

## FROM A REVIEWER'S NOTEBOOK

### Brief Comment on Some Recently Opened Group and One-Man Exhibitions—Paintings by Eugen Spiro and Moses Soyer

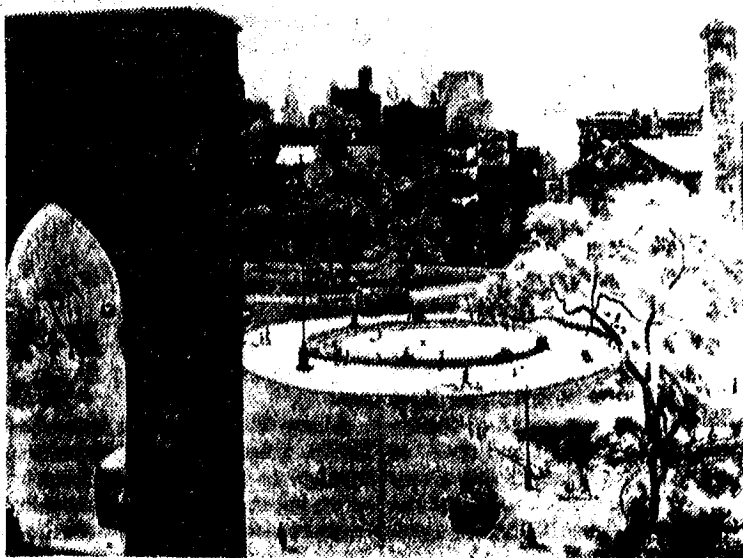
By HOWARD DEVREE

**N**EARING threescore and ten, Eugen Spiro, once leader of the Secession movement in Berlin and later forbidden by the Nazis to paint, is holding his first New York exhibition at Galerie St. Etienne. The show includes paintings executed during his long European career and now lent from private collections, as well as work done since his arrival in this country two years ago. And much of the new work is among his best.

No violent break with the past is indicated in the recent painting, but there is definite development to be traced from the pictures painted a score or more of years

ago. One has only to compare the "Old Town in Yugoslavia" of 1923 or "The House Concert" of the year before with the "Washington Square" and the portrait of the artist's wife, both painted late in 1942, to note the growth in subtler brushwork, in the management of light, in the softly persuasive treatment of texture. A new free singing quality, a new sparkle and zest are apparent in most of the late work. It is unfortunate that the portrait of Einstein, which attracted much favorable comment in the recent exhibition, "Twentieth Century Portraits," at the Museum of Modern Art, could not be included. Portraits, especially those of women and children, are

ingratiatingly unself-conscious. A group of drawings strongly supplements the oils.



"Washington Square," by Eugen Spiro at Galerie St. Etienne.

