THE WORLD’S ADVANCE IN INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION: EXHIBITS AT THIRD INTERNATIONAL ART CONGRESS IN LONDON FULL OF SUGGESTION TO AMERICANS: BY ERNEST A. BATCHELDER

The third International Art Congress for the development of drawing and art teaching and their application to industrial work was held in London from August third to eighth inclusive. The purpose of the Congress was to offer a comparative exhibition of the work that is being done in art education in various countries and to discuss organization and methods of instruction. The exhibition comprised work from elementary and secondary schools, schools of professional training and schools of industrial and advanced art training.

It may be said, in order to emphasize the scope and importance of this Congress, that the first international exhibition of this kind was held in Paris during the Exposition of Nineteen Hundred and One. At that time fifteen different countries were represented. The value of this opportunity to compare results and methods of art training was recognized and a second Congress was held in Berne during the summer of Nineteen Hundred and Four. At this Congress twenty-five different countries were represented. From the exhibition and discussions at that time many valuable lessons were drawn and the Congress executed a marked influence in many directions. At the Congress recently concluded in London thirty-seven countries were represented. Our own country sent a composite exhibition of public school work from about sixty elementary schools, as well as exhibitions from a large number of secondary schools, schools of design, art schools and manual training schools.

In this, the third gathering of its kind, there was a most notable increase of interest. From far away Siam to the United States one was impressed by the efforts being made to give the word art a real meaning, to so shape an art training that drawing and designing will become common as means of expression, a language that needs no interpreter to make its intent clear to all.

It is dull reading to enumerate the features of an exhibition to those who have not seen it. Let us confine ourselves then to some of the things that seemed to possess an unique interest. First perhaps would come the work of Austria and Hungary,—in its distinctive racial character and the artistic ideals that prevail in those countries, in the boldness of the more advanced work, and, in the case of Austria,
the remarkable development of careful representation in pupils from fourteen to eighteen years of age. Such work would be impossible, and probably undesirable, in American schools. But here as elsewhere in Europe one feels that children are taught to draw anyway, even though there may seem less freedom and spontaneity.

Two minor points come to mind in connection with this work. In the Hungarian schools one finds a most interesting set of school models furnished for the purpose of drawing,—miniature houses with thatched roofs, well-heads, dovecotes and an innumerable variety of other forms peculiarly Hungarian. Here is a technical matter that may be new to most of our teachers, something that may be put to good service whether in elementary schools or in advanced work,—"linoleum prints." Most of our teachers are familiar with the wood-block printing practiced in so many of our schools. The thought is the same; but in place of wood blocks a heavy grade of common linoleum about three-sixteenths of an inch thick is used. The design or composition is cut out with ease and the material does not warp or crack. It is well worth experimenting with the idea; in Hungary as well as in Germany splendid, practical work is done in this way, often on a large scale and in several colors. It is practiced in the advanced training schools devoted to typography.

One of the surprises of the exhibition was from Zürich, Switzerland. Never have I seen such wonderful work from nature, and such a seeking for pattern in natural forms. Sheet after sheet of spirited drawings from nature were shown, in all mediums, and ever present was the feeling for a decorative application of pattern. One returned again and again to this section to wonder at the results and at what manner of pupils could produce such interesting things.

Germany concentrated specially on her schools of industrial training and made an envyable showing,—strong, fearless work without being bizarre. The weaving from Düsseldorf and the printing from the typographic schools of Magdeburg and Barmen were particularly strong in technique and design.

In the work of all these countries animate life plays a very important part. Everywhere one found an infinite variety of sketches from live creatures. Some schools, that in Birmingham for instance, maintain a veritable menagerie of animals, birds, fowls, and from this material a large amount of work is required, from action sketches and anatomical studies to minute and carefully rendered studies of feathers and other details.

There is much of practical interest in the method employed in the Royal Hungarian Institute for the teaching of the historic styles
of architecture and ornament. It is first a study of the origin and treatment of materials, methods of handling and working as compared with modern times; then comes a comparative study of construction and local environments, the people and how they lived. From these conditions, influenced to some extent by commercial relations with other lands, various styles were formed. Last of all come the details of ornament, the development and decadence of standards. We begin too frequently at the end of the subject and fail to go into it far enough to penetrate to the part that is most vital.

