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Art Acknowledged and Disregarded: Art and Its National Context at St. Cloud State University

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ART ACKNOWLEDGED AND DISREGARDED: ART AND ITS NATIONAL
CONTEXT AT ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY

by

Krista Lewis

B.A., Drexel University, Philadelphia, 2008

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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This thesis submitted by Krista Lewis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

Chairperson

Dean
School of Graduate Studies

ART ACKNOWLEDGED AND DISREGARDED: ART AND ITS NATIONAL CONTEXT AT ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY

Krista Lewis

Existing histories of St. Cloud State University pay little attention to art and its place at the school. Given that the university is currently home to an accredited art program, and a rather large collection of art, recognition of the contribution art has made to the school is overdue.

Delving into records, one finds that art played a role in the curriculum and mission of the institution from its very beginning as a normal school. Though not always strong or valued, it grew with the school nonetheless. Examining this role as it relates to developments with art regionally and nationally reveals that the school's experience often paralleled these broader trends.

Early on, at St. Cloud and elsewhere, art was often associated with the elite. If it made it into the schools, it was largely seen as a supplementary tool to teaching and most useful only in conjunction with other subjects. The school eventually acknowledged the value of art appreciation and worked to instill this in its students through a collection of reproductions and a lively discourse on art. Art advocates elsewhere worked heartily to dispel the elitist association and develop an appreciation of art apart from its practical value among the public and within the government.

As the school grew to serve more than future teachers, art slowly asserted a more independent place on campus. Similarly, arts organizations geared toward the general public began to appear in Minnesota and the federal government established support with the New Deal. This pace exploded during the 1960s, as the school experienced overwhelming change and growth. The art program expanded spectacularly, bringing in faculty who earnestly worked toward building a collection of original artworks. The art department's focus also began to turn from art teachers to artists. Inadequate facilities and equipment plagued the program as consequences of such growth. Nationally, after struggling for decades to pass arts legislation, the National Endowment for the Arts was created in this period, allowing arts support to grow as never before. This also brought consequences, as economic and cultural challenges forced advocates to prove the worth of art and the agency. As growth slowed at St. Cloud, art on campus faced similar challenges and the program adjusted to meet the diversifying needs of its students.

Today, though art is accepted at the University, the struggle to maintain an adequate level of support remains.

Month Year

Approved by Research Committee:

Mary Wingerd Chairperson

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INTRODUCTION

“You have often observed in the hall near the door of the business office, the bronze tablet on which is inscribed Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Do you, however, know the history of this tablet?...”

“...Similar...in that they probably also have a story behind them, are many of the other works of art which decorate the halls and rooms of the school. Not a few of their stories, however, are hidden in obscurity, and are not easy to trace.

“Many pieces of statuary and a number of paintings were bought at the time the school was built....

“...A number of paintings and drawings were given by the literary societies of past years. ...Many pictures, as well as statuary, were secured through the proceeds of art exhibits. Some pieces were donated by friends of the college. Others...were purchased by the school. We suggest, students, that you examine the works of art in the college and benefit thereby.”¹

A St. Cloud State Teachers College student wrote this in a 1925 article for the *College Chronicle* entitled “School Art Sources are Interesting.” It is used here because it may as well have been written about the current art collection held by St. Cloud State University. Any observant individual walking around the campus should notice more than a few pieces of artwork, which range from pottery and sculpture to painting and tapestry. Unless a curiosity to investigate the story behind the pieces strikes, however, they may often be dismissed as mere decoration. This is unfortunate, for art, in one form or another, has been with the university as more than decoration from its beginning as a normal school.

¹ “School Art Sources are Interesting,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), February 27, 1925, 1.

