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Il n'est pas exagéré de dire que The 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art, aussi appelée The Armory Show, est l'exposition d'art la plus importante de toute l'histoire américaine. Il s'agit de la véritable introduction de l'art européen moderne aux Etats-Unis, et son influence nationale est difficile à surestimer. Parmi les critiques d'art, mais aussi dans le monde intellectuel au-delà des critiques, elle suscite un débat animé sur le but de l'art et sa place dans la société américaine. Vu l'intérêt porté par Theodore Roosevelt à l'évolution culturelle, son nationalisme et sa passion pour l'art, il n'est pas étonnant qu'il ait participé à ce débat. Cet article cherche à analyser en détail le discours de Roosevelt sur cette exposition pour permettre une meilleure compréhension de cet épisode de l'histoire culturelle américaine et pour révéler une dimension mal connue de l'énigme intellectuelle souvent appelée simplement « TR ». Comme d'autres critiques conservateurs tels que Kenyon Cox, Roosevelt considère que l'art moderne abstrait est une rétrogression artistique. Il craint l'abstraction des artistes modernes européens parce qu'il croit que l'objectif premier de l'art est de transmettre l'identité nationale en reflétant les « traits nationaux » tout en restant accessible au grand public. Selon lui, les artistes américains devraient jouer le rôle d'agents de transmission culturelle, une mission plus essentielle que celle consistant à traiter des changements majeurs de la société moderne. Il croit également que les modernes essaient de tromper le public pour des raisons purement financières. The Armory Show, comme le débat qu'il suscite, nous permet d'appréhender les craintes de Roosevelt, ainsi que celles d'autres témoins de son époque. Nombre de chercheurs ont réinterprété le sens de l'exposition pour le peuple américain ou ce qu'elle révèle sur les courants artistiques de l'époque, mais l'idée que la signification du débat va au-delà du monde de l'art a été très peu explorée.

Stephen L. Levine

The scholar H. Wayne Morgan considers the "conflict between modern and traditional art" in the early twentieth century to be "one of the best known episodes in American cultural history." The International Exhibition of Modern Art, the most important art exhibition ever held in the United States, served as the catalyst for this controversy. After opening in the 69th Regiment Armory in New York on 17 February 1913 and traveling to Chicago and Boston, the "Armory Show," as it came to be known, received more than 250,000 visitors who came to see for themselves the most recent trends in modern art. On display were approximately 1,300 works by European artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and American artists such as Albert Pinkham Ryder, Stuart Davis and Charles Sheeler. News of the exhibit filled the pages of daily newspapers and popular magazines as well as art journals. The Armory Show was America's *de facto* introduction to modern art, and the face of American art would never be the same again. The impact of the exhibit, however, went far beyond the art world (Morgan ix).[1]

Reactions varied widely. Some believed the American Association of Painters and Sculptors (AAPS), and particularly its president, Arthur S. Davies, organized the show simply to shock the American public out of its artistic ignorance. Others contended that the show was merely an attempt to fleece American art collectors. More serious charges were levied at the art and artists themselves. Perhaps these artists who defied the Western art tradition were in fact anarchists who through their art promoted the overthrow of societal norms and existing political systems? Theories abounded (Mechlin 840-841).

The modernists' departure from the canons of art had spawned dialogue among art critics and artists that reflected the widespread concern about the political, social and cultural implications of their art. The controversy transcended the esoteric art world as modern art and its potential influence on American institutions and society became a source of national debate. Considering Theodore Roosevelt's view of art as an agent of cultural advance, it is not surprising that he took part in the cultural debate on modernism or that his response to the moderns was vitriolic. More important, an assessment of Roosevelt's involvement in this most interesting episode of United States cultural history not only serves as a window through which the significance of the Armory Show can be viewed, but also provides a means of understanding one more dimension of the intellectual enigma often referred to simply as TR. For these reasons, a careful examination of Roosevelt's involvement in the hysteria surrounding the Armory Show is warranted.

