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# NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE

## DISCUSSES CREATIVE YOUTH

### THE YOUNG GENERATION CREATIVE ARTISTS IN SWITZERLAND —

This was the title of a talk given to the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique on 20th November. The meeting took place at the Lecture Hall of the Swiss Embassy, in the presence of a large audience who welcomed the lecturer, Mr. Philippe Garraux, Berne, as an old friend and member of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad.

The President, Mrs. Mariann Meier, opened the meeting by extending a welcome to the Swiss Ambassador. She regretted his coming departure and thanked him on behalf of the Society for all the interest he had taken in the affairs of the NSH and the help and assistance he and his staff had given the Society at all times.

Dr. Weitnauer then regretfully took leave of the NSH, expressing once again admiration for its activities and wishing the Society and its officers the best of luck in the future, certain that they would continue to contribute admirably to the Swiss image in Great Britain.

The President also welcomed Mrs.

Garraux, the Minister of the Swiss Embassy, Monsieur Fritschi, and several other members of the Embassy. She told of how she had contacted about 15 Swiss artists in London, and welcomed a number of them present. She also mentioned Mrs. Egli, who as Selma Vaz Dias had made a name for herself not only as an actress but also as a painter.

Mr. Garraux began his lecture by giving some definitions: "Young" painters and artists meant up to 30 or 40 years of age. Two important Swiss institutions gave scholarships to young artists, the *Eidgenoessische Stipendium* by the Federal Art Commission and Federal Government, and the *Kiefer-Hablitzel Foundation*. The speaker pointed out that he was not intending to give a general survey of art in Switzerland over the past decade or two, but to describe the actual situation in Switzerland and the activities of the young generation of today, their centres, and the different ways and means of expressing their philosophy.

Due to lack of time he would leave out the many painters and sculptors who follow conservative lines, although they had to be respected. He then explained with a few examples of music and classical painting as opposed to modern, how it was difficult to know exactly what one heard and saw. In music and the arts in general, a work of art was nothing but the final expression, the visualisation of a thought, a feeling, a philosophy.

Mr. Garraux said: "For the young generation of artists, a work of art should no longer be a definite ever-lasting signature, a document, a quiet, museum-like object, a statical, framed product. On the contrary, in this world of change and 'upside-downs', creative art must necessarily become fugitive, transient, made for a momentary effect."

The lecturer explained that various methods were used to express this, and he showed this by many typical slides; for instance *hand-writing*, a head formed by writing with only nose and eyebrows painted. Other methods used were pencil drawings with nails, a fugitive creation made three-dimensional by added light shadows. The artists he mentioned in this connection were *Markus Dulk* (born 1949) and *Alfred Hofkunst* (born 1942).

Sometimes artists create their own, very personal material. The speaker gave as an example *Carl Bucher* (born 1935) whose "landings" expressed mobility and communicative joy and had a strong impact on the observer. His own particular material was "polystone", a sandy polyester matter which helps

Bucher to come close to nature. There is little colour, but much movement in the form of pleats.

Switzerland, Mr. Garraux said, was a good home for artists, specially in the Ticino and the Suisse Romande, where a 1,000 of them, not all young, were known. Geneva had its circle called "Ecart" with artists like *John Michael Armleder* (born 1948) and Lausanne "Impact" (Art Video). That particular experimentation was considered the first step in complete transformation of creative art, until now, seen on walls, in rooms and gardens. Another circle was La Chaux-de-Fond's "Club 44".

In Central Switzerland, the curator of the art museum in Lucerne, Dr. Ammann, gave active support to a group inspired by the Bernese artist *Markus Raetz* (born 1941). Mr. Garraux gave as an example his "iron flop", a rod coming out of a wall in an elegantly swung line down to the floor, giving an impression of flexible rubber, although it remained, of course, an iron rod. The same artist also used photography and cloth.

Next he mentioned the art circle of Winterthur in connection with *Heinz Mueller-Tosa* (born 1943) an exponent of "art concrete", the opposite of what he had shown us by Raetz; "It is the art to create the visible by means of colour, room and light. By composing these elements, new realities can be created."

To Mr. Garraux's knowledge, the only really important circle for plastic art, sculpture, is in Bienne with its Biennale for plastic art organised for the sixth time last summer. It started in 1954 and was a sensation because the sculptures were and still are exhibited in the open. He then showed some examples by *Kaspar Pfenninger* (born 1956): "Wings", made of cotton, nylon and enamel lacquer. By *Adelheid Hanselmann-Erne* (born 1946): "Where the winds meet to play", made of iron, stone and cloth. By *Ernst Buchwalder* (born 1941): "To rub shoulders", a creation of 20 flags brought into direct contact with threes. By *Gottfried Brunner* (born 1947), who uses polyester and similar materials.

The lecturer continued: "Creative art is no longer painting and sculpture in the classical distinction; it has become broader, wider with the growth of materials, the increase of possibilities for combining materials, lights, colour, sound, photography". He then went on to talk about a popular field called "Body Art". An important exponent was *Luciano Castelli* (born 1951) who presents "the masculine-feminine not as a

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contrast, but in one, where the narcissism of the travesty becomes brutally clear". Other body art artists Mr. Garraux mentioned, are *Urs Iuethy* and *Alex Silber*.

He then talked about an interesting man, *Helmut Federle* (born 1944) from Basle. He paints landscapes which only exist in his imagination, and it is not the scenery, but the mood expressed which matters. It is a meditation, calm, but with immediate effect.

