NEEDS IN ART EDUCATION

Our people may best come in contact with, participate in, and add to, our aesthetic inheritance by means of the public schools.

Otto Kahn, a great connoisseur of art, says: "It is no copybook maxim but sober truth to say that to have an appreciation of and an understanding of art is to have one of the most genuine and remunerative forms of wealth that it is given to man to possess." He affirms, moreover, that a fostering of the art life of the country counteracts harsh materialism and helps to relieve the strain of peoples' everyday lives.

In making these positive statements regarding art and its relation to life, Mr. Kahn has been anticipating the crying need of the people today for a greater contemplation of beauty which will tend to turn man's thoughts from materialism, unemployment, growing nationalism, and all the various ills of our present-day existence, into channels which will enable him to develop a more spiritual and peaceful outlook. Many art critics are of the opinion that art and religion are twin manifestations of the same spiritual state of man. Elie Faure maintains that religion does not create art, but on the contrary is developed by art; and it is natural to feel certain that a contemplation and perception of beauty does develop within people better mental states which result in finer responses of man towards man.

C. Hanford Henderson believes true art is the overflow of a radiant spirit. "The growth of art in any community," he says, "depends not only on the number of workers, but also on the number of appreciative onlookers, creators of an atmosphere favorable to the art spirit." At this time of economic stress, when conditions seem to be unfavorable to the immediate encouragement of art, with adequate workers and equipment with which to carry on, it behooves us to do some serious thinking, and try to advance ideas and ways and means of developing this vast appreciative audience about which we are concerned. It is in times like these that seeds are sown which, although apparently strewn on barren ground, will find fruition in the days to come. Faure says: "Art lives in the future. It is the fruit of the pain, desires, and hopes of the people, and the promise contained in these feelings does not reach its slow realization until later, in the new needs of the crowds." Like H. G. Wells, I feel that we must look forward to the "shape of things to come" in the art world, so that we may with assurance anticipate and fulfill these new needs.

This ideal state of our people, to which we look forward, presupposes a finer and more thorough art education, and I believe that all will agree that the education of the masses can be achieved most consistently and systematically through the public schools. But what is the situation in our public schools with reference to art education? This vast responsibility of elevating the taste of our students, enriching their lives culturally and giving them creative expression in art, is falling principally on the shoulders of a few art supervisors and art teachers. This does not seem fair either to the art teachers who are being sadly overworked, or to the students and eventually to the communities who are not receiving adequate knowledge of our subject. The distribution of responsibility should be equalized since art is so vitally concerned with life, and our art forces have been depleted to such a ridiculous number.

But even under the prevailing conditions, I believe that the art situation in the schools can be ameliorated to a considerable extent, and a more adequate art education given to every child in the state with no additional cost to the state or communities. My dream of such an art education which will give each child his rightful cultural heritage and expression in creation, includes the following:
1. A better equipped classroom teacher—one whose cultural background is broad enough to include a knowledge of the history of art as related to the history of man throughout the ages; also a consciousness of good design, color, and arrangement.

2. The division of art education into two parts:
   a. Creative expression in art to be taught principally by the special drawing teacher with the stress on appreciation necessary to the proper presentation of her subject.
   b. Art appreciation to be taught principally by the classroom teacher in connection with room arrangement and decoration and as related to her social studies.

3. Drawing for every elementary child in the state:
   a. It is an aid in character development.
   b. It keeps alive inventive, creative, and imaginative powers.
   c. It indicates a child's interests.


5. A thorough correlation of the history of art and the history of man to be taught *visually*, designed for potential teachers in colleges and normal schools and for presentation in progressive steps in the public schools from the fourth grade through high school.

   Such a program should result in the development of an aesthetic and spiritual sense among our people; this collective mental state would work for enriched lives, more beautiful school-room environments, well-designed homes, co-operative community life, more beautiful highways and byways, and a tendency toward world peace.

1. The solution of our problem seems to lie principally in a raising or changing of the teaching requirements. In this, the cooperation of the state educational officials and of the colleges and normal schools must be sought. It seems to me that the inclusion of a comprehensive art course could be given to each potential teacher not only without financial loss to the state or communities, but with decided benefit both to normal schools and colleges and to individual communities. At the present time I am conducting an experiment in the teaching of art appreciation to a small group which includes a grade school principal, one junior high teacher and several grade teachers. I am trying to see just how much correlated material and knowledge of art can be given in a two-hour class once a week. This course has been revealing. I have been amazed to find how little the art of a people can be really understood until the contributing factors of geography, religion, social conditions, etc., have been taken into account. We are constantly making allusions to these factors and to ethnology, evolution, mythology, and history. It seems to me that college professors might well put their heads together and work out one correlated college unit in which all of the needed material for life could be included. Life itself is a correlation, and one thing is dependent upon another. Why could there not be a course in college which would start with the beginnings of things and evolve as life does? Such a course would require months of careful compilation in order to be effective, but it could also be given in the public schools in progressive steps from the fourth grade on through high school.

2. (a-b) In our city schools, the special drawing teacher is allowed thirty to forty minute periods with each class, these periods coming once a week and sometimes once in every three weeks. In this limited time, it is not only impossible for the drawing teacher to develop creative expression in drawing satisfactorily, but to give any more appreciation than is needed for the proper presen-
tation of her subject. I speak from personal experience in the grades. The teachers want art work for display, and the students clamor for creative expression in art. Moreover, I do not feel that art appreciation can be soaked up like water from a sponge; it is something which must be acquired gradually, day by day and from year to year. It must be absorbed and digested, as it were. This art appreciation could very well be correlated by the well-trained teacher with the social studies and with room arrangement and decoration, and given to the students every day and day after day. A student can create only in so far as his appreciation is developed; hence, this added increase of appreciation would make the child more responsive to the work of the special drawing teacher.

