A Device for Measuring the Degree of Aesthetic Sensitivity

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(ABSTRACT)

Individuals differ greatly in their responses to art situations. The exact nature of this sensitivity is not known but the findings of this investigation indicate that it is more acquired than innate. The highest degree of response comes from those that combine early childhood experience of correct esthetic types with later
cognitive acquirements. The function itself is fundamental to artistic production and art criticism.

An instrument of measurement of artistic sensitivity must reduce this complex function to structural elements such as appear in all reputable works of art and are employed consciously or through background processes by all great artists. The device developed consists of some eighty comparison art works, being for the most part carefully constructed compositions of the writer's own hand, traced from the works of great artists and then altered to suit the purpose of differential response. The principle followed in modification was that esthetic rightness would be recognized by the sensitive and confused by the less sensitive.

The most abundant source of material was found in the Japanese color prints which are ideally suited to this purpose, representing as they do the tradition of centuries of experience in developing the principles of balance, harmony, rhythm, and emphasis. Themes from occidental art include Del Sarto, Titian, and Millet from the older masters and Monet, Brangwyn, and Pennell from the modern ranks. For presentation order a three part plan is followed: Simple themes, taken largely from Japanese subjects, constructed on a dual choice basis; Complex themes, made up mostly from the works of great masters, presented in dual choice manner; and finally, Complex themes in five variations. The device comprises in all one hundred and fifty drawings.

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