As of this writing, St. Cloud State University is one of six schools in Minnesota with accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. Of the remaining five, two are institutions dedicated to the visual arts and design, two are state universities like St. Cloud, and one is a community college.² On its own, this fact is not especially impressive, for more than 300 other schools are currently accredited by the NASAD. Minnesota can take pride in having the most accredited schools in the Upper Midwest, but if the boundaries are stretched just a little bit to include all of Illinois and Michigan, Minnesota easily loses its bragging rights. Then again, comparing state populations to the number of accredited schools equalizes the discrepancy, somewhat alleviating the pain by making Minnesota just as special as its neighboring states. What makes St. Cloud State University's accreditation remarkable is that the institution originated as a normal school, the Third State Normal School to be exact. As a normal school dedicated to educating and training future teachers, one might easily assume that art played a minimal role at the school. On the surface this is true, yet a little digging reveals a much greater significance for art on campus and beyond. Art has had a fundamental role in the educational and philosophical development of the school, a role that has been overlooked in existing discussions of the school's past and present. This is not to suggest that the place for art has always been strong, for it has fluctuated with the changing goals and mission of the university, but it is part of its institutional history.

What role the normal school had for art would be carried forward and built upon in many

² The other schools include the College of Visual Arts, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minnesota State University Mankato, Minnesota State University Moorhead, and Normandale Community College. The University of Minnesota is conspicuously absent. "Accredited Institutional Members," *National Association of Schools of Art and Design*, accessed June 6, 2012, http://nasad.arts-accredit.org/index.jsp?page=List_Accredited_Members.

ways, ultimately leading to art having greater prominence at the school and the conditions under which the school might be accredited by the NASAD. But not without certain hitches along the way.

Understanding the significance of art to the university goes beyond the campus and must include a discussion of art and artists in a local, regional, and national context, as a reflection and interpretation of the period of its development. Americans have had a long and complex relationship with artists and the art world, one in which artists have often seemed separate or isolated and treated differently from general society. Currently, the American attitude toward the arts as popularly projected is one of little respect and little interest from the majority of citizens. Stephen Colbert illustrated this well when in May of 2011 he interviewed Alison Klayman on his show, *The Colbert Report*, about her documentary of the renowned and somewhat controversial Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. During the interview he said, "...in America we know to ignore artists if they're serious in any way. Because in America, serious artists are a complete joke." Since Colbert plays a character speaking from an ultra-conservative viewpoint, his audience can laugh at him and his statements knowing that they are eccentric and do not represent the mainstream. This is how he can get away with making such blunt and harsh statements, and that is partly what makes them funny, but in that capacity they also speak to some truth about American society. In other words, what he said about the American attitude toward artists is funny because it is true.

Colbert's words come to life in a September 2012 article in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* about a Japanese artist, Tatzu Nishi, "constructing a contemporary living room

on top of the Columbus Monument in Columbus Circle” in New York City. Members of the Italic Institute of America immediately objected to the project, saying that “Encasing this majestic statue in a cocoon of conceptual art demeans the [Italian] community and trivializes history,” it “makes a mockery” of Columbus, and it is “buffoonery masquerading as art.” The Italic Institute clearly did not ignore Nishi, but while praising one piece of art, it failed to give his work a chance. The Public Art Fund commissioned the work and in defending it, the fund’s director, Nicholas Baume, argued that Nishi’s work is about “drawing attention and giving access to the public to urban monuments, statues and architectural details that they wouldn’t normally have access to and to present it in a new way that gives it a contemporary relevance and opens our eyes to something that is perhaps overlooked.”³ The previous year, the *Star Tribune* featured an interview with the filmmaker and satirist John Waters about an exhibit called “Absentee Landlord” that the Walker Art Center asked him to curate. He observed that

A lot of people think contemporary art makes them feel stupid. Because they are stupid. They’re right. If you have contempt about contemporary art, you are stupid. You can be the most uneducated person in the world and completely appreciate contemporary art, because you see the rebellion. You see that it’s trying to change things. Contemporary art is supposed to ruin what came before, while paying respect to it.⁴

These examples illustrate that when we do not make an effort to understand the context and intent of art and both the physical and intellectual processes involved in producing it, we allow ourselves to ridicule and criticize it as without merit, dismiss it as decoration, and ignore those who create it. At a university with no shortage of art and a

³ Ula Illytzky, “NYC Columbus Statue Enveloped by Living Room,” *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), September 6, 2012, E4.