In a comparison of our own work with that done in other countries, notably in England, Germany, Austria and Hungary, one could not help feeling the need of an art training more intimately related to industrial requirements. Are we not too much inclined to give our attention to the educational or cultural side of art education to the neglect of a disciplinary training that may be of immediate value in industrial work? How many of the pupils who leave our schools are prepared to use drawing as a common, everyday language? In one sense this brings into question the aims and methods of our entire educational system. Statistics are not generally interesting; but there are a few figures that speak in a way that must be considered. We have a most elaborate and thorough system of free education from the kindergarten through the university. But is it not rather disconcerting to learn that more than eighty per cent. of those who enter the primary school fail to complete the eighth grade of our public schools, that ninety per cent. fail to enter the high schools and that only four per cent. of the pupils who start at the bottom of the ladder ever graduate from the high schools? Are we sure that our ideals of an education are right in the light of such figures? Our whole system seems keyed to the requirements of the universities at the top and the vast army of pupils who drop out by the wayside are left more or less to their own salvation. This in a large measure accounts for the rise of the correspondence schools in America; they have come into being to meet a demand from young men and women who are groping for something that will help them in their immediate work, something that was not to be found in the school training offered them. Until recently we have looked upon the trade school as a bogie hovering about our carefully reared educational fabric. But now the question of industrial training is one that must be met squarely if we are to retain our position with other nations in the advanced stand that has been taken. It would seem wiser to fit our system of education to the ninety-six per cent. that, from one reason or another, leaves school to go to work rather than to the four per cent. that continues through to the more advanced studies.
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NOW as regards the art side of it. Art training was introduced into educational work in America first of all from practical motives. It was known as industrial drawing; and a very dull and formal sort of drawing it was, too. Gradually, during years past, our drawing courses have been enriched, the imaginative and creative sides have been emphasized, color has played an important part in the work. It has become more of a culture apparently than a disciplinary or practical training. We ventured in time to discard the old term industrial drawing and call our work art education. Handicrafts have found a way into the courses of art training and have furnished an opportunity for the application of design along many interesting lines. And withal there is an unquestionable freshness and vigor in our work until we get into the advanced elementary grades. It is here that we falter, that the promise of earlier work does not bear just the fruit that might be wished. It is at this point that a comparison of our work with that of other countries, taking the pupils age for age, furnishes material for thoughtful study. In the countries mentioned specialization for industrial work begins at an earlier age than in our own country. A special study is made of the local environment and courses of work planned to fit the industrial problem offered. For example,—at Pécs in Hungary is the immense plant of the Zsolnay Majolica Company. The boys who are destined to be workers in this factory find as early as ten years of age that they can follow a line of study peculiarly adapted to the requirements of this particular industry. Their art training is turned into channels that will tend to make them better and more efficient workmen, and this too without overlooking the claims of those other pupils who choose to fit themselves for professional or other works not related to the factory. As the art training progresses practical application is given more and more to ceramics, and the coöperation of the manufacturers is sought at all times. And then too there is always something ahead. If the pupil drops out of school he can continue in the evening classes specially planned for his needs and tending to increase year by year his efficiency as a workman.

NOW it is here that the suggestion occurs. Do we give enough study to the environment in which our work is carried on? Can we not in many cases give it a more practical turn, adapt it to industrial conditions, secure the interest of manufacturers and lay something of a foundation for the schools of industrial art that will soon be with us in America? Industrial schools with us are now carried on largely through philanthropy; the question must soon be met by municipal and state authorities, and sound industrial training in-
corporated as a part of our educational system. Our manual training high schools are in the right direction, but they do not go half far enough. They do not in any sense offer a practical industrial training and the teachers are not sufficiently in touch with actual shop practice and methods. Our arts and crafts work, whether in school or out of school, is too superficial in its intent and purpose. There is scarcely an art school in our land that is not offering courses in the arts and crafts. But these courses are keyed to the demands of the amateur; they do not offer the long, severe disciplinary technical training that would enable the student to take a place in the actual industrial work of the day. We are too impatient of time and want results to show to admiring and envious friends.

In the study of industrial art schools abroad it is apparent that their work is planned with these distinct aims in mind:—First: to give a thoroughly technical and practical artistic training fitting as closely as possible into the local environment. Their methods of training for these pupils are adapted to actual trade conditions in so far as possible, though aiming to improve rather than slavishly follow these conditions. The pupils of these schools find that they are wanted by the manufacturers when the course of study has been completed. Second: to offer work adapted to the professional training of teachers, placing them in touch with practical trade conditions and shop methods. Third: to meet the demands of the amateur or dilettante worker, offering a sound training again that will lead to a better appreciation of good things. If industrial art is to become a reality the education of the consumer is quite as important as the training of the producers. Fourth: to preserve national traditions in design.

