. TUSCAN MASTER: *Head of Christ*.  
Detail of a crucifix. Painted about 1270.  
Florence, Uffizi



9. DÜRER: *A Hare*. Water-colour. Painted in 1502.  
Vienna, Albertina



10. REMBRANDT: *An Elephant*. Drawn in 1637. Vienna, Albertina



11. PICASSO: *A Hen with chickens*. Illustration  
to Buffon's *Natural History* published in 1942

'real'. They are even more repelled by what is drawn, particularly when they belong to the category of 'ought to have known better'. As a matter of fact, distortions of nature about which we hear so much in modern art. Everyone who has ever seen a mouse knows about it. He knows that it is sometimes drawn to look, to change and distort them in one look, to change and distort them in one look, to look very much like a real mouse, yet people write papers about the length of his tail. Those who are not worried about Art with a capital A. They have the same prejudices they like to take with them to the painting. But if a modern artist draws something that is thought a bungler who can do no better. If we are artists, we may safely credit them with competence if they do not do so their reasons may be very good. It shows a plate from an illustrated *Natural History* of the modern movement, Picasso. Surely no one would expect a representation of a mother hen and her chicks, a cockerel (Fig. 12), Picasso was not content with the bird's appearance. He wanted to bring out the stupidity. In other words he has resorted to caricature it is!

the Passion as did Reni, but we must first understand his feelings. When we have come to understand them we may even prefer works of art whose meaning is not to be guessed, so some people are fond of works of art whose meaning is something to guess and ponder about. In fact, if we were not so skilled in representing human nature, it is often all the more moving to see how the artist's feeling they wanted to convey.

against another difficulty. They want to represent the things they see. What they like best is to represent for a moment that this is an important moment which goes into the faithful rendering of the work of the great artists of the past have devoted much of their time and effort. Dürer's watercolor of a hare is carefully recorded. Dürer's watercolor of a hare is the most famous examples of this loving and detailed drawing of an elephant (Fig. 10) is the most famous examples of this loving and detailed drawing of an elephant's wrinkly skin with a few lines

and people who like their pictures to look

orks which they consider to be incorrectly  
 o a more modern period when the artist  
 er of fact, there is no mystery about these  
 ear so many complaints in discussions on  
 a Disney film or a comic strip knows all  
 right to draw things otherwise than they  
 way or another. Mickey Mouse does not  
 ople do not write indignant letters to the  
 e who enter Disney's enchanted world are  
 hey do not go to his shows armed with the  
 m when going to an exhibition of modern  
 something in his own way, he is apt to be  
 Now, whatever we may think of modern  
 enough knowledge to draw 'correctly'. If  
 ry similar to those of Mr. Disney. Fig. 11  
*ral History* by the famous leader of the  
 one could find fault with his charming  
 fluffy little chickens. But in drawing a  
 ent with giving a mere rendering of the  
 out its aggressiveness, its cheek and its  
 ed to caricature. But what a convincing



12. PICASSO: *A Cockerel*. Drawn in 1938.  
 In the artist's possession

There are two things, therefore, which  
 fault with the accuracy of a picture. One  
 reasons for changing the appearance of w  
 reasons as the story of art unfolds. The  
 work for being incorrectly drawn unless  
 and the painter is wrong. We are all in  
 'things do not look like that'. We have a  
 always look like the pictures we are accus  
 astonishing discovery which was made ne  
 centuries, have watched horses gallop, h  
 enjoyed paintings and sporting prints sh  
 ning after hounds. Not one of these peo  
 looks like' when a horse runs. Pictures and  
 outstretched legs in full flight through  
 century painter Géricault painted them  
 Epsom (Fig. 13). About eighty years ago  
 sufficiently perfected for snapshots of h  
 snapshots proved that both the painters  
 while. No galloping horse ever moved in  
 It draws its legs in in turn as they come  
 a moment we shall realize that it could h  
 painters began to apply this new discov  
 actually do, everyone complained that t

This, no doubt, is an extreme exampl  
 rare as one might think. We are all inclin  
 as the only correct ones. Children someti  
 though naturally they are not. The peopl  
 be blue, and the grass green, are not ver  
 very indignant if they see other colours i  
 have heard about green grass and blue sk  
 arrived from another planet on a voyage  
 first time, we may find that things are  
 Now painters sometimes feel as if they w  
 want to see the world afresh, and to disca  
 about flesh being pink and apples yellow  
 preconceived ideas, but the artists who su  
 most exciting works. It is they who teach  
 existence we had never dreamt. If we fo  
 glance out of our own window may bec

There is no greater obstacle to the e