

I shall devote a few future papers to these artists. Here I shall confine myself to speaking of an artist who has paved the way for all others in that he did not disdain to devote his great talent to giving vitality to ordinary fashion figurines.

Bernard Boutet de Monvel

He received me at the door with a friendly smile, and with outstretched hands, with very clear eyes and light hair—the latter already touched with silver. I at once felt "at home" in this studio with the high and bright windows—made so by the simple heartiness of his welcome.

I say "at home" and yet I was at the same time embarrassed, for Boutet de Monvel, like all true artists, is modest and averse to talking about himself. "Fashion drawings? But I do them only as an amateur! And then so very few of them!" he at once said.

And had I not known, known for certain that his fashion drawings alone would have sufficed to give him a name in France and outside of France, and had I not, in view of my being so sure, urged him a little, who knows whether Boutet de Monvel would have decided to produce from his portfolios those beautiful drawings which decorate these pages?

*Decorative Drawings — Modern Drawings
"Thoroughbred" Drawings.*

The first artistic solicitude which Boutet de Monvel imposes upon himself is to be decorative. Even if he would not attest it himself, it would nevertheless be visible in all his works—it strikes the eyes at once. No matter whether the subject be a woman, an animal or a house, Boutet de Monvel endeavours first of all, amidst all the complicated lines which cloud the aspect of ordinary things to our mortal eyes, to find the essential line or lines—those which give the woman, the animal or the house at once a dominant personality and plastic beauty. In brief, he is not only a painter who is in love with colors and with the contrasts in tone—Boutet de Monvel is also an architect and sculptor in relation to his drawings, in love with line, masses and harmonious balance.

The drawings of Boutet de Monvel are however not only decorative but also extremely modern. They are, first of all, modern, for one finds that the outlines to which Fashion has accustomed us, the long, lissom, delicate silhouette, the silhouette

of the elegant and the sport-loving woman, with very small, proudly-held head, the woman who seems a bit boyish and who is yet wholly woman.

These drawings are also modern because they show an effort towards simplicity. This is proved by the woman golf-player depicted with a few simple strokes—which also have the modern quality of passing beyond the actual end in view. The two preceding sketches give us an idea of the working methods of Boutet de Monvel who traces his drawings five, six or seven times, just as he may find it necessary to divest them of a superfluous detail or an unnecessary line.

Finally, in addition to being decorative and modern, the drawings of Boutet de Monvel are also "thoroughbred." Whenever, by chance, he forces himself to do a fashion drawing, then as a man of the world he is simply unable to refrain from giving everything that comes to life at the stroke of his pencil, be it man, woman, horse, deerhound or automobile, something aristocratic. These drawings, like all things by this artist, are aristocratic without exaggeration, without presumption and without that snobbery which is a mere forgery of the aristocratic. They are all that just like Boutet de Monvel himself—with a great deal of proportion and simplicity and natural good grace.

His Work which is not all his Work.

But it would be disparaging the gift of Boutet de Monvel in a singular way were one to assume that his work is confined to fashion drawings. This work is very extensive and very multiform. It contains numerous portraits, it also embodies numerous landscapes in delicate tints, very pastel-like. In addition Boutet de Monvel has brought with him from his last trip to Morocco a number of studies, very remarkable by the architectural value of the lines. Finally, and only recently, he composed a series of frescoes which are intended for the octagonal spaces of a large *salle*. Unfortunately the reproduction here given conveys only a very imperfect idea of the decorative power of the green cacti upon a grey background, against which white figures stand relieved in purest contours.

And now may Boutet de Monvel forgive me for saying in a few words what really deserves many pages. May he forgive me just as he received me—with outstretched hand, with very clear eyes beneath light hair already touched with silver—and with his kindly smile.

Translated by Herman George Scheffauer