⁴ Colin Covert, “Who Gave John Waters the Keys to the Museum?” *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), June 5, 2011, E1, E7.

strong art program, this is exactly what must not happen, and this is why the significance of art to St. Cloud State University needs to be documented.

Chapter I

ESTABLISHING A PRACTICAL PLACE FOR ART

“Democratic nations...will habitually prefer the useful to the beautiful, and they will require that the beautiful should be useful.”

Alexis de Tocqueville made this statement in 1835 with reference to his experiences in the United States.¹ It continued to be accurate when a normal school took root a generation or more later in the up-and-coming city of St. Cloud, Minnesota. To be sure, the mentality he described would shape the role art performed at the school and for its students for years to come.

Location Matters

In August of 1858 the Minnesota state legislature passed an education bill requiring the governor to appoint a Normal Board of Instruction, which had the task of establishing three state normal schools.² In accordance with this bill, and after much haggling, the Third State Normal School found a home on the western bank of the Mississippi River in the Lower Town neighborhood of St. Cloud and opened its doors to students in 1869, just eleven years after Minnesota achieved statehood and thirteen since

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America Volume 2* (1945 reprint, New York: J. & H. G. Langley, 1840), 48.

² Edwin Cates, *A Centennial History of St. Cloud State College* (Minneapolis: Dillon Press, 1968), 3.

the city had been incorporated.³ Though both city and state had hardly entered adolescence, enough time had already passed in the city for class distinctions, and all the claims to culture and taste that go with it, to exist. In truth, very little time had to pass before these distinctions manifested. In the mid 1850s, when people began to earnestly settle in the area that would become St. Cloud, three towns formed, commonly referred to as Upper Town, Middle Town, and Lower Town. Upper Town set itself apart initially as the cultural center, bringing in wealthy, educated Southerners. Germans dominated in Middle Town, while Protestant Yankee merchants (and their Northern sensibilities) set up shop in Lower Town. Advertising proved to be an effective means by which to attract settlers and encourage development, especially for Lower Town.⁴ Such advertising relied on simple, self-effacing descriptions of everyday life in Minnesota and the potential for a bright future, which contrasted well against the heavily developed areas of the United States that offered little land and much struggle. Of course, words can only convey so much; thus, in order to fully sell the idea, advertisers took advantage of artistic talent.⁵ Edwin Whitefield, who first became known for selling lithographed images of cities to subscribers, is an example of one such talent. Not long after arriving in Minnesota in 1855, he discovered he could use his ability to be a settlers' artist for frontier promotion, which he quickly put to use in helping to establish the town of

³ See chapter 2 of Alexander Ames's "Mansions of Memories" for all the dramatic details. Alexander L. Ames, "Mansions of Memories: Preservation, Destruction, and the Construction of Place in Central Minnesota" (master's thesis, St. Cloud State University, 2012).

⁴ John J. Dominik, *St. Cloud: The Triplet City* (Woodland Hills, Calif.: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1983), 13-14.

⁵ Rena Neumann Coen, *Painting and Sculpture in Minnesota 1820-1914* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 48.

Kandiyohi.⁶ Along with his views of the new land, he tempted settlers with phrases, such as "...cities spring almost literally in a day, and families that a few years previously were toiling for a pitiful subsistence in the crowded Atlantic towns, find themselves in their new homes...enjoying the luxuries and refinements of the most happy civilization."⁷

This use of art to bring attention to the West and describe it to those who could not travel there began well before the settling of St. Cloud. In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the Hudson River School and its affiliation with Romanticism stimulated an interest in and reverence for the American landscape. These artists attached to the landscape a moral as well as aesthetic value, reveling in and praising its raw, natural, unspoiled state so unlike the tainted decadence of Europe.