Before Roosevelt's response to the European art movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century can be fully understood, the cultural

context in which he and other Americans confronted modern art must first be established. As the United States industrialized, urbanized, and became more technologically advanced and ethnically diverse, concerns over the cultural progress of the United States heightened. The teachings of Herbert Spencer had permeated America to the extent that the notion of inevitable societal evolution was taken for granted not only by politicians like Roosevelt, but also by prominent cultural figures such as the artist and art critic Kenyon Cox. Social Darwinism, racial theories, and fear of cultural decay were by no means confined to the halls of academe. Meanwhile, as the nation experienced such unprecedented social, economic, and cultural change, the arts attracted more practitioners and more patrons. Thus, it is not surprising that at the turn of the century, the place of art in society came under careful scrutiny, and the recognition of it as a vehicle for transmitting national characteristics and maintaining cultural cohesion gained broader acceptance. Roosevelt's views on art reflected this trend (Morgan 1-11).

An almost incessant reader with an insatiable intellectual appetite, Roosevelt could read in five languages, devour two books a night, and quote from them five years later. He seemed to know something about almost everything from taxonomy to Icelandic literature. Natural history, ornithology, and the nation's westward expansion were among the subjects that most intrigued him, and it was in such areas that the depth of his knowledge was most remarkable. The fine arts were yet another of his preoccupations, although scholars have often overlooked this. Historians have discussed Roosevelt's politics and diplomacy at length, and, more recently, his thinking on such matters as race and masculinity. They have been less diligent in analyzing his aesthetic thought and diverse activity in the arts.

Historians have to an extent discussed Roosevelt's involvement in the arts and his reaction to the Armory Show. In "Theodore Roosevelt: Champion of Governmental Aesthetics," Willard Gatewood, Jr. provides a cursory overview of Roosevelt's promotion of the arts while Joseph Masheck, in "Teddy's Taste: Theodore Roosevelt and the Armory Show," provides only a brief summary of Roosevelt's reaction to the exhibit. Neither these studies nor other works have placed Roosevelt's activities in the arts in their appropriate cultural context or given his art thought the detailed, nuanced assessment that it deserves. This essay is intended to help bridge this historiographical gap (Gatewood; Masheck; Levine).[2]

Roosevelt was, in fact, the first president since Thomas Jefferson to express a deep interest in the arts, as his efforts while president—as well as his writings before, during, and after—demonstrate. Though domestic issues and diplomatic concern kept Roosevelt busy while he was president, he devoted considerable time and energy to promoting the arts. As the chosen steward of the people, he felt it his duty to do so.[3]

During his nearly two terms as president, Roosevelt met regularly with writers, painters, sculptors, and architects. This is not to say that Roosevelt was an aesthete or a practicing art critic; yet when it came to expressing his tastes in architecture, painting, and other arts, he was unequivocal. He took art seriously, considering it a means of maintaining a virtuous republican citizenry. Concerned about the evolution/devolution of this citizenry, or the "American race" as he sometimes called it, Roosevelt sought to employ art in the service of cultural progress. It was this nationalist, utilitarian conception of art that informed his aesthetics (Roosevelt, *National Life; American Ideals; Winning; Americanism; Racial Decay)*.

Roosevelt's most lucid explanation of his art thought came in the form of a speech he gave at a joint meeting of the American Academy and the National Institute of Arts and Letters called "Nationalism in Literature and Art." If he made one thing clear in the speech, it was that he expected artists to be both connected to the "national soul" and to serve as cultural leaders. "The greatest literature, the greatest art, must spring from the souls of the people themselves." But, Roosevelt claims, "there must be leadership" in "any great literary and artistic nation." Artists "must express the soul of the nation, partly they must lead and guide the soul of the nation; but only by being one with it can they become one with humanity at large." These artistic leaders "must take advantage of the life of the people, and must follow the trend of its marked currents." Roosevelt cites Greek art as an example, claiming that it, "like Gothic architecture, owed more to the national spirit than to any conscious effort of any group of men." This explains why Roosevelt befriended and admired artists who he felt understood the American citizenry and could portray its characteristics artistically. Roosevelt's reverence for Frederick Remington, for example, is understandable, considering that Remington experienced life in the West and depicted it via painting and sculpture in such a way that was congruent with Roosevelt's perceptions of the West (Roosevelt, "Nationalism" 325-326; Roosevelt Papers, Remington Art Museum).

Roosevelt also explained in the speech why he thought art was an essential component of culture. Without artistic achievement to complement national economic and military fortitude, culture remained incomplete and national greatness elusive. "The national greatness which is wholly divorced from every form of artistic production, whether in literature, painting, sculpture, or architecture […] is not merely one-sided, but a malformed, greatness." He cites Tyre, Sidon, and Carthage, the great commercial city-states founded by the Phoenicians, as examples of such failure, while the Greeks at their apogee epitomized the ideal (Roosevelt, Nationalism 325-326).

