

REPORT ON THE FINE ARTS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649279470

Report on the Fine Arts by Frank Leslie

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

FRANK LESLIE

**REPORT ON
THE FINE ARTS**

*With Mr. Leslie's
Compliments*

PARIS UNIVERSAL EXPOSITION, 1867.
REPORTS OF THE UNITED STATES COMMISSIONERS, *on the*

REPORT

OF

THE FINE ARTS.

BY

FRANK LESLIE,
UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1868.

CONTENTS.

	Page.
THE EXPOSITION BUILDING.....	5
CLASSIFICATION.....	5
COUNTRIES REPRESENTED AND AWARDS.....	6
THE FINE ART DEPARTMENT NOT COMPETITIVE.....	7
THE AMERICAN GALLERY.....	8
THE FRENCH GALLERY.....	16
THE BRITISH GALLERY.....	21
BAVARIA.....	23
BELGIUM.....	24
HOLLAND.....	25
PRUSSIA AND NORTHERN GERMANY.....	26
RUSSIA.....	27
SWITZERLAND.....	24
AUSTRIA.....	2c
DENMARK.....	29
SWEDEN.....	29
NORWAY.....	29
ROME AND ITALY.....	30
SPAIN.....	30
PORTUGAL, GREECE, AND OTHER COUNTRIES.....	39
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE PAINTINGS.....	31
SCULPTURE.....	33
ENGRAVING.....	35
THE GRAPHOTYPE PROCESS.....	36
THE COPPER PROCESS.....	36
THE GILLOT PROCESS.....	36
THE CONTE PROCESS.....	37
APPENDIX A.—UNITED STATES: LIST OF PAINTINGS, SCULPTURES, ETC.....	38
APPENDIX B.—LIST OF AWARDS.....	41

REPORT ON THE FINE ARTS.

EXTENT AND CHARACTER OF THE EXHIBITION.

THE EXPOSITION BUILDING.

The building in which the Universal Exposition of 1867 was held in Paris was singularly deficient in architectural display and merit. It can, perhaps, be best described, in homely phrase, as a series of vast sheds ranged concentrically around an open oval court or garden, and intersected, at regular intervals, by avenues radiating from the central area to the circumference. Or, it may be compared to a Roman amphitheatre, by which, it is possible, it was suggested, with a garden for the arena, and radiating passages answering to the vomitories.

There was consequently nothing salient about the building; no striking mass standing out against the sky to mark the spot where the industry of the nations of the earth was gathered, nor lofty façade to awe or impress the visitor. Built on curved lines, the interior was equally without those grand vistas and imposing effects which might have been obtained in a rectangular structure of equal proportions.

Yet for many, if not all the practical purposes and results of such an Exposition, the plan and arrangements of the building could hardly be surpassed. It admitted of the classification of the articles exhibited, not only in respect of their character, but their nationality. Each gallery or zone was set apart to a specific group or class of art or manufacture. The larger products, such as machinery and raw materials, bulky and requiring most room, occupied the larger outer galleries, while the products of the liberal and fine arts found the narrower areas of the inner ellipses sufficiently roomy for their exposition. Thus the visitor interested in machinery had only to make the circuit of the outer gallery to review in succession the achievements of each nation in that department. Or, if devoted more especially to the fine arts, he had only to make the circuit of the gallery dedicated to them. On the other hand, if desirous of studying the collective exhibition of any single nation, he could do so by following the radiating avenues of the edifice, which cut it up like the folds of a fan, one or more folds being assigned to each nation, according to its requirements or the extent of its display.

CLASSIFICATION.

Articles and objects exhibited under the classification of Group I occupied the interior galleries, and consisted of five classes, viz:

Class 1.—Paintings in oil.

Class 2.—Other paintings and drawings.

Class 3.—Sculpture, die-sinking, stone and cameo engraving.

Class 4.—Architectural designs and models.

Class 5.—Engraving and lithography.

The space assigned to this group, especially in respect of what are generally denominated the "fine arts," (painting and sculpture,) was well filled, nearly every country represented at all in the Exposition fully occupying the room conceded to it. A few countries, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland, and Bavaria, finding their space in the main edifice inadequate to what they considered a fair exposition of their paintings, erected "annexes" or supplementary buildings for that purpose in the Park, which were better adapted for showing the pictures to advantage than the main structure.