The land became a point of pride for many Americans because nothing else like it existed. Since not everyone could experience this landscape firsthand, the panorama movement, which peaked by the 1850s, became one way to expose thousands of Americans to it. When a panorama exhibit came to town, people flocked to it to see the land, cities, and Indians it portrayed, as well as hear the historical and geographical explanations that went with it all. It proved to be an excellent tool for spreading geographic information and attracting settlers, as well as a lucrative endeavor for the artists involved.⁸

As the nation's boundary moved westward, artists in search of new and wonderful subjects followed. Minnesota had more than a few natural attractions, not to mention

⁶ Kandiyohi is roughly 60 miles southwest of St. Cloud.

⁷ Bertha L. Heilbron, "Edwin Whitefield, Settlers' Artist," *Minnesota History* 40, no. 2 (1966): 63-64, 67, 73.

⁸ Joseph Earl Arrington, "The Story of Stockwell's Panorama," *Minnesota History* 33, no. 7 (1953): 284, 286-287.

native inhabitants, that enticed artists and tourists alike. The artists in Minnesota at mid-century included John Frederick Kensett, Eastman Johnson, Frank B. Mayer, Albert Bierstadt, and Robert S. Duncanson, among others. For many artists of this stripe, this would be a temporary excursion or adventure that provided them with material and inspiration for the real work to be done back East where they could find big cities and patrons.⁹ Several of the works created by these and other artists are highly valued now for the history they recorded.¹⁰ In fact, the artists produced their work with this idea in mind. Even as Americans admired, or more accurately idealized, the novel landscape they had the good fortune to live in, or at least near, and the simple lives of the Native Americans, they knew these would not last forever. With the pace of growth and expansion in the United States, they especially anticipated that the native population would not survive much longer. As one 1850 Maryland Historical Society annual report explained, “The aboriginal inhabitants of this great continent are fast yielding to the more powerful race now peopling their ancient domain. ...The greater the necessity for now rescuing from oblivion every memorial of a people so soon to be extinguished...”¹¹ Despite the blatant racial arrogance of this statement, good intentions lay behind it, and it implicitly highlights the significance artists could have in this rescue mission. This statement also hints at the fact that while these artists captured the frontier, they also witnessed the beginning of its transformation into a more settled and comparatively

⁹ Rena Neumann Coen, “Alfred Thomson Bricher’s Early Minnesota Scenes,” *Minnesota History* 46, no. 6 (1979): 233-234.

¹⁰ Bertha L. Heilbron, “Seth Eastman’s Water Colors,” *Minnesota History* 19, no. 4 (1938): 423; Grace Lee Nute, “Rindisbacher’s Minnesota Water Colors,” *Minnesota History* 20, no. 1 (1939): 56-57.

¹¹ Jean Jepson Page, “Frank Blackwell Mayer, Painter of the Minnesota Indian,” *Minnesota History* 46, no. 2 (1978): 70.

mundane environment. With this change, portrait painting and genre scenes grew in importance, reflecting the wants and needs of the region's new inhabitants.¹²

Back in St. Cloud, as Lower Town prospered, its good fortune became evident in the construction of stately homes and the activities of the most prominent and influential wives in the town. Many of these wives, having received their education from women's institutes and finishing schools back East, had come to appreciate the arts, literature, and philosophy, and as one historian of these women has noted, they had an "eagerness to fashion a cultural life in their new surroundings."¹³ As early as 1865 one Oliver Hudson Kelly wrote,

St. Cloud...where an Eastern Man would hardly expect to find much beauty and fashion, yet it is here in all its gorgeous hues and attractions – pianos, Brussels carpets,...greenbacks, crinolines, and all the other accomplishments which add happiness to the soul of handsome and accomplished women wherever they may be found.¹⁴

While praising St. Cloud, Kelly's observation is also interesting for pointing out what Easterners expected of life in the West. As will be seen, these notions of inferiority and superiority plagued America's relationship with or perception of art and culture. One of the more significant creations of St. Cloud's prominent wives proved to be the St. Cloud Reading Room Society, which they established in 1880. Through this society, they offered lectures, recitals, and art exhibits, all aimed at improving intellectual growth and an "interest in the best things" in its members and the public.¹⁵

¹² Coen, *Painting and Sculpture*, 51.