Considering the cultural significance Roosevelt assigned to art, it was only natural that he pursued various artistic endeavors as vigorously as other

causes he deemed crucial to the nation. He endorsed the creation of an artistic coinage, the restoration/remodeling of the White House, and the implementation of the McMillan Plan to enhance and preserve the beauty of Washington, D.C.. Roosevelt's presidency coincided with the City Beautiful Movement which influenced many people to consider the beautification of the Capitol, as well as other cities throughout the country, to be an important reform. Roosevelt also oversaw the founding of the Freer Gallery of Art and, by way of executive order, established the Council of Fine Arts. Roosevelt's stance against modernism is yet another testament to the importance he placed on the connection between art and cultural evolution.

The clearest expression of Roosevelt's anti-modernism came in the form of a critique he wrote of the International Exhibition of Modern Art for the 29 March 1913 edition of *Outlook*, a liberal, Christian, reform-oriented magazine. The European modernists, the "extremists" as Roosevelt called them, were anathema to his conception of the purpose of art. By abandoning representation, the modernists at the exhibit did not, nor did they intend to, relay national aspirations and promote cultural advance. Therefore, he attacked the European modernists. It was a battle Roosevelt took seriously, even though some have referred to the critique as little more than a playful dig at the modernists. He had just lost his bid for the presidency and now, as a private citizen, he was taking part in what he deemed to be a most important cause. Given his understanding of the connection between art and American cultural evolution, his reaction to the modernists is understandable.

Roosevelt's response to modernism is strikingly consistent with his general conception of reformism. Whether in the art world or the political arena, he considered drastic reform to be potentially detrimental. In the critique he argues that "probably in any reform movement, in any field of life, the penalty for avoiding the commonplace is liability to extravagance." He warns that in any "forward movement" there is "apt to be a lunatic fringe among the votaries." The Armory Show affirmed his hypothesis. His visit to the exhibit proved that the "lunatic fringe," a phrase he coined and applied to those whose ideas or actions he considered extreme and/or inane, was as evident in the art world as it was in the political arena. He could not bring himself to take Cubism, Fauvism, Post-Impressionism, Futurism, or other *avant garde* art movements of the early twentieth century seriously. Like many others who attended the exhibit, Roosevelt did not understand the philosophical and aesthetic assumptions that informed movements such as Post-Impressionism and Futurism. He did know, however, that he did not like them. The work of the "extremists," as Roosevelt labeled this new wave of artists, added nothing to the art world. He appreciated the Impressionist paintings by artists such as Claude Monet and some of Paul Cezanne's paintings, such as *An Old Woman with a Rosary* (c. 1896), but saw little

value in more abstract works. If anything he saw modernist artists as agents of cultural retrogression (Roosevelt, "Layman's" 718-719; Brown, *Armory Show* 145).

Despite his vehement rejection of the European modernists, Roosevelt was not an artistic reactionary. As in politics, Roosevelt not only welcomed reform, he championed it. He emphasizes from the outset of his critique that he applauds innovation in the various arts. He boasts, in fact, about the absence of the "commonplace" at the exhibition and writes that "any sculptor or painter who had in him something to express and the power of expressing it found the field open to him," as the artist was not expected to "measure up or down to stereotyped or fossilized standards." This artistic freedom, he claims, merits "hearty praise" as it is "vitally necessary to move forward and shake off the dead hand, often the fossilized dead hand, of the reactionaries." Roosevelt goes to the extent of writing that "there can be no life without change, no development without change, and that to be afraid of what is different is to be afraid of life." But different is not always better, as "change may mean death and not life" (Roosevelt, "Layman's" 718).

As Roosevelt made his way through the exhibit on 4 March, the same day his political rival Woodrow Wilson took the oath of office, he certainly realized the extent to which the modernists had redefined art. Roosevelt, along with his entourage, which consisted of Arthur Davies, Walt Kuhn, and American artists Frederick Gregg and Robert Chanler, took his time wandering through the Armory. After Roosevelt complimented Davies on one of his sculptures, the artist capitalized on the opportunity to explain, perhaps in an effort to win him over, that it was "all built up geometrically, Mr. President, just full of pentagons and triangles on the inside." But Roosevelt retorted, "and I dare say the Venus de Milo has a skeleton on the inside, and that's the right place to keep it." He would not be swayed (Brown, *Armory Show* 145-146; Perlman 232).

