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Calendar of Events January 1935

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COMMUNITY ART PROJECT



CALENDAR of ART EVENTS

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(The following interview with Professor Curt J. Ducasse, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, Brown University, gives his answers to some of the stimulating questions raised by the Institute of Art held in December.)

QUESTION: Is there a real distinction between the so-called fine arts, such as painting and sculpture, and the so-called minor arts, such as furniture, pottery, etc.?

ANSWER: The distinction between the so-called fine arts and the minor or applied or decorative arts is essentially this, that the latter take for their raw material an object which is intended to perform some utilitarian function in addition to being an object of possible aesthetic enjoyment. This imposes upon the artist in the so-called minor arts certain limitations in what he may attempt,—those namely constituted by the fact that no matter how he modifies the object which constitutes his raw material, he must nevertheless leave it fit to discharge its utilitarian function. The artist who works in the fine arts, on the other hand, attempts to free himself as much as possible from limitations of this sort. The object he creates has supposedly no other function than that of being an object for aesthetic contemplation. The only limitations within which the creator of it has to work are those inherent in the medium he uses,—for example, in the case of painting, the limited range of values that pigments, as compared with light as it occurs in nature, make it possible to depict. If the artist who elects to work in mahogany, on the other hand, were to attempt to free himself similarly from limitations imposed by the practical function of the object he creates, he might instead of making a chair or a desk, create an arrangement of carved, turned, polished pieces of wood, shaped and related to one

The Calendar of Art Events is published regularly by the Community Art Project. Copies will be mailed monthly without charge upon request to Miss Louise Bauer, Stenographic Bureau, Brown University, Providence, R. I.

JEWELRY DESIGN

The accompanying photograph illustrates a high point in jewelry design and fabrication. It is the Etruscan fibula, made of fine gold, now in the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design. The fibula was the first safety-pin, and practically no change has been made in construction, though safety-pins are now machine-produced by the thousands.

During the early periods, jewelry played an important part in personal adornment. The Greeks, Etruscans, and early Romans used jewelry of simple and graceful forms with low relief decorations, either stamped or applied, to give vibrations of light that enhance the beautiful color of the gold. In the piece shown, the ornamentation is made up of minute grains of gold so attached that each grain is separate; this technique gives a shimmering play of light over the delicately drawn, animated figures.

The jewelry worn by the Egyptians was much more ornate, and color played a larger part in the effects obtained. Egyptian jewelry was more a part of the costume different from the simple ornament of adornment worn by the Etruscans and Greeks. When gems and pearls were brought into the picture, the jewelry became more lavish.

How fortunate we are today not to have the type of jewelry we wear prescribed by the government or the church, as was the case in the next important period, the Byzantine period. During the early Christian era personal adornment was looked down upon, and it was not until the church was established at Byzantium that a new type of ornament had its beginning. Since the style in design and kind of ornament was supervised by the church, Byzantine jewelry used traditional forms and little emphasis was placed on personal expression.

As trade developed between the countries around the Mediterranean and in the then known east, knowledge broadened and more and more people began to express themselves in the various arts. With the coming of the Renaissance, the use of color and decoration seemed unlimited. One of the finest collections of Renaissance jewelry was recently exhibited at the Rhode Island School of Design; several pieces in the collection undoubtedly originated in the hands of Cellini. The use of colored gems and enamels on gold produced some wonderful effects, and many of the designs were pro-

ART EVENTS and NOTES

another solely with the aim of making the combination an interesting piece of design in the three dimensions, that is, without any attempt to make it any more usable for anything than is, for instance, a piece of statuary.

QUESTION: Is a person who works in the minor arts as genuinely an artist as one who works in the fine arts?

ANSWER: He can be. It is true that in most cases the limitations arising from the utilitarian function of the object upon which he works make his art incapable of expressing many things that he otherwise might desire to express. Yet there is much to be said on the other side. A highly delimited problem, although restricting the variety of what might otherwise be done, at the same time is likely to provide much more highly specific suggestions than does an indeterminate problem. Throughout its history, art, as a matter of fact, has had to lean for its right to existence greatly upon the possibility it had of grafting itself upon objects of use. The savage whom necessity compelled to make a spoon could not have afforded the time to carve things made merely to look at. The practical functions to be performed by a spoon dictated up to a point the shape it had to have, but beyond that point room existed for the expression of the maker's taste. From that point on, he was free; for all freedom, after all, is the freedom a prisoner has in jail. Only, some jails are bigger than others. The minor artist's jail is smaller, but on this account it is likely to be explored by him the more thoroughly.

QUESTION: Do not the fine arts too have at times some connection with aims other than aesthetic?

