Letters

"Art in Science"? No!

As a rule, artists don't attempt to barge into the columns of science magazines, but a point of esthetic honor is involved here, and something should be said.

D. G. Barry's "Art in science" (10 Dec. 1965, p. 1486) contains certain formulations that threaten the artist's traditional preeminence in his own field. Barry speaks of "forms and patterns as revealed by science" as having "esthetic elements in common with the forms and patterns created by artists." Elsewhere, referring to an exhibit organized by Mort Grant and himself, he says, " . . . we thus sought to provide evidence that science enables us to find beauty as well as scientific truth." The basis for my disagreement with the article lies solely in these two seemingly innocent quotations, for it is not science that reveals the beauty of nature, but the artist's vision alone. Even when science shows us wonders that are hidden from the naked eye, it is doing no more than providing us with the raw material of nature. It remains for the artist to translate this raw material into meaningful symbols.

Perhaps I'm a trifle touchy, but, as an artist, I don't like to see my territory invaded even by something as distinguished and respectable as an electron microscope. A micrograph of lens tissue may be beautiful, but its beauty is nothing more than an accident of nature and hence cannot, in itself, communicate ideas.

The purpose of a work of art, on the other hand, *is* to communicate ideas, and, in the process, to reveal aspects of nature we were never aware of before. This is what happens when, after seeing an exhibition of paintings by Renoir, you discover to your astonishment that every child you meet is a living "Renoir." Whistler had this in mind when he said that nature is always trying to imitate the artist.

Obviously, then, it is not science, with its modern telescopes and microscopes, which has "revealed" new kinds of imagery; it is simply that the artist, through the force of his imagination, has made it possible for us to see beauty in the "patterns, lines, and colors" that science has brought to light.

It is true that there is an amazing similarity between the imagery of science and that of much contemporary art. The Modern Art Museum is loaded with paintings that *look* like exploding galaxies, intestinal smears, and cross sections of frog muscle. But this formal similarity is misleading; it is, in fact, the key to the *dis*similarity between art and science. A close-up of the encrustations on an oyster shell, for example, might resemble the textures in a painting by Dubuffet, but the meanings of their respective forms are completely unrelated. To attempt to compare the two is to force each to be judged on the other's terms. If I were to make an abstract painting designed to express the nervous energy of a congested city street, I would hate to see it hung next to a computer-generated pattern merely to show off their similarities. I've seen too many paintings suffer, undeservedly, through such comparisons. Fortunately for the computer, it wouldn't feel a thing, because if it were judged on the painting's terms it wouldn't stand a chance.

The world is full of avid matchmakers who are determined to bring art and science together in suffocating wedlock. Why? Is this misalliance supposed to produce an art that is obedient to science, and a science that is pretty? This is a kind of artificial togetherness whose only common bonds are coincidence, superficiality, and wishful thinking.

I am sure, however, that there is a level where science and art are truly similar—where they share the intuition that has just sprung from their common social and physical environment. This intuition next emerges as a thinking technique (such as art or science) whose mode, or style, is a reflection of the total life experience. Investigation at this level could, conceivably, help us to discover the *real* similarities between Newton and Rembrandt, for example, or Einstein and Picasso. Somehow this approach seems better than simply staring in blank amazement at printed circuits and calligraphic designs that happen to look alike.

In spite of the matchmakers, I believe that art and science will always manage to remain comfortably apart except on those occasions when they must combine forces to produce necessary additions to living and knowledge—as in the case of the laws of perspective, which embody principles of art and mathematics, or in architecture, which brings together the concepts of the sculptor and the engineer. These are the significant relationships that exist, not the random, eye-catching configurations that are scattered haphazardly throughout the universe.

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Chiropractic and Osteopathy

Now that Flynn's letter ("The legacy of the Flexner Report," 29 Oct., p. 554) has produced some pithy comment from an osteopath (G. Grainger, 24 Dec., p. 1666), it is only fair to make known the reactions of a chiropractor to both letters.

Flynn seems unaware that something analogous to the Flexner Report hit chiropractic schools more than 20 years ago, though it did not come, as in the case of the medical schools, from the outside. The upgrading which resulted was a purely endogenous reformation. Today all schools approved by the American Chiropractic Association are nonprofit institutions offering only a 4-year course, which embraces the basic and the clinical sciences, the theory and practice of chiropractic, public health, jurisprudence, and, generally, comparative therapeutics, as well as nutrition and mental health. They are equipped with laboratories for work in chemistry, histology, dissection, clinical pathology, and roentgenography, as well as every type of visual aid and adequate libraries. Their faculties are made up of seasoned practitioners, young chiropractors with academic degrees in the subjects which they teach, and nonchiropractor spe-