¹³ Patricia K. Witte, *Indomitable Ladies of the St. Cloud Reading Room Society, 1880 to 2010* (St. Cloud: North Star Press of St. Cloud, Inc., 2010), 5.

¹⁴ Dominik, *St. Cloud: The Triplet City*, 27.

¹⁵ Witte, *Indomitable Ladies*, 14-15.

The influence and cultural inclination of these ladies is perhaps one reason why the Lower Town site for the Third State Normal School beat out all the other competition. Few other places could provide cultural offerings better than an institution of higher learning; therefore, many found the presence of the normal school appealing.¹⁶ Education in general had clearly become important to St. Cloud by this point, as evidenced by the creation of a Board of Education the same year the normal school opened. Yet, if a child wanted to study cultural subjects, such as art, music, and languages, he or she had to seek private tutoring.¹⁷ The Lower Town site appealed for another, less intellectual but equally stimulating, reason as well: the beauty of the location. The position of the school upon a bluff with an enviable view of the Mississippi River could not help but attract students.¹⁸ Hence, even before the school opened, ideas about culture and aesthetics permeated the thoughts of those who had a stake in its success.

Why Education, Why Art Education

Of course, not everyone looked upon the normal school or even public education favorably, and in 1870 a movement against normal schools emerged within the state legislature and among the citizens it represented. Some found the cost of public education burdensome, while others saw no reason to teach children beyond the standard three month session. The idea that teachers did not need any special training, however,

¹⁶ Ames, "Mansions of Memories," 116-117.

¹⁷ Dominik, *St. Cloud: The Triplet City*, 82.

¹⁸ Cates, *A Centennial History*, 13, 17.

hit normal schools closest to home.¹⁹ Fortunately, the State Normal Board managed to fend off this attack with the help of friendly newspapers that presented their cause and printed their proceedings.²⁰

The very notion of a normal school system traveled west with those who migrated from the east, especially those Yankees from New England. In 1839, under the guidance of Horace Mann, Massachusetts established the first normal schools in the United States. By this time, common schools had become a regular feature in the United States, and many considered them an aid in the effort to create civic equality and citizens who would be “responsible, productive, unified, and committed.”²¹ Living in a democracy like the United States meant having the right to vote, but an uneducated vote could be disastrous. For Mann, “a human being is not in any proper sense a human being until he is educated,” and “[t]o a wise man, comparatively few things can be propounded which do not require a response with qualifications, with discrimination, with proportion.”²² Therefore, Mann felt that an education provided Americans with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in a democracy and encouraged the moral characteristics desired in democratic citizens.²³ In addition to this, Mann argued that education helped equalize the conditions of men and promoted the financial well-being of individuals and the nation. Overall, education provided the means needed for democratic political

¹⁹ Ibid., 27, 30.

²⁰ Dudley S. Brainard, *History of St. Cloud State Teachers College* (1954), 13.

²¹ Bob Pepperman Taylor, *Horace Mann’s Troubling Legacy: The Education of Democratic Citizens* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), ix.

²² Horace Mann, *Horace Mann on the Crisis in Education*, ed. Louis Filler (Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch Press, 1965), 9.

²³ Taylor, *Horace Mann’s Troubling Legacy*, 7.

communities to be successful.²⁴ Some advocated economic and social reasons in support of public education as well. The ability to read, write, and do simple math came in handy in a cash economy. Furthermore, if children across the United States received a similar education, then a strong national identity might emerge.²⁵

