

Angry Penguins 1946
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Editorial

There is no clearly marked distinction between the terms of our everyday living and what might be described as our cultural living. There is only a complex and enduring interaction. The debasement of values in either sphere produces a most marked boomerang effect.

In a famous footnote, Karl Marx produced the theory that consciousness was determined by economic environment. As far as culture is concerned, the Marxists would say that the origin of debased cultural values is to be found in the hopeless economic environment and the class-riddled society out of which the culture emerges.

Although this magazine is not concerned in the long run with the ætiology of cultural and social effects, yet an elemental consideration of them will provide a clear idea of what sort of a job this broadsheet has to perform.

American society may have produced the kind of a world in which Frank Sinatra has a widespread destructive cultural influence. Although Sinatra's intelligence has led him to do fine work in opposing racial prejudice, yet it is still probable that his positive social contribution is outweighed by the results of his vocal talents. His singing may have an intrinsic validity, but there is no doubt it has made explicitly a low level of cultural response, it has bred and perpetuated an inferior level of living. It is only logical that critical intelligence must attack the kind of society which has produced a need for Sinatra. We must blame factories and frustrations, typewriters and temperaments.

It is then the function of this broadsheet to attack bad art on the one hand and to attack those debased values in the community which demand and perpetuate bad art.

Actually Marxists claim that they possess exactly the same aim. They desire to improve the lot of the masses so that they can get beyond an economic fixation, and appreciate higher forms of culture. But on the other hand they desire a kind of art which is immediately apprehensible to the masses.

There is a quaint contradiction here, for it is a simple empirical fact that great art is not widely accessible, and although it may be possible for Marxist artists to produce art that is both great and accessible, yet they are confronted with two inherent dangers. They produce an accessible art in a society rotten with bad taste and educated to debased values. The art they produce may be popular but appreciated at a superficial level. Because the art is accessible or popular, it may well cease to be revolutionary. It may perpetuate inferior responses. It must be remembered that Nazi officers rather liked Picasso's "Guernica." On the other hand, unless they are careful in their line about "accessible art" or "people's art" they are likely to cause the rejection of valid art which is not accessible, or immediately accessible.

This broadsheet aims to overcome such difficulties. It aims to improve taste and judgment in the realm of "popular art" such as the cinema, jazz, or journalism. On the other hand it aims to increase the accessibility and immediacy of the significant art of the time, whether it is obscure or social-realist. It aims to combat the debasement of cultural values which occurs through the application of third-rate minds and bad taste to the culture which is born into the contemporary world. Inferior motives and intellectual incompetence have led to commercial booms of a relatively shallow modern art. Literary and art criticisms have had the bias of hack journalistic minds, and cultural output has been affected by tendentious influences which have confused the artist's conception of his own function and retarded his self-development (for the artist is not subject to intellectual infallibility: rather the reverse is the case). This broadsheet will not plug any particular cultural "line" or "direction." It will stand for serious appraisal, and for vigorous iconoclasm directed against bad art itself.

The second part of its function is already stated. Just as it will attack the bad social judgment of art and literature, so it will attack the bad culture that the social milieu evokes.

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Its pages will, then, be open for any sound expression of opinion on cultural issues of the day, on æsthetics, for satirical or polemical purposes. Contributions need not be long; the field is broad and inclusive. One of the main values of this broadsheet is that it overcomes the problems of a time lag. It is many months after a book is published that a review appears; issues go cold very quickly. In the field of film criticism, for instance, the intellectual is, in general, inarticulate, since the only critical arena which bears any relevance to current films is the daily press, and there clichés are substituted for criticism. The broadsheet will review current literature hot from the press and

will comment on exhibitions while they are still fresh in the mind. There are no fixed critics — anyone and everyone is invited to perform these functions. Writers have here an uninhibited channel for the expression of their cultural responses.

As well, creative material — poetry, short stories, serious articles — is invited. Constructive attitudes will be particularly welcome.

The publication which meets cultural issues as they arise is, we believe, badly needed. The measure of its necessity will depend upon the reception it receives. The measure of its value will depend more upon the co-operation of writers and upon a flood of contributions than upon the activities of the editors or the writing of editorials.