

## HISTORY OF THE ART STUDY SECTION OF THE FACULTY WOMEN'S CLUB

This story of the beginning and continuing life of the Art Study Section of the Faculty Women's Club is based on the recollections of some of its founding and early members combined with information found in existing records. Quite understandably those records are incomplete so that some data are not available.

Although our section is known currently as Art Study, we were originally known as Art Study II. The first chairman, Elaine Rice, recalls: "Art Study II had its first meeting after the fall reception in 1946 at the home of Agnes Miner. This organizational meeting was formed from a waiting list for the Art Study section already in existence which decided it could not accomodate any more members in its group. Grace Marckwardt, a member of this group, took it upon herself to assist us and to serve as our mentor. She stayed with us all through our formative year and into the next. Our meeting time was the fourth Monday of the month at 8:00 p.m. (This gave us the evening out without having to hire baby sitters.) With very few exceptions, we provided the programs which we researched and presented. The art in which we seemed most interested was that of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It seemed that while Art Study I emphasized the historical aspects in studying art, we were very much concerned with form, color and composition. Marjory Landecker offered to provide us with a background lecture on Classicism, Romanticism, and Realism prior to our study of the Impressionists. This was followed by twenty other programs, mostly on the French." According to early members, interest was keen, sparked by a determination to study seriously and do well.

And so it was that our present section began forty-three years ago. It is our good fortune that four of the earliest members are still in the group. They are: Elaine Rice, Marjory Landecker, Nita Eggertson and Alix Spurlin. Each served as chairman in the beginning years, Elaine having done so for the first four. Our name remained Art Study II for many years until Art Study I disbanded. Another section, Art Study III, lasted only a short while and was absorbed by this group in 1949.

From the beginning enrollment of about fourteen, Art Study grew steadily to a peak enrollment of forty-seven in 1987-88, with a slight decline in 1988-89 to forty-three. A dozen or more of the current members have been affiliated with the group for twenty to thirty or more years. It is interesting to note that the practice of having a waiting list gave way in 1949 to a policy of inclusiveness, welcoming to membership all who wished to join.

Through the many years of this section's activity, programs have ranged widely over the world of art from primitive to contemporary, have dipped into Egyptian, Byzantine, and Ancient Mexican Art, and have included Sculpture and Architecture, Museums of Europe and the United States, and Art Collectors and Connoisseurs. Paintings, however, have been the favorite subjects, especially those of European and American artists. In addition to French Impressionists' works, those of Renaissance artists and of United States painters have been given the greatest share of attention. Only now and then has the group turned to outside speakers, sometimes University faculty, sometimes local people who helpfully agreed to provide background for or add to a particular program series. On the whole, the commitment of members to researching and presenting their programs has prevailed. (A list of programs will be included with this history.)

Visual materials to accompany reports are most important to art study. At first speakers used illustrated art books from their own or local libraries, mounted reproductions available at the University's Fine Arts Library, pictures clipped from magazines, small reproductions purchased from Ulrich's Book Store - whatever they could find, including photographic slides when such were available. Eventually a fortunate arrangement with the Fine Arts Library made it possible to borrow slides from its collection; but after several years, this generous and greatly appreciated privilege was discontinued because of the need of faculty and students to have them available at all times.

Since then, Art Study members have resorted to various means of having pictures to project on a screen: renting cumbersome opaque projectors, sending to museums for slides, engaging husbands or friends with photographic skills to take pictures from art books, taking pictures themselves when visiting art museums during their travels, or using a camera, with permission, at the U of M Audio-Visual Center.

A noticeable change in our section's routine was that of meeting time. In 1970, the membership agreed to meet in the afternoon instead of evenings, and for two years did so on the first Tuesday of the month, until the second Tuesday was found to be more suitable. For a few years the plan was to meet at 12:30, with each one taking a sandwich for lunching together before the program; but this arrangement did not work out satisfactorily. In 1974 the meeting time was changed to 1:00 p.m., allowing a half hour for socializing before the program.

Sociability came quite easily for Art Study members, bound together by a strong mutual interest in art, and continued to be enjoyed in a variety of ways, the most

regular one being to mingle over tea and cookies at meetings. In some of the years of evening meetings, there were potluck suppers with husbands as guests, or luncheons in the spring, with the food provided by members. Such luncheons were continued after the change to daytime meetings, until a suggestion that we try instead having a January luncheon at the Women's City Club was well-received. This January luncheon has become an annual event.

The initial practice of meeting in homes has been adhered to, mainly, and continues. With the increased size of our section, a large meeting place such as the City Club came to be valued because not many homes are large enough to accomodate the numbers (25 to 30) who are likely to attend. Another exception to meeting in homes has been to gather at the University Art Museum to see exhibits under the guidance of a docent. At such times, those who wished to do so met first for lunch together at the Michigan Union.

With time, experience and growth, changes and refinements in organization and procedure were adopted to meet group needs and wishes. As noted earlier, this section began with a chairman as its only officer, assisted by an advisor. After a year, a program chairman (and committee) replaced the advisor. These two remained the only officers for many years until a secretary-treasurer was named. Section dues had been agreed upon, for it was no longer acceptable that individuals absorb the occasional expenses. Initially, dues were fifty cents, then one dollar, and eventually two dollars, the current amount.

An early need for dues was to cover the cost of postcards sent as reminders of meetings, a practice dropped when postal rates increased and other expenses such as the cost of yearbooks and paying for program-related expenditures seemed more important. The cost of film for slides was reimbursed when such slides were to become the property of Faculty Women's Club. Another use of funds has been remembering members in appropriate ways at times of illness and bereavement, and contributing an art book to the Ann Arbor Public Library in memory of a deceased member.

As the section became larger, two assistant hostesses were added for each meeting to share in providing refreshments and to remind members, by telephone, of the time and place of the coming meeting.

Members of Art Study Section acknowledge readily that they have felt rewarded in various ways by taking part in it. For many, doing so has made possible acquaintance with works of art they otherwise would not have had and has stimulated further study. For some it has prompted enrolling in art courses; for others, it has made visits to art museums more meaningful. Also, association with women

of like interests has fostered valuable acquaintance and friendship among members.

Those who have gained in knowledge and enjoyment from Art Study Section hope it will continue to please and enrich its members in the same manner and spirit that have characterized it from the beginning.

Written by Esther McEwen  
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