Exhibitions were lately held, demonstrating the idea, of which I had already the occasion to write and speak several times. From the point of view of the history of art, it is always most important to reveal the so-called unknown artists. The names of great masters are very often in public judgment collective conceptions. When looking over the standard handbooks on art, we will find, in addition to the well-known celebrities, numerous names, whose creations are not commonly known. And yet these artists lived to the old age, worked incessantly, and had as their teachers great masters.

About an exhibition in Paris the press reported the following: "An exhibition of paintings, acclaimed by connoisseurs as highest works of art but bearing the signatures of unknown artists, was organized in Paris under the patronage of Georges Huysmans and was heralded to be the most remarkable of the series of thirty exhibitions of the Parisian season."

Exhibitions of unknown artists reminded old collectors and critics many episodes concerning mistakes of judgment committed by the best authorities on art.

One of them narrates: "Thirty years ago I got the idea of submitting to the jury of an exhibition a small Roman landscape painted in light-yellow and bluish colors and also a pen-drawing representing a peasant with a large hat. Both paintings were flatly refused. And yet the landscape was by Corot and the drawing was nothing less than one by Rembrandt himself."

Another art critic added that paintings by unknown authors were now and then acquired by the largest art museums and believed to be by known great masters. In a recent exhibition of old Italian art in Paris, there was exhibited the famous 'Open-air Concert', previously catalogued by outstanding authorities as a Titian, and now regarded as a masterpiece of Giorgione.

Such anecdotes remind us of the famous saying of Toulouse-Lautrec, "a painting should be perceived by the heart." In other words a painting should be valued on its merit and not because of the signature. This French artist adds: "What would it matter if an image of an Evangelist turns out to be not by Velasquez, if its high quality ranks it equal to the brush of the latter!"

We can remember many facts from life, which prove on what quicksand conventional judgment is based. In the Metropolitan Museum of New York there is a painting attributed to Massys, which is
actually a painting of the very interesting but completely unknown master of Netherlands, Haselaer. His signature, which I and the well-known authority on art, senator Semenoff-Tianshansky, have seen was evidently removed by its previous owner. On the market it is of course an entirely different thing to sell an unknown Haselaer or to have the opportunity to offer a famous Massys.

I have myself seen a written certificate by a well-known authority stating a painting to be a Rembrandt. Yet from this painting there had just been removed the name of Jan Victors—a distinguished pupil of Rembrandt. I also remember a landscape of the 18th century, under which was visible an older signature of the 17th century. One may cite many stories which eloquently prove that a painting should be judged not by the signature, but on its merit.

There are two types of collectors. One group requires first of all only the name. The other demands an artistic quality. For the collectors of the former type there have been created the innumerable fakes. A rather rude art dealer used to laugh: "A signature costs but a couple of shillings!"

If even to-day, before our very eyes, there disappears a signature from a painting, then evidently such sinister episodes took place also in the past. It is said about a well-known collector that he always carried with him a phial with alcohol and while bargaining for a painting he washed off the signature, in order to decrease the value of the painting. Many tragedies indeed have taken place around art objects. We ourselves were once horrified at seeing how a restorer reduced a beautiful painting to a seemingly dilapidated condition, in order to purchase it cheaply.

Everyone has heard of the destruction of masterpieces of Leonardo by religious fanatics and cruel invaders. I remember how a beautiful sketch by Rubens was used as cardboard for the binding of a book. An excellent portrait by Brullow was covered by an ugly landscape. Under the excellent painting attributed to Ingres was discovered the signature of his collaborator Carbonniere. In all countries there has always taken place an intentional or involuntary shifting of names and definitions. Together with revaluations and fashions, every century had its own conventionalities. Instead of true revaluation, new concealments are taking place.

But let us not dwell on old art only. The problem of contemporary art is still more acute. May the examples of the past teach our generation to open their hearts to young artists. And after all who can affirm, who are unknown and who the known artists, and to whom are they known or unknown?
I have been told of a most remarkable collection of "unknown" French artists of the recent period. A collector from Marseilles began to collect paintings of artists who died very young or who in despair discarded art. A large collection was assembled. A visitor who did not know the names might have thought that they were paintings by Degas, Monet, Manet, Rafaeli, Menard, Latouche and other celebrated French artists. This collection contained also some strongly individual conceptions. It became quite clear that at some time an enterprising person may arrange from such a collection a most striking and significant exhibition. Besides paintings of artists who died early in life, there were those of artists who considered themselves decourage. And it is yet another question whether they were all right considering themselves failures. Sometimes a terrible injustice brings people to this entirely undeserved self-estimate.

A friend of ours, when saying "unknown" always used to add "unknown to me." And in this he was quite right. How can anyone say that a person unknown to him at the moment and in a certain place, may not be greatly revered by other people elsewhere? Such a consideration should be understood by many people nowadays. Otherwise, in self-conceit, some persons may imagine, that if they do not know something or do not accept it, then all other people also do not know and do not admit it. Such is the usual vanity of the ignoramus. Besides, the question of being known or unknown is one of the most conditional. This definition is based on casual circumstances, both conscious and unconscious. Many excellent geniuses received recognition only after their death. For some curious reasons people seem to value only the factor of death in their judgments.

Helas! Because of crass ignorance so often the ugly dance macabre replaces the beautiful predestined Dance of Life.

May exhibitions of "unknown" artists remind once more of the conventionality of human judgment and may they create one more act of Justice in the contemporary world.

