

Cadmus, Satirist of Modern "Civilization"



Greenwich Village Cateria: PAUL CADMUS

A YOUNG MAN'S BITTERNESS against a world of impossible and sometimes disgusting people is sounded in the exhibition of Paul Cadmus at the Midtown Galleries, New York, until April 10. Like the contemporary writers Thomas Wolfe and Aldous Huxley the reaction of Cadmus against present day "civilization" is one of repulsion tinged with hatred. This note of protest seems to be the battle cry of the younger generation of artists and writers. Like banners they hold up Mr. and Mrs. Overdressed Middleclass to be viewed by the public. Daumier looked on the people of his period with a satirical eye but he was amused by them. No beguiling criticism is found in these paintings and prints by Cadmus. They are harsh caricatures that make the work of Reginald Marsh and Kenneth Hayes Miller seem almost gentle.

Cadmus was thrust into national prominence at the age of 26 when his canvas *The Fleet's In*, painted for the PWAP in 1933, stirred up a storm of protest. Since then controversies have dogged his art but with them has come recognition. His trenchant observation and draughtsmanship have placed him in the front with America's leading satirists. Born in 1906, Cadmus started his art career at an early age. Both his parents were artists and they encouraged him to start studying at the National Academy of Design. Later he worked at the Art Students League with Pennell and Charles Locke. His etchings have been included in national print shows since 1925, when, at 19, he was elected a member of the Society of American Etchers.

Aspects of suburban life—eel fishing off a public dock, over-fed business men playing golf, a polo accident and the small town excitement and fanfare of main street, furnished



material for his five paintings loaned to the Midtown exhibition by the Treasury Department Art Projects. Two of his wittiest portrayals are *Y. M. C. A. Locker Room* and *Gilding the Acrobats*. His *Shore Leave*, reminiscent of his other famous sailor picture *The Fleet's In*, and *Coney Island* are full of ludicrous and somewhat cruel characterizations. In *Greenwich Village Cafeteria*, Cadmus has set his teeth in a typical scene of night prowlers.

"Entering the world of human beings plunges one immediately into a mixture of emotions, thoughts and actions, some pleasant, some disturbing; but whether uplifting or disgusting, these reactions spring from a vital source," writes Cadmus in the catalogue. "I cannot term love optimism and disgust pessimism; one implies rose-colored glasses; the other, dark glasses. Therefore the terms optimism and pessimism, seem to me, falsifications. However, in order to make clear one's disgust (with base actions, conditions, habits, etc.), all sweet and lovely thoughts must be dropped by the wayside . . . Though artistic expression is often composed of elements repulsive to the artist, the very efficacy of these repulsive and perhaps immoral elements in strengthening and achieving better social standards is a source of infinite concern and even delight to the satirical artist."

SECOND ARTISTS' CONGRESS: The second American Artists' Congress will be held in New York City next Fall. Points of concentration, reports *Art Front*, will be the Federal Art Bill, extension of the art projects, unity against war and fascism, municipal art centers and the problem of democratizing culture.