

Introduction

DIANA KORZENIK

IT IS IMPORTANT that the papers in this volume, *The Cultivation of Artists in Nineteenth-Century America*, are now bound together. They were first heard as lectures presented on two beautiful spring days on the last day of May and the first of June in 1993 to a gathering of educators, curators, artists, collectors, librarians, and scholars across disciplines. The slide-illustrated lectures were accounts of new research on the importance to American art of young artists' early formal and informal education. These papers brought to light subjects usually left in the dark.

That this symposium ever happened was due to Georgia Barnhill's enthusiastic response to an idea I proposed: a conference that focused scholarly attention on an array of early art educational experiences of American artists in different eras and of different areas within the United States. I knew the power of this material. Having taught the history of American art education, I have guided generations of students through research projects helping them form questions and find the primary source documents to investigate them in order to unravel how a certain artist got his or her start. What has emerged is a picture of the many routes to art in this country.

The symposium concept I presented to Georgia Barnhill grew from my own curiosity and gaps in my own knowledge. Since I

DIANA KORZENIK, author of *Drawn to Art* and *Artmaking and Education*, has focused her research on the history of American art education. She has taught in the New York City public schools, Massachusetts College of Art, and Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Copyright © 1995 by American Antiquarian Society

had concentrated my attention on the history of art education in schools and only through research for *Drawn to Art* had I looked at wood engravers' training, I hoped this conference could be an occasion to branch out.¹ I proposed this be an occasion for a team of interdisciplinary scholars to look at how young artists in urban centers learned on the job, how artists acquired commercial marketable skills, and how they incorporated these into their own work.

This symposium seemed timely. Over the last twenty-five years, scholars had time to integrate the certain key works influencing our conceptions of art education in this country, particularly those by Peter Marzio, Carl Dreppard, Roger Stein, Lois Marie Fink and Joshua Taylor, Lillian Miller, and Neil Harris.²

Meanwhile key works in other fields also influenced the interpretation of the history of American art education. Sociologist Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* opened an entirely other sort of discussion.³ He demonstrated that the artist is and has been an artifact of hosts of supporting players. The gallery directors, framers, the agents, publicists, patrons, critics, art shippers, and teachers are all parts of a vast social system with certain social agreements. Collectively their extensive labors promote the illusion of a sole master. From another field, psychology, Rudolf Arnheim, particularly in *Visual Thinking* showed the normalcy of artistic thinking.⁴ If visual conception is built into all of us, then instruction either closes down or opens up normal mental functioning. From the field of American studies, Eileen Boris in *Art and Labor* looked at different conceptions of art-making as labor, from the English

1. Diana Korzenik, *Drawn to Art: A Nineteenth-Century American Dream* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1985).

2. Peter Marzio, *The Art Crusade* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1976); Carl Dreppard, *American Drawing Books* (New York: New York Public Library, 1946); Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1966); Roger B. Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); Lois Marie Fink and Joshua Taylor, *Academy: The Academic Tradition in American Art* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975); and Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

3. Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

4. Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969).

craftsman ideal to the schooling of taste in the American public school to women's culture joining art and philanthropy.⁵

In the past decade historians within the field of art education—Foster Wygant, Arthur Efland, and I—have generated quite a few books on art education history.⁶ Three thematically related volumes of historical studies are Enid Zimmerman and Mary Ann Stankiewicz, *Women Art Educators*, *Women Art Educators II*, and Kristin Cogdon and Zimmerman, *Women Art Educators III*.⁷ The National Art Education Association has supported this research movement publishing the collected papers from two international conferences at Pennsylvania State University in 1985 (Wilson and Hoffa), and in 1989, as well as a Canadian, British, and American retrospective in *Framing the Past*.⁸

A planning committee—Sinclair Hitchings, David Tatham, Georgia Barnhill, and I—developed several thematic questions: To what extent were artists trained in-house, in quasi-apprenticeships? Was such training replaced by pre-employment and extra-employment in schools such as the Rhode Island School of Design? Did art schools ultimately replace workshops? A call for papers went out to scholars in several disciplines announcing that the conference 'will explore how nineteenth-century businesses offered training opportunities. Because of economic necessity,

5. Eileen C. Boris, *Art and Labor: John Ruskin, William Morris and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Providence: Brown University, 1986).

