

Impact

NEWSLETTER OF THE AYN RAND INSTITUTE

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Ayn Rand Film Set to Hit Theaters January Release for Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life

Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life, the film biography of Ayn Rand, is slotted for an early January opening in New York City and Los Angeles. The film will be distributed by Strand Releasing, a prestigious independent film distributor.

The attendance levels at the film in New York and Los Angeles will influence how it will be released in other cities. If the film is well attended, it will gradually tour the country, eventually being shown in 100 to 150 prestige theaters. Otherwise, the film will have only short runs in minor theaters in fewer cities.

Impact readers in the Los Angeles and New York areas are strongly encouraged to see the movie early and to take their friends. The film will not be released on video or cable until its theater run is over.

Full details of the film's showing dates will be published in *Impact* as soon as they become available.

There will be spin-offs from *Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life*. Michael Paxton, the film's director, has plans for a companion "coffee table" book—containing the script and stills from the movie. In addition, a number of recording companies are interested in releasing the film's soundtrack.

Jon Gerrans, co-president of Strand Releasing, told *Impact*, "*Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life* comes from a very objective perspective, which is very appealing. Michael Paxton has done a superb job. The film is entertaining and informative and shows a very personal side of Ayn Rand and her life. It makes you wish you could have met her." Mr. Gerrans first saw the film at ARI's benefit screening last November. He was sold on it immediately and will tailor the film's release to make it eligible as a nominee for this year's Academy Awards. Strand was the distributor for a French film (*Wild Reeds*) that last year won several French Academy



Michael Paxton

Jeff Britting

Awards and the National Film Critics Award for best foreign film. Strand also re-released *The Graduate* last year.

After four years of creative struggle to get *Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life* on the screen, Mr. Paxton commented, "It's a great feeling to have it primed for release. I'm also very happy

that Strand is doing the distributing. Because distributors have an impact on the final packaging of the film, I always wanted a company that appreciates the importance of Ayn Rand's ideas." Jeff Britting, the film's associate producer, researcher, and composer added, "It's a dream fulfilled: combining ideas, film, and music."

The film has been approved by Ayn Rand's estate and displays considerable material from the Ayn Rand archives—including dozens of photos of Ayn Rand and many rare documents about her life. The film also features interviews with Leonard Peikoff, Michael Berliner, and Harry Binswanger—and shows rare film clips of Ayn Rand.

Michael Paxton's stated goal in making the film is "to create a portrait of the most original thinker of the 20th century and to show that her life was proof that the good is possible." And soon Ayn Rand fans across America will be able to experience Mr. Paxton's vision.

Christians vs. Objectivism

The following two incidents indicate that some Christian groups are so concerned about the influence of Objectivism that they have targeted it for special attacks.

Leonard Peikoff discussed the first of these during the August 17 broadcast of his radio show, "Philosophy: Who Needs It."

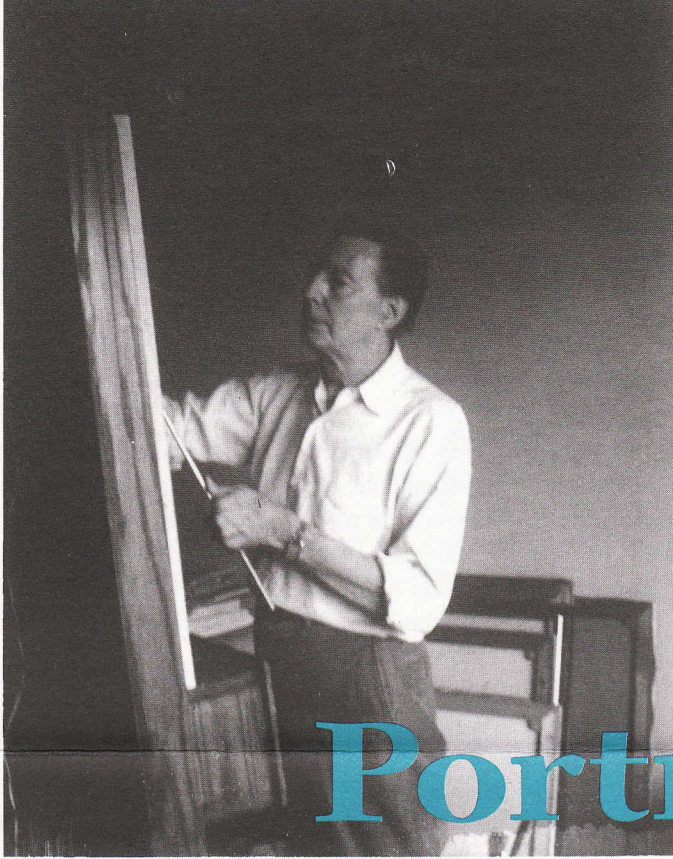
It is always gratifying to know your voice is being heard—and some people are really listening to me. Apparently, some Christian fundamentalists have been attempting to boycott me in Arizona, where I broadcast on KYCA 1490AM in Prescott. They've written to several advertisers, protesting the ads during the program, and they've asked the station to take the program off the air.

