

October 5th 1966

Dear Eliot; Aline asked me if I ever got your letter of last winter about my paintings. I did, thank you for it. I didn't answer, because I didn't know what to say. I think that I maybe do combine something from abstract-expressionism (which is a term I hate) with representation, and I certainly aim to do what you say I do do. I hope I am that successful: but I always have profound doubts. When I like something I paint, then I have a reaction soon afterwards; I see something different from what I do, and think that is the right thing, and what I do is on the wrong track or superficial. Last night, after seeing Aline, I called on John Button, whose paintings I often like very much, and it filled me again with the usual doubts about my own work. Also he had a catalogue of a big Paris exhibition of Balthus, which increased my doubts about my work.

I think that what I try to do, partly because it is natural for me to, is combine something I see in De Kooning with what I love and admire in Vuillard, and I would like to but can't include Bonnard.

Probably you know about the contents of this clipping. I thought of sending it to Mike and Nancy, but instead summarized the contents for my own congressman, and sent it to you, who would make more effective use of it than such an opponent as a Straus.

I have been reading a book that you might like, and then again you might not, called Human Ecology, by Sir George Stapledon (Faber 1964). I may have a copy sent to you. Jimmy found it in one of the British book catalogues that he subscribes to, and ordered it. It is closer to my beliefs about the world than that wildness is the preservation of the world. It includes the concept that wildness is necessary to the whole: he got his fame during both world wars as a world authority on grass, and contributed much to the problem of Great Britain being able to feed itself during the wars. He wants to, as he puts it, "integrate" city and country, ruralism and industrialism, to achieve a correct balance between the rural-agricultural and the urban-industrial, between the intellectual and the intuitional, between the biological and the physical. He thinks that the necessary and healthy imbalance of our life has gone to an unnatural and unhealthy unbalance, and that is caused by the segregation of our knowledge, perhaps because man may be by nature a mechanist who is more interested in playing tricks with the environment and with other men than in a sense of the whole and of the fitness of things. His researches about grass led to something that he doesn't like, to a boom in agriculture in Great Britain by making agriculture into an industry that is profitable to the farmer, in short his activity increased the segregation that he thinks is the illness of our society.

I am still reading him, and he is hard to summarize, but I suspect that he is presenting perhaps the most important idea today in the social field.

Next June early, Anne and I and the two girls plan to go to Italy. Katie loved her trip with Laurence and Betsy this summer, and now she loves college, which is Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart in Westchester County. It seems more serious academically than, say Sarah Lawrence; they respect facts more than "teaching the children how to think" which comes down to making them want to have the same politics as their teachers, to making Schaufflers out of everyone.

I hope Pat will like the university, and that he can take a creative writing course that he wants to.

with love

Tanquerel