COUNTRIES REPRESENTED AND AWARDS.

In the department of painting, the following countries were represented and received prizes in the proportions expressed in the subjoined table:

Countries.	No. of pictures.	No. of artists.	Prizes awarded.			
			Grand.	First.	Second.	Third.
France.....	698	330	4	6	10	10
Algiers.....	1	1				
Holland.....	179	77			1	1
Belgium.....	168	73	1	2	1	
Prussia and Northern Germany.....	96	67	1		1	1
Russia.....	3	1				
Bavaria.....	211	112	1	2		2
Baden.....	19	19				
Württemberg.....	11	8				
Austria.....	69	56		1	1	1
Switzerland.....	112	56			1	
Spain.....	42	38		1	1	2
Portugal.....	32	19				
Greece.....	14	14				
Denmark.....	39	19				
Sweden.....	54	26				
Norway.....	45	25			5	1
Russia.....	63	39				1
Italy.....	51	42	1		1	2
Rome.....	25	14				
United States.....	75	42				1
Turkey.....	7	3				
Republics of South America.....	3	3				
Brazil.....	3	3				
Great Britain.....	156	124			1	2
Total.....	2,004	1,102	8	15	29	24

The jury on paintings and drawings consisted of 25 members—12 from France and 13 from all other countries, as follows:

France.—Bida, Cabanel, Français, Fromentin, Gérôme, Meissonier,

Pils, T. Rousseau, Marquis Maiton, F. Reisch, Paul St. Victor and Count Welles de Lavalette.

Belgium.—De Lavelaye.

Holland.—T. Wittening.

Prussia.—E. Magnus.

Bavaria.—Herschlet.

Austria.—Engerth.

Switzerland.—Glevre.

Spain.—Benito Soriano y Murillo.

Sweden.—De Dardel.

Italy.—Morelli and Bertani.

England.—Lord Hardinge and Spencer Cowper.

United States.—W. J. Hoppin.

Of the 12 French jurors, eight were painters and competitors for prizes. Of the members of the jury not French, five were artists, and three of them competitors for prizes.

There were, in all, 67 prizes, viz: 8 grand medals; 15 first prizes; 20 second prizes; 24 third prizes.

Of the 8 grand medals, 4 were awarded to France, namely to Meissonier, Gérôme, Rousseau, and Cabanel, all of whom were members of the jury.

Of the 15 first prizes, 8 were awarded to France, (4 to the four French artists on the jury not obtaining a grand medal, viz: Pils, Fromentin, Bida, and François.)

France had 333 exhibitors out of 1,103, and secured 32 out of the 67 awards.

In the department of sculpture, out of 36 prizes, 23 were awarded to France; 5 to Italy; 2 to Prussia; 2 to Spain, and 1 each to Greece, Switzerland, Belgium, and Great Britain.

THE FINE ART DEPARTMENT NOT COMPETITIVE.

In extent, the exhibition of paintings was one of the largest ever known, but it has very justly been remarked of it that it could hardly be considered as a competition, "which can only be fair when all parties are equally well represented, and enter the lists with the intention of competing, and with a careful selection of pictures by their ablest painters."

France had every inducement not only to be well but perfectly represented in the exhibition, and she had furthermore the facilities for being so represented. She had all the advantages of proximity, all the stimulus of glory and gain, and if these were insufficient to call out and display her treasures in art, there existed behind an authority capable of achieving things much more difficult. Besides, she had, in the department of painting, and in that alone, a committee of inspection, composed of men of recognized if not infallible taste, to determine what pictures should be exhibited. In all other departments the meanest and most sordid spirit prevailed toward native (French) exhibitors, and a

narrow and offensive policy characterized the management of the whole affair. The privilege of placarding on the enclosure was sold for 650,000 francs; the privilege of placing chairs in the structure was sold for 70,000 francs; the right of taking photographs and of making drawings was also sold, and the visitor who endeavored to assist his memory by making a sketch of any object, however trifling, was liable to arrest. Every French exhibitor was obliged to hire the space, horizontal and vertical, that he occupied, at rates varying from 11 to 1,000 francs the square metre. In this space he might exhibit almost anything he chose, with little or no regard to its quality or merits, and without interference on the part of the managers.

