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giving his imagination free but rational play in stopping up the innumerable factual gaps in his career. There is a good bibliography (in which the work of Cedillo, Waterhouse, and Miss de Gué Trapier receives no mention), but unfortunately no index.

J.P.-H.

ARTISTS AT WORK. By Stanley Casson. (Harrap; 5/-)

In an attempt to popularise art and extend its appreciation, the B.B.C. last autumn hit on the unhappy notion of organising a series of discussions, confined nominally to matters of technique, but straying with peculiar persistence towards elementary aesthetics, between Mr. Stanley Casson and four prominent artists, Mr. Frank Dobson and Mr. Henry Rushbury, the choice of whom was unexceptionable, Mr. Albert Rutherston and Mr. Edward Halliday. Architecture, it was considered, might safely be omitted. The form the discussion took was of a series of questions put by Mr. Casson, answered by the four artists and reiterated, again by Mr. Casson, in a Foreword and Summary. In *Artists at Work* these talks are reproduced verbatim, and the book consequently contains technical explanations by the artists of their methods which are of the highest interest and importance for potential students of their work.

The principles on which Mr. Casson bases his cross-examination are three :

(i) ' It is important to establish the fact that art cannot be considered separately from ordinary daily life, and that the mere act of living presupposes an appreciation of art in every man ' (p. 13).

(ii) ' Whatever an artist says about art has more potential value, if he be a good artist, than anything said by anyone else ' (p. 25).

(iii) ' If art is worth talking about at all, it is worth talking about in everyday language ' (p. 133).

He objects to what he considers the divorce of art from life, and supports his objections with facetious jibes at what he chooses to think the obscurantism of the modern critic. For a criticism based on specialised knowledge he attempts to substitute an approach founded on the quality that Mr. Kaines-Smith has lately disarmingly termed common-sense.

Where does this common-sense lead us in the case, first of all, of the last of his three principles? Mr. Dobson, explaining why he finds his own source of inspiration in the human form, says : ' When you use the human form you are using something

with which you are intimate and familiar. You find new shapes the more you study it. The mere representation of a physical form or the idea of it isn't satisfying. You must reassemble, as it were, the parts of a known body, just as we agreed to reassemble the egg and the matchbox, and what is reassembled must have some affinity with the human form.' Mr. Casson replies: 'We're getting terribly highbrow, you know, Dobson' (the 'highbrow' attitude is one from which Mr. Casson is, quite needlessly, at endless trouble to dissociate himself), 'but I don't see how otherwise we could have got to the bottom of the main theory of the thing. All things considered, I think that it boils down rather neatly, though I expect there are lots of sculptors who would disagree. What you say is, in other words, that exact copying of the human shape doesn't take you far.' Mr. Casson's effort at verbal simplicity leads him to substitute a negative truism for Mr. Dobson's concise, positive theory. A few pages further on precisely the same thing happens again. Mr. Dobson explains the appeal of sculpture as being 'to the emotion which results from contemplating the peculiar and static evolutions which take place when a number of forms are superbly assembled,' and when asked to define the meaning of 'static evolutions' says: 'The forms . . . are assembled in such a fashion that one is aware of a continuous and beautiful movement within the whole, which I like to call rhythm. One limb is given a fullness which leads up to another shape which is its complement, and so, as you pass round, you observe the unity of the artist's intention.' Mr. Casson's interpretation of this perfectly straightforward explanation reads like this: 'Good . . . I begin to see what you mean by that most misused of all words, rhythm. It is, I imagine, the balancing up of the parts of a statue, so that there is nothing discordant,' a remark which does not approximate in any way to what Mr. Dobson has said. If artistic processes are to be vulgarised in everyday language, care should at least be taken to distinguish between valid simplification of expression and utterly invalid simplification of thought.

The second of Mr. Casson's principles asks us to pretend that the artist has *ipso facto* a critical infallibility to which the critic by profession cannot lay claim. Mr. Rutherston criticises Matisse on the ground that his pictures seem unfinished, while 'those works of art which have survived the centuries . . . have this in common—a striving after perfection.' After all, it's common-sense, isn't it, to expect a painter with the idiosyncracies of Mr. Rutherston to give an impartial and authoritative judgment on painters as mannered as himself? Again, when

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asked why certain war pictures are 'so very lovely while what they represent was in fact so very unpleasant,' he suggests 'that it is like falling in love. Our vision then is influenced by a particular state of mind, in which we don't see each feature, each small point of face and form as they would be in a photograph, but rather the peculiar beauty and significance that they assume to our adoring vision,' a representational standpoint which provided an entirely erroneous approach to the shifting of emphasis from matter to manner in the greater number of modern paintings.

Thirdly, 'Art,' says Mr. Casson, 'cannot be considered separately from ordinary daily life.' These talks prove conclusively that it can and must be so considered, if we are not, like Mr. Casson, to devote a hundred and fifty pages to explaining to the 'average man' the appreciation of the type of art he almost certainly appreciates already, the art, that is, of thirty years ago. Where, in the case of Mr. Dobson, Mr. Casson is dealing with a great and representative modern artist, he takes an infinity of pains to lower the discussion from Mr. Dobson's more or less abstract plane to the representational level of the 'average man.' 'As far as I can see,' says Mr. Dobson, 'it is a generally accepted idea that every human being is completely equipped as an art-critic at birth'—Mr. Casson's own theory, apparently; he replies, at all events: 'Every man in a sense is his own art critic, because you, as the artist, put something before him and he has to look at it. The man in the street is a pretty good judge in the long run, you know'; an example of peculiarly fallacious reasoning. We seem to remember a saying of Michelangelo, 'Good painting is a music and a melody, which the intellect can alone appreciate, and that with difficulty.' Relate art, of its very nature exclusive, to the ordinary man, ridicule the intellectual approach of the modern critic and, more important, of the modern artist, and you are left with the Royal Academy.

J.P.-H.

RECENT ART EXHIBITIONS

THE retrospective exhibition of Mr. Jacob Epstein's work at the Leicester Galleries has provoked the usual conflicting criticisms; he is insincere, insensitive, sensational by turns, while individual works like the *Madonna and Child* (No. 13) or the *Nude* (No. 21) are characterised as disgusting and obscene. It reaffirms, of course, what everyone has always said, that Epstein cannot carve in stone, but it shows equally that though he does not understand stone as a medium in the way that Dobson and Maillol understand it, his work in it is incom-