

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

Rudolf von Ripper.

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Rudolf von Ripper.

It is not necessary anymore to "present" our friend Rudolf von Ripper to the American public. Not only the connoisseurs appreciate his remarkable talent. His artistic work is original, even daring, without having that dubious touch of snobism which spoils sometimes our pleasure in certain "surréalistic" creations. It seems significant that one of Ripper's pictures recently has been used by the most popular of the American illustrated periodicals, "Life", as its front page. His first exhibit in New York received very serious consideration from the press. The art critic of a prominent New York paper mentioned him simultaneously with Dürer and Breughel. Such a statement sounds ~~egg~~ exaggerated; as a matter of fact, the series of copperplate engravings in question boasts of qualities that make a comparison with masterpieces very obvious. 'Ecraser l'Infame' (Crush the Infamous) is the title given this series of pictures; the "Infamous" - the horrors of our present day and age - are not brought forth as reporting photographic reality, but rather as artistic drawings. Ripper has made the terrifyingly intimate acquaintance with the Infamous: he was interned in a German concentration camp. He rids himself of these nightmares by reproducing them in his work of art. Dread speaks to us directly from his art portfolios; they shout accusation. War planes with horrid claws get the appearance of monsters, and Nazi sadists, watching their tortured victims, show repulsive masks instead of human faces. But Ripper's work is not just a "chamber of horrors"; at the same time it possesses beauty. Naturally it is no longer pleasing or playful beauty; more grave and hard, tragic and almost angry. Suffering has not been forgotten - not his own or that of others. It is always subtly in the background of his work, and perceptible even when the subject of the picture does not remind us. Since the joy in beauty, in dignity and charm are kept alive in this young artist, it may safely be assumed that new and better impressions

will gradually obliterate the old ones and ultimately supplant them altogether.

These new impressions he needed have come to him from the great city of New York. Its tremendous reality is more fantastic, more inspiring and thrilling than the "romantic darkness" of Europe. The young artist, who wanted to "crush the Infamous", found a new productive enthusiasm for life with all of its hardships and problems and ^{even its} ugly things. His new pictures are praising life; that is why many of them had to become coloured, while ~~drawn~~ in his European period, in the period of "Ecraser l'Infame", Ripper preferred the black-and-white technique. Now he is using the colour to express his grateful enthusiasm. He finds life everywhere, even in the stones and rocks, and the landscape of ~~the~~ Central Park looks enchanted like the landscapes in fairy-tales, and the big huge World's Fair has a magic charm, with all of its faces, and lights, and its Scenic Railway, and the fat old negro woman is as attractive as the sweet slender little girl. The young painter is in love with the big city.

And still, there remains a certain element of melancholia in all of his works - it is not exactly bitterness, but something very sad. The new beauty he loves and praises cannot make ^{him} forgetting ~~him~~ the infernal things he went through. He is showing us human beings - they don't have horrid masks, but real human faces. ^{But} there is a mysterious fear in their eyes - ^{an} anguish which they cannot hide, even when they are smiling. They seem to be endangered, and threatened by wicked forces; perhaps there are bad trends and feelings in their own character The young painter from Austria is warning the people of the Big City: Be aware! The Infamous I wanted to crush is very powerful and active, everywhere! Human beings can be sweet and lovely. But they can change into bloodthirsty monsters, and very fast too, - I have watched

this awful kind of transformation...

In von Ripper's work we find a fine combination of the naïve enthusiasm which is "in love with life", and moral seriousness. Without the natural enthusiasm for beauty, the artist is bound to become a bore, or a demagogue, or a demagogical bore. Without the moral seriousness he neglects his supreme task and duty. We think Rudolf von Ripper deserves to be called an artist in the full, complex sense of the word. For he possesses strongly and productively both of the feelings: the ardent, delighted love for this world as it is - and the keen, courageous desire to change it.