An Arts and Crafts Exhibition at Minneapolis

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The third public exhibition of The Society of Arts and Crafts of Minneapolis was held from January 20 to 24 inclusive. Following the private view for friends, on the evening of the nineteenth, the large exhibition room was open to the public both day and evening.

The society itself is a small one. It is composed of women who are enthusiasts on the subject, and every effort was made to bring together types of craftsmanship which would be not only a joy to the eye, but of educational value as well. The members are, for the main part, busy women, but all joined to make the affair successful, although the labor of planning and carrying out the exhibition was great, and demanded much strength and time. The posters and cover design of the catalogue were by two clever members, and the collections were presided over by different women, who gladly gave information regarding the display of interesting and valuable specimens of craftsmanship. The exhibits included bookbinding and leather work; cabinet wood carvings; ceramics; metal work; decorative modeling; basketry; designs and book decorations; school work; embroidery and textiles.

Leather work, which is always fascinating to the lover of good craftsmanship, was presented in a number of ways. The warm, rich tones of the leather were never better displayed than in the large display of table and piano covers, desk sets, card cases, bags, magazine covers, etc. Work in this material which attracted much attention was that of Charles Frederick Eaton and his associates of Santa Barbara, California, whose creations have been exhibited only on one other occasion east of the Mississippi. Mr. Eaton sent chests, boxes and cases, which were marvels of unique construction as well as of beauty. His colors are subdued, and all his leather work shows delicacy of treatment and good taste. In particular, one large silver chest of oozé leather, with brass trimmings, received much admiration. This was an expensive production, filled with many trays and compartments, each finished with the utmost skill of the workman’s art. Mr. Eaton combines leather, brass and semi-precious stones in a broad and novel way that appeals to all
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lovers of the unique. Among other things in his collection, beside the jewel caskets, screens, writing desks and golf books, were two exquisite marriage books, richly illuminated on parchment. One of these was dainty in the extreme, being bound in white leather, with brass trimmings studded with stones. All Mr. Eaton’s creations are marvels of suggestive possibilities; the chests having tiny drawers with decorative handles, and the metal screens designed to set on a table in order to protect an alcohol flame from draughts, were unique affairs that appealed instantly to the connoisseur. This whole exhibit was original and distinctive.

Another notable collection of leather work was that of Mrs. Amelia H. Center of Chicago. Mrs. Center was, at one time, a member of the Minneapolis society, and still retains an active interest in its welfare. Among the articles sent by this expert craftswoman were two beautiful six-foot leather screens: one decorated with an elaborate frieze of carved and embossed leather. Another distinctive piece from the same source was an unique leather reredos for use behind a mantel. This was embossed in rich peacock hues in tones as rich as jewels. All Mrs. Center’s work shows rare dignity of design, coupled with much sentiment and good execution. Nearly everything that can be made of leather was shown, the exhibitors being members of the Wilro Shop, Kalo Shop, Swastica Shop, of Chicago; the Society of Arts and Crafts, Dayton, Ohio, and private individuals.

Of a kindred interest to lovers of leather work as well as to book collectors was the large collection of handsomely bound books from all the leading book binderies in the country. Mr. W. G. White of St. Paul, a bibliophile, showed a loan collection representing each of the best binderies abroad and in this country. This, of course, included Zahn, Matthews, Steikeman and Zaehnsdorf. Another loan collection was that of Mr. E. D. Brooks of Minneapolis, who is an expert judge of rare and artistic bookbinding. In this, Rivière and Son and the work of the Woman’s Guild Binders of London were represented. Chief interest, of course, centered in the Mosher books, of which there were five, one being of green crushed levant, with gold tooling, hand wrought, with application
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of black leather. There were, also, five crushed levant books from Otto Zahn, which showed to perfection his exquisite tooling and mirror-like polish; books from Miss Ellen Starr of Hull House, from her pupil, Paul Verberg, and the work of Minneapolis binders. Miss Starr’s Fables of Bidpai, in green morocco, with inlaid diaper of roses, was especially pleasing. Of the Minneapolis workers who were represented, Miss Edith Griffith, a graduate pupil of Miss Starr, had several books in dark green crushed levant, and Mrs. F. B. Dodge, who is an expert amateur book binder, exhibited three books: one, “Our Ladies’ Tumbler,” printed by Mosher, and bound in crushed levant, with gold tooling and border in red illu.s, being especially noticeable. Other fine work was by Professor C. F. McClumpha.

