

A Note on "The Hudson from Heine Cook's"

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This etching was produced by Mahonri Young in 1916. In today's world of anxiety and extremes his confidence in the long-standing artistic values of sympathetic understanding faithful representation, and modest personal transformation seems all the more precious. His work is so simple and direct; as his friend Charles Locke once commented, "His interest centered in what he had to say and he said it without any conscious mannerisms." All his work shows the American respect for common people accomplishing their daily tasks as Mahonri Young accomplished his. There was a great white secret to be revealed as the ax split open the wood:

How work is holy
When the heart of the worker
Is fixed on the Highest.

And if not that, at least one may have seen a kind of rejuvenating zest in the simple rural ritual.

But today it is asked "sympathetic understanding of what? Faithful representation of what? And how? And why?" Today the talk is of new realities, if any.

"Of that," Mahonri would have said, pointing, puzzled that the value *there* was in question. A contemporary artist might respond, "*There*? Out there is chaos and I am *here*. Lama Sabachthani."

Is a Mahonri possible today? Or is it as Allan Kaprow, the man of "Happenings," said recently: "At present, any avant-garde art is primarily a philosophical quest and a finding of truths rather than purely an aesthetic activity; for this latter is possible, if at all, only in a relatively stable age when most human beings can agree upon fundamental notions of the nature of the universe."

Oh, to split a stick of plain real wood again.

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