Read, Herbert (Edward) (1893 – 1968)

Summary Article: Read, Herbert (Edward)
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English critic and poet. His reputation as an art critic was established in the 1930s and 1940s, when he was a keen supporter of such artists as Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, and Ben Nicholson. His many books and essays, which helped to make modern art accessible to a wider public, include The Meaning of Art (1931) and the influential Education through Art (1943). He was knighted in 1953.

Life Reed was born in Kirbymoorside, Yorkshire, studied at Leeds University, and served as an officer in World War I. He was assistant keeper in the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1922–31, professor of fine art at Edinburgh until 1933, and editor of the Burlington Magazine, an art journal, from 1933–39.

Poetry and literary criticism As a poet he was a careful and conscientious crafter of free verse, publishing a succession of volumes from 1919 onwards. As a literary critic he published Reason and Romanticism (1926), English Prose Style (1928), The Sense of Glory (1929), Wordsworth (1930), Form in Modern Poetry (1932), In Defence of Shelley (1935), Essays in Literary Criticism (1938), and The True Voice of Feeling (1953).

Art criticism His reputation as an art critic rests mainly on his interwar years, when he defended the work of many new English artists. He also wrote several influential works on the educational and social role of art, including Art Now (1933), Art and Industry (1936), and Education through Art (1943). Later works, which concentrated upon the rationale behind the modern movement, include The Philosophy of Modern Art (1951). He was one of the founders of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London.

Autobiography He also wrote three volumes of autobiography: The Innocent Eye (1933), Annals of Innocence and Experience (1940), and The Contrary Experience (1963).

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