If the United States would have a successful democracy of well-educated citizens, it would of course need well-educated teachers (thus the need for normal schools) and a well-planned curricular program. Mann had studied educational practices in Europe and especially admired the Prussians, who sought to stimulate the entire intellectual world of students. This meant lessons included material from a range of disciplines and skills, as well as demonstrations of practical applications of knowledge to problem solving, the use of drawing being among them. As couched in practical terms, Mann would likely have found this use of drawing acceptable, for he felt the practical to be much more important than the beautiful or artistic.²⁶ To him, studying drawing helped develop a person's ability to observe, something he thought "should be cultivated by every rational being." Teaching a child to draw meant the development of a talent that left him "better enabled to attend to the common duties of life, and to be more serviceable to his fellow-men, but [also] more likely to appreciate the beauties and magnificence of nature, which everywhere reflect the glories of the Creator into his soul."²⁷ Thus, drawing could be used toward the betterment of a person civically and even spiritually, for he spoke of

²⁴ Mann/Filler, *Horace Mann on the Crisis in Education*, 124; Taylor, *Horace Mann's Troubling Legacy*, 12, 66.

²⁵ Margaret A. Nash, *Women's Education in the United States, 1780-1840* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 2.

²⁶ Taylor, *Horace Mann's Troubling Legacy*, 39, 41.

²⁷ Peter Smith, *The History of American Art Education: Learning About Art in American Schools* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 28.

beauty in terms of divinity not aesthetics. Aesthetics came second, as he believed that “in a world, where...utility outranks elegance; where harvests to sustain life must be cultivated before gardens are planted to gratify taste...no gentility or gracefulness of mind or manners...is any substitute for practical wisdom and benevolence.” In other words, “Intellect must lay a foundation...before taste can adorn it.”²⁸ Mann disliked the use of art (as distinct from drawing), as well as literature, in education in part because it often had to be interpreted; it conveyed far less precise knowledge than its practical or scientific counterparts.²⁹

This bent toward practicality, and subsequent dismissal of art, prevailed among many during this time, and far into the future. During the early nineteenth century, America possessed few art collectors and few professional artists whom they could patronize.³⁰ Beyond that, most people tended to spend the majority of their time working, which left them little chance to develop interests or talents outside of their work. Additionally, the influence of a Protestantism that leaned toward the austere garnered scanty attention for the traditional high arts of music, painting, and sculpture. If a family had enough wealth, though, it might commission a few portraits from an itinerant artist.³¹ By the middle of the century, the position of America as a mercantile power had grown significantly, and those whose main concern had to do with making money looked upon aesthetics and the arts as frills. This extended even to the federal

²⁸ Mann/Filler, *Horace Mann on the Crisis in Education*, 56.

²⁹ Taylor, *Horace Mann's Troubling Legacy*, 72.

³⁰ Kenneth John Myers, “Art and Commerce in Jacksonian America: The Steamboat *Albany* Collection,” *The Art Bulletin* 82, no. 3 (Sept. 2000): 503.

³¹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), 31-32, 38-39, 46.

government. Most politicians felt that art did not legitimately fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Where patronage did occur, the government tried to limit it to practical undertakings geared toward advancing economic growth.³² As a result, Europeans, steeped in an aesthetic appreciation, accused Americans of being obsessed with accruing wealth and worshipping the “almighty dollar.”³³ While this criticism likely stung some Americans who looked to Europe as a cultural standard bearer and wanted the respect of its people, others could brush it aside. Up until this time, the arts had been supported by aristocracies that had the time to enjoy art and develop the ability to discriminate between good and bad taste in art. This did not reflect the nature of democratic egalitarianism.³⁴

To be sure, this prevailing view of art had its opponents. Some contemporaries of Mann, such as John Stuart Mill, disagreed with him. Mill believed that an exposure to and appreciation of beauty had the ability to take one beyond him or herself and consider the views of another, as well as teach one to be concerned with the important things that really mattered in life.³⁵ With this in mind, art could encourage tolerance and civic engagement, both of which would have won Mann’s approval. Well before the time of Mann and Mill, eighteenth-century moral philosophers espoused the notion that art could stimulate sentiments that applied to real life, and encourage moral sensitivity in people.³⁶ Considering that Mann believed education could shape morals, this easily fits in with his

³² Brian W. Dippie, “Government Patronage: Catlin, Stanley, and Eastman,” *The Magazine of Western History* 44 no. 4 (autumn 1994): 40, 43.

