

INTERNACIONAL
STUDIO

ALBERT PINKHAM RYDER

CENTURIES APART ARE great personalities. A piece of brown wrapping paper and the brief, stumbling notes of Abraham Lincoln, on his way to the Gettysburg battlefield, became the greatest literature of our nation, delivered to a people who listened intently, silent, gazing at the ungainly, homely, humane hulk of a man, their captain of the ship of state. So in the art-history of America rises the giant figure of Albert Pinkham Ryder, looming uncertain, ungainly, unkempt, but enveloped by a vision of beauty he despaired of realizing. Ryder loved life, and art was his metier.

Money, food, comfort were unconscious, entirely alienated perquisites. The world and the flesh and the devil were unknown to Ryder, nonexistent. He thought everybody square and honest; money just part of the world. He never borrowed, although he enjoyed no creature comforts. If you asked, "Ryder, anything I can do?" Well needed, but you were answered, "No, no, no." He just painted, had some coffee, part of a loaf of bread, a little salt, ate when he was hungry, drank when he was dry, and when tired rolled himself up in his buffalo robe and slept.

Sometimes Horatio Walker would ask, "How are you getting on with that picture?"

"Everything in it but what I want."

"Well, what do you want?" Walker knew what he wanted: a halo in every picture.

Pure innocence in the search for beauty, he dreamed, he lived, a recluse, a hermit glorified. His *milieu*, out of the soil of which arose the spiritual beauty of his canvases, was extraordinarily

An American master whose work, product of a life of sacrifice to art, forms one of our great treasures

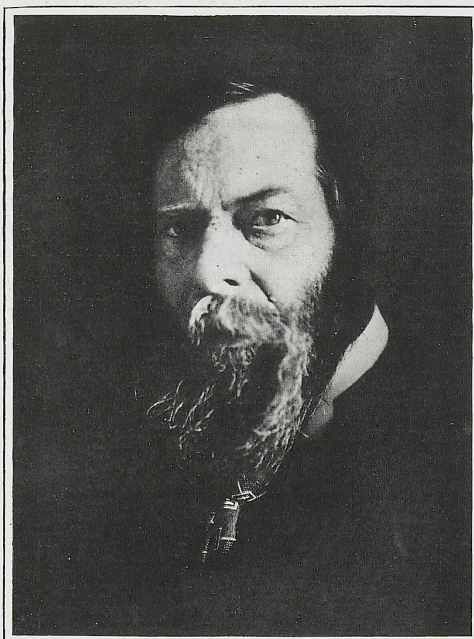
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simple, fundamental, archaic. He rose among our arts a white, pure, free flame, uninfluenced except by the sacred fires of his most devoted soul. His home was a room ten feet

by twelve; you entered on the short side, striking a path. On the left-hand side boxes and odds and ends of broken furniture merely left there in a pile. Beside the path was a couch on which stood a keg of coal with one side out, the beauty thereby being he need not shovel the coal, just yank the keg. On the middle of one side a chimney place

and a grate, the only heat he had. Here rose a high, hard pile of ashes, with matches and egg-shells and one bronzed coffee pot, patined brown in years. He had two low south windows, but the sun seldom penetrated the gloom and cobwebs of their opaqueness. Between them a chest of drawers and books, two candlesticks, and under the windowsills more boxes effectively guarding the windows from approach. There was, between the windows, a three-legged easel, substantially stuck to the floor from varnish drippings, filled with burned matches, paint tubes, etc., and his palette all gummed up. He never washed his brushes. In front of this easel one chair, big, heavy, leather-covered, minus one leg which had been replaced by a box.

When anyone called, he was placed in the chair and Ryder stood up towering over him. Behind the easel a useless coal-scuttle, newspapers, two cans all overlaid with a deep patine of age. The room had once been papered and the paper fell in great waving flags; plaster fell out; stains dominated the surface. Under the leather of his chair



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Photo by Alice Boughton