

A Note on "First Snow-Leonia"

by Dale T. Fletcher*

"First Snow-Leonia" was produced in 1916, the year Mahonri Young began to teach at the Art Students' League in New York City. His reputation was well established by then. He had learned etching in the 1890's while working in the engraving department of the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Later he became the president of the New York Society of Etchers. In his lifetime he produced over 2,500 prints. He said of the artists of the Renaissance, "The pieces of the Great Masters are filled with things. They don't give you one glance. You get a glance and that's good, but you can read into them. They are full of all kinds of things." Much of his own work is just so.

A person today cannot help wondering whether Mahonri Young realized that the Renaissance master's faith in the value of things was dependent upon the authenticity of the church. Given the apostacy, when Renaissance man tried to marry medieval faith to classical reason, the inevitable offspring was doubt, which has grown and spread ever since. Thus, the understructure of art based on *things* was progressively knocked away until we come to the avant-garde painter of today, a self alone and *out there* is chaos, the blank wall where the truth is "less is more"—minimal art.

Good for the minimal artist! He sees it clearly. The world is in a desperate situation. The value of all things is in serious jeopardy. All sorts of frightful conclusions must be faced if the apostacy remains unremedied. False religions are an opiate. Reason in art is not rationally justifiable in this kind of predicament. Of course, most people are unaware of the predicament; and, if such a one is an artist, he might be just as apt to do one thing as another, following the fads, thinking it is all an exciting adventure. To this bottomless limbo the avant-garde painter prefers the wall.

Yet, thanks alone to the Restoration, Mahorni Young's faith in the value of *things* was justified after all.

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