

V A N I T Y F A I R

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p . 6 6

The Paintings of Thomas H. Benton

*Canvases Which Have at Once Depth,
Rhythmic Movement and Serenity*



MUCH interest has lately been evoked by the recent work of Thomas H. Benton, a young American artist who has evolved a method all his own in an attempt to discover a new aesthetic El Dorado. Benton had his preliminary training at the Chicago Art Institute. After two years there he went to Paris innocent of any art opinions, and ready to swallow the first idea presented. He was immediately attracted by the impressionists and painted in the manner of Monet and Pissarro. Gradually, however, the impressionistic preoccupation with rendering effects of light ceased to absorb him, and a study of the masters in the Louvre—notably Rubens and Paul Veronese—drew his attention to the importance of composition.

Cézanne's work, in its turn, aroused his curiosity concerning the mechanics of form and the interest of representing the volume, the weight, and third-dimensional aspect of nature. Concentrating, therefore, on design and on the perspective of masses, he has developed a very original type of picture, in which the figures possess a sculptural quality, so vividly is their volume insisted on, and in which composition is carefully and satisfyingly constructed. Although far from being directly imitative of nature, Mr. Benton yet conveys a sense of reality by the solidity and rhythmic simplicity of his forms.