

1927
The studio -
Sunday afternoon -
May 15th -
Florence -

Laurie Dear:

The Proof came - all safe & sound & not a penny to pay. I just went to Sportello No 33 at the Porta, & there was the neat parcel handed out to me. I've looked them over more than once, you may be sure, and yet, not having them here beside me as I write, I may not mention all I like best. But my first general impression (confirmed & strengthened by reviewing), is that you've made great strides in portraiture. Some of those portraits are superb, Laurie!

I confess I'd always thought you much stronger at landscape or design, than at depicting your fellow-man, but now I'm not sure. Anyone who can make such brilliant character studies as those of the interior decorator, or of young Dorothy Gilpin, can make a mighty

not a bit too daring

fine portrait! I think they, in particular
are extraordinary. Also take off my hat
to your ingenious lighting & composing of
the violinist. A difficult problem,
interestingly solved. You've also brought
out finely, not only the personal characteristics
but the lives & "settings" of the respective
Mrs. Musbaum & Mr. Fisher. Of the
latter's architecture I really can't judge
fairly, but it doesn't strike me as being
particularly fine. I like the proportions
of the Polo Club lounge (& my blessed
Laurie in the chair!), but I don't like
the mantel, with those minaret things.

Garrison's relief I like as far as he
copied the quaint old jousting knight
& turned him into a polo-player. Horse
& man & caparisons are fine - but
why did he scallop the background?
That spoils it, to my mind, just as
too many scallopy folds of drapery mar
his architectural figures on the outside
of that ~~other~~ building. However, they are
architectural, there's no doubt about
that.

And Laurie, I have a confession to make:
I showed the proofs to Eva! I know
how you hate to have the proofs seen,
but these negatives are so fine, irrespective
of print quality, that I thought you
wouldn't mind, & besides, she's seen
other finished things of yours. - So she
knows what you can do. Well, she
was tremendously impressed - both
with the patterns & compositions, & also
with the distinctness which you've
achieved without a trace of hardness.
She hates a "fuzzy" photograph! She
was fascinated by the personality of
the interior decorator lady, & wanted
to know all about her. I could tell
her nothing, because you haven't told
me. Some of the baby ones are sweet.
Eva so loved the one of the babe
sitting on Betsy's knee & looking up
at her, that I'm going to ask you
to make a print of that for me to
give her as a remembrance present.
Will you please - & send me bill for
same. Eva's going back to England in

a couple of weeks now, so when it is done
(no hurry) just write on the back "To Eva,
from Laura & Brenda" & mail it to
82 Vincent Square, London S.W.1.

According to my promise, I have despatched
to you the book of prints of the Laurentian
Mss. I do hope you'll get some pleasure
& help from them.

Back to proofs again. On the one of
Bets & the Baby you will trim down
Bets' hair a bit, won't you - also
the lines in her neck? 'Huh?

That's a sweet one, too, with Mrs.
& the baby. I also like much the
easy & unusual pose of the little
boy John. Ann is good, too - all
good, in fact, except where Baby
moved, & who can help that?

The landscapes of the Mesa I adore.
You certainly have got that wonderful
sweep of the knife-edge drive part
of it. I fairly expected the proof to
be blue instead of red - it brought
those blue layers so vivid to my mind.

Can you make a big one of the Ship Rock?
I do like it! Of the two Indian ones, I
prefer the one where he (she?) is standing
up in the half-gloom of the upper window.
The other I'm not so keen about -
perhaps because I don't like the pose -
with the arm bent backward at elbow,
etc. Of course I know arms do do that,
but it doesn't make me like it any
better. I'm looking over the architectural
ones again. I like very much some of the
little square plaques above the entrance
of the Midland Savings Bank. Nice
Romanesque treatment -

As for the Frozen Tree - you did it
once before, & now you've done it
again, as I believe only you can do
it - Exquisite. And the one of
Berthoud (?) Pass is one of the biggest
things you've ever accomplished. It
made Eva fairly gasp. Marvellous,
what that row of stark trees in
the foreground adds to the distant
mass. It soars.

Who says you haven't accomplished
anything this year - huh?!

you know, I think you & I, as well as some others I could mention, suffer, in a way, from knowing and appreciating so much of the art achievements of bygone ages & peoples. It leads us, unconsciously, when we take stock of our output, to balance it, not against one other artist's achievements but against ^{that of} a group of artists. If you stop & analyze each man's output for a period equal to our creative one, we find we've been pretty busy, after all. ~~The~~ Try it - when you're downhearted.

My own winter seems to have been an utter fizzle as far as creative achievement goes - but I find, looking through the lives of other & better artists, that there were often periods of unproductiveness lasting far longer than six months. So then I take heart again.

Not much news to recount - the city is a mass of flowers, & our garden is enchanting. I'm expecting Dad on about the 27th of this month, so keeping my nose to grindstone now, in order to be free when he comes. He'll just catch Eva, who departs on the 30th also! Must play piano & violin sonatas with old Mr. Rich. He loves it! Bye-bye, dear -
your Brendie



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