



I Found America

By THURSTON MACAULEY

ONE of our chief concerns, during my several years as an information officer at the American Embassy in London, has been that ever important matter of Anglo-American relations. Our government officials, from the ambassador down, have rarely neglected to refer to it in their public utterances and statements. For my part, however, the best object lesson I ever had in this vital issue of mutual understanding was provided by a recent fortnight I spent in Leeds as the only American with our traveling exhibition "USA Today." It was the fifth and last town in the British Isles to be visited by our show, after Edinburgh, Manchester, Newcastle, and Leicester.

The Yorkshire industrial city was a far cry from Grosvenor Square, or "Little America" as it has been known ever since the last war. The transition involved much more than the mere miles between dingy old Kings Cross station in London and Leeds Central. I was plunged instantly into a vastly different world, an entirely new milieu. The change was considerably greater than it would have been for one of my opposite numbers in the British Information Service to quit Washington for a fortnight in, say, Detroit or Kansas City. Yorkshire folk seemed, by and large, much friendlier than Londoners. I liked being called "Luv" by strange old ladies; but I could not for the life of me conceive how these towns with their tall smoking chimneys and soot-blackened buildings ever managed to produce people of such bubbling and spontaneous good humor.

Most of the time, from ten in the

morning until seven o'clock closing time, I sat behind the Information desk (under a large colored picture of President Eisenhower) in a corner of the drafty Fenton Street Drill Hall—unprepossessing and off the beaten track, but the only premises available—between a section devoted to the American home and a library of some 500 volumes that provided a good cross section of our general and technical books, with fiction only on the juvenile shelves. The little library was manned, for the exhibition, by volunteers from the Leeds Public Library. People were told that if they didn't find the books they wanted, they should write to the U.S. Government libraries in London or Edinburgh and the books would be sent on loan post free.

During my Leeds fortnight I had to answer a steady barrage of questions on a variety of topics ranging from Senator McCarthy to the climate in California. Many persons stopped to talk with me just because I was American; in such cases I took particular pains to cultivate an authentic Yankee accent, mine having suffered from long service in foreign parts. Most frequently I was asked for information on emigration to the States: usually I had to refer the visitor to the nearest American consul at Manchester (the Bradford consulate was recently closed for economy), explaining that the exhibition was not designed to add to our increasing population.

"What is the purpose of the exhibition?" many demanded.

"To help improve relations between our countries by making you better acquainted with us and our methods, our ways of living and doing things."

I would reply. The exhibition was carefully planned so as not to give any impression of boasting about the American Way of Life: for comments on our achievements in productivity and standard of living, for example, we quoted from the published reports of British industrial teams that had been to the United States.

Once in a while someone would turn up who was skeptical of our motives.

"Ah've coom to many exhibitions in t' hall," one man remarked in broadest Yorkshire. "They've all been commercial like, all had summat to sell. All but yours, that is. Ah don't get it, lad."

In a sense, I suppose, we were selling something too; admittedly we were trying to win friends and influence people along the lines of better understanding. While answering questions, I kept handing out official publications dealing with our history, government, education, economy, labor unions, and social problems, and a pictorial map of the United States. The most popular were two publications in size and looks very like our slick magazines: "The Land and the People," which opens with two full pages of Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing," and concludes with the story of Johnny Appleseed, and an excellent seventy-six-page "Outline of American History" (which hadn't caught up to Eisenhower as President) prepared by the State Department.

Very rarely did visitors leave the Information desk empty-handed (the trouble was keeping grubby-handed youngsters from coming again and again). I suspected a few spurning our pamphlets of being Communists who were having a quick look around and were unwilling to risk contamination by our literature.

"Books cost lot o' brass," a visitor would comment. "'Oo's payin' for 'em?"

"The United States Government," I said. "That is, the American taxpayer."

AND I don't think many of our taxpayers would begrudge the expense if they could have been by my side at Leeds and seen the faces, young and old alike, light up at the sight of the bright, well-printed brochures, if they could have seen the library jammed by book browsers, the exhibition cinema packed for the hourly showings of our documentaries, if they could have heard the music section resound with recordings of Burl Ives and Gershwin (one request for bebop proved fruitless).

It was surprising the number of
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Draftsman Extraordinaire

"The Paintings of Ingres," by **Georges Wildenstein** (Phaidon Publishers-Garden City Books, 246 pp, 120 plates, eight in full color. \$12.50), is a catalogue raisonné and album of the works of the great nineteenth-century French artist. Below Thomas B. Hess, managing editor of *Art News*, considers it in the light of his contemporary reputation.

