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Gentlemen:

I knew Boris Mestchersky in the days of the Russian Ballet and Cubism and the Academie Ranson. It was in those years before the war which now seem to us so full of flavor and which, whatever one may think of them, certainly were not sterile years in art.

Boris, however, could not look on the world from the points of view of cubism and the Russian Ballet. He had come, -- a young man, to the Academie Ranson, with its atmosphere of springtime to seek the guidance of those who had learned the lessons of the Impressionists, Cezanne and of Gauguin. What I was able to give him there contributed not a little, I think, toward the development of his restlessness of style and his turning toward what we used to call in those days "a new classic order". He knew that good art could not be produced without thought, that it was necessary to learn one's trade and to make many experiments before becoming a true painter.

He made the experiments and acquired that experience of life and art which is necessary to true expression. He was too conscientious and too proud to seek success in the eccentricities and the mannerisms of the time. He was endowed with native originality as well as with intelligence and cultivation. It was as though there lived again in him, rejuvenated and modernized, the severe and gracious art of the time of Catherine II, which embodied the taste of the old Russian aristocracy and was based so largely on the inspiration of French culture.

He became interested in the theatre and he created for the Parisian stage scenic decorations which not only were new but which showed splendid imaginative power as well as originality of conception.

He studied fresco, and while he was achieving in this medium, secular works which had the glamor of poetic harmony, whether they were inspired by the legends of antiquity as they sometimes were, or by a feeling for the exotic, he was producing those religious decorations of moving emotional quality in which the fervor of his religious nature flowered. Here one can see a beautiful example of this. Boris Mestchersky is now fully in possession of the technique of fresco. He is an accomplished painter of easel pictures, a true artist in portraits. He is careful to exhibit only finished compositions or such sketches as show his knowledge of decoration and his technique in painting -- a decorative sense and a technical facility that are, like all he does, of supreme distinction.

*Maurice Denis*

MAURICE DENIS  
St. Germain-en-Laye

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