

Owen Edwards

The Art in Newman's Artists



Photographers have long been attracted to painters, both as friends and as subjects. Though some of that attraction is due no doubt to the similarity of their artistic pursuits (however tenuous that may be in fact), I suspect that the prime motive is nothing more exalted than plain envy. The creation of a photograph seldom takes more than a few basic adjustments and a click, and most methods of printing are thin on sensual pleasures. It's not hard to imagine the longing that might rise up in a photographer when he watches a painter like, say, Jackson Pollock leap about on a canvas, streaming bright lines of color, not so much in touch with the muse as possessed by her. There stands the man with the little picture machine, a wallflower at the orgy, no less a lover of material and its delectable feel than a painter or sculptor, but bound to a medium in which spontaneity and joyful abandon have no place.

If they cannot *be* painters (though many try, mostly with unhappy results) photographers can at least associate with their seemingly lustier brethren, and, of course, take pictures of them.

Perhaps no photographer has stalked painters and sculptors so relentlessly as Arnold Newman, whose recent large exhibition at Manhattan's Light Gallery, and book, *Artists*, just published by the New York Graphic Society, strikingly establish him as the visual Boswell to a glittering host of brush-and-chisel Johnsons.

Newman's style of portraiture is that of a characterist. He endeavors in his pictures to present some indication of who and what his subject is; to tell, with props and ambience, a terse but

Newman's photos of (left) Piet Mondrian, 1940, and (opposite) Edward Hopper, 1960.

definitive story about the man or woman being photographed.

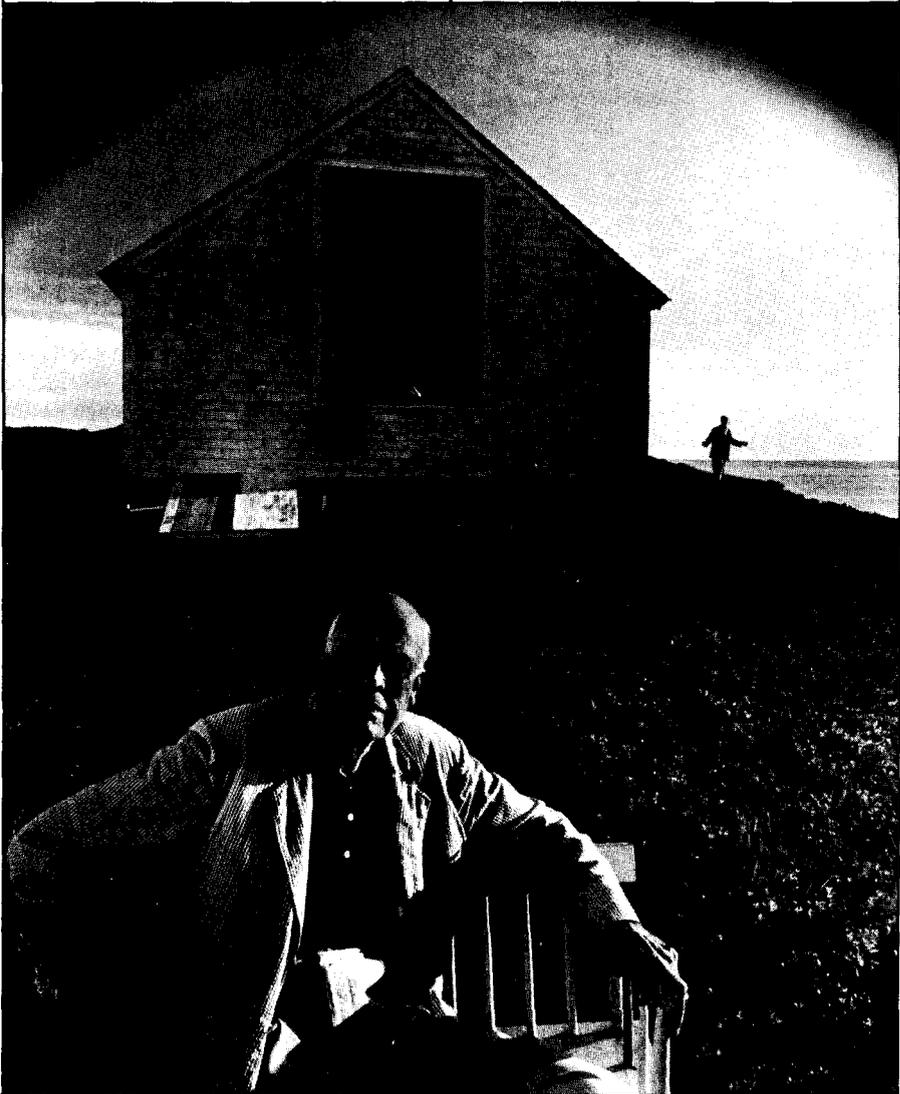
With painters, Newman seems able to transmit a quality which, I hazard a guess, attracts and fascinates him: a singular emission of pure, unmistakable physicality that resonates in the work of his subjects. It is a sign of Newman's control that, with only a few exceptions, he manages to express his own feeling about a given painter's presence without creating men and women who look as if they're being forced to play roles. Since, as we all know too well, the command from a photographer to "just be yourself" is near to paralyzing, what we have in a portrait of Jackson Pollock looking like a dervish reluctantly at rest, is not necessarily the painter in his natural state, but Pollock as Newman believes him to be (or wishes he were).