I regard this as a mark of success. Until groups try to silence you, you haven't arrived. When they feel that it is not safe to ignore you, that means you are hitting them where it hurts.

I am happy to say that the station's General Manager, Lou Silverstein, and several advertisers have continued to support the program, despite these protests. I will continue to grace the Arizona airwaves for some time to come.

The second case is a Christian book publisher's ploy to get its recently published book attacking Ayn Rand onto the shelves of a major bookstore chain. The Trinity Foundation has written to its supporters offering them \$40 in free books if they will place an order for *Without a Prayer: Ayn Rand and the Close of Her System* at their local Barnes and Noble stores. Their purpose is to create enough "artificial" demand at some stores to convince Barnes and Noble to stock the book in all of its stores. Our source, a philosophy professor who has scanned the book, reports that it is a diatribe "motivated by an odd hostility toward Ayn Rand for pulling young people away from fundamentalist religion."

Frank O'Connor at work in his studio, 1966



Portrait of an ARTIST

Charles Francis O'Connor was born on September 22, 1897. To commemorate his centenary, ARI asked Mary Ann Sures to write about her friend of 25 years.

Frank O'Connor loved to create beauty, in life and in art.

Physically, he looked the part. He was tall and slender; he had light brown hair, a high

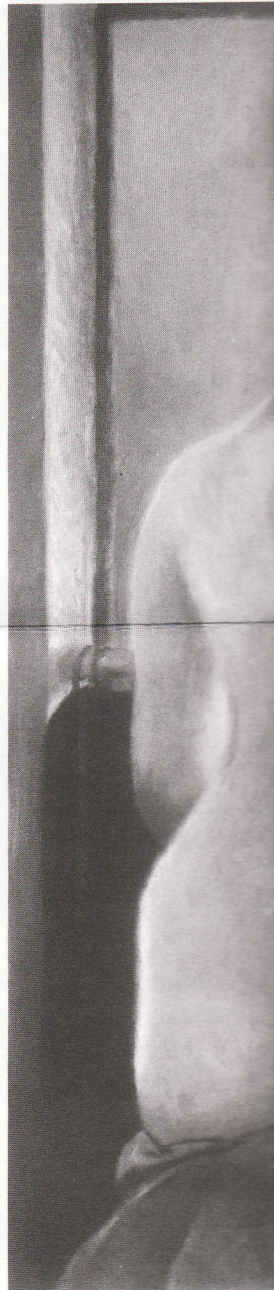
forehead, high cheekbones; his lips were thin and straight, often smiling; his eyes were blue gray, often intent and serious, often twinkling in amusement (sometimes at his own witty remarks).

In manner, he was calm and soft-spoken, always a gentleman. In character, he was a man of iron—independent and strong-willed. “My Rock of Gibraltar” is how he was described by his wife, Ayn Rand.

Frank was a talented decorator, even though he had no professional training in interior design. The O'Connor apartment of the 1960s was his creation. He combined austerity with extravagance—austerity in the angular and circular shapes of the furniture, extravagance in the richly textured materials, touches of brilliant color, exotic flowers.