Most critics and the public did not find much artistic merit in the modernists either, even though guides tried to help visitors make sense out of the unfamiliar images with which they were bombarded. The paintings and sculptures were organized in such a way as to present the historical development that resulted in the new movements, but most visitors still did not take the modernists seriously (Brown, *American Painting* 49; *Armory Show* 244-327; Kuhn 26-28; "French Cubist" 4).

Though attendance in New York remained low the first couple of weeks, the third week saw a dramatic increase. Artists, celebrities, and others who were curious walked the exhibit, while stories appeared on a daily basis in academic and professional journals and the popular press. Ironically, the press's disparaging comments about the exhibit and attacks on particular works probably account for the heightened interest.

After New York, the exhibit in modified form traveled to Chicago and Boston. Chicago proved to be more receptive than Boston, although it was outside the Chicago Art Institute, site of the exhibition, that enraged students burned effigies of Matisse, Brancusi, and Walter Pach. Of the roughly 250,000 people who eventually passed through the exhibit, many were not merely casual observers. Some collectors, for example, realized the financial potential and aesthetic value of the works. Dr. Albert Barnes, who bought Maurice de Vlaminck's *Les Figues* for $162, was one of many collectors who, in aggregate, purchased more than three hundred paintings. Meanwhile, the critics wagged their tongues and their pens (Green; Berman; Craven 459-460; Brown, *American Painting* 50; *Armory Show* 322).[4]

In his critique, Roosevelt denounces artists he labeled "extremists." Although his identification of movements and works is sometimes vague, if not erroneous, his Cubist diatribe is lucid. He found that the Cubists epitomized the extremists, and thus all that was wrong with modern art. "In this recent art exhibit, the lunatic fringe was fully in evidence, especially in … the Cubists." Artists associated with this school, he reports, "are entitled to serious attention of all who find enjoyment in the colored pictures of the Sunday newspapers." Roosevelt elaborates on the inanity of the Marcel Duchamp painting he calls "*A Naked Man Going Down the Stairs*." His attack on the painting *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* is at once vicious and amusing. He refers to a Navaho rug in his bathroom which, "on any proper interpretation of the Cubist theory," is a "far more satisfactory and decorative picture." The rug, according to Roosevelt, warrants the name *A Well Dressed Man Going Up A Ladder* as much as Duchamp's painting does *A Naked Man Going Down the Stairs*. The painting was a favorite target for others as well as it epitomized for many the irrationality and artistic bankruptcy that characterized modernism. *Art News* offered a prize for the best explanation of the painting. Soon it was difficult to get near it (AAPS; Duchamp; Roosevelt, "Layman's" 719).

Roosevelt's assault on Duchamp was just part of his general disgust for the Cubists. His most toxic remarks come in his scrutiny of the term "Cubist." He argues that there is no logical explanation for choosing the cube to represent the art. "There is no reason why people should not call themselves Cubists, or Octogonists, or Parallelopipedonists, or Knights of the Isosceles Triangle, or Brothers of the Cosine, if they so desire, as expressing anything serious or permanent, one term is as fatuous as another" (Brown, *American Painting* 49; Roosevelt, "Layman's" 719).

Roosevelt likens the Cubists to P. T. Barnum. Just as some people willingly paid to see Barnum's "faked mermaid," Roosevelt argues, they spent their money on a Cubist painting or another work that was "repellent from every standpoint" and that they knew had no artistic merit. Here he

suggests that the Cubists were merely attempting to shock the public in order to attract attention and to fleece money from those who were not interested in discerning between superficial and substantial art (Roosevelt, "Layman's" 718).

