

**THE CLASSIC POINT OF  
VIEW: SIX LECTURES  
ON PAINTING. [1912]**

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The Classic Point of View: Six Lectures on Painting. [1912] by Kenyon Cox

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## PREFACE

IN the course of a life devoted to the study, the practice, and the teaching of the art of painting I have, naturally, arrived at some pretty definite conclusions as to the nature of that art and of the problems involved in it—some decided opinions as to what that art has been, is, and should be. These opinions I have tried, however imperfectly, to exemplify in my work and to inculcate in my teaching. They have also, inevitably, colored what I have written. But what I have written has, hitherto, been casual and occasional—a discussion of this or that master, a criticism of this or that particular work of art—and the bases of my criticism, the fundamental ideas on which it is founded, have had, for the most part, to be taken for granted, or to be cursorily and incompletely expressed. These papers have, moreover, been written at long intervals, and for different purposes, and could hardly be entirely consistent with each other. Something like a general point of view could, perhaps, be inferred from them, and something like a consistent body of doctrine made out, by the exercise of sufficient care and sufficient intelligence; but such careful and intelligent consideration as would be necessary could hardly be expected of many readers.

I have therefore welcomed the opportunity afforded by the

invitation from The Art Institute of Chicago to deliver the Scammon Lectures for 1911 to draw up a definitive *credo*—a detailed and explicit confession of artistic faith. The following pages will, accordingly, be found to contain a statement, as clear as I can make it, of what one painter believes and hopes and fears with regard to painting; of what he takes to be the malady of modern art, and of where he looks for the remedy for it. It would be little less than miraculous if such a statement of belief should contain the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It must contain errors, and may contain wrongheadedness. At least it is an honest attempt at a contribution to the truth.

It has been said that the criticism of art by an artist is never anything else than an apology for his own work. This is so far true that the expression of opinions definitely held must be the expression of ideals consciously striven for, but I should be sorry to have it thought that my description of what painting should be is intended for a description of what I suppose my own painting to be. We moderns are all in the same boat together. We are all lamentably ill educated, and we are all trying to make up for the faults of our education by strenuous endeavor. We paint as we can, and none of us can afford to have the validity of his opinions judged by his success in carrying them into practice.

KENYON COX.

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