There was gray carpeting with the sheen of pewter; a wedge-shaped pillow in peacock-blue silk on a black tweed couch; there were armless chairs covered in olive-green velour. He designed a small, round, black table with an opaque glass top; beneath the glass, hidden lights created a soft glow; small crystal sculptures set on the glass appeared to float, as if suspended above an island of light.

On glass and polished wood surfaces, Frank placed brightly colored objects: bowls and ashtrays in shades of blue-green (his wife's favorite color); a copper tray with ceramic fruit in hues of

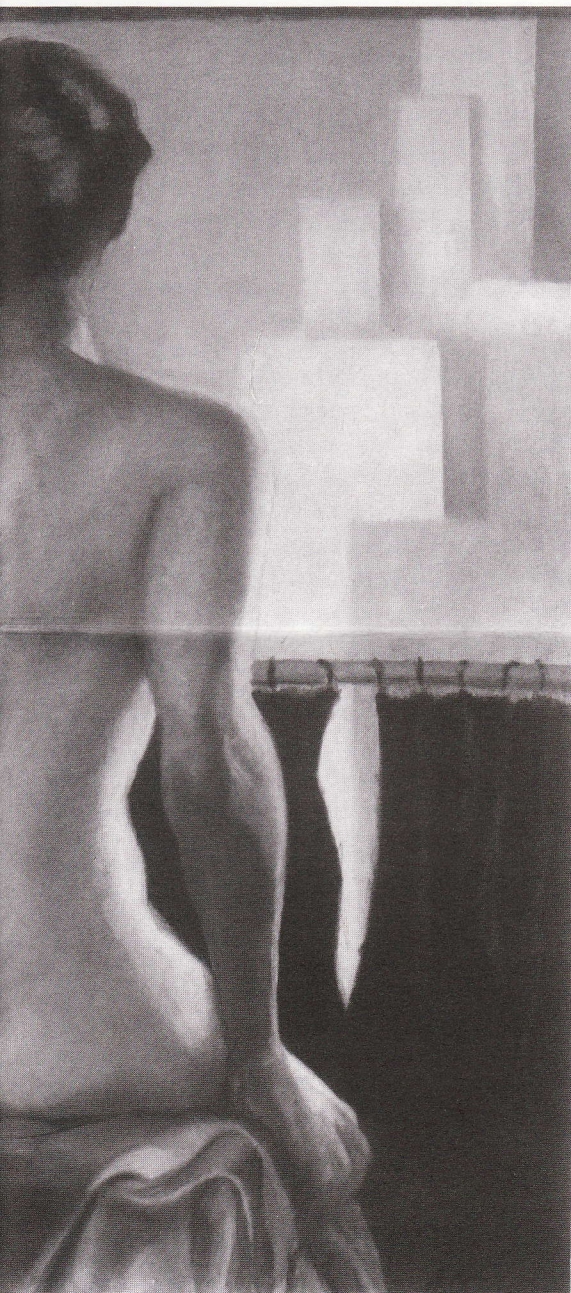


Serenity

apple green, pink, and red; a cigarette box made of copper and peacock-blue glass; silver candelabra resembling stylized figures standing at military attention. He designed floral arrangements (another of his artistic talents): purple and orange birds-of-paradise rising in a crystal vase, or a bowl with the glossy, red leaves of an anthurium plant. And hanging on the off-white walls surrounding the room were Frank's paintings.

He was about fifty-eight years old when he started to paint. Some artists master technique, but have little to express in content. Frank's problem was the reverse. His imagination seemed endless and overflowing, and it constantly challenged his technical knowledge.

From the start, his painting was inventive. His first finished work, in pastel, was an imaginary view of modern towers rising into an evening sky of deep blue; a tree branch with green leaves cut into the foreground. Upon completing it, he did a second version, one more difficult to exe-



cute—the same subject in wintry twilight and snow. Frank worked at an easel in the bedroom while his wife sat at her desk in the nearby study writing *Atlas Shrugged*.

He enrolled in the Art Students League, attending daily to take instruction and to work from live models or still life arrangements. One week, the model was a Japanese actor in costume and make-up. While other students did studies of just the model, Frank composed and painted a still life: stalks of bamboo with pointed leaves cast shadows on a wall on which there was a framed painting of the actor (Frank titled it *Painting Within a Painting*).