6. Foster Wygant, *School Art in American Culture, 1820-1970* (Cincinnati: Interwood Press, 1993); *Standards for Art Teacher Preparation Programs* (Reston, Va.: National Art Education Association, c. 1990); and *Art in American Schools in the Nineteenth Century* (Cincinnati: Interwood Press, 1993); Arthur Efland, *A History of Art Education* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1990); and Diana Korzenik and Maurice Brown, *Art Making and Education* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

7. Enid Zimmerman and Mary Ann Stankiewicz, *Women Art Educators* (Bloomington: Department of Art Education, Indiana University, 1982) and *Women Art Educators II* (Bloomington: Department of Art Education, Indiana University, 1985); and Kristin Cogdon and Enid Zimmerman, *Women Art Educators III* (Bloomington: Department of Art Education, Indiana University, 1993).

8. Brent Wilson and Harland Hoffa, *The History of Art Education: Proceedings from the Pennsylvania State University Conference* (Reston, Va.: National Art Education Association, 1985); Patricia M. Amburgy, ed., *The History of Art Education* (Reston, Va.: National Art Education Association, 1992); Donald Soucy and Mary Ann Stankiewicz, eds., *Framing the Past* (Reston, Va.: National Art Education Association, 1990).

numbers of young people sought employment in the shops of commercial pictorial printmakers and publishers.' It raised some questions: 'What were the patterns and processes through which artists entered their trade? What were the expectations of the employers? How did they help young people to meet them? How did pictorial printing firms shelter, nurture, and train new generations of artists?' The idea was to focus on the company climate of different graphic art firms located in urban centers in nineteenth-century America.

From the responses that came in, it became obvious that the symposium presentations could not present workplaces without also discussing schools. The papers particularly related to the 1870s and 1880s highlighted how intertwined were the developments of formal art classes and employment opportunities. The Massachusetts legislature's 1870 Drawing Act conceived the mission of schools and jobs in tandem. Art education in public day schools and publicly funded adult evening classes were expected to advance commercial textile, metals, glass, and ceramics production. So school and on-the-job training became our dual subjects.

In my mind, one objective for undertaking this symposium was to correct a pattern of art historical writing that James Flexner identified back in 1947. 'Modern art historians, determined to find what seems to them *more suitably elevated sources* [my emphasis] for the landscapists' style and achievements, have overlooked the significance of the fact that a large majority of the painters began their careers and received their basic training in the workshop of commercial engravers.'⁹ Some of these 'less elevated, overlooked sources' are the young person's schooling and preparation for the many artistically-oriented trades.

What is puzzling is why it has taken fifty years for a significant number of scholars to define artistic elements in the trades. What has kept people away from these 'less elevated sources'? One rea-

9. Asher B. Durand: *An Engraver's and a Farmer's Art* (Yonkers, N.Y.: Hudson River Museum, 1983), 7.

son has to do with how art is studied and collected. An example of the problem concerned the collection of the art made by one family in New Hampshire that became the basis for my writing *Drawn to Art*. When I first found the collection, I immediately saw how much could be learned from all of it because so much of the work of the family's three artists survived together. Still together were the wood engravings produced at the Boston firm, Kilburn and Cross, with fancy leather-bound books produced using the engravings. With these were family photographs, watercolors, drawings, oil paintings on small pieces of canvas, greeting cards, ledgers, recipe books, a few woodblocks, and advertising booklets for which the Crosses engraved, as well as the ephemera the family saved that were the products of their competitors.

But when my writing using the collection was done, I needed to find the Cross archive a new home where all would continue to be kept together. Here I faced the problem. The fact is that among institutions that collect objects, mass-produced advertising and illustration work tends to be welcomed in entirely different sorts of institutions than those that preserve paintings and drawings. Art museums in many cases prefer to edit out those 'less elevated sources.' That this conference and book were sponsored by the American Antiquarian Society reflects the same generosity of spirit that makes AAS the ideal home for the *Drawn to Art* collection. Here, both conceptually and physically, the fine arts and the commercial work are welcomed together. They are understood to be parts of a larger social, intellectual, and political enterprise.