For a photographer like Newman, who depends for effect and revelation on surroundings and material clues, painters are infinitely more forthcoming than, for example, writers. They show themselves in their work, and their working places are more likely to manifest their characters than those of other creators (what could be less revealing than an IBM typewriter?). Newman makes telling use of both the art of his artists and the happenstance odds and ends with which they surround themselves. Thus, Pollock squats broodingly amid a gaggle of open paint pots, seemingly stared at by a prophetic skull; Giacometti, with all the craggy character of his late figures, stands against a chipped and spattered wall that any Abstract Expressionist would be proud of; and Mondrian, impeccably suited, as cool and distant and severe as his masterpieces, poses in a room that is all straight lines and angles, his canvases blending imperceptibly with place and personality.

Newman sometimes plays a risky game of whimsically adapting the style of the artist in question. When this ploy fails, as it does in a grotesquely distorted collage of Andy Warhol, the cause is simply the triumph of a gimmick over Newman's own high craftsmanship. But he succeeds at these stratagems surprisingly often. He photographs Dubuffet's beautifully formed, shaved head

against a vaguely circular splotch of dark paint on a wall, so that the painter ends up outlined with one of his own trademark borders; and we end up with Dubuffet *as* a Dubuffet. Similarly, Jasper Johns sits before a wall on which are mounted, in a straight line, a knife, fork, and spoon. Just as the silverware becomes art by being on a wall and not a table, Johns becomes a Johns by being

is both sophisticated about photographs, and surfeited with them. We have come to suspect that no photograph can show us more than a world of surfaces. More and more photographers are stripping their subjects of props and familiar surroundings, preferring to stand them before seamless white paper and let merciless strobe lights reveal—warts, pores, and all—



part of the pop composition.

The characteristic approach always poses the risk of being hackneyed. But Newman is too demanding of himself to indulge in clichés more than once in a great while.

The notion that the camera can tell us the unalloyed truth about people and events has, quite justifiably, suffered from the skepticism of an audience that

that surface which has begun to seem photography's only rightful province.

But Newman will have none of that. He may or may not truly believe that he can show us "the real Picasso," but he steadfastly refuses to abdicate his role as interpreter. The artists Newman photographs may be their own creations, or they may be his, but they are rarely less than fascinating. ■

TOOLS FOR LIVING™

In the past two years, Tools For Living has featured more than 100 products; all of which have shown that they serve a real need—not an invented one, provide excellent value for the money and are well made. Every once in a while, we present the **BEST OF TOOLS**, where we offer those items that have proven to be most popular with readers.