3. In a consideration of drawing for every elementary child in the state, I want to consider once more the division of art education into two parts: art appreciation, the purpose of which is to engender a love of beauty, to develop good taste, to enrich life by opening up many avenues of interest, and to train for leisure time; and creative expression, the effectiveness of which is dependent upon this appreciation.

(a) Creative expression is primarily essential for the child because it is a great humanizing and stabilizing force. It gives the child an outlet for his intense feelings and desires. If these desires when expressed prove to be unbalanced, the simple expression of them tends toward the eradication of these things which are unhealthy. If, on the other hand, the desires are normal, expression fosters development and growth. In this day of general unrest, such a balancing factor becomes more important than ever before.

(b) Art fosters and keeps alive in the child that without which civilization could never progress—the creative, imaginative, and inventive powers. Every teacher of art can give countless instances in which she has been amazed at the inventiveness with which children can put materials together, and at the new ways in which they can solve old problems.

(c) Through creative expression in art, the interests of every child can be ascertained. Educators are coming to a realization of its importance in the teaching of the “duller” subjects. In fact, there is scarcely any school subject which is not approached through and correlated with art.

4. The fact that every child can be reached or interested by some phase of art seems to me to hold a great hope for the future. I believe that the increasing importance of vocational training and vocational guidance, which increased leisure is demanding, is going to depend largely on the interests of the child which are discoverable through his expression in drawing or other art projects. Possibly an accumulation of a child’s drawings might be kept over a period of years until vocational guidance could be called upon to decide upon the child’s field of specialization. A child’s drawings invariably indicate his primary interests and general type.

5. Since eighty per cent of education is acquired visually, it is my ambition for future education, that the history of man and the history of art be thoroughly correlated and given through the grades and the high schools in progressive talking pictures or silent pictures with good lecturers. We are witnesses to the harmful influence which the movies are having upon the youth of our nation. It seems to me that the educators could rally their forces and employ this powerful weapon of talking pictures for the good of the young.

With the classroom teacher sympathetic and enlightened, the child developing into a normal, inventive and beauty-loving person and receiving each day his natural share in our aesthetic inheritance, and with the added aid of visual education in presenting our subject, I believe that effects would soon become apparent in community life. The good mental state of the people would help to
overcome the danger of nationalism in a time when countries are being drawn closer and closer together because of man's invention of the airplane and radio, and there is greater need of the development of an international spirit. That a cultivation of the arts helps to create bonds of friendship between the different nations was realized by Oscar Wilde, who said: "Some day, when the world grows really civilized, men will say: 'We will not go to war with France, because her prose is perfect.'" And Richard Le Gallienne adds: "How lightly it is said, but what a world of truth and common sense lies beneath it. Will the time never come when spiritual and intellectual gratitude between nations will prove in itself an indissoluble league, and the great men and great achievements of individual nations give them a certain protective sacredness even in the eyes of their enemies?"

Let us not be complacent. The art of the Egyptians tells us that the soul expresses itself in the ideal of eternity, and if we wish to build for the future, we must lay our foundations with stone. The Assyrians say to us that we must have strength and courage. The Persians tell us that despite the intermingling influences within our borders, we can still hope to develop a truly national art on our own fruitful soil. The Greeks say that man is in effect a god and can mould both materials and men into whatever shapes he chooses, provided he thinks the beautiful thought and lives the unhindered and aesthetic life. The fervor expressed in the art of the Early Christian tells us that faith without works availeth nothing.

But let us not be complacent. Let us have faith, and let us work for a finer art education throughout the state and nation.

SARA CROSS JOYNER

Let us test our opinions by the knowledge of the most diverse minds and cling only to what survives the encounter.

—CHARLES ROSS WILLIAMSON.

CITY SCHOOLS SUFFER IN THE CRISIS

Will new tax legislation penalize greed and fortify the coming generation? Need such retrenchments be made when cities are governed by honest men?

HOW are the city school systems faring this year?

The most recent answer to this question is supplied by the Federal Office of Education.

United States Commissioner of Education George F. Zook released on December 26 a survey of "City Schools and the Economic Situation." It follows up and supplements a previous round-up of the effects of the depression on city schools last winter.

Comparisons of the two surveys indicate that conditions have grown increasingly difficult for city schools. Prospects reported by city superintendents for the current year are, as a whole, dark—although there are some bright spots in the national school picture.

School Budgets Cut

Some of the outstanding facts revealed by the reports from city schools are these:

City schools are operating with about 18,000 fewer teachers now than in 1930.

Enrolment is up sharply—probably 250,000 more than 1930.

Expenditures are down. City schools are now running on approximately $133,000,000 less for current expenses than they did in 1931-32.

The fact that cities have had to borrow money to keep their schools open is reflected in an increase of 1.2 per cent in the amount of money devoted to interest payments.

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Few school buildings are being built. Few old ones have been repaired. Expenses for capital outlay have dropped considerably.

Very few cities have not made some reduction in teachers' salaries since 1930. The reductions run as high as 40 and 45 per