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Archives of American Art

Jacques Seligmann & Co. records, General Correspondence: Ingersoll, R. Sturgis, 1936-1954

Extracted on Mar-28-2024 10:48:08

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[[preprinted]]
ELLIS AMES BALLARD
1883 – 1938
FREDERIC L. BALLARD
1918 – 1952

LAW OFFICES
BALLARD, SPAHR, ANDREWS & INGERSOLL
1035 LAND TITLE BUILDING
PHILADELPHIA 10
Locust 7-5615

BOYD LEE SPAHR
SCHOFIELD ANDREWS
R. STURGIS INGERSOLL
CHARLES I. THOMPSON
WILLIAM R. SPOFFORD
ALLEN HUNTER WHITE
MORRIS CHESTON
KNOX HENDERSON
DANIEL MILLER
RICHARDSON BLAIR
E. CALVERT CHESTON
BOYD L. SPAHR, JR.
HAMILTON C. CONNOR, JR.
CHARLES S. JACOBS
H. OBER HESS
M. CARTON DITTMANN, JR.
SHERWIN T. MCDOWELL
WILLIAM S. RAWLS
FREDERIC L. BALLARD, JR.
LEDYARD H. HECKSCHER
PHILIP C. PATTERSON
THOMAS G. B. EBERT
ROBERT R. BATT
FRANCIS BALLARD
HENRY N. PLATT, JR.
NORMAN H. BROWN
ROBERT L. BAST
JOSEPH K. GORDON
PETER PLATTEN
JOHN F. KENNEDY
[[/preprinted]]

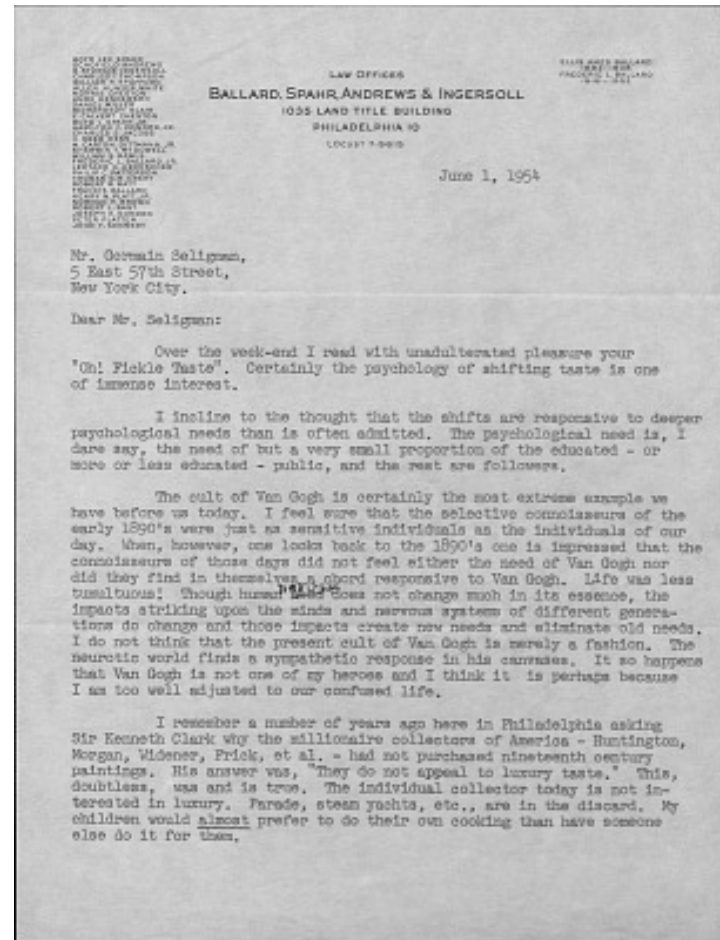
June 1, 1954

Mr. Germain Seligman,
5 East 57th Street,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Seligman:

Over the week-end I read with unadulterated pleasure your "Oh! Fickle Taste". Certainly the psychology of shifting taste is one of immense interest.

I inclined to the thought that the shifts are responsive to deeper psychological needs than is often admitted. The psychological need is, I



dare say, the need of but a very small proportion of the educated – or more or less educated – public, and the rest are followers.

The cult of Van Gogh is certainly the most extreme example we have before us today. I feel sure that the selective connoisseurs of the early 1890's were just as sensitive individuals as the individuals of our day. When, however, one looks back to the 1890's one is impressed that the connoisseurs of those days did not feel either the need of Van Gogh nor did they find in themselves accord responsive to Van Gogh. Life was less tumultuous! Though human [^][[nature]] ~~need~~ ~~[[/strikethrough]]~~ does not change much in its essence, the impacts striking upon the minds and nervous systems of different generations do change and those impacts create new needs and eliminate old needs. I do not think that the present cult of Van Gogh is merely a fashion. The neurotic world finds a sympathetic response in his canvases. It so happens that Van Gogh is not one of my heroes and I think it is perhaps because I am too well adjusted to our confused life.

I remember a number of years ago here in Philadelphia asking Sir Kenneth Clark why the millionaire collectors of America – Huntington, Morgan, Widener, Frick, et al. – had not purchased 19th century paintings. His answer was, "They do not appeal to luxury taste." This, doubtless, was and is true. The individual collector today is not interested in luxury. Parade, steam yachts, etc., are in the discard. My children would almost prefer to do their own cooking than have someone else do it for them.

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