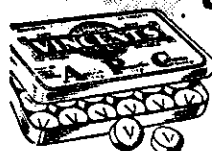


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# BACK FROM PARIS

ALTHOUGH the student who arrives at the University City of Paris round about midnight may not speak a word of French except "Oui!" and "Pardon!" he will find everyone he asks willing to direct him to the requisite authority. In short, the French are kind and helpful to foreigners. Perhaps this is because Paris is, above all, a cosmopolitan city. Apart from ignorance of the language, my main difficulty arose from lack of money. Everything is very expensive, and I soon realised that my allowance from the French Government would not cover the inflated costs of food, lodging, and painting materials. At first I tried to compromise and went short of everything. Even my shirts and sheets were torn up and stretched for canvases.

But insufficient food coupled with worries concerning finance, and a touch of homesickness, began to affect my health, and in desperation I was obliged to apply to New Zealand for aid. Fortunately, this was immediately granted and life became easier, my health improved, and progress in painting became possible. Most foreign students in Paris, I found, were in the same boat—allowances have not risen in proportion to prices.

## Desire for Freedom

I had been studying under André L'Hôte and at the Beaux Arts drawing from the nude exclusively, and about this time I began to feel I needed more freedom to follow my own inclinations and I applied for permission to work elsewhere on my own. The French fully understand the meaning of the word *freedom*, and co-operated with me. I soon found a room in St. Germain-en-Laye, a beautiful suburb of Paris, where living is somewhat cheaper than in the city itself and here I was able to start work in earnest, all day and often far into the night.

Then came an introduction to Georges Braque. He showed much interest in my work. We often met afterwards in his studio where, while discussing our work, I sorted among the piles of canvases stacked against the walls. During a visit to London I met Epstein at his home for dinner. We talked of Modigliani, whom Epstein knew well and still admires, and thus we got on well together. In London I also met the great sculptor Henry Moore, and was tremendously impressed by his achievements.

In London there are a few good painters; but in Paris there are many. Any New Zealand artist in Europe should try to stay for a while in Paris if only to experience the atmosphere of freedom and appreciation which, to me, was its happiest characteristic. Innumerable Paris galleries display every phase and development of painting from the old masters to the moderns, and are a unique feature. One senses how the French are born an artistic people. This is demonstrated everywhere, in window dressing, poster design, women's fashions, books, and interior decoration. Any painter, however strange to Latin customs and unacquainted with the French temperament, must feel himself artistically at home in France.



**SAM CAIRNCROSS**, the Wellington painter who last year was awarded a French Government bursary enabling him to study in Paris, is back home again. In this article he tells "Listener" readers something of his experiences and of what the trip meant to him.



My work there consisted firstly of studying and copying from the old masters in the Louvre; secondly, of keeping in touch with all the contemporary trends at the smaller galleries; thirdly, of buying (as far as funds permitted) the excellent coloured reproductions of my favourite painters; lastly, of working furiously out at St. Germain. This left little enough time for tasting the pleasures one normally associates with Paris!

Who are the great figures in European art to-day? I think Braque is one, not because I came into contact with him personally, but because his work seems to be the work of a great man. He works close to nature, as did Cezanne, and with the same deep respect for the subject; inspired more by the spirit animating all living things than by their superficial material appearances. Henry Moore has a similar ideal, though he expresses himself through a different medium. Picasso, of course, is unique and overwhelming: no one else possesses such aggressive strength and conviction as Picasso. Gauguin, Soutine, Modigliani, and Vlaminck are the others from whom I feel I can learn most just now. Of Augustus John, whose work is so generally admired in New Zealand, I must say that only a few, and the most spontaneous, of his pictures achieve the veracity of important art, although of his skill as a draughtsman there can be no question. Among the many originals of the old masters those of Rembrandt and El Greco affected me most deeply.

I cannot finish without mentioning the two hectic days spent in New York's Museum of Modern Art on the way to Europe. This must be one of the wonders of the artists' world. Room after room is filled with the finest examples of recent painting and sculpture. For two days I staggered among them; the

(continued on next page)

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