It was not the principle of abstraction Roosevelt found distasteful. His collection of Indian rugs and blankets at the house at Sagamore Hill in Long Island proves that he found some abstract, planar art to be of decorative value. Other art aficionados such as Dr. Albert Barnes also admired Indian rugs and collected them, while at the same time finding little aesthetic value in the majority of Cubist works. Roosevelt's understanding of abstract art probably derived from a lecture he heard at the White House in 1903 by Arthur Dow. Dow promoted the ideals of planar, abstract, strictly decorative art. Roosevelt seems to have accepted that beauty can come in the form of non-representational art. His distaste for the European modernists was predicated on the belief that they were pretentious because their works purported to represent identifiable content. The titles of Cubist paintings imply that their canvases depict the natural world and/or human forms. According to Roosevelt, these painters misled viewers, or perhaps even worse, disregarded them. The modernists, according to Roosevelt, violated and indeed explicitly disputed the norms of both representational and decorative art. It is also likely that Roosevelt liked Indian art for the simple reason that it was American (Masheck 73).

Roosevelt did not restrict his disparaging remarks to the Cubists alone. He also scorned, for example, the works of the Fauvist Henri Matisse. Whereas the Cubist works were highly abstract, and their content elusive, Roosevelt, as well as critics, easily identified Matisse's subject matter. Yet Matisse's depictions defied nearly all standard forms of art, including the still life, the portrait, and the nude. Although Roosevelt does not mention any Matisse painting by name, it is likely that *Blue Nude* was at least one of his targets. Employing novel approaches to color and form, Matisse presents a woman whose proportions are as unnatural as the colors with which she is depicted. Matisse had succeeded in shocking Roosevelt as easily as he had critics at the Salon d'Automne in Paris, where a critic labeled him and others who worked in a similar style *fauves,* meaning "wild beasts." The name stuck (Matisse; Roosevelt, "Layman's" 718).

Roosevelt's remarks about a Wilhelm Lehmbruck sculpture *Kneeling Woman* also suggest that he deemed the distortion of human proportions reminiscent of paleolithic art. He explains how there are "interesting samples of the strivings for representation of the human form among artists of many different countries from many different times, all in the same stage of paleolithic culture." He credits these early artists for their "stumbling effort," which in the paleolithic era "represented progress." But "forty

thousand years later, when entered into artificially and deliberately, it represents only a smirking pose of retrogression." Lehmbruck's disproportionate female with the "deformed pelvis" and "tibia of giraffe-like length" exemplified this tendency of the modernists (Lehmbruck; Roosevelt, "Layman's" 719-720).

Roosevelt's discussion of *Kneeling Woman* also reveals his frustration with the pomposity of art critics. What particularly disturbed him was what he determined to be their penchant for attaching false meaning to art works, and their tendency to use only the most pretentious language in doing so. Roosevelt saw in the critique an opportunity to identify the pervasive idiocy he detected in the rhetoric of pro-modernist critics. When Roosevelt facetiously mentions that the Lehmbruck sculpture is "full of lyric grace," "tremendously sincere," and "of a jewel-like preciousness," he is borrowing language from an essay written by William Murrell Fischer titled "Sculpture at the Exhibition." His allusion to Fischer's piece, which appeared in *Art and Decoration*, also suggests that Roosevelt may have been more aware of modern art criticism and theory than his critique implies. If nothing else, Roosevelt's allusion to Fischer's phraseology attests to the breadth of his reading (Fisher 168-169; Masheck 72; Roosevelt, "Layman's" 719).

Roosevelt and Cox were not the only ones to voice concern about the potential cultural impact of modern art. Critics in some cases equated the artistic radicals with political revolutionaries and criminals, viewing them as cogs in the wheel of cultural progress. They understood, and perhaps exaggerated, the cultural significance of artists. Cox considered some of the modernists "as truly anarchistic as those who would overthrow all social laws," while other critics such as Leila Mechlin, editor of *Art and Progress*, conveyed similar sentiments. After explaining that the bomb thrower is imprisoned and the lunatic confined to protect society, she asked why we "so blithely tolerate these crimes in art." ("The Greatest Exhibition" 230-232; Dangerfield 328-329; Cox 10; Cortissoz, "The Post-Impressionist" 805-815; Mather, Jr. & Jewett 512; Brown, *Armory Show* 155; Mechlin 840-841). Not all anti-modernist critics were as alarmist as Mechlin, and a relative few considered the introduction and spread of the new movements as potentially beneficial to the art world and to society (Morgan 7-9; Cox 220-221).

