EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS
BY STEPHEN HAWEIS
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DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

STEPHEN HAWEIS

STEPHEN HAWEIS, Stone Ridge, N. Y. Educated at Westminster School, London, and Peterhouse, Cambridge, after which he went to Paris, studying there under Alphonse Mucha. He did much photographic work for Rodin, by whom he was introduced to Eugene Carriere, whose pupil he became. Through Rodin he also met the great Belgian sculptor and painter, Constantin Meunier. Other artists, Charles Morice, Whistler and Charles Conder, among them, influenced his work.

In 1913 he made a trip to the South Seas. After spending a year there he arrived at San Francisco, proceeding to New York, by way of Panama, where he worked up his sketches into finished paintings.

He has exhibited at the Salon of the Champs de Mars, at the Salon D'Automne in Paris, and in leading art centers in America. He is a member of the Salon des Independents.

Mr. Haweis has published "The Book About the Sea Gardens," and has contributed many articles to VANITY FAIR and other American and European periodicals.

FOREWORD BY THE ARTIST

I AM TOLD that these pictures come under the head of Cubism, in that they are composed of forms and colours of objects in Nature arbitrarily put together in harmonious relation. They are not Representations of Nature, but Interpretations, based upon a certain particular interest in the subjects which form their motif. They aim at being truthful impressions, not primary but secondary; that is, expression of what remains in the memory after continued observation, not the immediate record of any given moment or place.

Tropical fish are actually among the most brilliant things in Nature, comparable only to butterflies and jewels; they even appear brilliant beneath many feet of water, as do masses of coral, fans and certain sponges. The variety and relation of the colours seen among the coral rocks leaves in the mind an impression of something far more vivid than the colours actually are, owing to the sheen and flicker of light and movement; therefore an accurate transcript from Nature, if it were possible, would be actually far less truthful than the truth interpreted in terms of memory. What we retain from study is more important to us than the truth entire.

It is the impossibility of attaining Absolute Truth which develops in Art the various interpretative schools of painting each of which has its own standards and aims. The conventional methods of expression are entirely satisfactory within their limits, but as every method is only a convention invented and pursued to its logical conclusion, so it is right and natural to attempt new conventions to interpret what has hitherto not interested the artist or has been regarded as inexpressible.

Certain patterns produce movement until the flat surface seems to be alive, certain curves suggest slow or rapid motion, as angular lines suggest a different impulse. With things that are in continual motion we have the choice of drawing them accurately in one position and supplying the motion from imagination, or departing from the known forms to suggest the infinite variety that we really see as separate pictures in rapid succession.

The dead fish that do duty in company with a beaker of wine and a split lemon for still life do not interpret anything of the life and happiness of a fish in water. The scientific diagram from which the various kinds of fish can be identified are to me no better. My

pictures do not attempt to compete with them. Their aim is to be everything that they are not, to describe the joy of the fishes' life, the beauty of marine growths, the wonder of one who loves to watch the mystery-play of their lives.

The excitement and interest of fishing with rod and reel for the great sea-dwellers is a thing as incomprehensible to those who do not fish as the joy of chasing a little ball with a club from one hole to another to others who do not play golf. The leaping flash of a living ingot of silver a yard long from sea like a breathing sapphire in an emotion, the rush of any great fish, is an incommunicable experience. A hundred Yellowtails over a park of purple sea fans, the Angel fish among their rock palaces, the silver Pompanos and Shad on their lawns of sand, the various Parrot fish with their impossible magnificence—to some these may mean food or sport alone, to me they are the peoples of another world no less beautiful than our own where there is Love and War, but no sin other than ill-health. If there is God upon earth there is certainly God in the deep sea. Pictures, if puny prayers, are yet an act of worship which some may respect, albeit others may find them excessively ridiculous.

The imagination is a finer medium of vision than the eye; the eye records what is seen at a given moment, but any photograph of rapidly moving objects will convince us that what we see is not the exact truth. Photographic truths are often completely untrue both to the eye and the imagination, but whereas the eye makes a final statement, the imagination can construct a sequence of events endowing them with life and movement if it is sympathetically approached. Shapes as we know them presuppose the subject at rest; what we actually see of things in motion requires a new convention. A line which in one place indicates the edge of something may equally be used to suggest direction of movement. To me interrupted lines convey the idea of movement in a marvelous degree and I find that figures may be broken and distorted in many ways without destroying their beauty as such, if all the lines have a certain degree of truth and the several shapes and masses created are in equilibrium.