The problem in America is radically different from that of European countries,—different in two noticeable features. First we have no national traditions on which to build an art training. In the exhibition just closed there was a marked national character in the work of each country of Europe. Our own advanced work bore evidence of many diverse influences, of a groping after ideals not clearly defined,—here the marked influence of an individual teacher, again a following along the line of historic styles. Lacking a national tradition it would seem best for us to dig away down to the bottom of things, to seek the simplest elementary principles, to design on the basis of thorough technical knowledge of tools, materials and processes, less on a theoretic knowledge of things. Our problem is more difficult than that of other countries. In Hungary, for instance, the industrial art training is concentrated upon the problem of preserving and fostering all that is distinctly Hungarian, that will give
to the commercial product of the country an unmistakable national character through a unity of construction and design. This brings us to the second important point of difference: —the industrial training here is under the immediate direction or supervision of the national governments in most instances. The initiative was taken by the governments and the work is supported in part or entirely by the governments. In America industrial art must come about from enlightened public opinion, from municipal authorities first. It is a problem for our boards of education to meet through co-operation with manufacturers and working men.

It is my purpose later to go into details regarding the technical training and industrial conditions of Hungary. For the present let us note the method of approaching this subject of technical training in England. One typical educational center will serve as an illustration, the city of Birmingham. This city is probably the largest center of the metal trades in the world. It conducts two very large schools for technical training, each school having a number of branch schools scattered about the city; each branch school giving particular attention to the needs of its district. One of these central institutions is devoted to what may be called purely technical or trade school purposes, carpentry, plumbing, tinsmithing, metallurgy, chemistry, etc. The other school, in which we are now interested, is known as the Municipal School of Arts and Crafts. As it was my good fortune to attend this school some years ago I can recount from personal observation the valuable part that it plays in the metal trades of the city. The school is managed in cooperation with the Manufacturers’ Association and the Metal Trades Unions, both of these organizations contributing liberally to the support of the work. The head master is charged with the general supervision of art training in the elementary schools of the city in order to ensure a unity of work throughout. The scope of the school is unusually broad; it offers an art training along general lines, in architectural work, for teachers, and particularly along lines of special crafts work. Its aim is above all else to strengthen the artistic trades practiced in the city. Its teachers and departmental heads are invariably chosen from the shops of the city. In other words, they are workers first, each a recognized expert in his particular craft; part of their time only is spent in the school; the rest is spent in actual shop practice. There is both strength and weakness in this plan. It is not always wise to assume that the good workman will make a good teacher. He is very apt to look upon his pupils as incompetent workers, fail to plan wisely for the development of
latent ability and withal expect too much and assume too much from those who are studying under his direction. On the other hand the plan imparts a distinct practical character to the training and places the pupil in touch with actual shop methods.

One interesting phase of the work is its relation to the elementary school system and its comprehensive scheme of scholarship system. Each year one hundred pupils who have shown marked ability in the elementary art training are drafted into the Municipal Art School under scholarships ranging from five shillings per week upward. These pupils range from twelve years of age, and year by year spend an increasing amount of time in special work to which they seem best adapted, and this too without interfering with their general education along other lines. In course of time these pupils pass on into the industrial work of the city more efficient in every way through the training that they have received.

Equally valuable are the courses of work for apprentices. Many pupils divide their time between the schools and the shops under an arrangement with their employers. The evening apprentice school of one branch alone registers over six hundred pupils who are employed daytimes in the local shops. One feels that this activity of the school and the close correlation maintained between the school and the shops must react year by year upon a better commercial product. No graduate of the school ever experiences difficulty in obtaining a good position in the shops whenever he is ready to go to work.

In connection with the school, though in a separate building, is a large and very complete Municipal Museum of Fine and Industrial Art. In the latter work it is particularly complete and furnishes a valuable opportunity to study the best work of the past. Incidentally it may be remarked that this museum, like that at South Kensington, is a workers’ museum; that is to say one is at liberty to measure, sketch and draw at will without encountering the petty restrictions that are so often found in other galleries.

