

VITAL ENGLISH ART

FUTURIST MANIFESTO.

I am an Italian Futurist poet, and a passionate admirer of England. I wish, however, to cure English Art of that most grave of all maladies—passéism. I have the right to speak plainly and without compromise, and together with my friend Nevinson, an English Futurist painter, to give the signal for battle

AGAINST:

1 — The worship of tradition, and the conservatism of Academies, the commercial acquiescence of English artists, the effeminacy of their art and their complete absorption towards a purely decorative sense.

2. — The pessimistic, sceptical and narrow views of the English public, who stupidly adore the pretty-pretty, the commonplace, the soft, sweet, and mediocere, the sickly revivals of mediævalism, the Garden Cities with their curfews and artificial battlements, the Maypole Morris dances, Aestheticism, Oscar Wilde, the Pre-Raphaelites, Neo-primitives and Paris.

3. — The perverted snob who ignores or despises all English daring, originality and invention, but welcomes eagerly all foreign

originality and daring. After all, England can boast of Pioneers—in Poetry, such as Shakespeare and Swinburne—in Art, Turner and Constable (the original founders of the Impressionist and Barbizon School)—in Science, Watts, Stephenson, Darwin, etc., etc.

4. — The sham revolutionaries of the New English Art Club, who, having destroyed the prestige of the Royal Academy, now show themselves grossly hostile to the later movements of the advanceguard.

5. — The indifference of the King, the State, and the politicians towards all arts.

6. — The English notion that Art is a useless pastime, only fit for women and schoolgirls, that artists are poor deluded fools to be pitied and protected, and Art a ridiculous complaint, a mere topic for table-talk.

7. — The universal right of the ignorant to discuss and decide upon all questions of Art.

8. — The old grotesque ideal of genius—drunken, filthy, ragged, outcast; drunkenness the synonym of Art, Chelsea the Montmartre of London; the Post-Rossettis with long hair under the sombrero, and other passéist filth.

9. — The sentimentality with which you load your pictures—to compensate, perhaps, for your praiseworthy utter lack of sentimentality in life.

10. — Pioneers suffering from arrested development, from success or from despair, pioneers sitting snug on their tight little islands, or vegetating in their oases, refusing to resume the march, the pioneers who say: "We love Progress, but not yours"; the wearied pioneers who say: "Post-impressionism is all right, but it

must not go further than "liberate naïveté" (Gauguin). These pioneers show that not only has their development stopped, but that they have never really understood the evolution of Art. If it has been necessary in painting and sculpture to have naïveté, deformation and archaism, it was only because it was essential to break away violently from the academic and the graceful before going further towards the plastic dynamism.

11. — The mania for immortality. A masterpiece must disappear with its author. Immortality in Art is a disgrace. The ancestors of our Italian Art, by their constructive power and their ideal of immortality, have built for us a prison of timidity, of imitation, and of plagiarism. They sit there on grandfather chairs and for ever dominate our creative agonies with their marble frowns: "Take care, children, mind the motors, don't go too quick, wrap yourselves up well, mind the draughts, be careful of the lightning."

"Forward! HURRAH for motors! HURRAH for speed! HURRAH for draughts! HURRAH for lightning!"

WE WANT:

1. — To have an English Art that is strong, virile and anti-sentimental.

2. — That English artists strengthen their Art by a recuperative optimism, a fearless desire of adventure, a heroic instinct of discovery, a worship of strength, and a physical and moral courage—all sturdy virtues of the English race.

3. — Sport to be considered an essential element in Art.

4. — To create a powerful advanceguard, which alone can save English Art now threatened by the traditional conservatism of Academies, and the habitual indifference of the public. This will

be an exciting stimulant, a violent incentive for creative genius, a constant inducement to keep alive the fires of invention and of art so as to obviate the monotonous labour and expense of perpetual raking out and relighting of the furnace.

5. — A rich and powerful country like England ought without question to support, defend, and glorify her advanceguard of artists, no matter how advanced or how extreme, if she intends to deliver her art from inevitable death.

6. — So we call upon the English public to support, defend, and glorify the genius of the great Futurist painters or pioneers and advance-forces of vital English Art.

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