

# Eternal Quest

Richard Thompson

**M**ankind probably first became aware of beauty as a subject for discussion during the heyday of ancient Athens. The citizen of that city in the sixth century B.C. might, if he wished, join a circle of thinkers and discuss the subject at great length. Each little group of mind-probers would attach itself to some thinker who for some reason or other had attained eminence in his field. Exultantly they would pursue the eternal for hours, thinking neither of personal comfort nor of work, producing great quantities of verbiage together with some leavening of original thought. One school of thought which devoted itself a good part of the time to the pursuit of beauty — that is, the concept of beauty — eventually arrived at the conclusion that beauty, along with truth and goodness, is eternal. While they were congratulating themselves on the propounding of this dictum, the philosophers carefully ignored the industrious slaves who were busily chipping away at columns and friezes, who were polishing exquisite statues, who in short were constructing that heritage of beauty which is today our principal legacy from ancient Greece. Grimly the philosophers clung to their esoteric ideas, battling to the death with other dissident philosophers and in the end bequeathing to us their opinions.

Ever since then, in age after weary age, that schism between thinkers and doers has been repeated with variations. In the middle ages it was the scholars and clerics who argued endlessly over esthetical points while the more humble craftsmen erected soaring cathedrals, symphonic stained glass windows and mosaics, and a host of beautiful objects too humble to be considered by the pundits. In a later age a new generation of self-styled "wise men" would glance at these truly beautiful works and dismiss them with the scornful comment, "gothic" a synonym for "barbarous." The thinkers could simply not understand the simple and intuitive standards of beauty employed by the doers. They scoffed and in scoffing made eternal laughingstocks of themselves.

Today the "struggle" continues. While the writers and critics of a score of periodicals pour forth nonsensical statements and disjointed reasoning, the doers for once are striving to follow their leadership without noticeable success. Nothing satisfies the remarkable standards of the guild of

mind-probers. The most fantastic conglomeration of line, color, and psychological analysis, when put on canvas or carved in stone, is regarded by these as "too tame" or else "insincere." The last phrase is the most accurate ever included in several volumes of nonsense, for most of this art is insincere. When artists are so overawed by the writing trade that their initiative and standards of beauty suffer, no sincerity is possible in art.

The exact relationship of all this to the topic of beauty may at first be hard to see, although actually it is quite simple. That standards of beauty are necessary to the artist is undeniable, but these standards ought to be his own idea, not the product of some critic whose principal motive is to sell books. No one can deny that we have discarded traditional standards of beauty or, rather, that writers and artists have phey's insomnia purely psychological. Sleeping pills nothing cling to our outmoded instincts, as is evidenced by the vague disgust felt by Mr. Average Citizen towards the vitriolic greens and clashing reds which are now regarded as the ultimate in artistic beauty. The only consolation is that the artists, having gone so far, can go no farther.

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## Mr. Fix-it

Shirley Jo Waltz

As I write this, I can look across the room and see a gray-haired gentleman whom I call Daddy. There is a twinkle in his eye, and although he laughed when I told him that he was the subject of my theme, I think he is secretly pleased. As he sits there in his favorite easy chair, his slipper swings on his long foot in time to the music which is softly pouring from the radio. The only lights in the room are from the radio and the Christmas tree. Daddy has always liked to sit quietly in a room with soft lights and music. In his day he was quite a dancer and a Sir Gallahad too, I understand. He is still very handsome and gallant, in my opinion, even though he is getting a "middle-age spread" and his hair is silver.

My friends all like to come to our house in order to talk to Daddy and to hear him laugh. The children in our neighborhood say that Mr. Waltz laughs just like Santa Claus. His