This leads us to the government’s encouragement of industrial art schools, a system in which the Birmingham school is merely a unit. This system centers in the Royal College of Art, South Kensington Museum and the National Competition. During the Congress there was exhibited in the galleries of South Kensington the results of the National Competition for the present year as well as a retrospective exhibition of the medal work for ten years past. The government encourages the forming of schools of industrial art in villages, cities and countries through a plan of grants of money toward maintenance and equipment, through the loan of much of its valuable
collection at South Kensington to local schools and through its national competition for pupils held each year. In order to be eligible for this assistance the school must conform to certain regulations laid down by the Board of Education as regards management, courses of work, qualification of teachers, methods of teaching, etc., each school submitting a syllabus of its work, as related to local conditions, for approval. The plan leaves a broad margin for local initiative and at the same time brings the whole scheme under the general supervision of a common center. The national competition of the present year seemed to serve as a justification of the plan. There was a splendid showing of what may be called successfully ambitious efforts in crafts work, thorough in technique and good in design. There is a strong incentive to do the fine thing and do it well, and to design each article from a basis of technical knowledge acquired through hard earned experience. In a classification of the different lines of work examiners are chosen who are recognized as foremost authorities and their reports and recommendations make valuable reading. There is a seriousness about it all that extends even to smaller village schools, giving to the whole movement a broad, national development.

Aside from this national organization much is being done here in a quiet though effective way for the promotion of industrial work among the agricultural workers of Scotland, Ireland and Wales. It has been a matter of surprise to find how wide in scope and how thorough in organization this work is. It is promoted in each country by an association that endeavors to find a market for handicraft work and keep alive old traditions among the cottagers in small villages and on the farms. The Welsh Industries Association is typical of them all and it may be of interest to describe its work at greater length. It is patronized by royalty and has the active interest and support of a large number of titled individuals. The object of the Association is the development and encouragement of Welsh industries, particularly through the improvement of the textile fabrics. It aims to provide the workers with good patterns, to collect and distribute good designs that have been preserved, in this way tending to foster the national Welsh traditions. Its immediate and more practical aid to the peasant workers comes through the establishment of salesrooms in order that a market may be provided. Wales is divided by the Association into a number of districts for convenience, each district having an organization of its own, under the general direction of a central office, with salesrooms in various cities. The salesrooms are conducted on a commission basis, twenty per cent.
of the selling price of the goods being charged. The worker sets
his own price on the things to be sold. In the different districts
much of the actual management of the Association’s work is being
given over to tenant farmers, cottagers and others who are directly
interested, in order that the system of patronage may gradually be
removed, leaving the industrial work on a stable basis with an as-
sured market. It is hoped in this way that the country people may
find a good living on the farms and through the encouragement that
the market offers for handicraft work be prevented from swarming
into the already overcrowded cities. It is gratifying to learn that in
the ten years since its organization the sales of the work have mate-
rially increased year by year and the area of activity broadened until
the whole of Wales is now covered. Incidentally we cannot help
feeling that many who have found a ready market for the work of
their hands have remained true to the healthier out-of-door life in
the country who would otherwise have given up to the love of the city,
—the city that ever stretches forth so much of promise and expecta-
tion. Many have remained on the soil who would otherwise have
formed new recruits to the hopeless factory grind of the city; and to
keep men and women on the soil away from the lure of the towns is one
of the economic problems that faces England. Millions of dollars’
worth of agricultural products are imported yearly while thousands
of acres of good farming land are idle for want of tenants.

But the work of this Association is not confined to the textile
industries alone. It is the policy of each district organization to
foster, to put new life and spirit into the old industries that are peculiar
to the villages of that district. In some districts it is lacemaking
and embroidery that are most important; in others basket weaving
or metal work, and in some of the towns enameling, bookbinding
and pottery. Some very interesting work along the line of pottery
is done. The traditions of this craft were rapidly disappearing; but
now the old forms and glazes and patterns have been revived and
new experiments are being carried on. Much of the native ware
bears a strong resemblance to some of the Mexican painted pottery
with salt glazes, and quaint, half barbaric flower forms. Classes
and community work shops have been established with encouraging
success in many districts. The material in all cases is provided by
the people themselves, the product being their own from the raw
material to the completed articles. And last of all, though perhaps
not least, orders are taken for butter, eggs, cheese and other farm
products.