

Dear Sir,

Mr Mencher's column points to the question whether art and icon are the same. I don't think they are. All art is iconic but not all icons are art. The role of the ikon in the Russian Orthodox Church is determined by religion. Some of these ikons are superb art, but that is not necessary for success in the role of ikon.

So I think the hauntingness of the photograph of Settela is not because it is a work of art. The Victorian adage "every picture tells a story" may be true of some pictures, but it seems to follow that you will not be able to appreciate the picture unless you know the story. If you don't, does the picture cease to be art? It is what we know of the German genocide of Jews and gypsies that gives the poignancy to that photograph. With the Rembrandt self-portraits that Mr Mencher also mentions, it perhaps helps if you know something of Rembrandt's life, perhaps by way of Joseph Heller's underrated historical novel *Picture This*; but there is also the distinct possibility that you may miss the art, explain it way as a comment on the life. With real art the significance is always the work of art itself.

That raises the more interesting question about false or inferior art that becomes iconic. Does it tell us more about our world, about standards of taste, or about the work of art itself that one of the predominant icons of our world is Andy Warhol's *Marilyn*?

yours &c.

J. M. Jones

Dear Sir,

Allow me to draw your attention to the well-known photograph of Anne Frank, reproduced below. Our knowledge of what happened to her no doubt fills us with sorrow and anger as we examine it: the photograph of a lively, intelligent modern girl. Now look at Settela—a girl from another world. She could belong to the slums of India. Likewise, she might belong to the age of Rembrandt himself. Her primitive garments make her representative of universal mankind: rather like King Lear removing his clothes so that he might reveal the essential character of his human nature, shorn of power, wealth, and all distinction. Basic, perceiving, helpless Man: this sensible warm motion. She looks from the train, without perceptible response to what she sees. Does she feel anything? I don't know. But she stands for us all. If Christianity is right, then Christ stands there, within her. In any event she poses the most fundamental question. It is what we know about Anne Frank that makes her important. Settela's importance arises purely from her image.

Barrie Mencher

ANNE



SETTELA