³³ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 310.

³⁴ Earl E. Edgar, “Philosophy, Democracy, and the Arts,” in *The Arts in Higher Education*, eds. Lawrence E. Dennis and Renate M. Jacob (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1968), 37.

³⁵ Taylor, *Horace Mann’s Troubling Legacy*, 90-91.

³⁶ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 630.

notions. Clearly, though he disliked the idea of art in education, it had the potential to work within his system.

Elsewhere, soon after the War of 1812 a campaign for a national culture emerged, one that asked for government subsidization of the arts. Supporters of this movement felt that cultural independence meant just as much to a nation as political and economic independence.³⁷ Americans had achieved the latter points, but struggled with the former, as artists continued to take their cues from famous European artists.³⁸ Artists themselves also sought a certain degree of independence, namely independence from personal patronage. By the middle of the century, America's new mercantile economy caused many artists to turn to the competitive marketplace to sell their wares, thereby defying prejudices about the aristocratic nature of art.³⁹ Some even argued that a connection existed between the arts and freedom, that most American of words. They felt art could help combat materialism and economic selfishness, the very points for which Europeans had criticized Americans.⁴⁰ Not surprisingly, two of the nation's leading art schools of the time, the American Academy of the Fine Arts and the National Academy of Design, also advocated for the place of art in the United States. The principal concern of the leaders of the American Academy had to do with the aesthetic education of the public. They believed that art in the United States would be advanced by "raising the character of their countrymen, by increasing their knowledge and taste."⁴¹ Despite not always being on friendly terms with the American Academy, the National Academy held similar

³⁷ Dippie, "Government Patronage," 41-42.

³⁸ Marcel Brion, *Romantic Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), 213.

³⁹ Myers, "Art and Commerce in Jacksonian America," 506.

⁴⁰ Dippie, "Government Patronage," 44.

⁴¹ Myers, "Art and Commerce in Jacksonian America," 506.

desires. One of its founders, Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor of Morse code, wanted to foster American nationhood and play a role in shaping public taste, both of which he felt could be achieved through painting historical panoramas and founding (and presumably maintaining) the National Academy.⁴²

Perhaps one of the more important events linking education with art occurred in 1870 when Massachusetts, once again setting the standard, passed the Industrial Drawing Act, which required drawing to be a part of school curriculum. Notably, industrialists pushed for this law because they wanted designers.⁴³ As a result, in 1873 the Boston Normal School of Art opened with Walter Smith as professor of art education. Smith had been hired by the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1871 in an attempt to fend off foreign competition and improve America's industrial design capabilities. Thus, while holding the role of professor he also acted as the state director of art education for Massachusetts.⁴⁴ In his *Art Education, Scholastic and Industrial* Smith explained his stance on art and its role in education. He felt art provided "enjoyment and refinement which trade and commerce alone cannot give," and its absence in education left "valuable human faculties...undeveloped."⁴⁵ Furthermore, and more embarrassingly, America ranked at the bottom in art manufactures at the world expositions of 1851 and 1867. This proved to him that Americans needed an education in art and needed mechanics knowledgeable in drawing in order to avoid wasting time and money in explaining

⁴² Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 692.

⁴³ Smith, *The History of American Art Education*, 22.

⁴⁴ Karen A. Hamblen, "Art Education Changes and Continuities: Value Orientations of Modernity and Postmodernity," in *Context, Content, and Community in Art Education: Beyond Postmodernism*, ed. Ronald W. Neperud (New York: Teachers College Press, 1995), 44.