I have spent several years in various parts of the Bahamas, and have known the sea in many climes. I have seen intense blues in the Mediterranean and about the Channel Islands; I have never been sure that it was very different there from the colour of the Indian Ocean or South Pacific. But the Bahamas have one thing that is not found in any other part of the world, vast expanses of shallow sea whose greatest depth at any tide may not be more than

two fathoms. There are a few places where one may sail in a boat miles from land and be able to get out and walk knee deep in perfect security collecting sponges, shells or fans. These shallows upon leagues of immaculate sand take on a colour that can be seen nowhere else; not the deep blue of the Caribbean Sea, though there is plenty of water deep enough for the deepest blues, but the "white waters," pale green, pale azures and mauves in which the pelicans love to fish and long shanked birds wade between the sand flats, are not found elsewhere. These are the sponging grounds where sponges of all kinds, from the coarse black loggerhead to the silky reef sponge, are hooked up with long poles; plumes and feathers and fans of vivid violet and yellow are found there, as well as in the patches of coral rocks which are the towns and villages of the sea people. With a glass bottomed bucket one may watch them as easily as if in an aquarium. I have sat on the bottom of the sea in a diving hood thirty feet below the surface, among shoals of incredible fish within arm's length, for they exhibit no fear of a diver at all. I do not doubt they would take food from one's hand if one sat quite still for a long time.

The Fijian pictures were painted in New York from studies I made during the year spent in the South Sea Islands. While travelling I made sketches of all sorts of things which I soon found to be valuable only as notes upon which to base my impressions, and I felt that painting with a "Broken French accent" amid surroundings so entirely new to me did not give a truthful interpretation of all I saw and felt, and it was this that turned my attention to the schools of Modern Art, which at that time I despised, and by which I was most unwilling to be influenced in any particular. The choice comes to every artist at some moment of whether he will paint what he can or go a-seeking for what he is pretty sure he can't. In the first case he may become widely respected, in the second he does not lose his own respect. It came to me through the rhythm of Vakamololo, a concerted dance performed by the men of a Fijian village seated in long rows upon the ground. Every meed of movement is used from the gentle gesture of a ballerine to the vigorous hook and swing of the boxer. Shining with cocoanut oil and garlanded with wreaths of mango leaves or coloured crotons, the dancers move like a shoal of fish as though impelled by a common soul. From earliest childhood every Fijian learns to swing his hands when he sings, and he always sings. Meke is the history and literature of the people, it is contemporary celebration, personal compliment, something more vital than religion to them. The white officials in Fiji regard the cere-

monial yangona drinking and the ceremonial dancing as tiresome hindrances to the day's work, for without ceremony the Fijian will not do anything and the British are wise enough to respect the customs of native peoples—after long apprenticeship and much tribulation.

Many years ago John LaFarge went to Fiji and made a few exquisite studies of the people and their ceremonies. As pictures, records, poems, they are superb, but they are not vakamololo. The feeblest convention insisting upon the inspiring swing of those live brown gods in unison means more to me than perfectly still shapes selected from imaginary moments which is the best the former methods of art can express.

I did not adopt a new art; I doubt if anyone does; art as an adopted child is always a changeling for the child of experience. The sights and sounds of the South Seas were a new impulse which found its own expression in these pictures and they are a true interpretation to me of a life I hope to renew if ever occasion offers again, for there is very much work to be done by a sympathetic artist and antiquary where at present there are none but money-grubbing hunters, storekeepers and overworked Government officials.

STEPHEN HAWEIS.

Nassau, Bahamas.

CATALOGUE

1 Forte Dei Marmi, Liguria
2 A Fijian Village
3 Loma Loma, Fiji
4 Native House, Fiji
5 Rotary Movement, Vakamololo
6 Frieze Design, Vakamololo
7 Turning Movement, Vakamololo
8 Fijian Dance
9 Emotional Movement, Vakamololo
10 Fijian Dance
11 Vakamololo, Three Girls
12 Girls at Nataveira, Vakamololo
13 Men on the Beach, Breadfruit Trees and Sound of the Reef
14 By the Stream, Breadfruit Trees, Butterflies
15 War Meke
16 Bure Bure. Rewa River, Fiji. People of Colo
17 Bure Bure. Rewa River, Fiji. People of Colo
18 Spearing Fish on the Reef, Fiji
19 Spearing Fish on the Reef
20 Meke of Lakeba
21 Moala
22 Houndfish Chasing Goggle Eyes
23 Mirami
24 Sun, Thunder (Moala)
25 Moonlight at Loma Loma, Lau Group
26 A Solomoni Boy
27 A Tongan Boy
28 Loma Loma
29 Evening—Carrying Pandanus Leaves
30 Village of Naroi, Moala

31 Nataveira, Rewa

32 Vakamololo

33 The Marine Parade, Moala

34 Amberjack

35 Na Aissama, A Fijian Village

36-55 Drawings of Chiefs and Natives

56 Young Grouper

57 Isaac and Benjamin, Movement of Climbing a Cocoanut Tree

58 Starlight and Spider Lilies

59 Sea Garden Study for Mural Decoration

60 Sea Garden Study for Mural Decoration

61 Sea Garden Study for Mural Decoration

62 Sea Garden Study for Mural Decoration

63 Handline Fishing on Reef

66 The Water Glass

67 Killing The Barracuda

68 The Bay, Whale Cay, Bahamas

69 The Wickedest Mule in the Bahamas

70 The Durgan

71 Hooked Barracuda

72 Bacchanal

73 The Glassy Eyed Snapper

74 Barracuda Leap

75 The Sisters

76 The Dancing Tree, Whale Cay

77 Wild Dog