Roosevelt was not entirely negative either. He in fact praises the works of American artists, most of whom represented a more moderate break from tradition than the European modernists. Roosevelt claims that "in some ways it is the work of the American painters and sculptors" that are "of most interest" at the exhibit. The very fact that he categorized the American artists at the exhibit in such a way attests to his conception of art as a manifestation of, and as a means of affirming, national identity. His praise of Robert Chanler reflects not only this interest in nationalistic art but also the

extent to which Roosevelt accepted departure from orthodoxy (Roosevelt, "Layman's" 718-720).

Chanler's works appealed to Roosevelt for several reasons. That the majority of animals depicted were indigenous to the United States certainly pleased him. Two of the works, *Hopi Indian Snake Dance* and *Indian*, very likely appealed to Roosevelt's love of the West and his commitment to maintaining among the American public a sense of connection to its cultural and racial origins. But what Roosevelt lauded most clearly was Chanler's style. "As first-class decorative work, the very unexpected pictures of Sheriff Bob Chandler [*sic*] have a merit all their own." All ten of Chanler's paintings were imaginative arrangements of brilliant colors. Roosevelt was not the only one who was favorably impressed with the little known artist. William M. R. French, the director of the Chicago Art Institute, demanded that several Chanler paintings adorn the entrance of the exhibit when it came to the museum (Narodny 51; Roosevelt, "Layman's" 720).

"Decorative" is the operative word in Roosevelt's statement about Chanler's screens because it demonstrates Roosevelt's acceptance of certain abstract art as long as it was decorative. He was interested in the conceptual aspects of such works. But it is also clear that Roosevelt did not consider decorative art to be as significant as more representational art. He may have liked Chanler's screens, but he certainly did not consider them to be as culturally influential as the works of artists such as Remington or Saint-Gaudens (*Woodstock's* 70-71; AAPS; Narodny 51).

John Sloan's *Sunday, Women Drying Their Hair* was one of the few paintings Roosevelt mentions by name in the critique, although he jumbles the title. "The group of girls on the roof of a New York tenement-house," as Roosevelt identifies it, is a typical Sloan painting, depicting the American urban experience realistically and dispassionately. His canvases portray the filth, sense of isolation, and overcrowding that many urban dwellers took for granted in the early twentieth century. Like most of Sloan's paintings, *Sunday, Women Drying Their Hair* captures a particular moment of everyday city life. It is essentially a snapshot of three women on the roof of a building drying their hair. The large, gray, cluttered city forms the background. Sloan in no way attempts to romanticize the city, nor does he try to glorify the seemingly mundane lives of the women he presents. His paintings depict the essence of the American city, and this surely resonated with Roosevelt who knew about the tenements from his days on the New York City Police Commission and from his acquaintance with Jacob Riis. Moreover, the city had emerged as a dominant feature of American life by the early twentieth century, and Sloan had proven his ability to express this aspect of American culture in his work (Sloan; Roosevelt, "Layman's" 720).

Like the traditionalists, Roosevelt accepted the mutability of artistic and aesthetic standards. But the works of Davies and Chanler can by no means be compared with the more abstract works produced by Europeans such as Duchamp. Roosevelt applauded Chanler's mystical, fantasy-like depictions of the natural world and Sloan's gritty, urban scenes because they elevated the art of painting and embodied Americanism. Whereas Chanler had benefited from the artistic freedom at the exhibit, the most radical of the European modernists had done little more than shock visitors with their self-indulgent absurdities. By allowing the drive for individual expression to supersede the effort to communicate to the public, the modernists had divorced themselves from the cultural function Roosevelt expected them to serve, while claiming to promote cultural advance. The modernists explicitly took issue with the narrative function of art that Roosevelt considered so vital. Their works served neither the decorative nor the representative function that Roosevelt assigned to art.

Roosevelt nonetheless expressed gratitude for the exhibition. He thought it necessary to educate the American public. "The exhibitors were quite right as to the need of showing to our people in this manner the art forces which of late have been at work in Europe, forces which cannot be ignored." This view of the role of the exhibition relates to his other ideas about the social function of art. Perhaps more important, Roosevelt praised the exhibit because he thought it was essential to expose American artists to the new movements, to keep them abreast of what their European counterparts were doing. He wrote that the "extremists'" work had inspired many American artists to become more original in painting and sculpture. In sum, Roosevelt's reaction to the exhibit can best be described as ambivalent despite his firm, often dogmatic comments (Roosevelt, "Layman's" 720).

