

3

3

PASSAGE III

HUMANITIES: *Colorful Reflections on Fairfield Porter*

My first encounter with the international artist and art critic Fairfield Porter was actually through the poetry of his wife, Anne (Channing) Porter. While both grew to become quite celebrated in their crafts, Fairfield's story is unique.

Born into an affluent, artistic family in 1907, the boy who was to one day become a renowned artist and respected art critic showed a comparative lack of artistic ability when seen next to his siblings. While his older brother Eliot took to photography, Fairfield Porter, despite being remarkably intelligent, appeared to be lacking any natural artistic talents. It seemed that, although a member of a family full of artists, his true skill lay in the critiquing of others' artistry. This was evidenced in his second year at Harvard by Fairfield's decision to pursue art history as his major field of study. After studying at Harvard under Arthur Pope and then traveling briefly through Europe, Fairfield came back to the United States to further his education at the Art Students League in New York City. There he became acquainted with the famed photographer Alfred Stieglitz—the work of whom is said to have positively influenced Fairfield's paintings to some degree.

Between the years 1931 and 1932, Fairfield spent the majority of his time in Italy learning to appreciate and critique the works of the great Renaissance painters. His training came from both direct study under world-famous art historian Bernard Berenson, and from countless hours spent in museums and galleries observing the greatest pieces of Italian art.

Following his marriage to Anne upon his return from Italy, Fairfield spent the better part of the next two decades developing his skills as a painter while caring for his autistic son. During this period his meetings with the French Intimist painter Willem De Kooning would prove to have a profound effect on his later works. Porter was the first to publicly acclaim the work of Kooning.

In fact, what made Porter so famous was his knack for responding directly to an artist's work. He found fault with the common "talk based" criticism that spoke to art only in reference to its past or to some vague theoretical framework; such criticism attempted to shape the future of art and was far too biased for Porter. His time as an art critic for such publications as *Art News* and *The Nation* ended, however, in 1961 when he decided to pursue a full-time painting career.

The other side of his fame, his uncommon approach to painting, is just as important to the understanding of Fairfield Porter's contributions to the world of art. His personal philosophy comes from a blending of two views; art should be personal, emotional, and representative of its subject, while at the same time be boldly colorful, expressive, and generally abstract. Drawing on his vast knowledge of art history, especially the styles of French Intimism, Porter fused these two feelings to create a powerful, emotive collection of paintings about families, individuals, and the home, as well as moving nature scenes such as

60 *The Door to the Woods* (1971) and *Maine – Toward the Harbor* (1967).

When he died in 1975, on a morning walk along the ocean, he left the world as one of the most respected art critics in the past century. On top of that, his work as a painter is still viewed within the art community as amazingly distinctive and especially representative of his life. It is sad to say that now, however, some thirty years after his death, he is still virtually unknown outside of art circles. This remarkably insightful, articulate, creative individual needs to be discovered by the common man and revered for his continuing influence on the artists of today. The words of this intellectual were some of the best and most honest critiques of art ever spoken.

21. The main purpose of the passage can best be described as an attempt to:
- explain Porter's renowned ability to candidly address artists' works.
 - illustrate the influence several renowned artists had on the works of Porter.
 - appraise Porter's unusual methods of painting and critiquing artwork.
 - chronicle Porter's life, particularly the events and beliefs that shaped his career.
22. The author's attitude towards the subject of the passage can best be characterized as:
- detached interest.
 - amused tolerance.
 - warm appreciation.
 - deep abhorrence.
23. As described in the passage, Porter's method of criticizing art can best be summarized by which of the following statements?
- Porter's criticisms were frank and forthright, and were based solely on his evaluation of the piece of art that he was appraising.
 - Porter criticized art based on the context of the painting and conceptual structures that he found most useful in his evaluations.
 - Porter's critiques were comparable to those of Bernard Berenson, who greatly influenced Porter's outlook on art.
 - Porter targeted his criticisms at helping artists by attempting to influence their forthcoming works.
24. Porter's painting style can be described by all of the following EXCEPT:
- stirring.
 - vivid.
 - trite.
 - individualistic.

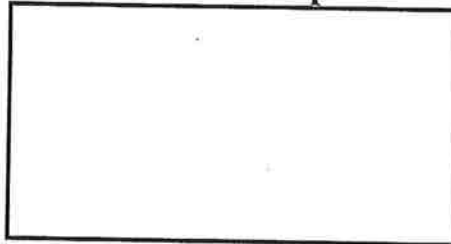
GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

3

3

25. Without the first paragraph, the passage would lose:
- A. an overview of the passage as a whole.
 - B. a brief introduction and transition into the topic.
 - C. important detail that later becomes relevant to the passage.
 - D. an explanation of the logic behind the author's viewpoint.
26. In line 11, the statement "despite being remarkably intelligent" is intended to:
- F. call attention to the fact that although Porter was a well-respected art critic, he failed to impress his college professors.
 - G. communicate to the reader that Porter's lack of a formal education did not detract from his ability to critique art.
 - H. emphasize to the reader that Porter's high level of intelligence was not related to his artistic ability.
 - J. inform the reader that Porter's position as an art critic was so difficult that it challenged his intellect.
27. The word *revered* in line 71 most nearly means:
- A. trusted.
 - B. depreciated.
 - C. reminiscent.
 - D. honored.
28. According to the passage, when did Fairfield Porter become serious about becoming an artist?
- F. Immediately upon his return from Italy.
 - G. While he was studying at the Art Students League.
 - H. Just before his death in 1975.
 - J. Approximately thirty years after he returned from Italy.
29. The third paragraph states that, during 1931 and 1932, Fairfield Porter was:
- A. continuing his training as an art critic.
 - B. the greatest art critic in Italy.
 - C. planning his marriage to Anne Channing.
 - D. training to become a Renaissance painter.
30. The author uses the phrase "other side of his fame" (line 48) most likely in order to:
- F. suggest that Fairfield Porter was better known as an artist than as an art critic.
 - G. indicate that Fairfield Porter was both a renowned art critic and painter.
 - H. show that Fairfield Porter was not aware of his popularity as a painter.
 - J. suggest that other art critics of the time were more famous than was Fairfield Porter.

TLC Stamp



GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.