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Calendar of Events March 1935

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COMMUNITY ART PROJECT

CALENDAR of ART EVENTS

March 1935

Volume Two Number Six
RHODE ISLAND SILVERSMITHS

The craft of the silversmith during the colonial period was primarily dependent for its existence and for the breadth of its development upon the wealth and cultural enlightenment of the community. Wealth, however, was of necessity a wealth represented by an accumulation of silver coin, English and foreign, for it was from this source that the silversmith drew the material with which he worked. For his designs the silversmith turned to, and followed, the prevailing creations of his English contemporaries, but the taste of his client, and the ecclesiastical dominance and limitations reflected in certain colonies, governed the simplicity or the richness of decoration.

The Colony of Rhode Island was fortunate in having in the town of Newport a community that, at an early date, fulfilled the requirement of wealth, wealth resultant from its advantageous proximity to the sea. The rich trade with the West Indies and privateering (and also profitable but less reputable ventures) had, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, brought fortune to the town and had placed it in an enviable position. Furthermore its residents were free from religious restrictions; and by contact with what well may be termed a cosmopolitan breadth of thought and culture, the tastes were such as to give the silversmith greater latitude in his work. It is, therefore, natural that several excellent silversmiths had established themselves in Newport during its earlier years, even prior to 1700.

Arnold Collins would appear to be the earliest silversmith of note in Newport. He engraved and made a seal for the colony in 1690 and later made a beaker which was, in 1711, bequested by Joseph Church to the United Congregational Church in Little Compton. Collins died in 1735, living to see, and possibly instruct, the silversmith who to-day is held in the highest esteem of all Newport craftsmen, Samuel Vernon (1683-1737).

It has been written of Vernon that an "impressive quantity of his silver is still in existence to prove his skill". Daniel Russell, of whom little is known, was one of the silversmiths commissioned to carry out the bequest of Nathaniel Kay, that generous patron of Rhode Island silversmiths. J. Clarke, who was working in 1734, and Benjamin Brenton (1695-1749) also made silver under the Kay bequest. John Coddington (1690-1743) also belonged to this early group. Later, mention should be made of John Tanner (1713-85), Jonathan Otis (1723-91), Thomas Arnold (1739-1828) and Daniel Rogers (1753-92). Otis came from Massachusetts to Newport where he remained until 1778, when, conditions due to the Revolution being not to his liking, he moved to Middletown, Conn. The excellence of his work has caused three colonies to claim him as their own.

Next to Newport in wealth, from approximately 1725 until the Revolution, was that well known section of the Colony, the rich grazing and farm lands of the Narragansett Country. Here in the middle years of the century worked that master craftsman, albeit rogue, Samuel Casey (1724-1770) whose skill was acknowledged throughout the colonies. Later John Waite (1742-1817), an apprentice to Casey, and Nathaniel Helme (1761-89) carried on the excellent quality of work.

Providence, due to its less favorable position at the head of Narragansett Bay, to its early unsettled political conditions, and its lack of wealth was not, in the earlier years of the Colony, a town attractive to silversmiths. Nevertheless Joshua Dods, who died in 1753, was considered worthy of executing a beaker for the Kay bequest. However, as the years of the eighteenth century passed, the wealth of the town grew. The British occupation of Newport, during the Revolution, diverted commerce from that port to Providence, and permanently established the supremacy of the latter. It was therefore after the Revolution that we find the best silversmiths in Providence, although one, Saunders Pitman (1732-1808) did excellent work prior to that time. Among many, the following names should be noticed: Esek E. Burr, David Vinton, George Baker, Nathan Cheanch Dodge, Pardon Miller and Jabez Gorham. It is to the son of Jabez Gorham, John, that we owe the establishment of the firm which today places Rhode Island in the highest rank in the production of work in silver.

There were of course many minor silversmiths in the towns and in the villages, but their work was usually limited to spoons, with an occasional pourer as their only attempt at hollow ware. To those who would wish to learn more regarding the silversmiths of Rhode Island, the excellence of their craftsmanship, and the notable variety and beauty of their silver, the following books may be recommended: C. Louise Avery, Early American Silver, and American Silver of the XVII and XVIII Centuries; E. Alfred Jones, Old Silver of American Churches; Francis Hill Bigelow, Historic Silver of the Colonies and Its Makers; Stephen G. C. Ensko, American Silversmiths and Their Marks; Hollis French, A List of Early American Silversmiths and Their Marks; William Davis Miller, Silversmiths of Little Rest.