By Thomas B. Hess

ART critics often claim, with a touching if pardonable respect for their profession, that painters' reputations are made by other critics—usually in conspiracy with a "coterie" of museum officials and collectors. Actually, a painter's reputation lives or dies from the respect it is held in by artists themselves. Artists form our taste and even the way in which we see things, so today we may see Picasso in the face of a girl, Mondrian from a city window, Miro at a baseball game. Critics, historians, museum directors, even trustees follow, rightly or wrongly, in the thoughts of their contemporary artists. And nowhere is this more evident than in the reputation of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, who was born in 1780, nine years before the French Revolution, and died at eighty-seven, three years before the debacle of the Franco-Prussian War. He started in the aristocratic landscape poignantly recollected by Chateaubriand, he died not far from the infected slums of Zola.

Today we look at Ingres with the help of three generations of avant-garde painters; our interpretations can be refreshed by the insights of Baudelaire—Ingres' declared enemy who nevertheless always recognized the master's stature. But just as most of our avant-garde artists remain unappreciated, so Ingres' paintings still are misread in terms of nineteenth-century stereotypes, and are praised or dismissed in irrelevant or superficial judgments.

In his lifetime, Ingres was a major power acting on European art and taste. Historically he was the last of the official master-artists. After his death, when a State confidently ordered a painting to commemorate its virtues, it would get glossy rub-

bish, or something very different from its intentions and dreams of self-embodiment—like Picasso's great mural of the Spanish Civil War. Ingres was made a member of the French Senate; the citizens of his native town, Montauban, sent him a gold wreath bought by popular subscription; Napoleon III personally decorated him with the cross of Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor. The old man was part of the nation's public glory; his prestige was equivalent roughly to that of Bernard Baruch's today.

Obviously the artist sought power, and used it in his field. Dedicated to art as purely and wholly as any modern painter (and here Ingres' attitude marks another watershed between us and the Ancien Régime), he was sure of his esthetic and of his ability to transmit it to all Europe. Posterity, too, he planned, would receive his solutions through his many disciples. The tragedy was that Ingres' esthetic was so personal, so difficultly formed, and so complexly embedded in his gigantic ego that it never could be bequeathed successfully. Thus, although his own pictures prophesied much of what was to come, and frequently reached perfection on their own terms, *Ingrisme* came to mean a hodgepodge of reactionary systems for a mass-production of questionable anecdotes. All *Ingrisme* could inherit was power: Academies of Beaux-Arts the world over marketed their vulgar versions of his nobility to railroad tycoons, best-selling diarists, and candidates.

In the few years it took to discredit this style (which today seems insouciant and gay, and has even found an amiable niche in neo-Victorian interior decoration), Ingres, too, was discredited. His opponents, the Romantics, under the leadership of Delacroix, assumed the role of progressive enlighteners, and this despite the fact that Delacroix and Ingres had more in common with each other than with any of their followers. Both

were geniuses. Today, in spite of testimonials from Cézanne, Seurat, Picasso, La Fresnaye, and such distinguished American painters as Arshile Gorky and Willem de Kooning, Ingres' case still needs special pleading. It is not enough to take him on his own terms, and leave him at rest in the company of Raphael, Poussin, Flaxman (Wedgewood's china designer), J. L. David (his great teacher), and all the other inhabitants of the private heaven he devised in his "Apotheosis of Homer."

A WRITER recently described a visit to a picture exhibition by saying disgustedly that the room was full of chi-chi girls talking about "presences." Unfortunately this is a necessary term in a discussion of Ingres' masterpieces. In his portraits, nudes, historical and mythological subjects, a "presence" is expressed that is so strong and so inherent a product of the work that to ignore or to misname it becomes a mark of careless looking and responding. Ingres was one of the ablest draftsman who ever lived, ranking with Rubens, Watteau, or Pisanello. But despite his virtuosity, he sacrificed endless amounts of energy to drawing and scrupulously redrawing and redrawing, in every medium, each form that would act as a gesture or expression or appurtenance. Notwithstanding the artist's famous dictum about line being the probity of art, his process of drawing was worked in depth, in meticulously ordered dispositions of modeling and perspective. Each circumstantial shape had to be fixed in the rigid ice of his form. From such obsessional concentration and ability came harmony and uniqueness. That area which is a forehead is an oval relating to other curves; it is in front of, yet a piece with the background; its flesh is like the arm, but is also part of the world of the silk shawl and gold chain.

Americans who have seen Ingres' portraits in the Metropolitan and Frick collections in New York, at the National Gallery, Washington, or in Cincinnati's Taft Museum have seen living documents of nineteenth-century France rendered with a psychological depth comparable to Stendhal. It was the period of genial monsters, and Ingres' ladies and gentlemen have the fire and frigidity of Lucien's worst nightmares (and this includes Ingres' self-portraits). But a fusion takes place between the recognizable and the invented, between the "speaking likeness" and the pigments themselves on the flat canvas. Perhaps this neither adds to nor detracts from Ingres' accomplishments, but it makes him particularly valuable to us, and close

EDITOR'S NOTE: Because James Thrall Soby is devoting all his attention to the completion of a book on Giorgio di Chirico, his monthly column on THE FINE ARTS does not appear this week. It will be resumed with the July 3 issue.