But in the department of painting, as already said, space was free, and a careful criticism and sound judgment were exercised, with excellent results.

Some other countries besides France, Belgium and Russia, for instance, seem to have had a competent organization sufficiently early to exercise some direction in the choice of objects that were proffered to be exhibited as evidences of the art and industry of their people. Most European sovereigns are munificent patrons of art, and have under their control, outside of their own collections, vast public galleries, containing the best productions of modern art. From these, and the galleries of private collectors proud of the skill of their countrymen and ambitious of national *éclat*, it was comparatively easy to select a sufficient number of good paintings to make the national exhibit respectable, if not competitive.

THE EXHIBITION MADE BY VARIOUS COUNTRIES.

THE AMERICAN GALLERY.

These and the following remarks are not intended to deprecate public judgment as regards the art exhibition of the United States in Paris, which received so slight a recognition in the distribution of awards, but to show that circumstances did not permit of the United States entering as an art competitor in the Exhibition. Every picture sent from here should have had placed over it "*hors du concours.*" And this for many reasons.

In the first place, the action of Congress, as regards the Exhibition, was so tardy that, almost up to the moment when all entries were to be closed, it was doubtful if any attempt at a national exhibit would be made. The little that was done was in an informal way, and even when the national commissioners were authorized and appointed, their instructions did not warrant an exercise of their functions until the opening of the Exhibition in Paris. As a consequence, they were unable to render that aid in the organization of the American exhibition here which they would have willingly extended.

The arrangements for securing works to be sent on as types of American art were left to the overtasked hands of the forwarding agent of

the government in New York, who appointed a committee consisting of local patrons of art and dealers in pictures. There were no artists or recognized authorities on art matters on the committee, and the selection was made chiefly from the galleries or sales-rooms of the members of the committee themselves. Some of these selections were good, but most of them, although by artists of acknowledged merit, were not their latest or best productions.

Here, it may be said broadly, there are no galleries of national art, no public collection of pictures that have stood the test of exhibition and criticism, from which a selection of either original or characteristic paintings could be made. What paintings we have are in the hands of individuals, scattered over a country as large as all Europe, or else in the hands of the artists. Now, few owners of pictures of recognized merit were ever asked to contribute towards making up a competitive exhibition of American art in Paris, and even among those who were applied to, few were willing to submit to the annoyance of having their pictures removed, or to incur the risks of having them sent so far from home with no better guarantee than the word of a committee informally organized, and invested with no responsible authority.

Notwithstanding all disadvantages, seventy-five pictures, by thirty-eight artists, were sent forward from the United States and placed in the Exposition. Of this number at least one-third should not under any pretence or influence have been admitted to a place. It is doubtful if they could have obtained room in any local exhibition where ordinary discrimination is exercised in the choice of pictures. Now, we have upwards of four hundred painters, members of the different Academies of Design in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other cities, and it is idle to pretend that the place of the 25 mediocre or utterly worthless pictures could not have been supplied by at least creditable works of art. Many such works were accessible. Among them may be mentioned with credit the fine pictures by Bradford, drawn after careful study among the icebergs and on the coast and among the natives of Labrador. One of these, offered by the artist, he was obliged himself to exhibit in Paris, where it speedily found a sale, while the eye of the visitor to the Exhibition was offended by, in one instance certainly, no less than four so-called works of art from a single unpracticed and obscure hand.

The American collection occupied one end of the British gallery, and the walls of the *Avenue d'Afrique* dividing this gallery from the Italian. This passage was constantly crowded, so that the lower ranges or tiers of pictures could seldom be seen, or if at all at a great disadvantage. Thus Gifford's "Twilight on Mount Hunter," Hubbard's "View of the Adirondacks," and Mac Entee's "Virginia in 1863," were hung in very bad light, while works far inferior had prominent places in the gallery itself.

The relative proportion of space occupied by us in the fine art depart-