Next, the speaker talked of surrealism and the art of *Martin Distler* (born 1949) and *Pierre Keller* (born 1945); the latter used fur and photography on porcelain for his "le coeur Christian".

The only school for experimental creation in Switzerland, said Mr. Garraux, was located in Zurich, called F & F (form and colour, Farbe). Robert Junck, well-known author, mentioned the school as "laboratory of the future". *Peter Jenny* (born 1942) gives courses for "creative composition" and teaches "experiment of creation of human presentation" at the ETH in Zurich.

The last artist mentioned was *Peter Weibel*, who is concerned with video art as experimented with at the "Impact" circle.

Without the numerous slides the lecturer showed, it would have been difficult to get a real impression. Mr. Garraux used them with skill and made it easy to follow. He finished by saying that creative art had become international and did not recognise national frontiers. Yet for every artist his background was of significance. Often his message was addressed to certain definite recipients: to a community whose mentality was familiar to him. Thus the Swiss artists were influenced as well, and one could concentrate on Swiss artists without chauvinism.

The President thanked Mr. Garraux for his most interesting lecture which had made a great impression on the audience — as shown by the ready applause and many questions — even though it was perhaps somewhat bewildering until one realised that the artists of today had not arrived at any permanent conception, but were searching.

MM

"The monthly meetings of your Society have become an integral part of our life in London, a meeting place for friends who wish to discuss matters of common interest. We could not do without it."

Mr. Fritschi then proposed a toast to the Society and its College.

In his address the Society's President, Mr. A. Jaccard, paid tribute to the guests from the Embassy as well as other guests too numerous to mention individually.

He also especially welcomed a newcomer to the Society's activities, Mr. E. Tangemann, Manager of the London Office of the Union Bank of Switzerland.

Perhaps with just an element of "tongue in cheek", Mr. Jaccard made reference to a rather special football match which took place last April between the College team and the Times FC at Ravensbourne in Kent.

To use Mr. Jaccard's own words — "to say we suffered a reverse would be a gross understatement and unfair to our opponents. It was, in fact, more like the massacre of the innocents, master-minded by Mr. John Gard whom we salute tonight, not as a foe but as an old friend".

For the record — the result of the match was Times FC 8—SMS 1.

When it came to the point when Mr. Jaccard wanted to propose his toast to the guests and the ladies he was faced with a minor problem — the recently enacted Sex Discrimination Act.

Obviously having given the matter considerable thought, Mr. Jaccard solved the problem in his own inimitable style. Instead of asking his colleagues to raise their glasses to the guests and female persons (or as he insists he has heard — gentle persons), he said "Honestly, ladies, we rejoice in your recently gained emancipation and so long as you don't let this business go to your heads, you do not ask your husbands to produce babies, and as long as you retain your greatest asset, your femininity, we shall be proud to continue to refer to you as our better halves." Definitely the touch of a gentleman!

Dancing to the sort of little ensemble one would expect the Dorchester to supply ended what was, by common consent, a happy and memorable evening.

WGS

## NOTICE

Members of the Swiss Relief Society who have not yet paid their contribution for 1975 are kindly requested to send their subscriptions to the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. Wegmüller, Consulate General of Switzerland, Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester M1 4BH. In order to reduce postage expenses, it has been decided to send receipts on request only. Members of the Swiss Club who want to join the Swiss Relief Society may contact the Hon. Treasurer.

# SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY KEEPS DORCHESTER DATE

The Dorchester Hotel's elegant Orchid Room provided a suitably convivial atmosphere for the Swiss Mercantile Society's annual dinner and dance on the 31st January.

The members and guests were also not disappointed by the food which came from a well-thought out and appetising menu which was tackled with relish after Father Paul Bossard of the Swiss Catholic community in London had dedicated the event and led those present in grace.

Among the distinguished guests were Mr. Karl Fritschi, Charge d'Affaires at the Swiss Embassy as well as other members of the embassy staff.

In his speech Minister Fritschi paid tribute to the SMS and its many important activities. He also pointed out that this year he was unable to make apologies for the absence of the Swiss Ambassador for the simple reason that none was in office, Dr. Weitnauer having departed and Mr. Thalmann expected shortly.

"How does one feel in such a situation?" he continued. "To be sure, the status of Chargé d'Affaires appears much less glamorous than that of Ambassador, Consul or Attaché. Also these titles have great attraction for the public at large. Take for instance the hotels, cars, furniture, shirts and aftershaves which have been named 'Ambassador'. A well-known car proudly

carries the name of Consul throughout the world. And no Director General, no President — be he of your Society — and not even an Ambassador can do without an attaché case.

"But have you ever heard of a hotel, car or brief-case upon which a clever businessman might have bestowed the name of Chargé d'Affaires? No wonder that the most frequent question I have to answer during the short spell of my present assignment is 'When is the new Ambassador arriving?'.

"You may rest assured that everything is being done to welcome Ambassador and Mrs. Thalmann in a couple of days. Like his predecessor he will, I am sure, greatly appreciate all your Society does for the benefit of the Swiss community here and for the good relations which so happily exist between Switzerland and Britain.

"Your College has for its motto 'Study means success', and I could not think of a better guide for its students.

"In my younger days my teachers used to tell me, when I was indulging in the pleasures of laziness, that it was not for school but for life I had to keep on and strive for good results. For over 50 years your College has helped hundreds of young people from Switzerland to make a good start in their professional life.