His work was entirely firsthand, in every respect. He visited museums, acquainting himself with the work of old masters, but he was not influenced by historical styles. He developed a style of rendering that was completely his own, combining precision with sensuousness. For his first still life in oil, he gave himself what appeared to be an impossible assignment. He set up an arrangement featuring a crystal decanter with an inch of green liqueur, a copper tray, a tall silver candelabra, and a crystal brandy glass with the green liquid—all of it sitting on a white tablecloth in bright sunlight. He was faced with a complexity of reflections, colors, highlights and shadows. He brought it all under control by selecting, revising, eliminating, emphasizing. And when he finished, there was the brilliance of green liqueur reflected in glowing copper and seen through sparkling crystal, and the hint of copper cast onto shining silver.

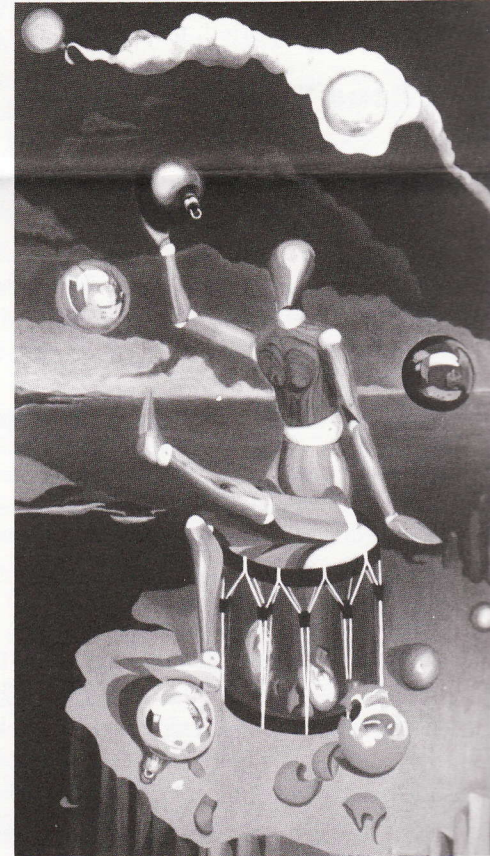
Frank painted happily and steadily for about ten years. Unfortunately, he developed an allergy which often caused his hands to be rough and sore, making it difficult for him to control the paintbrush; turpentine aggravated the condition. Consequently, he stopped painting before he had fully mastered technique, and there are errors in anatomy and perspective in some of his paintings. However, in the full context of his work, the flaws are minor. His sense of life shines through, irrepressibly. The world in his paintings is an ordered, immaculate, luminous, *benevolent* realm, as in:

Still Life with Apples: in which strong light illuminates a small blue ceramic vase and three red apples, giving them an assertive character and casting their shadows and reflections onto a lustrous surface. (These are the apples described by Ayn Rand in "Art and Cognition," *The Romantic Manifesto*.)

Serenity: in which dignity and calm certainty are conveyed by the body of a nude woman, seen from the back, seated before a window and enveloped by warm light.

Diminishing Returns: in which the theme of gaiety is expressed by an artist's wooden anatomical model seated on a toy drum, juggling gleaming Christmas tree ornaments that rise, fall, and drift away in sunlit space.

Man Also Rises: in which man's work is contrasted with nature, showing girders of a building under construction and a few broad rays of light streaming through dark clouds and piercing a body of water. (Reproduced on the jacket of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition of *The Fountainhead*. In the introduction, Ayn Rand wrote a beautiful tribute to her husband.)



Diminishing Returns

Frank always looked at the world with the selective vision of an artist. In 1975, when Ayn was in the hospital recuperating from surgery, I came to New York to stay with him. We visited her daily, and Frank insisted that we stay until twilight. From her room, there was a view of the East River. As blue dusk settled over the city, Frank sat at the window, waiting for the first lights to appear in buildings and on the bridges spanning the river. "It's all very lovely," he said.