We all know of the martyrdom of scientists like Copernicus, Galileo, Paracelsus, Lavoisier and other innumerable sufferers for truth. There exist entire books dedicated to these martyrs of science and next to them there should also exist volumes "Martyrs of Art and Culture." However, once we know that artists are priests of the beautiful we also know all unavoidable attributes of attainments.
We know not only of ancient Herostrates who destroyed the beautiful. Even in our days, Sargent's painting was barbarously cut in the Royal Academy in London. A vandal slashed Millet's "Angelus" in the Louvre and another brute in 1912 stabbed Repin's "Ivan the Terrible" at the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow. Much has been written about vandalism. We introduced the Banner of Peace as a Red Cross of Culture, to protect real treasures of humanity. And now let me mention another hidden but cruel vandalism, which quietly existed in the life of many nations.

When studying old masters, we often find that many very good paintings were for some reason overpainted by inferior artists with entirely different subjects. It is obvious that the old painting had become old-fashioned and the artist simply used the wood as material for his modern and more fashionable creation. One should not think that only paintings of secondry importance were subjected to such barbarous manipulations. On the contrary amongst the recorded cases we find some very important names which to-day occupy a place of honour in the history of art.

I have personally seen an old replica of the well-known painting by Correggio, which is in the National Gallery in London and on this replica I could clearly see the outlines of an ancient portrait and indeed the panel on which it was painted proved to be far older than the replica. Once we had occasion to witness how from beneath painting of the 17th and the 18th centuries there appeared in good condition beautiful originals by Lambert Lombard, Rogier van der Weiden, Adrien Bloemart and other artists equally renowned.

Such examples show to us that vandalism is committed not only by the hands of an infuriated mob, but also secretly, in highly distinguished dwellings, for the sake of vanity and prejudice.

Beauty cannot be guarded by orders and laws alone. Only when human consciousness realizes the inestimable value of beauty, its power of creating, ennobling and refining, only then will real treasures of humanity be safe. And one should not think that the vice of vandalism belongs but to the past ages, to some notorious invaders and conquerers. We see that the vandalism of many kinds takes place even today. Therefore the endeavour to protect and save beauty is not an abstract nebulous move, but is imperative, real and undeferrable.

Verily, education in art and beauty is a necessity. And although it is a "beautiful" necessity yet it is a necessity with all its duties and
obligations. We always rejoice when we see that thoughts are being transmuted into action. Such transfiguration is manifested by a true oeuvre, a clear yet at the same time almost untranslatable word. One can say “creative work”, yet something more profound and summarizing is expressed in this French concept.

About art in all its manifestations people are accustomed to judge very light-mindedly. Some have read two verses and already speak with authority about the poet. Some have seen three or four paintings or reproductions and already pass judgment on the artist. From one novel they fix the position of a writer. One book of sketches is enough for an irrevocable opinion over a cup of tea.

More than once it has been noted in literature that the celebrated “cup of tea” binds one to nothing. And perhaps the pronouncements at the dinner-table likewise are not binding, yet they often have very profound consequences. In such conversations over a “cup of tea”, people do not think about the fact that the separate productions are only as the petals of the entire oeuvre. Even an experienced horticulturist or botanist would hardly undertake to form a judgment about an entire plant from a single petal of its blossom.

In all kinds of creativeness—in literature, in music, in the graphic arts everywhere an attentive and careful correlation is decidedly necessary. It is well known how much has been attributed to authors, which was entirely alien to them, based on incomplete quotations from some train of thought. You know that not only casual people take it upon themselves to pass judgement. In each domain dwells a self-appointed judge.

It is said that the valuation by critics changes three times in a century, that is, by generations. To observe these deviations of evaluations is very instructive. How many irrelevant considerations will influence public opinion! Competition of publisher or greed of the dealers in artistic productions, finally any of the various forms of envy and enmity are so complexly reflected in appraisals, that for the future investigator-historian it is often completely impossible to discriminate. A great number of examples of this could be adduced.

Let us not bring up certain episodes out of the world of collectors, when competition led these people to most unworthy conduct. It is only important to remember that appraisals of creative work are singularly tortuous and personal. We recollect how a certain music lover warned a well-known musician not to play on a particular day because an influential critic had a toothache. But when to all these mortal chances there
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is united the wish in general not to acquaint oneself with a man's entire work then this situation becomes truly tragic.

Let us recall any prolific author. Can one form a judgement about him without knowing the sequence of all his works? One can, indeed, estimate separate productions of the author, but then this will be an opinion which concerns the production itself, but not all the man's creative oeuvre. It is not alone the biography of a great personality, for it is still more valuable to follow the accumulation of creative power and all the paths of its expression. Thus once again we see how significant in its meaning is the word oeuvre. It impels one to outline the entire manifestation and comprehensively to examine its influence and consequence.

History, passing from personal oeuvre, appraises also the oeuvre of an entire nation, of a whole epoch. If the historian does not teach himself in the small and accessible, then by what means can he draw near to and encompass broad problems? Before thinking about such comprehensive tasks it is necessary to reflect about conscientious judgments of parts, of individuals. He who sets himself the task of always staying within the bounds of truth learns to discriminate in all fortuities and to compare causes and effects carefully.

Just now when there is so much destruction and upheaval, each clear honest exhaustive understanding of a subject will be an especially needed contemporary task. We have read how Stokowski has definitely expressed himself about the harm of mechanical music for true creativeness. Stokowski has justly reminded us that even between the very vibrations transmitted directly or mechanically there is an enormous difference. Certain instruments are generally imperceptible in mechanical transmission.

In a time when music and science, design and the graphic arts have been subjected to mechanization, precisely then must the appraisals of creativeness be still more precise, profound and well-grounded. At this very moment, when it is the modern practice to strive for the brief, the staccato, and the casual, it is specially necessary to aspire for evolutions on the basis of the entire creation.