

## "LYONS-LA-FORET"



TWO YEARS IN FRANCE gave Gino E. Conti the variety of inspiration which finds its record in his Art Club exhibition, one of the season's important one man shows.

### Regretting the Centuries Gone By More Congenial He Would Have Found Them, Says Conti in Showing Two Important Years' Work Done with Painstaking Earnestness

BY MABEL LISLE DUCASSE, M. F. A.

Unlike many artists who feel they would be happier and more at home in the enlightened freedom which may reign on earth several centuries hence, Gino E. Conti believes he would have found a more congenial environment six or seven hundred years ago.

This Providence artist, who is still in his twenties, has attained a high degree of technical skill during his five years of study at the Rhode Island School of Design and four years of work abroad. His exhibit of mural decorations, landscapes, drawings and other works, which opens at the Providence Art Club today, comprises the production of the last two years at his Paris studio.

He loves the life simple and pastoral. He is the spiritual brother of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Bernardin de St. Pierre.

"Today," says Mr. Conti, "painting results from the impulse of the moment—some effect or object striking the eye or senses. Therefore it is inspired by the external rather than the internal, by the material rather than the spiritual. The soul is imprisoned by the illusions of the material world."

Back to the Old Masters.

Mr. Conti believes in the methods of the masters of an older day. "They worked systematically," he says. "When they conceived an idea for a composition they set to work making numerous sketches of the design and finally a cartoon the full size of the painting to be. They wrought painstakingly the slightest detail, making study after study from nature and life—going through months and even years of preparation before the first spot of color was applied to the canvas."

"But now," he regrets, "it is all to the contrary. The artist has no regard for the method—but splattering paint on, restlessly trying to catch the fleeting effect of the moment. Alas! his work can never be more than a foundationless mess of paint dabs!"

Certainly Mr. Conti cannot be accused of sparing pains in his work, for his pictures are all thoroughly considered designs, carefully painted, every inch of them fully intended. Some of them have required months of preparation.

A Painstaking Artist

In the large mural, "St. Francis," for instance, he used all the stories about the beloved saint in building his design. (In the exhibit is included the first tiny sketch in which he recorded the original idea.)

The tremendous amount of research and experiment with massing, values, balancing of color and arrangement of

decoration called "Prelude No. 20 opus 28, Chopin." The music made him feel the emotions of grief, anxiety and despair which he has interpreted in terms of line and color.

Mr. Conti studied chiefly Gothic sculpture and the paintings and tapestries of the French and the Flemish Renaissance.

He has an uncommon love for the great cathedrals, of which he speaks as "towering up to the heavens—the very soul of the community, whose entire interest has gone to glorify the shrine of the spirit—to make it a masterpiece worthy of God. Their dwellings cling close under its shadows as for protection."

In his paintings of various cathedrals, one feels his almost ecstatic worship of them. In fact, all of his pictures are pervaded by a religious quality, their suggestion of spirituality being in no way dependent upon subject matter. His ecclesiastical edifices are all distinguished by a sense of mysterious grandeur.

He has followed Monet, not in impressionistic technique, but in choosing to represent the Cathedral at Rouen in various light effects at different times of the day. He has painted St. Maclou, St. Ouen, Beauvais, and Chartres as well.

He has captured something of the ineffable loveliness of the Chateau Pierrefonds in a series of little paintings of that enchanting castle.

Suggesting Renoir.

In "Les Ecoliers," "Garçon" and "L'Enfant" he has suggested the odd charm of a certain type of child made famous by Renoir in his pictures of his own young children. The little boy standing with an open book in his hands is a particularly fine composition as well as a delightful study of childhood.

Many of the canvases show a preoccupation with "modernistic" forms of painting—and indeed the artist claims to be concerned with the development of certain theories and apropos of this he feels that the renaissance (type of painting) has reached such a state of perfection that it would be impossible to carry it further—therefore in order to progress we must return to the primitive and discover new channels for development.

Mr. Conti's work is that of an unusually earnest man, convinced of the importance of his mission, and sparing no pains to execute it faithfully. In these days when painters think themselves qualified by six months work, and in lieu of something to express a ruthless resolve to attract at-

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The tremendous amount of research and experiment with massing, values, balancing of color and arrangement of line required to produce the finished painting with its easy air of being born Minerva-like a perfect thing, can be guessed only by one who has done a similar piece of work—not a common experience for the 20th century artist.

The St. Francis represents Conti's "flattest" period, that is, the time during which he almost entirely dispensed with modelling of forms and with the usual methods of perspective through recessive values, relying for his effect upon opposition of color—the juxtaposition of hot color and cold color. This was a reaction from the highly realistic type of painting he practiced before going to Europe.

#### Some Transitions

In the other large mural of the same size and shape, on the wall opposite the "Ideal of Life," he had begun to suggest volume a bit more, while in the "Prelude" he has returned completely to the representation of volume and depth by employing a formula almost sculptural.

This transition has been accompanied by a similar one in the use of color. His palette, very gray in the "St. Francis," has become gradually brighter, until in the very latest picture he has used pure pigment as it comes from the tubes. He considers this last canvas, "La Vierge, L'Enfant et St. Jean," his masterpiece.

Mr. Conti again says, "We must resort to nature for every step in life and in art. The fine arts are but human interpretations of the one intangible, inexhaustible source which is nature, and nature will through eternity stand unchanged, incomparable and unique. The musician reveals this in sound, the poet in words, the architect in stone and I believe the painter, to be successful must make a study of the sister arts."

In this connection it is interesting to see how he has taken a musical composition as his inspiration for the large

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Mr. Conti's work is that of an unusually earnest man, convinced of the importance of his mission, and sparing no pains to execute it faithfully. In these days when painters think themselves qualified by six months work, and in lieu of something to express, a ruthless resolve to attract attention, the work of this artist strikes the note of a worthier tradition.

### "A PRELUDE OF CHOPIN" BY GINO E. CONTI



SCULPTURAL IN EFFECT is this mural which essays a decorative interpretation of a musical theme. The painting is one of the latest by the Rhode Island School of Design graduate who has returned to Providence to give his first exhibition here since 1926.