The debate over modernism and its cultural implications would continue through the twentieth century, but one thing was certain in the wake of the Armory Show. The American art scene would never be the same, even though critics such as Cox and organizations such as the conservative National Academy of Design in New York did what they could to maintain what they believed to be sensible development in art. Membership in the "Academy," as it was called, was conferred only to those who conformed to its traditional artistic standards, and those members refused to grant exhibition space to nonconformist artists. These institutions could not stop the tide of modernism that emanated from Europe; neither could the critics nor the public. Although the reception of the European *avant-garde* in America had been tepid at best, the direction that American art would take in the twentieth century proves that, at least among artists, modernism survived the cultural crucible. The modernists' success among wealthy American collectors such as the Rockefellers and

Frank Crowninshield was undeniable (Brown, *American Painting* 4; Corn; Krauss).

During Roosevelt's lifetime the very definition of art had been challenged, and the course that American art would take was questionable. Fearing that the battle was about much more than the manipulation of oils, clays and other material, he felt that it was important to try to influence the direction that American artists would take. But Roosevelt's response to the exhibit, along with that of other critics and much of the public, was not enough to prevent the further influence of the European modernists. The decades following the Armory Show witnessed greater interaction between American and European schools of art, continued interest in modern art among American collectors, and the emergence of institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1929. Looking back on the remainder of the twentieth century following the Armory Show, it is clear that the battle against the European modernists was one that Roosevelt waged in vain.

Although Roosevelt's diatribe against the modernists was ineffective in terms of directing the art world, his attack on the modernists is nonetheless important. When considered along with his other involvement with and statements about art, it is clear that he viewed the arts as an essential component of national identity and cultural evolution. American greatness was about more than economic and military prowess; it also required a national art. To interpret Roosevelt's reaction to the European modernists as anything less than an expression of his fear and anxiety about the possible degradation of American art, and subsequently American culture, would be to ignore an entire facet of his intellect.

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NOTE

1. There is a large body of literature on the Armory Show. The most detailed, inclusive study is Milton Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988). See also Andrew Martinez, "A Mixed Reception for Modernism: The 1913 Armory Show at The Art Institute of Chicago," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* (1993): 30-57; J.M. Mancini, "'One Term is as Fatuous as Another': Responses to the Armory Show Reconsidered," *American Quarterly* 51 (1999): 833-870; Charlotte Laubard, "The 1913 Armory Show: Stakes, Strategies and Reception of a Media Event," in *American Art: 1908-1947, From Winslow Homer to Jackson Pollock,* ed. Eric de Chassey (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002): Abraham A. Davidson, "The Armory Show and Early Modernism in America," In *American Art in the 20th Century: Painting and Sculpture, 1913-1993*. Ed. Christos Joachimides and Norman Rosenthal (New York: te Neues, 1993).

2. For more on Roosevelt's understanding of race, the most thorough study to date is Thomas Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1989). For more on Roosevelt's conception of masculinity, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995), and Sarah Watts, *Rough Rider in the White House* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003). For more on Roosevelt and the arts, see Royal Cortissoz, *American Artists* (New York: Scribner, 1928); Glenn Brown, "Roosevelt and the Fine Arts," *American Architect* 66 (1919): 711-719; Edward Wagenknecht, *The Seven Worlds of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Longmans, 1958); Willard Gatewood, Jr., "Theodore Roosevelt: Champion of Governmental Aesthetics," *Georgia Review* 21 (1967): 172-183; Joseph Masheck, "Teddy's Taste: Theodore Roosevelt and the Armory Show," *Artforum* 9 (November 1970): 70-73; Richard Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt, Culture, Diplomacy, and Expansion: A New View of American Imperialism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1985); Eric de Chassey, *La Peinture efficace: Une Histoire de l'abstraction aux États-Unis (1910-1960)* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001) 20-21.

3. For a more complete treatment of Roosevelt and the arts, see Levine, "Race, Art, and Culture: Theodore Roosevelt and the Nationalist Aesthetic".

4. Walt Kuhn, who served as Secretary for the AAPS, kept many of the responses to the Armory Show that appeared in newspapers, magazines, and journals. These can be found in The Walt Kuhn Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Elmer MacRae, the treasurer of the AAPS, also kept some written reactions to the exhibit. See The MacRae Papers, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.