

RUE de PARADIS

(Paradise Street)

1925

Oliver N. Chaffee, Jr.



The Painting

In this oil on canvas, the scene is of a woman on a donkey riding down a street in a southern France village (probably Vence, France). The artists' interest in architecture, along with his previous experimentation in Impressionism, Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism and Primitivism are evident in the bold leaning lines of the buildings. The buildings also show that he was preoccupied with mathematical measurement and theories of proportion, as well as, his quest for solidity of form and structure. While earlier working with bold colors, during this period (probably a decade long), Chaffee was drawn to more muted, natural colors like those found in the buildings and nature that he painted. The rough brush strokes help to convey the rustic character of the buildings. This painting could almost be considered "whimsical".

The Artist



Born in January, 1881, in Detroit, Chaffee was always drawn to art. When he was twelve, his wealthy grandfather died and left him a trust which helped him to continue his pursuit of art throughout his life.

As mentioned above, he experimented with many styles of art and was considered "a modern before modernism was popular". His goal was to shape a mixture of abstract and real; he loved nature and all living things. He was highly thought of by other leading artists and students, but was a modest, quiet person who did not seek recognition or material success.

Chaffee was one of the founders of the Provincetown Art Assn. (MA) and was considered one of the best American fauvist painters. In 1908, a fire consumed a brothers garage where Chaffee had stored over 80 paintings . . . this was considered a huge loss of an era of Chaffee art.

In the 1930's he became interested in fantasy and primitivism, especially tribal art and the art of the Pacific Northwest and Easter Island, especially masks.

Chaffee was married twice. The first time (1912) to Mary Hollbrook Cole with whom he had a son (who only lived for a week) and a daughter, Jane Merick Chaffee. They divorced in 1926 and later that year he married Ada Gilmore, an accomplished block printmaker. Interestingly, Ada was born in Kalamazoo in 1883 and was the daughter of the Gilmore who established the Gilmore Department Store.

During his lifetime, Oliver Chaffee spent most of his time in New York, Provincetown, MA, France (Paris and Southern France) and Florida. In April, 1944, while traveling from Florida to Provincetown, Chaffee experienced a fatal stroke and passed away in N. Carolina.

Questions

Elementary

**Does this picture tell a story? What is it?

**Do you see any interesting shapes in the painting? What are they?

High School/Adult

**Can you see a relationship between modern art and nature? What is it?

**Can you see the influence of the artists' interest in architecture in this painting?
What is it?

**Can you see an influence of Fauvism on this painting?