The mission of the conference was to permit the commercial and the fine arts, education, and employment, to converge where they do in order to uncover American patterns. One example is Flexner's thesis that American art is a working-class art, that it is a tradesperson's art. 'Painting is not an upper-class tradition superimposed from above, but an extension of artisans engaged in utilitarian tasks.'¹⁰ We hoped the papers might show how in this

10. James T. Flexner, *American Painting. The First Flowers of Our Wilderness* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1947), 6-7.

country, though not necessarily by law or policy, art has been made accessible to many classes and subcultures. In a letter after the conference, in the spirit of Flexner, Elizabeth Hawkes observed: 'The conference brought up an overlooked point. In the nineteenth century young people with artistic aspirations from the lower and middle class could not afford traditional art school training and study in Europe. Some businesses (such as printing and publishing companies), for example, provided an alternative entry to art education. This is certainly the case for some of the Ashcan artists who got their start in the newspaper and magazine business.' In this vein Donald O'Brien's paper describes the workshop of Abner Reed, Ann Wagner documents wood engraver Hiram Merrill, and Elizabeth Hawkes shows the influence of a newspaper artist's training on the art of John Sloan. Florence Jumonville traces the lithography of New Orleans sheet music by Henri and Clementine Wehrmann. Serendipitously the paper about the drawings at the New Orleans Notarial Archives delivered by Sally Reeves at the American Antiquarian Society's semi-annual meeting in April 1995 continued the theme of art education in the Crescent City. Reeves's description of the plan-book drawings complements Jumonville's essay and furthers the discussion of on-the-job training as art education.

In addition to the artisan tradition, we also have had a far-reaching system of democratization of art: the local public school. Elliot Davis's work on Fitz Hugh Lane shows how Lane used art instruction textbooks, particularly John Gadsby Chapman's *American Drawing Book*, to develop his way of painting, among other things, sailing vessels and shadows. The changing textbooks for the curriculum in public schools' visual art education are essential reading for students of American art. The commercial art textbook producer of greatest impact and scale was Boston's Louis Prang & Company. Michael Clapper's paper 'Art, Industry, and Education in Prang's Chromolithograph Company' addresses the way in which that company exploited both the school and home market in chromolithographic art reproductions.

Other types of schools beyond the ever-expanding public school movement played critical roles in art education. One is the museum school, a professional school formally attached to fine art museums. Joyce W. Lehmann's paper traces the origins of what she called 'this hybrid institution.' Nancy Austin's paper on the industrial origins of the Rhode Island School of Design looks at one of these institutions.

All of the authors' findings testify to the fact that for art to have been passed along from one generation to another, places had to exist where young people could get their start. In any era, in order for young people to have become artists they need to have had teachers who were engaged with the forms of art current in their time. Though obviously families were of enormous importance, their role was outside the province of this symposium. What proved to be central to all these papers was the importance of some form of teaching either in schools or at workplaces. Someone had to point the young person to picture galleries, libraries, and stores selling drawing, painting, and printing materials and actually show the young person what to do to make images.

In appreciating the results of this symposium, it seems worthy to note that in our century educators and psychologists, not historians, have dominated the discussion of how young people became artists. Though art-making hardly is just about learning how to draw, often that has been the psychologists' beginning point. Their theories have agreed that a person's representation of the world on a flat piece of paper is a learned process, but they disagree about how it is learned. Most theories of how drawing is learned can be organized under one or two rubrics. One account is developmental. It posits predictable stages of a young person's artistic development. As Rousseau did two centuries ago, these twentieth-century psychologically-oriented writers describe artistic development as the unfolding of natural stages through which the growing child may be expected to pass.

The other theoretical direction looks at the students' frame of

reference in learning to draw. They look at where the students direct their attention. Ernst Gombrich, James J. Gibson, and Rudolf Arnheim each have offered different accounts of this, and different pedagogy has been created from each premise. One encourages copying, while the others oppose it. One requires observational drawing, while the other concentrates the students' visual attention inward. Though the controversy has been productive particularly of instructional strategies, it seems to have denied the importance of the young art learner's own era and own local culture.

I am delighted that the papers in *The Cultivation of Artists in Nineteenth-Century America* bring the discussion of the beginnings of art back into the domain of history. To truly understand artistic development, I believe we need to know the historical particulars. Although the psychological discussion could not help but be an influence, the gold mine of historical sources, documents, correspondence, old newspapers, school circulars, curriculum reports, art instruction books, drawing cards and students' copies of them, and treatises all inform current research.

It is with great pleasure that I thank the American Antiquarian Society for expressing its commitment to these issues in this very concrete form and for seeing that the symposium papers became a publication. Thanks, too, to the members of the conference planning committee who foresaw the potential in this theme.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.