

Untitled review of

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, March 1953, 5.

Summary: Has high praise for a pamphlet by artist Fritz Eichenberg. Includes quotes on the misuse of art in advertising, the beauty of creative acts, and the role of the artist in society. (DDLW #646).

ART AND FAITH by Fritz Eichenberg. A Pendle Hill Pamphlet, Pendle Hill, Wallingford, Pa. 35c. Reviewed by Dorothy Day.

Everytime I started to review this pamphlet, I found that some one had walked off with it. Just now I found it after searching Peter Maurin farm, cleaning my desk, looking through my file, searching shopping bags. "Rita took it," Stanley said. "I heard her saying, what a wonderful pamphlet! Just look what I've found!" And he brought it to me from the dining room which is our reading room, spinning room, art studio and everything else these cold days.

How Peter Maurin would have loved this pamphlet! I can see him adding it to his lists of books. It is so full of meat that one could sit down and discuss for an entire evening, one page, one paragraph.

The author admits that he does not paint too optimistic a picture of our times. He is at one with Pius XII, who wrote in his Christmas message of our mechanized life and what it does to man. Fritz speaks of the morality of helping to sell to the public more things than it needs, or can afford, illustrating magazines with lurid pictures designed to excite man's baser "appetites," a profitable prostitution, he calls it. The artist as procurer, he calls him.

Whereas the artist's life "should be dedicated to fighting the causes of all wars and injustices in day by day devotion which knows no holiday because every day is a holy day."

"In such a community of spirit and deed, man should be ready to give of whatever talent he may have . . . convinced that art is a divine gift." "Art can deepen our sensitivity, heighten our devotion, give meaning and expression to our unformed longings for the Eternal, give us a sense of beauty and the deep satisfaction of being creative, co-creative with God."

“Creativity,” to Fritz Eichenberg, “consists of a joining of mind, matter and soul . . . minds set in motion their hands to form the matter, and their hearts rejoiced in the achievement in which the whole complex human being was engaged. This left no room for idleness, no parts were unused, no faculties unemployed. Man could function as a unit—spiritually and physically.”

“Sex, to which we are slaves since our expulsion from Paradise, rules our lives more powerfully than we care to discuss. Instead of sanctifying what God gave us, too often we worship the flesh and we prostitute it as the most potent sales agent the world has ever seen. The artist becomes procurer—he displays the body in its most alluring light and uses it to sell everything from patriotism to cosmetics.”

The things that man must fight against, in this struggle to save his soul, is the egotism which deadens him to the labors, joys and sufferings of his fellowmen, the greed which is hunger for power that money can buy, the speed which spoils the enjoyment of nature, dulls our senses, prevents meditation and the maturing of a growing mind."

Eichenberg sees the artist as one who sees into the soul of things, sensing impending change, suffering with humanity.

Catholic Worker readers are acquainted now for some time with his beautiful work, his portrayal of saints, of the suffering poor. His work also arouses the conscience and inspires love for those whom he portrays. The Lumber and Sawmill workers in Oregon have used his nativity picture on the front page of their journal and the International Ladies' Garment Workers Scranton local have a copy of his workers of the world, united by the Cross, which we published in last May day's issue of the Catholic Worker.

Those who love his work will want to read this pamphlet.