



Smithsonian Institution

Archives of American Art

Interview with Betty Parsons, WNYC Art Festival, 1951

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Interview over WNYC
Art Festival
3.30 p.m., October 16th, 1951

Question:
What is the relationship of avant-garde (meaning "ahead of this day" art) to your gallery?

Answer:
I personally object to the word the way it is used today and the career that has been made of it. I am not as interested in the avant-garde as in Art. To me, the word is confusing. But I would like to explain the basis on which I have chosen these artists; my real conviction about them is, that they have created a world truly related to life, rather than follow the historical trends of art, notions of tradition, and conventional ways of living. I feel that this work can only be achieved by a mature mind. The adolescent cannot integrate. Only the mature can make a real history of the living. The adolescent is involved in imitation of styles, modes, fashions of modern art, which produce pictures that may have great style but are devoid of content.

Question:
The charge against these men is that you have made a place where they live in an ivory tower.

Answer:
This is completely wrong. These artists are establishing a relationship with the world through their own experience, and I have made a place where their expression can exist. That the strength of this liberation is so important, so vital, in a world where we see freedom being submerged all around us, is adequate compensation for my commitment. And this is why I am involved. But on the other hand, I should not be the only one; I would like to make the work of these men available to all, so that each will really understand liberation! I don't feel that by doing this that I am carrying a special torch - this freedom of the spirit has always existed, and my devotion to it and presentation of it to the public is a simple human act, and all I am asking of the public is to come - and if they can feel these pictures, and when they do, to act on the basis of their own feeling, with courage. I think their work has messages for all, and can be part of any man's life.

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