ANSWER: Yes, and this shows how impossible it is to draw a sharp line between the fine and the minor arts. From such external connections, moreover, the fine arts derive not merely limitations but also often definite inspiration and vigor. In the realm of painting, for instance, it might well be contended that the most vigorous periods have been those in which painters were not so very free, but rather under the dominion of some vigorous ideal,—religious perhaps, or patriotic, or social,—which they were endeavoring to

serve through their art, and which inspired them with the feelings that they expressed in their paintings. It is perhaps not without significance in this connection that some of the most noteworthy painters of today, such as those of the Mexican School, have in addition to their artistic ability the inspiration arising from some strongly felt social ideal. Lacking some such inspiration from the rest of life, the art of even the most technically skillful artist is likely to be a rather anaemic and futile thing, and this simply because he then has almost nothing to say and is preoccupied only with saying it very well.

QUESTION: Do you feel that the present emphasis on the expression of national or American qualities in the art of this country is a healthy emphasis?

ANSWER: Yes, in so far as it means that the American artist is freeing himself from the superstition that imported artistic ideals are ipso facto better. It is a healthy movement in so far as it springs in the American artist from genuine attention to and interest in the environment in which he actually lives, instead of an environment which he only visits. But it would be unhealthy if "being American" were erected into an ideal, or into a quasi-religious duty, as "being German" apparently is today in Germany. In art, as elsewhere, the first condition of being genuinely oneself is to forget oneself and to express whatever attention to something other than oneself inspires one with. The people who are consciously preoccupied with the importance of being themselves are persons whose self is so unformed, that they can hardly be said to be anybody in particular. That is, they are persons who are hunting for a self they can put on, as an actor does a part.

The Community Art Project announces the following lectures, in the form of written texts accompanied by lantern slides: (1) "The Life and work of Gilbert Stuart," (2) "Legends of Christmas in Art" (available after December 8). The lectures are available without charge to interested groups in Rhode Island. Applications for bookings may be made to Professor George E. Downing, Secretary, 44 Benevolent Street, Providence. Other lectures are in preparation.



ETRUSCAN FIBULA

Museum of the Rhode Island
School of Design

duced by leading artists, such as Ghiberti, Ghirlandaio, Donatello, Dürer, and Holbein. These men were apprenticed to jewelers, and their first training was had in the jewelry shop. Hence the care given to the painting of jewels in their pictures.

After the Renaissance, few changes in style appeared until modern times. Much good work was done by the Arts and Crafts movements in England and in this country in developing good taste in jewelry design and in all handicrafts. The effects of these efforts are still an important factor. Perhaps more costly jewelry was never made in such quantities as during the period following the World War. Though the quality of design was seldom outstanding, the workmanship was marvelous in the intricacies of mechanical construction, and perhaps reached as high a level as at any time.

The requirement today is for jewelry to match the costume, and a new era in jewelry design is developing. There is a growing demand for American designs to express our American mode of living. We are leading in the development of a style in architecture to meet our own needs, and we have created new forms for most all appliances, including automobiles, flat-irons, perfume bottles, and kitchen sinks. It is most logical that, if we enjoy all of these devices of our own design, we should look to our designers for new creations in personal adornment. The chemist is discovering new materials and metals and methods of plating, and machinery is being developed for the mass production of jewelry of artistic merit. We can afford to change our jewelry with the change of fashion. This does not mean that fine jewelry will not be made, because there will always be a demand for the individual type of thing for the connoisseur; but it does mean that more people can have better designed and better made jewelry.

While it is well known that Providence and Attleboro are the jewelry centers of this country, I feel safe in saying that few of us appreciate the beautiful things that are made here and sold in other markets. Not only do we lead in the manufacture of metal jewelry, but there has grown in recent years a large industry manufacturing imitation stones and pearls. We thus are gradually growing away from dependence on the European market for ideas and for materials with which to express them.

A. SIDNEY ROLLINGS

EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE OF PROVIDENCE

Gallery of Fine Arts, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

Jan. 6-30—Russian Ballet designs from the Lefar-Diaghilev collection, lent by the Avery Memorial, Hartford, Conn.

Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Conn.

Jan. 1-15—Hitchcock photographs of Romanesque style.

Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass.

Jan. 1-31—Woodcuts by Josef Albers.
Jan. 2-31—Chinese painting through the ages.
Jan. 7-21—Our government in art.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.

Jan. 1-31—Paintings from ancient Egyptian tombs by Joseph Lindon Smith.
Jan. 1-31—Woodcuts by Durer, etchings by Rembrandt and Zorn, etched portraits by Van Dyck, and lithographs by Daumier.

The Guild of Boston Artists, 162 Newbury Street, Boston, Mass.

Jan. 1-5—Portraits by members of the Guild.
Jan. 7-19—Paintings by Louis Kronberg.
Jan. 21-Feb. 2—Landscapes by members of the Guild.

Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Jan. 4-31—Chinese Paintings.
Jan. 1-Feb. 23—Prints by Rembrandt.
Jan. 4-31—Russian and Byzantine Religious Paintings.

Germanic Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Jan. 1-21—19th and 20th century German painting in reproduction.

Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Mass.

Jan. 6-18—Sassetta's "Christ in Limbo," and Pesellino's "The Building of the Temple." Lent by the Fogg Art Museum.
Jan. 7-21—Work from classes of the Art Institute of Chicago.

The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Mass.

Jan. 7-31—Works of Louis Eislerhemius.

Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Mass.

Jan. 5-25—Springfield Art League exhibition.
Jan. 5-25—Sculpture exhibition from the Clay Club, New York.

Wellesley College Art Museum, Wellesley, Mass.

Jan. 14-Feb. 2—Textiles and embroideries lent by A. Ayres.

Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Mass.

Jan. 1-13—French drawings of the 19th century (from the collection of Jacques Seligmann Co.)
Jan. 16-31—Samuel B. Woodward collection of Cruikshanksiana.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York City

Jan. 1-15—Fifth Anniversary exhibition.

CALENDAR

(All events listed are open to the public)

Saturday, January 5

Broadcast WBZ Boston, "The Modern City," lecture in the series "Art in America," under the auspices of the American Federation of Arts, 8:00 P. M.

Sunday, January 6

Sunday Gallery Talk, "Portraits by Copley and Stuart" by Roger Gilman. Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Friday, January 11

Memory Day for Edgar John Lowins. Organ recital by Charles Courboin. Sayles Hall, Brown University, 4:30 P. M.

Saturday, January 12

Broadcast WBZ Boston, "Photography in the United States," lecture in the series "Art in America," under the auspices of the American Federation of Arts, 8:00 P. M.

Sunday, January 13

Sunday Gallery Talk, "Design in Wall Paper" by Dana Vaughan. Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Lecture on the program of the Boston Symphony Orchestra by Dr. W. Louis Chapman under the auspices of the Monday Morning Musical Club. Providence Public Library, 4:00 P. M.

Monday, January 14

*Sock and Buskin present "Marshal" by Ferenc Molnar. Faunce House Theater, Brown University, 8:30 P. M.

Tuesday, January 15

*Concert by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Metropolitan Theater, 8:30 P. M.

*Sock and Buskin present "Marshal" by Ferenc Molnar. Faunce House Theater, Brown University, 8:30 P. M.

Wednesday, January 16

*Sock and Buskin present "Marshal" by Ferenc Molnar. Faunce House Theater, Brown University, 8:30 P. M.

Saturday, January 19

Broadcast WBZ Boston, "The Motion Picture," lecture in the series "Art in America," under the auspices of the American Federation of Arts, 8:00 P. M.

Sunday, January 20

Sunday Gallery Talk, "The Artist and His Subject" by Stephen Macomber. Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Oratorio Society Concert, first part of Spohr's "Fall of Babylon." Elmwood Congregational Church, 8:15 P. M.

Monday, January 21

*Concert by the Brown University Orchestra, Faunce House Theater, Brown University, 8:30 P. M.

Saturday, January 26

Broadcast WBZ Boston, Review of the lectures in the series "Art in America," under the auspices of the American Federation of Arts, 8:00 P. M.

Sunday, January 27

Sunday Gallery Talk, "The Use of Wall Paper in the Home" by James Mulligan. Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Oratorio Society Concert, second part of Spohr's "Fall of Babylon." Elmwood Congregational Church, 8:15 P. M.

Tuesday, January 29

*Concert by the Providence Symphony Orchestra. Metropolitan Theater, 8:30 P. M.

*Admission charged

EXHIBITIONS IN PROVIDENCE

Faunce House Art Gallery, Brown University

Jan. 7-20—Cambodian and Siamese stone and wood sculpture, Javanese puppets and masks.

John Hay Library, Brown University

Jan. 1-16—Sumerian and Babylonian inscriptions.

Mauk-Murray Studios

Jan. 1-31—Etchings by Thomas Hanforth, and etchings in color by Lillian Miller.

Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design

Jan. 1-31—Charles Huard collection of French wall paper recently purchased by the Museum.
Jan. 1-31—New group of the Rockefeller prints.

School Gallery, Rhode Island School of Design

Jan. 1-17—Cotton Institute, styling and uses of cotton.
Jan. 18-22—Work of the Junior school of the Rhode Island School of Design.
Jan. 22-28—Advanced compositions from the classes of Mr. Sisson.

Plantations Club

Jan. 9 (2-5 P. M.)—Silhouettes by Mrs. Hope Pickerstill Browning.

Providence Art Club

Jan. 1-13—Works by Edna Lawrence.
Jan. 15-27—Works by Frederic Whitaker.

Tilden-Thurber Gallery

Jan. 1-31—General exhibition of oils, water-colors, and etchings.