

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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## MUSEUM OF MODERN ART EXHIBITS YOUNG PEOPLE'S ART WORK FROM AN ENGLISH SCHOOL

Paintings by English adolescents will be shown in the Young Peoples Gallery of the Museum of Modern Art from March 17 through April 18, 1948. Installed by Victor D'Amico, Director of the Museum's Educational Program, the exhibition consists of 32 paintings by young artists ranging in age from 10 to 17 years.

Entitled Young People's Art Work From an English School, the exhibition is a record of the teaching of Robin Bond, an English artist and creative teacher, during his three years at the famous Summerhill School in England run by A. S. Neill, pioneer of the Free School. By "Free School" is meant a school based on the assumption that a child has a right to an environment created largely by himself and for himself. There are no compulsory lessons. The only final authority is the school government which comprises everyone in the community--all the children and teachers, the cook, odd job man, gardener, and of course, Neill himself. School law is the law of majority vote. The criterion of education in Summerhill School is the full emotional development of the child.

During the past few years the Museum of Modern Art has shown paintings by Chinese and English children made during and of the war. Currently on view at the Museum are selections from prize winning work done by French children during the past eleven years. The new English exhibition, however, marks the beginning of an endeavor on the part of the Educational Program of the Museum to bring examples of the most significant art teaching of other countries to the attention of this country.

Mr. D'Amico comments on Young People's Art Work From an English School as follows:

"The object of presenting the art teaching of other countries is to show that creativity in children is not limited to nationality, race, or creed, but that all children are creative if guided by understanding and skillful teachers. By establishing a world consciousness of the creative integrity of the child, we may help achieve that respect for individuality without prejudice which is basic to world security and peace."

In reference to his own training and attitude toward art education Mr. Bond says:

"My own academic training led me into rebellion against

the generally accepted forms of education, and finally to the work of educational pioneers: A. S. Neill, Homer Lane, Bertrand and Dora Russell, William Curry, who by their writing and their experiments drew me into the field. Neill and Lane in particular have expressed the deepest convictions of this movement.

"For three years I worked in two small schools based on Neill's work. One, in Scotland, was run communally under the nominal leadership of John Aitkenhead, another Scots rebel. This school, like Neill's Summerhill was designed as much by the children as for them, the only final authority residing in the weekly general meeting of staff and children.

"The aim of these schools is to renounce the general notion of what a teacher is. A teacher is as much a participator as he is a mentor; he works and plays with children not only in the classroom, but as part of their community. Children and staff together make the school, both in terms of social structure and physical environment. We dug our own gardens, built our own workshop, kept our own small farm, improvising continually with very limited materials.

"A. S. Neill's Summerhill was the background of what I consider to be my truly creative work as a teacher. Art moves outside the studio. In Summerhill I tried to bring it into every part of life where it should by nature find expression. We built our own theatre, social events became the reason for communal expression, and every term the main room where we all met was completely transformed."

Mr. Bond further says:

"My own attitude is based on seven years' work in pioneer schools, and on these convictions:

"Creative vitality depends on emotional freedom.

"Emotional freedom in children depends on adult recognition of childhood realities and their instinctual nature--the only good teacher is the one able to learn as much from the child as the child learns from him.

"Art is largely an emotional, intuitive language which cannot be imposed in any form--traditional or progressive. It can only be evoked from the latent capacities in every individual child's character. Rigid systems of education are always wrong.

"The social purpose of art education should be to produce people of creative vitality and personal sensitivity, not passive aesthetes. The attitude of cultural refinement is anti-child. Art should be servant to the child.

"As the pupil changes within, in response to an environment designed to facilitate free growth, corresponding shifts in the direction of his work take place. The teacher must always be alive to these changes. Adolescence, in particular, is a crisis of growth. Art can be an enormous force for good at this time providing the teacher is able to understand and accept the profound changes that characterize adolescence."