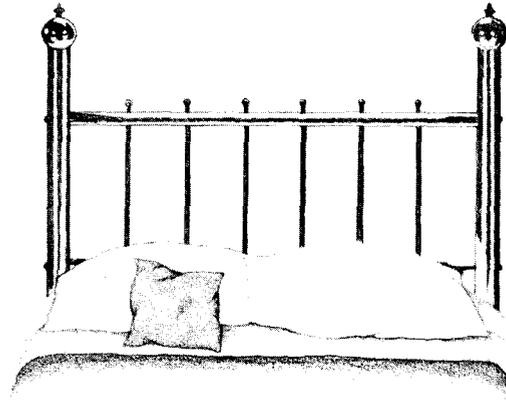
POSTER GARDEN

The sunflower represents the beauty and bounty of nature. Its shape and color nearly mirror its maker, the sun, and its



seed is the manna of health-food lovers. If nature has moods, the sunflower is a happy plant. Art certainly has moods, and if ever a graphic could brighten the wall of a home, it is this sunflower reproduction, by a 17th century artist from the Rare Book Collection of the New York Botanical Garden, our nation's foremost horticultural institution. When brought back to Europe after its discovery in America circa 1569, the sunflower inspired this exclamation, "Joyfull newes out of the new founde worlde." This impeccably printed color reproduction in vivid shades of green, yellow, and brown measures 24" x 36" and can be purchased unframed for \$10.50 (\$2.45) #SRA25.

TOP BRASS



A brass headboard is much coveted these days by lovers of antiquity, but the price of a solid brass headboard keeps it, for many, just that—coveted. But thanks to an innovative manufacturer there is now a way to satisfy that craving without ransoming your future. This company produces a *brass-plated* headboard that looks remarkably like the real thing. The uprights are a full 2" in diameter, just like the old style brass beauties. The plating job is well done and should stand up to years of normal use. While this all-metal headboard is ob-

viously not as heavy as one of solid brass, it is still plenty sturdy. The overall effect is the feel of an authentic brass bed at a fraction of the price. The twin size headboard (39" wide) costs just \$54.00 (\$5.95) #SRA201, full size (54") \$67.00 (\$7.95) #SRA202, Queen (60") \$77.00 (\$12.95) #SRA203, King (78") \$87.00 (\$12.95) #SRA204. The headboard comes unassembled, but a screwdriver and 30 minutes is all you'll need to have it fully mounted. This is truly a brass bed to enjoy; you won't lie awake nights worrying over how much it costs.

A HOT TEA POT

Politics gave tea a bad name in this country. But the welcome our Brown Betty teapot has received of late proves this is changing since a certain tea party was held in Boston in 1773. Extraordinary subtleties of design are required to make an ideal teapot. For example, the shape needs to be rounded with just the right degree of squatness, so that the tea swirls gently after the water is poured in, assuring a perfectly balanced infusion. But the critical choice is material: what do you use to make the teapot? You use a special red clay that is available only in one small district in England. This clay is legendary for its abilities to hold the heat

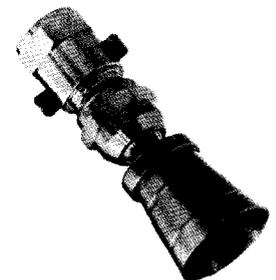
in the teapot and to coddle the brew—attributes that make a truly classic teapot. All these qualities and more can be found in the Brown Betty redware



teapot, imported from England where it has been recognized as the premier "branded" teapot for over 100 years. A 6-cup Brown Betty straight from England costs \$14.50 (\$2.45, #SRA178.

WATER AND MONEY DOWN THE DRAIN

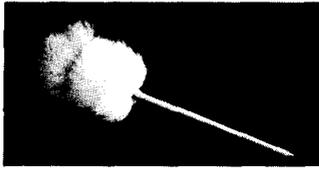
The success of the Shower-Saver—our best seller—shows Americans are committed to saving energy *and* hard-earned cash. America got to its place of world prominence by the energy and inventiveness of its people and the energy in the ground. Running short of the latter, the best and brightest scientists and technologists have been hard at work insuring the energy we burn is used sensibly and efficiently. The Shower-Saver is one result of this work; it cuts the use of hot water in the shower from 8 to 10 gallons a minute to 2.2 gallons. Studies show heating water in a house



is second only to the cost of heating that house. With the normal shower head—designed when energy was plentiful and cheap—the average family of four uses 300 to 400 gallons of water—most of it heated—every day. With the ShowerSaver that same family uses 70% less water or, according to figures from the U.S. Department of Energy, a savings of up to \$350 a year for electrically heated water or \$195 for gas-heated water.