Frank O'Connor died on November 7, 1979; he was eighty-two. His favorite poem was read at the graveside, Rudyard Kipling's "When Earth's Last Picture Is Painted."

Toohey Interviewed

Actor Robert Douglas, who played Ellsworth Toohey in the 1949 production of *The Fountainhead*, was recently interviewed by ARI about his work on *The Fountainhead* movie and his meetings with Ayn Rand. ARI archives researcher Scott McConnell interviewed Mr. Douglas for more than 50 minutes. Among the many topics discussed were Mr. Douglas's conception of the role of Ellsworth Toohey (he played Toohey as being stronger than the character Miss Rand envisaged), his love for the script, and Miss Rand's reactions to the scenes as they were being shot. Mr. Douglas said that he enjoyed playing the challenging role of Toohey, which he got after not being chosen for the part of Gail Wynand. Mr. Douglas also appeared (usually as a villain) in such movies as *Kim*, *Don Juan*, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, and *Ivanhoe*. He still receives an average of 9 to 10 fan letters a week, with half of them, he reported, mentioning *The Fountainhead*.

Ayn Rand Number One

Time magazine is conducting a poll on the Web for the "100 most important people of the 20th Century." In the category Entertainers and Artists, Ayn Rand is currently number one. As of August 19 she had received 36,957 votes, (16.65 percent of the total in this category), just ahead of Madonna. Voting continues until March and promises to be very competitive. To register your vote, go to this Web site: <http://www.time.com>.

ARI Anti-Volunteerism Request

If you have details about any state or major city conventions promoting Volunteerism, please notify ARI at scottm@aynrand.org or (310) 306-9232.

For Body and Soul

ARI's fund-raising picnic held during the recent Lyceum Conference was attended by 70 people. The menu included Miss Rand's favorite lemonade, cold borscht, and cabbage rolls, followed by the main courses of cabbage and macaroni salad, Russian salad, and sweet and smoky chicken. Dessert was caramelized pecan pie, Russian nut cake, and fruited upside-down cake.

The highlight of the evening was actress Janne Peters' reading of unpublished Ayn Rand material. Miss Peters, an award-winning actress, is known to Objectivist audiences for

her portrayals of Kay Gonda in the 1989 world premier of "Ideal" and in the forthcoming film *Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life*.

The readings were:

- a 1932 letter from Ayn Rand to a Chicago cousin expressing her gratitude to the family that brought her to America;
- a 1937 letter from Ayn Rand to her agent discussing the content of "Ideal";
- a monologue by Kira from "The Unconquered" (the theatrical version of *We the Living*);
- a 1938 letter to a playwright friend about the greatness of his play and recent (horrible) performances of "Night of January 16th";
- a description of Kay Gonda's background and the Johnnie Dawes letter to Kay Gonda from the novella version of "Ideal";
- and the 1927 scenario for "The Skyscraper," Ayn Rand's first original scenario for Cecil B. DeMille.

ARI Day Slated for New York City

ARI contributors in the New York City area are invited to attend a full-day Ayn Rand Institute meeting (November 1, 1997) that will outline and discuss ARI projects. The meeting's theme is "Changing the World," and a significant portion of the meeting will be ARI staff and directors answering questions from contributors. Invitations to the event have been mailed to ARI donors in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Anyone from outside these states who would like to attend should contact ARI. Advance registration is required (deadline October 23), and the meeting is open only to current ARI contributors and their guests.

We plan to hold these meetings in a number of locations around the United States over the next couple of years, with the next meeting planned for San Francisco in early 1998.

Second Renaissance Summer Conference

Second Renaissance Conferences will present a summer conference, June 28 to July 11, 1998, in Nashua, New Hampshire (44 miles from Boston). One- and two-week attendance options are available. Faculty members include Harry Binswanger, John Ridpath, Peter Schwartz, Mary Ann Sures, Andrew Bernstein, Gary Hull, Edwin A. Locke, and M. Northrup Buechner. For details, call 203-791-1755 or e-mail SchwartzSRC@sprintmail.com, or write to 130 Federal Road, Suite 56, Danbury, CT 06811.

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The Center for the Advancement of Objectivism

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