Eugen Spiro

GALERIE ST. ETIENNE  
46 West 57th Street New York City

EUGEN SPIRO  
*Paintings*

February — March 1943

## COMMITTEE OF SPONSORS

RICHARD BEER-HOFMANN

ALBERT EINSTEIN

ALFRED M. FRANKFURTER

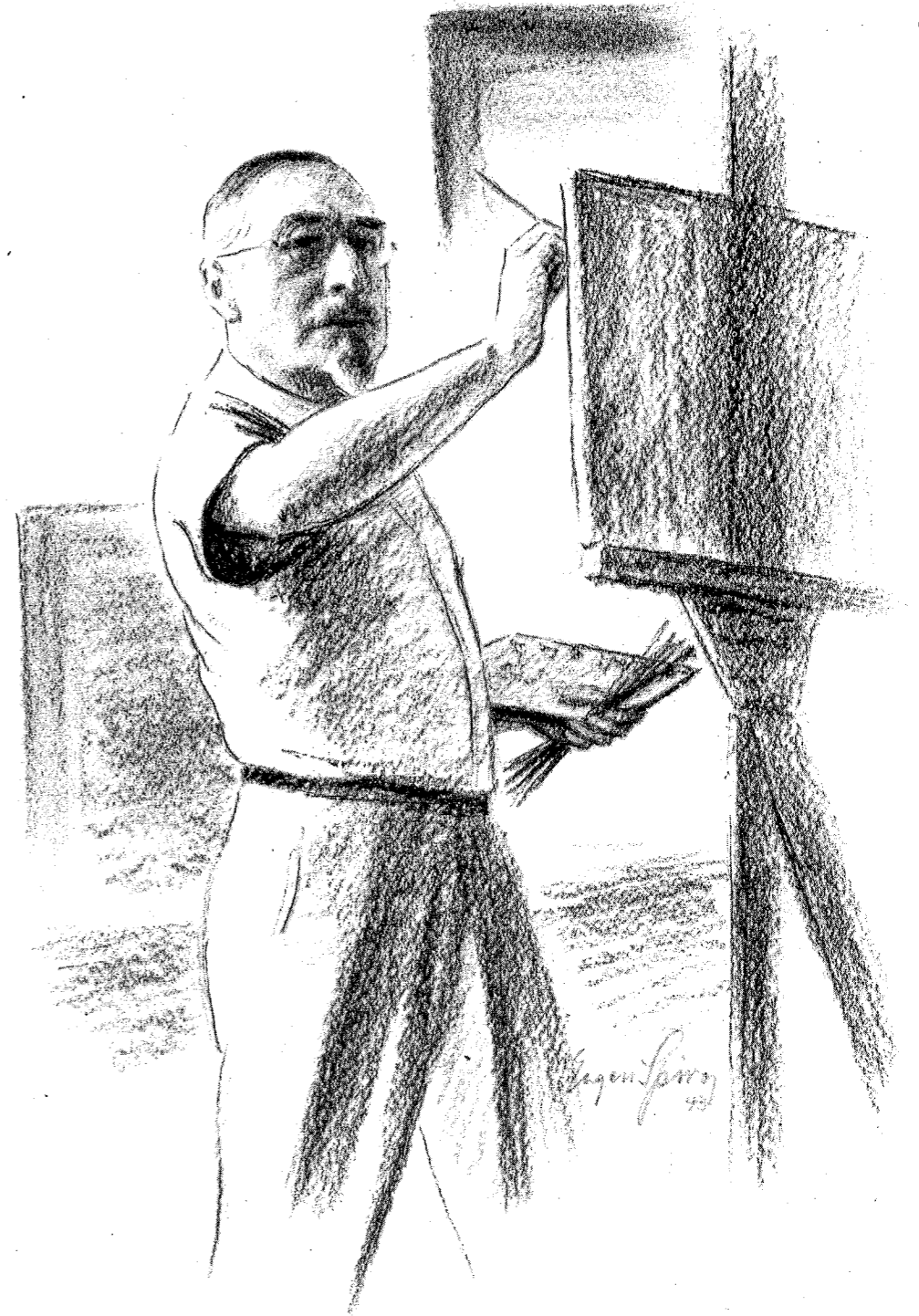
THOMAS MANN

MAX REINHARDT

GEORGE N. SHUSTER

BRUNO WALTER

FRANZ WERFEL



# EUGEN SPIRO

by

MAX OSBORN

Eugen Spiro, formerly widely known in Europe as one of Germany's most talented and most successful artists, now presents to the public of New York his first One Man Show in this country. His intention is not to give a complete showing of his work — this would not be possible, as almost the entire output of former years that still remained in his possession — paintings, studies and sketches — had to be left behind in the Paris studio on the artist's hurried departure in the spring of 1940. What may have happened to them meanwhile!

