

## Affandi and Other Indonesian Painters, at the Army and Navy Stores

Affandi, who was born in Java in 1910, is a painter of genius. Unequal, capable of badly erratic work, his best paintings and drawings (some of the latter in a portfolio) are quite remarkable. I have no space here to analyse their quality by discussing single works, or to comment on the fact that, self-taught, Affandi has made, not consciously but instinctively, a real synthesis between Eastern and Western styles of colour and drawing. I can only strongly recommend the reader to go to the exhibition this week and to look particularly at the large, violent, Indian town and landscapes, the huge, upright watercolours of beggars and the various pictures of unexotic animals. It would be possible to label Affandi's work Expressionist, and to point out similarities with Van Gogh and Kokoschka, but to do so would be very superficial. His work is different in kind from nearly everything being produced in Europe. And for this reason it shows a way out of the *impasse* now reached in Paris, New York and London: a way out which may imply a partial but necessary humiliation of "Art." Affandi's canvases, which are not even separated from their surroundings by frames, are essentially works of action. Their emotions of anger, comparison, violence and tenderness have not been recollected in tranquillity, but disciplined and used as they

were felt. They do not present the spectator with the quintessence of their subject, but their subject with a witness. The bad, insufficiently organised works remain bad because to Affandi they are as irrevocable as past actions; to try to undo them would be a negative waste of time. The strength and sensitivity of the good works is not the result of romantic identification, but rather of the endurance of a protagonist.

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