Made of chrome-plated solid brass, it is guaranteed for one year. It installs easily over the standard 1/2" pipe with pliers or a wrench, and no plumber is needed. We offer the ShowerSaver for \$19.00 (\$2.95) #SRA76. At that price, it will pay for itself in a matter of months.

DUST MAGNET



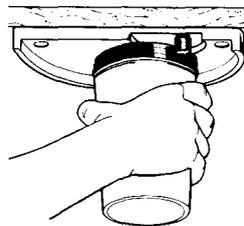
The timeless appeal of the lamb's wool duster proves the old ways are sometimes better ways. This remarkable implement originated, the best we can tell,

in 19th-century England where it quickly put the feather-duster to shame. On its own it actually attracts and holds dust like a magnet. The static charge in the lamb's wool causes dust literally to leap off surfaces where it has accumulated, making this just the thing for dusting bric-a-brac, china, crystal, pictures and other fragile items. Its magnetic qualities also are perfect for gathering cobwebs from the tops of windows or from ceiling corners. We offer a 20" authentic lamb's wool duster for **\$8.00** (\$1.95) #SRA163.

ONE-HANDED MARVEL

There are innumerable jar-openers on the market but none as clever—or as popular with our readers—as this gadget, the Un-Skru, marketed independently by a Denver man. With this aid, even the most stubborn jar top can be opened using only one hand. No more straining or rapping the jar on a counter edge or running hot water on the lid until you eventually free it—or making an unscheduled change in the menu. The Un-Skru mounts unobtrusively and easily under a shelf or cabinet and works on

any lid from 3/8" to 3 3/8." It is made to survive years of everyday use. We can send the Un-Skru for **\$8.00** (\$1.95) #SRA85. We can say without reservation that every kitchen should have one.



A CLEAN SWEEP



It is said that the electric vacuum cleaner is a labor saver. But when faced with those small cleanups that occur daily just whose labor is it saving by the time you tote and haul it, plug it in and pack it away again? This small but mighty non-electric carpet sweeper has shown itself to be perfect for those quick and dirty jobs. The Clean Sweep is a newly designed, non-electric lightweight carpet sweeper that cleans like

gangbusters. It even works on bare floors and on those hard-to-clean places like stairs and closets. The Clean Sweep is noiseless, only 9 1/2" wide, half the weight of the traditional carpet sweeper, and it comes with corner brushes for getting into hard-to-reach places. It is also extremely well made, with all-steel construction and a replaceable boar-bristle rotor brush. The Bissel Co. provides a full 5 year warranty. **\$28.00** (\$2.95) #SRA275.

WHISTLE BLOWING

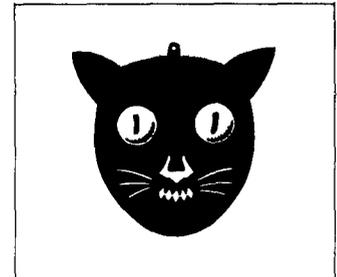


Apparently noise has its place in the modern world. In the high-decibel world we live in, the human voice or human whistle just isn't what it used to be. To hail a cab, call the children or call for help, the aptly

named Thunderer Whistle allows you to stand out in a crowd and be heard! Doormen know the value of a good whistle on a rainy night when there are too many riders and too few cabs. And when alone, the Thunderer Whistle can work as a personal body guard. This amazing whistle is made in England of beautifully polished solid brass and comes with a key ring, keeping it ever handy. This 1/2-oz. of protection sells for only **\$6.50** (\$1.45) #SRA22. Probably all the sound you'll ever need comes from 1 3/4" Thunderer Whistle.

A WORKING CAT

There are 20 million black cats in France and a growing number here. Not the ordinary kind of cats with fur and purr, but *Le Chat Noir*, clever cat impersonations pressed from metal plate. These silhouette cat faces, just under 6" square, have clear glass eyes that glint at the slightest bit of light and create an uncanny impression of a real cat. *Le Chat Noir* is made to work. Hung in the garden, they keep birds and rabbits from your delicacies. It is a simple, silent, humane way to protect fruits and vegetables. (City dwellers can just as effectively



keep their windowsills free from the annoyance of pigeons.) When not gainfully employed, they can decorate window panes or what-have-you. Imported from France, *Le Chat Noir* is **\$7.00** (\$1.95) #SRA143.