However, Spiro has been able to assemble two groups of pictures in the present show, both of which will be of special interest to the American public. He is exhibiting a selection from his numerous pictures formerly purchased and brought to this country by American art lovers, as well as his most recent works, created since his arrival in New York, not quite two years ago. Necessity and chance have thus collaborated in achieving a very fascinating presentation of this painter's extraordinary art of then and now. We trace resemblances and differences, we find interesting connections between the two periods, and we are always impressed by the artist's steadfast development toward ever greater maturity and perfection.

Spiro's strong and vital talent has been decisively shaped through

his early and repeated studies in Paris, where he was later named a professor at the "Académie Moderne" and, in 1911 "Officier d'Académie", and where he became one of the founders of the "Salon d'Automne". In later years he worked chiefly in Berlin as one of the outstanding disciples of the doctrines of French Impressionism.

Spiro's landscapes, especially the French and Spanish ones, his still lifes, his intérieurs and figural compositions all have a natural charm as to conception and rendering of the subject and the subtle grace of their colors; his portraits show tact and insight into human nature, whether the people he represents are well known personalities or beautiful and charming women. The warmth and joy of living, which are part of Spiro's nature, find expression in his paintings, which have always sought to mirror the features of the world glowing and colorful, in spite of all its darkness.

Eugen Spiro's personality, rich in human as well as artistic gifts, brought him to high rank and esteem in Germany and in Paris. He was for many years president of the "Berliner Secession", the foremost progressive group of German artists, and the German capital was greatly indebted to him for his artistic leadership in those pre-Hitler days. From 1935 to 1940 Spiro again made his home in Paris, where he was equally appreciated and became president of the "Free Artists' Union".

However, as Europe became engulfed in madness and destruction, there was no longer room for his art, and so Spiro came to this country which he already knew from a previous stay. Here, he

soon found himself surrounded by old friends, by art lovers and collectors of his pictures, and so he met again many of his works that had made the trip across the ocean before him. This reunion with works of past years proved a source of many agreeable surprises. He found instances of all phases of his development. He had such a vast choice that all he needed to do, was to pick the best examples of his work of former years.

In the meantime the bare walls of his New York studio, which had at first seemed to give him such a frosty welcome, had come alive with a new population of works. Was this the same Spiro who had arrived in New York such a short while ago? We are different persons, all of us, when we disembark on the shore of America, from what we were when we went aboard in Europe. The voyage in itself has a magic and transforming power. And the city of New York is sure to remould to the very depths anyone with an impressionable artistic temperament. Everything is different: the outer world, people, ways of life, and even our own emotions. An artist of Spiro's sensitiveness and susceptibility was bound to receive deep impressions and new viewpoints through that overwhelming experience, "New York".

Spiro's new works are the fruit of this recent experience. The general trend of his art, of course, remains the same, and he has sacrificed neither his technical discipline nor his personal style. However, a fresh impulse pervades these pictures, a sense of new joy in his long established craftsmanship. He seems rejuvenated and even more fluent in his means. No trace of constraint is left,

he has found a new freedom of expression. The resulting lightness in the handling of light and shadow enhances the picturesque charm. In this new manner the artist has created views of New York, sparkling with light and air and full of the peculiar atmosphere characteristic of this city. He has, above all, created portraits of varied kinds. His series of portraits of famous musicians — Spiro himself is a great music lover — has been continued here with a magnificent portrait of Fritz Busch, and with drawings of Toscanini and Huberman. There is also a masterful sketch of Max Reinhardt's imposing head. There are several portraits of American personalities, with the clear and typical American features. And again we recognize Spiro's special talent in portraying gracious and lovely women, and children, who are so hard to characterize, with their soft and wondering faces. They too bear the American features, so different from any European face, to the eye of the experienced painter.

The past and the present meet at the show of the Galerie St. Etienne. It is not a retrospective exhibition, but that of an uninterrupted development, pointing towards a new phase in the artist's work.

Eugen Spiro follows in the path of the great masters who advanced to ever greater freedom of conception and expression as they grew older, and for whom each work seemed to prepare the way for the next, because the creative impulse that brought them to life, was indestructible.