Mentor's Introduction

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Roy Pearson has chosen a very interesting, and, I believe, important question to investigate: how is the visual artist portrayed on television? This is a complex question that requires antecedent research: is the artist portrayed on television, how often, under what circumstances? Mr. Pearson's preliminary answers to these questions are impressive: artists are treated sporadically but frequently throughout the week in local news shows, as regular features on a Sunday morning news magazine, in commercials selling a variety of wares through the depicted glamour of their lifestyles, and in all the entertainment genres throughout daily, prime time viewing hours.

The more important question and the more difficult to determine, is to what effect are these portrayals? To what effect for our nation's conception of artists and their art? To what effect for art instruction in the schools? Does the portrayal of the visual artist in local news render artists and their art trivial and of marginal value? Does the nation want to pay for an education in art for its sons and daughters so that they can model the charm of the illiteracy of Nick, the noble savage artist of "Family Ties," now with a spin-off show of his own? Does Charles Kurault's serious and reverent treatments of artists and their works on Sunday mornings offset these other treatments?

Certainly Mr. Pearson cannot and does not intend to answer all of these questions in his present study, but any findings he will bring to the field will be original and valuable. Although we have considerable knowledge about several aspects of television in society

we have few findings about the depictions of artists by the television industry. Mr. Pearson comes to his study well-equipped as a formerly practicing artist surviving on the basis of his work, as a teacher of art, and as a recent student of Vincent Lanier, the pioneer advocate of television study in art education.