

**EPSTEIN**

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Epstein by Bernard Van Dieren

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**BERNARD VAN DIEREN**

**EPSTEIN**



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BY BERNARD VAN DIEREN ILLUSTRATED WITH FIFTY REPRODUCTIONS IN COLLOTYPE OF THE SCULPTOR'S WORK ■ ■

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## P R E F A C E

**T**HIS book is not intended to be more than introductory in nature. It must remain an introduction in more than one sense.

In the first place, where products of plastic art are concerned, one cannot hope to do more with words than indicate the direction from which they should be approached. If then, when the spectator is left alone with the work, it does not speak to him in its own language, if the thought of which it is the embodiment does not communicate itself to him, how can words help him further?

Dialectics might be able to suggest a conviction in the spectator of having grasped a work's meaning and qualities; but then nothing has been gained towards the attainment of a real understanding, for it is not the artist's creation but his propagator's power of persuasion that causes the effect.

In this way proselytes are made, but the faith instilled by a successful exercise of authority, and not born from direct conviction, is of no value. The artist is not served by the results of such forcible conversion.

Those new Christians that embraced the faith as the only alternative to the stake and the fire were no great acquisition to the Church.

Written incitements may serve to rouse and assist a well-intentioned but uninformed interest, but where creations in any other than a literary medium are concerned their assistance ceases when the spectator thus prepared is in front of the works. These restrictions naturally assert themselves even more positively when one is discussing the work of a living master.

Jacob Epstein is not only that, but he is also a man of extraordinary

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potentialities, the nature of which could not be foretold by speculations based on that of his past achievements.

If the steady increase of mastery and the constant development of new aspects in the manifestation of his creative powers continue one may confidently predict that his future works will reveal his significance and genius even more overwhelmingly than those he has already achieved.

This makes any attempted review of his work at this time unavoidably the more incomplete, though again one has reason to be grateful that the reason should be such an agreeable one.

The foregoing reflections make it almost unnecessary for me to crave my readers' indulgence for the fact that the greater part of my observations will be chiefly devoted to the problems of appreciation and understanding of art in general, and will deal with such abstractions more extensively than with the works of Epstein in particular. The defence and justification of my method are self-evident.

*Vae cum benedixerent vobis homines ; secundum haec enim faciebant pseudo prophetis patres eorum.*



## LIST OF PLATES

Detail from Tomb of Oscar Wilde <i>(In Père La Chaise Cemetery, Paris)</i>	. . . Plate I.
Sun God . . . . .	. . . Plate II.
The Christ . . . . .	. . . Plate III.
The Christ <i>(Slightly side view)</i>	. . . Plate IV.
Cursed be the day wherein I was born <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	. . . Plate V.
Maternity . . . . .	. . . Plate VI.
Carving in Flenite <i>(T. E. Huime Collection)</i>	. . . Plate VII.
Venus <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	. . . Plate VIII.
Doves <i>(Owned by John Alford, Esq.)</i>	. . . Plate IX.
Mother and Child <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	. . . Plate X.
Carving in Flenite <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	. . . Plate XI.
Original drawing for "Rock Drill" . . . . .	. . . Plate XII.
Upper part of figure from "Rock Drill" . . . . .	. . . Plate XIII.
Head of a Boy <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	. . . Plate XIV.
Mrs. Jacob Epstein <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	. . . Plate XV.
Mrs. Jacob Epstein . . . . .	. . . Plate XVI.
Her Grace the Duchess of Hamilton . . . . .	. . . Plate XVII.
Euphemia Lamb <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	. . . Plate XVIII.
Head of an Infant <i>(Owned by H. M. Queen Alexandra)</i>	. . . Plate XIX.
Head of a Child . . . . .	. . . Plate XX.
Bust of Nan . . . . .	. . . Plate XXI.
Head of a Girl . . . . .	. . . Plate XXII.

LIST OF PLATES—*continued.*

The Tin Hat <i>(Imperial War Museum)</i>	Plate XXIII.
Mrs. Ambrose McEvoy	Plate XXIV.
An American Soldier	Plate XXV.
Miss Marguerite Nielka	Plate XXVI.
Euphemia Lamb <i>(Evmoropoulos Collection)</i>	Plate XXVII.
Helena	Plate XXVIII.
Marcelle <i>(Coleman Collection)</i>	Plate XXIX.
Mlle Gabrielle Soene	Plate XXX.
The late Lieut. T. E. Hulme, R.M.A. <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	Plate XXXI.
W. H. Davies <i>(Owned by Hon. Evan Morgan)</i>	Plate XXXII.
The Countess of Drogheda <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	Plate XXXIII.
Admiral Lord Fisher <i>(Imperial War Museum)</i>	Plate XXXIV.
Bust of a Girl <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	Plate XXXV.
Iris Tree <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	Plate XXXVI.
Lillian Shelley	Plate XXXVII.
Meum with a Fan	Plate XXXVIII.
Betty May	Plate XXXIX.
Lady Gregory <i>(Dublin National Gallery)</i>	Plate XL.
Augustus John <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	Plate XLI.
Muirhead Bone <i>(Dundee Art Gallery)</i>	Plate XLII.
Josef Holbrooke <i>(Owned by Josef Holbrooke)</i>	Plate XLIII.
Bust of a Lady	Plate XLIV.
Bernard Van Dieren <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	Plate XLV.
Elizabeth, Daughter of Lady Howard de Walden <i>(Owned by Lady Howard de Walden)</i>	Plate XLVI.
Old Italian Woman <i>(John Quinn Collection)</i>	Plate XLVII.
Masque de Meum	Plate XLVIII.
Nan	Plate XLIX.
Sergt. David Ferguson Hunter, V.C. <i>(Imperial War Museum)</i>	Plate L.

EPSTEIN