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untenable; let's try another. No two people, we know, habitually write or talk or paint or laugh exactly alike unless consciously plagiarist, but we do know that numbers of people can look at experience in relatively similar ways. One group of people, the realists, when they paint try to record what they see exactly; while others turn inwards from their visual experience and give their work the evanescent clarity of dreams. If differing temperaments account for differing styles, they also explain similarity in style.

Background Influences

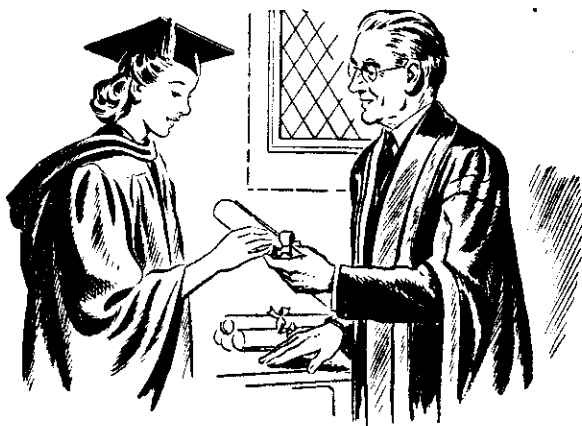
In this exhibition it was interesting to speculate on the background influences. Herbert Read postulates in his introduction to the catalogue "what is before all necessary is to create an atmosphere which will induce the child to exteriorise the rich and varied imagery in its mind." And again "the child is an imitative animal, and picks up with incredible ease, not only any idiosyncrasies which the teacher, as an artist, may possess, but also the more widely distributed sophistications of books, magazines and films." It seemed that the children responsible for this exhibition had absorbed a great deal from the work of their adult contemporaries. It would be hard to imagine any of them looking at a Picasso with the supercilious hostility which he and later artists can still excite in many people of an older generation. I should say that these children had been taken to art galleries, had seen prints of the work of modern artists, whose work they must have again seen on posters for Shell-Mex or the Underground, on book jackets and illustrations, in advertisements, and in designs for china or fabrics; and that these influences, inter-acting with their nature as children, had helped to form the freedom, simplicity and gay courage of their pictures. As twentieth-century children they could not avoid seeing a great deal that is tawdry, ill-proportioned, insipid and vulgar, too; that they have not absorbed the vicious seems to argue that the instinctive taste of children is good, and also that their teaching has been very good indeed.

Wise Teaching

That the teaching behind those paintings was wise, sympathetic, and extremely intelligent seemed to me to be constantly emphasised. The teachers have preserved and fostered the creative ability of the very young children so ably that unsophisticated work like the four-year-olds' *Stars*, or *Kitty in the Sun*, *Being Photographed*, *Landscape*, or *Pattern* are among the most interesting and delightful in the whole exhibition. In the later age-groups you can notice an increase in manipulative ability, an elaboration of the simple symbols which the younger children use so happily, and a considerable increase in other technical skills. These children have been taught unobtrusively the grammar of painting. Just as the labours, both massive and precise, behind the playing of a Schnabel are forgotten, and forgotten is the tedium of innumerable revisions behind the finished prose of Virginia Woolf, or unnoticed the mastered syntax in a fine poem, so behind a satisfying painting must lie — absorbed and apparently forgotten — a knowledge of design and colour. In the same way, although the

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