A large and comprehensive collection of designs and book decorations hung against a background of green burlap, formed a decorative feature of one end of the room. Chief among these were bookplates, of which there were many fine specimens, as well as designs for furniture, apartments and lettering. An important exhibit of designs for interior decorations was made by Frederick Charles Walton, the designer for Marshall Field & Co. E. D. French of Saranac Lake, N. Y., who himself engraves his designs on the metal, exhibited a collection of rare bookplates, as did Miss Mary E. Colter of St. Paul, W. E. Fisher of Fargo, N. Dakota, Miss Mary Cheney of Minneapolis, and others. Several interesting designs in landscape gardening were shown.

Two large show cases contained examples of the work of artist-artisans in jewelry: a display of rings, brooches, buckles, etc., showing charming conceits in the management of gold and silver with stones. The great delicacy of feeling that is distinctive of the work of Mrs. Eleanor Klapp of New York, showed to advantage in her arrangements of pearls, turquoises and opals, which were inset in various articles for personal adornment and use. Combs, pins, and buckles vied with each other in beauty, and novel effects were secured in chains, pendants, and buttons. Unique pieces, many of which were given a dash of color by means of enamel, were executed by B. Bennett and Hannah C. Beyer of Chicago, Jane Carson and
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Francis Barnum of Cleveland, and Katherine E. Folsom of Winchester, Mass.
The leading workers in hammered and iridescent copper and silverware were well represented. A small but delightful collection of brass candlesticks, a Dutch lantern with horn lights, and smoking sets in pewter being sent by J. R. Jarvie of Chicago. Miss Jessie M. Preston, of the same place, exhibited candelabra unique in design, and a Paul Revere lantern, by Miss Nellie S. Trufant of Minneapolis, attracted much attention, as did also a copper casserole and platter by Miss Caroline Seton Ogden.
The ceramic exhibit showed good examples of leading American wares. Besides new productions in Rookwood, old Chelsea plates, cups and saucers in Dedham crackle ware, the Van Briggle pottery of Colorado Springs, Colorado, was well represented. A former Rookwood potter, Mr. Van Briggle has succeeded in producing ware of a most artistic order by hand modeling instead of molding. In this way charming flower and figure motifs are carried out in soft greens that delight the eye. Another unique pottery exhibit was the Losanti ware, made by Miss Louise McLaughlin of Cincinnati. Miss McLaughlin's method is unique, in that she fires her pottery only once. The pieces shown had a fine lustrous finish, and many were fretted in design. Minneapolis was represented in over-glaze work: Miss M. Etta Beede having two examples of lustre ware, and Mrs. Ruth Wilson Tice, who makes a specialty of enamels and does her own designing and firing, having, among other things, a rare toast cup, Persian motifs in enamels, and a tile of rich design intended for a cabinet.
The department of carving, burnt and colored wood, contained specimens diversified in design and treatment. Many articles enhanced by the use of color were exhibited by Mr. Arthur G. Grinnell of New Bedford, Mass. Chests, racks and other articles, showed rare workmanship and a fitness of subject with substance and quality of wood. Minneapolis boasts several fine wood carvers, whose work is of more than local interest. From these were three pieces of furniture: a fire screen set with stained glass, and an inlaid desk and chair made by Wallace R. Clark, and a wall cup-
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board designed and executed by Mrs. Mary A. Helmick, pupil of
Ben Pitman and of William Fry. This was designed in Japanese
style, to hold one rich vase in peacock tints, and so that the idea
might be complete, a pongee lining with single peacock feather
done in stencil was suggested. Another fine piece of work executed
by a Minneapolis woman, Miss Harriet McDonald, was a sixteenth
century chest done in low relief, the fine walnut lending itself to
exquisite carving. Miss Mary L. Buchwalter showed a screen,
Miss Helen Heisser a carved frame, Miss Pauline Kruger a
burned and colored chest; while other fine carving and cabinet
work came from Dayton, Ohio.
Basketry was well represented by numerous local basket makers,
the Italian women of Hull House, and the Misses Francis of Plain-
field, Conn., the latter sending a number of choice husk and sweet
grass specimens. Deerfield, Mass., was represented here, as well
as in the textile department, where there was a choice collection of
that Society's blue-and-white needlework. A Colonial bedspread,
in this last department, attracted much attention, both on account of
its age and its queer workmanship.
A corner of the room that lent itself to artistic treatment was de-
voted to decorative modeling, in which display there were several
fine examples from St. Paul and Minneapolis.
A local exhibit was that of beadwork, the display being chiefly of
old pieces and including bracelets, charms, belts, bags and tobacco
pouches. Colonial, Indian and modern work was represented, and
the quaint patterns proved pleasing to the many visitors. Another
important feature of the enterprise was the school work, which
included designing, lettering, etc.
As a whole the exhibition was the finest that the Society has yet
given, and the organization is to be congratulated for obtaining so
many and such varied specimens from choice collections. A gen-
erous policy governed the entire plan, and the influence of the work
so accomplished will be most beneficial and far reaching.