WILLIAM DAVIS MILLER
EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE OF PROVIDENCE

Gallrey of Fine Arts, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.
Mar. 4-15—Reproductions of old master drawings.
Mar. 15-31—Photographs of Romanesque churches lent by H. Russell Hitchcock of Wesleyan University.
Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Conn.
Mar. 2-April 14—Gardens in art; paintings, prints, tapestries, rugs, etc., depicting garden scenes.
Mar. 15-April 15—Exhibition of American drawings.
Mar. 1-25—Paintings by Dudley Morris.
Mar. 5-April 5—Exhibition of classical art.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.
Mar. 1-10—Modern Japanese color prints lent by Mrs. Wilmot R. Evans.
Mar. 1-10—Gifts from Mrs. Charles Gaston Smith's group.

The Guild of Boston Artists, 162 Newbury Street, Boston, Mass.
Mar. 1-16—Landscapes by members of the Guild.
Mar. 18-30—Paintings by Henry H. Brooks.

Mar. 7-28—The Art of Audrey Beardsley, drawings and prints.
Mar. 7—Japanese prints from the Duet Collection.
Mar. 7-30—The tragic and the grotesque expressed by masks and costumes.

Mar. 11-April 7—Contemporary German textiles.

Fitchburg Art Center, Fitchburg, Mass.

Mar. 1-13—Designs by students of Mr. Josef Binder, Art Institute of Chicago.
Mar. 1-13—Exhibition of photographs of American cities before the Civil War, lent by Henry Russell Hitchcock, Jr. [Photographs by Berenice Abbott]

The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Mass.
Mar. 1-31—Exhibition of recent acquisitions including paintings by Alfred Maurer, Natalie Hammond, etchings by Luis Quintanilla and prints by Helen West Heller.


Mar. 3-31—Paintings and book illustrations by Charles Child.
Mar. 3-31—Ceramic sculptures by Waylande de Santis Gregory.

Museum of Modern Art, New York City
Mar. 18-May—Exhibition of African art.

CALENDAR

All events listed are open to the public

Sunday, March 3
Sunday Gallery Talk, “An Hour with French Painters” by Professor George E. Downing, Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Oriental Society concert, second part of Mendelsohn’s "Elisijh", Elmwood Congregational Church.

Tuesday, March 5
* Providence Symphony Orchestra concert, Metropolitan Theater, 8:30 P. M.

Wednesday, March 6
Lecture by Thomas Whittemore, Secretary of the Byzantine Institute, "New Discoveries in Constantinople", Memorial Hall, 8:15 P. M.

Thursday, March 7
* The Guild players of the Federal Hill House present three One-Act plays. Dancing will follow. Federal Hill House, 8:15 P. M.

Broadcast WAAB Boston, or WNBD New Bedford, "Art in the Pathway of Alexander", by Dr. H. H. Powers, a lecture in the series "Art Through the Ages" under the auspices of the Bureau of University Travel, 8:15 P. M.

Bach program by Gertrude Proksch Kurath, dancer, and Lawrence Appgar, organist and pianist, assisted by students of the Federal Hill House School of Music, Alumnae Hall, Pembroke College, 8:30 P. M.

Sunday, March 9
Sunday Gallery Talk, "Art and Crafts of Sardinia" by Miss Jessie Burbank, Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

Oriental Society concert, second part of Mendelsohn’s "Elisijh", Elmwood Congregational Church.

* Admission charged.

EXHIBITIONS IN PROVIDENCE

Faunce House Art Gallery, Brown University
Mar. 18-30—Paintings by Paul Cezanne (reproductions and originals including a portrait of Madame Cezanne from the Adolph Lewisohn Collection).

Malk-Murray Studios

Plantations Club (2-5 P. M.)

Providence Art Club
Mar. 5-17—Works by George and Nancy Love.
Mar. 19-31—Works by Frederick R. Sisson.

Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design
Mar. 6-27—Utopian Club exhibition.
Mar. 18-24—Special exhibition of Junior League work.

School Gallery, Rhode Island School of Design
Mar. 16—New designs for wallpaper from the Imperial Paper and Color Corporation.
Mar. 18-29—Exhibition of articles purchased locally for twenty-five cents or less.

Tilden-Thurber Gallery
Mar. 4-18—Etchings by R. Stephens Wright.
Mar. 18-31—Unframed mezzotints.

Nathaniel M. Vose Gallery
Feb. 1-Mar. 16—Paintings and pastels by F. Usher De Voll.