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Notes on the Building of Reformatories for young Delinquents 326

by Ernst Egeler

Deplorable existing conditions. The majority of Swiss reformatories reveal deplorable conditions which certainly contribute to the crisis in which the reeducational system as a whole finds itself at present. These institutions are often installed in buildings originally intended for some other purpose, they are often in a bad state of repair, dingy and sadly lacking in space (overcrowded dormitories, promiscuity, etc.). The new penal code really demands for young people buildings with segregation, especially on an age basis, but there is a lack of funds. Almost everything in this domain is yet to be done.

New types of reformatories. The ideal is the small building that is a home and allows of a really personal contact with the educators; unfortunately this type is hardly economical. The two modern types that have come to the fore are the big reeducational institution a) *centralised* but with a distinct functional differentiation (each group on its own floor, not more than 8 beds in each bedroom etc.) thus avoiding a mass education for the 60-120 pupils; b) *decentralised* groups of 18-20 pupils supervised by one educator and each group having its own home whilst the general principle is to separate very definitely the dining rooms, the work rooms (classrooms, workrooms) from the living quarters.

Plan, execution and installation. Even if all the sections are not to be completed at once there must exist a basic general plan, the only way to assure a well-conceived organization that differentiates the sections according to their functions. Because of the rapid wear and tear they should be of the best quality possible (which is more economical in the long run). Educational work insists on a favourable atmosphere (good furniture, curtains, engravings, flowers). Good architecture and good education go hand in hand.

Frans Masereel

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by Heinrich Rumpel

A place of special importance is being acquired by graphic art, which, more than is often the case with painting, enables the reestablishing of unity between the idea and its realization – a unity that has not been evident in the moderns for some time. This is also true of wood engraving, which has abandoned the ornamental trappings of the 19th century and has returned to the more primitive conception of treatment by large surfaces; this art has found a real revival with many artists and especially with Masereel who has just turned 60. M's personality and his conception of his art are the most directly revealed in "My Hour Book" (1919), a kind of autobiography in drawings, an admirable series of engravings suggested by what is really a popular inspiration and scintillating with the Flemish temperament of a creator enamoured of all things terrestrial. The structure and the specific laws that govern M's woodcuts are perhaps more clearly visible in certain separate engravings ("The Wooden Horse", "The Boxer", "The Accused" etc.) where a simple composition in which the principal figures generally occupy a central position brings into play the contrasts of lines and surfaces whose contours are, as it were, neon-lit by the light surfaces surrounding them, whilst teeming secondary scenes, far from having a documentary justification, are on the contrary, essential elements of the vision. It is essential to mention in addition the creator's very conscious will to be a social artist so that the full significance of his work may be appreciated. M. was born at Blankenberghe of a well-to-do family but he is not a social artist through resentment, but because of a noble feeling of brotherhood with the lowly. What may be called his activism was mainly evident during the first world war when he was a refugee in Geneva and collaborated by his drawings in the pacifist organs of the period, "La Feuille" and "Les Tablettes". With this

same period are connected the series of woodcuts entitled "The Dead Rise" and "The Dead Speak". But M. deliberately never took the step that separated him from "revolutionary" art in its modern sense. His creations, unlike those of a George Grosz, are not so much drawn from social criticism as from a deeply humane feeling that wishes to pass over class distinctions. Collections such as "The Sun", "Work", "Story Without Words" demonstrate beyond the bounds of doctrines and parties that "lay charity", that life-giving fellowship which does not exclude a sense of humour, this latter element enabling a comparison with his cousins Till Eulenspiegel and Münchhausen. This same feeling pervades everything he has consecrated to the verhaerian theme of the tentacular town ("Town" 1928 and also the pen sketches on certain makimonos, for example "Maboule City" which evokes the American visions of a Dos Passos that are very European because of our pity). In periods of intense emotion, for example in 1940, during the exodus when he became a kind of "reporter" on horror (Fates 1939-1940-1941-1942). M. gives preference to the pen sketch which does not demand the technical concentration of a woodcut. More directly than Goya in his "Caprichos" M. has borne witness to his revolt in a series of drawings entitled "Danse Macabre", "The Earth under Saturn", "Wrath" and "Remember", a period that made Picasso and Kokoschka the just indicators of the age. The return of calm renewed for M. the importance of wood cuts, with "Youth" (1947, introduced by Thomas Mann as formerly "My Hour Book") or "Genesis" whose 8 cuts conjure up for the first time a world other than the contemporary one (in the same way "Christmas Tale" at which the artist is at work). Apart from his illustrations for works by Coster, Maupassant, Verhaeren, P. J. Jouve and R. Rolland M. has also created a whole book of paintings presenting the sea and ports, which is worthy of his engravings that are unique, inimitable, springing as they do from a deeply humane inspiration.

Hans Fischer

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by Georgine Oeri

H. F. was born in the Haslital of a family of teachers and should have followed the family tradition, which in a certain sense he did, although nothing could be less "pedagogic" than his completely spontaneous connection with childhood – which he cannot be said to understand, for his relation is far deeper than understanding; it is inherent in his nature. The amazing thing in his case is that such a young artistic temperament should have been able to manifest itself in a country so little "young" as Switzerland, and also that a mind apparently preoccupied with dreaming and simplicity should have produced such effective art. F. began as a newspaper illustrator (he became known for his comic interpretations of proverbs and colloquialisms) and as a window-dresser and artistic designer of the Zürich "Cornichon" cabaret. So many gifts and possibilities might have wasted him if he had not had confidence in his pencil, and if he had not always been in a state of expectancy, an aspect of the artist as he beholds with childlike wonder what is coming to life on his paper. He is naturally gifted and for that has always been given "commissions" that were to reveal to him further facets of himself, as for instance the illustration of Clemens von Brentano's tale "Gokel, Hinkel and Gackeleia" 1944, in which his whimsicality suddenly enters the realms of poetry, plumbing the depths of an indefinable disquiet. But the engraving, the lithograph, add richness with their technical limitations. He perhaps owes to this schooling his success in illustrating La Fontaine's Fables (1949) in which he has surpassed all expectations and in which his art attains full consciousness of itself without losing any of its freshness. It is not surprising that he should feel attracted to mural painting. His achievements in this branch up to the present show that he is capable of self-limitation and therefore of self-fulfilment.