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RECORDS

Stephen Wadsworth

Hidden Haydn

Some of Franz Joseph Haydn's 21 operas are lost or incomplete. None has ever been considered important, either in Haydn's oeuvre or in the operatic canon. Yet by 1982, when we'll all be celebrating the 250th birthdays of Haydn, Fragonard, and George Washington, every known operatic note by the father of the symphony will probably be available on disc.

In the forefront, with Antal Dorati as guiding light and maestro, Philips has been busy with a cycle of Haydn's nine major operas. The seven so far released span the years of Gluck's maturity and Mozart's middle-period operas, 1775-1783. Every summer, Dorati—kept *au courant* by a phalanx of ardent Haydn scholars—takes a cast of fresh, characterful voices to Lausanne and breathes life into an opera or two for Philips's skillful producer and crew.

On a long list of mammoth recorded sets and cycles that appeal to the consumer who aspires to Have It All, Haydn's operas don't sound like a big buying priority. But this cycle, besides unfailingly maintaining a high standard of musical performance, is actually a creative project, not just another block of Beethoven symphonies.

For one thing, in festival-class performances with the most musical singers money can buy, these operas are revealed as plenty major, *qua opera* and also *qua Haydn*. For another, opera houses and festivals, from Glyndebourne to Aix-en-Provence to Caramoor, are now regularly giving Haydn's operas new life onstage, and for that blessed resurgence of faith Papa Haydn's papa scholar, H.C. Robbins Landon, claims these Dorati

records are "solely and completely responsible." The Haydn series has been recognized with major awards for both musical and musicological distinction.

Haydn's operas are insightful and felicitous in the extreme but rarely achieve the psychological depth and truth that Mozart, one of the great musical dramatists, commanded concurrently at only half Haydn's age. However, a surprising number of Mozart's most profound musicodramatic inspirations are eerily foreshadowed by Haydn's, which were in every case committed to paper several years before Mozart got around to



them. Haydn's vocal and orchestral writing is comparable to Mozart's, though, and the end-of-act ensembles in *La Fedeltà Premiata* (No. 6707028, 4-record set, \$39.92) and *Orlando Paladino* (No. 6707029, 4-record set, \$39.92) are, in Dorati's words, "just as good as the big Mozart finales."

Both Dorati and Landon recommend either of these two operas above the others in the cycle to the collector who only wants one. Asked which of Haydn's qualities the operas bring out, Dorati stresses wit and Landon compassion. In general, wit keeps Haydn's operas moving, and compassion, while deepening them, slows them down; in Landon's words, "In opera after opera he suddenly gets monumentally side-

tracked with these downtrodden people, and the action sort of stops." Not in *La Fedeltà Premiata* (Fidelity Rewarded), though. This numbskull pastoral, ripping with character and event, combines pathos and humor delectably. *Orlando Paladino*, a tongue-in-cheek yet touching song of Roland, isn't far behind.

How important are the operas in Haydn's oeuvre? Dorati says, "Haydn himself rated them very high. That should give you a clue." Dorati would include an opera in a basic library of five Haydn recordings, but Landon wouldn't: "An opera comes sixth."

More important for him are one recording each of the Opus 20 and 76 string quartets, some late London symphonies, a mass, probably the "Nelson," and a big oratorio, probably *The Creation*.

Nevertheless, Landon, whose worldwide roamings and ravings on behalf of these operas (and indeed

everything Haydnian) could be labeled, like *Orlando Paladino*, a *dramma eroicomico*, calls the Philips Haydn opera cycle "the finest thing Dorati has ever done, even finer than his complete Haydn symphonies for London. He's got the *pace* so marvelously. I cannot imagine Haydn himself having conducted them any differently."

You don't have to be H.C. Robbins Landon to enjoy these operas. They can no longer be considered a back alley for Haydn, nor should they be regarded as an indulgence of the recording industry or some musical elite. They are a new and happy fact of our operatic lives. ■

Stephen Wadsworth, former managing editor of *Opera News*, contributes articles to many musical publications here and abroad.