

books

IMPRESSIONISM

Skira Publications, two volumes, \$5.75 each.

by Ruth Abrams

These two "small, handy-sized" volumes span the Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist movements, taking us through all their stages—scientific, symbolist, and expressionist—right to the portal of twentieth-century avant-gardism.

The brilliant color and luminosity for which the period is famous are skillfully conveyed in 115 color plates. The course of Impressionism can be traced, almost step by step, through the plates alone. Accompanying each is an explanatory text often punctuated by bright bits of unexpected and amusing information. Guy de

Maupassant describes "from his usual jaundiced viewpoint" a bathing spot on the Seine that Renoir, concerned only with light and color, portrays as a carefree, dappled boating scene. On the opposite page is the same scene painted by Monet, more powerfully scented but without Renoir's harmony and unity of light effects. Both are titled "La Grenouillère." Renoir's is at the National Museum in Stockholm, Monet's at our own Metropolitan.

Benediction from Zola

Pissarro's "La Cote du Jallais a Poitouise," now also at the Metropolitan, receives an ecstatic benediction from Emile Zola: "Never have pictures seemed to me so masterful in their amplitude. Such reality as this is loftier than dream . . . This artist is concerned solely with the truth . . ." The Impressionist "truth" implied an escape from the soul-struggle and brooding of the romantic, enthralled by perspective and "correct anatomy," into a world of visual sensations. Nature was their model and they translated her through the interplay of light and color.

More than ever, these books

confirm that seeing is more than looking. The sunny, pleasing landscapes and figures, all of them now so "realistic" and easy to look at, were extravagant and ludicrous in their day—proving that "we do not so much know what we like, as like what we know."

Under the Spell

Proust, falling under the spell of Renoir's women, saw them now passing in the street "different from those of the past, for they are Renoir's, the very Renoirs in whom, not long ago, we failed to recognize real women."

It was Monet's "Impression, Sunrise" that inspired a journalist named Leroy to damn the renegades with the sobriquet "Impressionists." Poking fun at Monet's now famous canvas, Leroy said: "Impression . . . I might have guessed as much. I was just thinking that, since I am so much impressed, there must be some impression in that picture." Little could Leroy know what a lasting impression it was to be.

Their Own Salon

The official Salon rejected Manet, Pissarro, Whistler, Cezanne, and the others who then organized their own "Salon des Refuses." Seurat and Redon were rejected, too, and inspired the Societe des Artistes Independants. Yet while the traditionalists joined with press and public to heap ridicule and contempt upon them, they were not without their defenders. Mallarme, Baudelaire, Zola, and Proust came to their side. And Jules Laforgue, who wrote a "physiologico-aesthetic" explanation of Impressionist methods; Durand-Ruel, the powerful art dealer; Charpentier, the influential publisher.

In coupling a lively and interesting text with the many disputed exhibits themselves, the publishers have produced a stimulating pair of volumes, well worth the attention of the artist and the public. The price of \$5.75 per volume is a modest consideration for the value received, although the reduced scale of these excellent color plates minimizes certain differences in painting techniques.

The Night People

by JEAN SHEPHERD

Shoe, Unshoe

Shoe, Unshoe is the Ivy League version of Nancy Mitford's notorious U, non-U social-scale rating system. No one really knows what is shoe or what isn't; the state of shoe or unshoe is felt rather than defined. Please don't be so unshoe, as to ask. One just knows.

It is significant to note that what is shoe today can easily be most unshoe tonight. This, of course, precludes the possibility of an unshoe type becoming shoe simply by conforming to the mores and dictates of the known shoe of the campus. A risky business. Many an unshoe operator with dreams arrives on the Old Quad stocked up with a sharp supply of Tartan vests and MG's, only to find that Playboy has led him astray and that Playboy itself is unshoe. Often it is too late in the season to pick up an old '36 Buick coupe (shoe) and a stock of frayed white shirts (also shoe) in time to salvage a few shreds of self-respect. The only shoe thing to do in such a case is to resign and renew the application for admission to Trenton State Teachers.

Plays Hob

This phenomenon plays hob with purveyors of various goods and services for the male. There is the depressing example of the knit-tie wholesaler who suddenly became shoe and within a fortnight had added 200 employees, bought a 38-foot Richardson cruiser, divorced his wife, and was interviewed by Mike Wallace. Suddenly and inexplicably, as is always the case, knit ties became gauche and the bottom clattered into the abyss. He was stuck with 39,000 gross of olive-drab knit and was forced to sell out his entire stock at three cents on the buck to Evinrude Johnson, who converted the ties to outboard-motor starters. This is only one case. The American business littoral is strewn with the bleached bones of many such unfortunates. I might add that the term "shoe" it

does not mean precisely the same as "hip," "beat," or others of the same genre. Being hip or beat can quite possibly be briefly shoe and then become decidedly the opposite. Shoe always remains shoe.

Odd Areas

Shoemism has touched some really odd areas. For example, Zen Buddhism had a short shoe period and so did Existentialism, but they rapidly became unshoe. Occasionally something can run the cycle and then make a comeback. Dave Brubeck was made when he became unshoe, but as soon as Time, Madison Avenue, and Columbia Records discovered him, he became as unshoe as Lawrence Welk. However, he has new shown signs of a comeback among the shoe.

Shoe literature is interesting. Scott Fitzgerald was shoe momentarily but is now completely unshoe. Salinger has been shoe but shows signs of slipping. Kerouac has never made it among the shoe. As one shoe man put it to me: "illiteracy became even worse when written." Oddly enough, Conrad is completely shoe.

By the way, watching bad TV movies is right now shoe, but not for the reasons TV Guide would understand. Westerns and old horror movies are especially shoe.

As for drinking, gin and beer are shoe, but Scotch is for fathers, so naturally it is unshoe. Bourbon is drunk by Midwesterners, and no comment is necessary. It is interesting that beer is on the decline, while milk drinking is smashing shoe. There is a whole social thesis in shoemism, but it is extremely unshoe to mention it.

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Village Voice

The Night People

March 12, 1958

Shoe, Unshoe

By Jean Shepherd

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