⁴⁵ Walter Smith, *Art Education, Scholastic and Industrial* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872), v, 1.

concepts that they should already know.⁴⁶ Smith argued that if schools taught art, the country might then develop a working class capable of design. In this way, art, or more specifically drawing, provided something the American economy needed.⁴⁷

Art could clearly be more than a plaything, but it would take some convincing. For Smith, this depended on the way in which art would be taught and disseminated. He argued that drawing be taught not just as an art but as a language, and that it be made to relate to other subjects, thus effectively demonstrating the relationship and use of drawing to topics such as geography and botany.⁴⁸ He also encouraged museums to combine their “wealth of art [with] the active educational agencies in the class-room,” thereby using their goods to the greatest potential. Most obviously, and perhaps most importantly, for art to be taught there had to be art instructors. Smith saw plenty of people interested in the field, but lamented that many he talked to “proceeded to Europe to get their art training, in despair of immediately securing it here.” If for no other reason, this loss of talent proved the need to establish professional art-training schools, like the one in Boston.⁴⁹ Moreover, Smith saw a worthy but neglected talent pool in women, who made up the vast majority of teachers at the time. To him, women represented “an unworked mine of untold wealth,” and on top of being agreeable to the disposition of drawing, they had advantageous physical attributes, which is to say they had delicate fingers.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid., 15, 17.

⁴⁷ Peter Smith, *The History of American Art Education*, 40.

⁴⁸ Walter Smith, *Art Education, Scholastic and Industrial*, 10.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 22, 24.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 28-29.

The Role of Women

By the time the Third State Normal School opened, several other states had begun to operate normal schools of their own, in which by the close of the Civil War, the enrollment of women far exceeded that of men.⁵¹ The normal school reflected this trend.⁵² This phenomenon marks a nascent, yet significant development in the education of women. Enlightenment thinkers and philosophers of the eighteenth century, such as Rousseau and Kant, asserted a number of ideas regarding women and education that had lasting impact. Rousseau believed that the adornment of oneself came naturally to girls. Similarly, Kant felt that women's minds "experienced the most delicate sentiments" and had an aesthetic understanding, while men's minds leaned toward the abstract and "produced profound understanding."⁵³

⁵¹ Phyllis Stock, *Better Than Rubies: A History of Women's Education* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1978), 188.

⁵² In the 1870-1871 school year, 56 women enrolled compared to 12 men [*First Annual Catalogue and Circular of the State Normal School, at St. Cloud, Minnesota* (St. Cloud, MN: Journal Book and Job Print, 1870), 4-6]; In 1883-1884, 17 women to 5 men enrolled in the senior and junior classes [*Catalogue and Circular of the State Normal School, at St. Cloud, Minnesota, 1884-1885* (St. Cloud, MN: Journal-Press Steam Print, 1884), 16-17]; In 1890-1891, 19 women to 7 men enrolled in the senior and junior classes [*Annual Catalogue of the State Normal School at St. Cloud, Minnesota for the School Year Ending June 1, 1891 with Annual Circular for the Year 1891-92* (St. Cloud, MN: Journal-Press Steam Print, 1891), 5-6]; In 1900-1901, 21 women to 9 men enrolled in the senior and junior classes [*Annual Catalogue of the State Normal School, St. Cloud, Minnesota, For the School Year Ending June 12, 1901 with Annual Announcement For the Year 1901-1902* (St. Cloud, MN: Journal Press Book and Job Printing), 56-57]; In 1910-1911, 87 women to 21 men enrolled in the fifth year class [*Annual Catalog of State Normal School, St. Cloud, Minnesota for the School Year Ending May 31, 1911 with Annual Announcement for the Year 1911-1912*, 26-27]; In 1920-1921, 216 women to 9 men enrolled in the two-year course senior class [*State Teachers College, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Fifty-third Annual Catalogue, Announcements for 1921-1922*, 46-48]; In 1931-1932, 832 women to 271 men enrolled for the year [*Report for Academic Year 1931-32*, St. Cloud State University Archives]; In 1943-1944, 391 women to 27 men enrolled for the year (numbers dropped significantly due to WWII) [*Enrollment of Civilian Students in Minnesota Colleges*, St. Cloud State University Archives]. The trend begins to reverse or at least equalize after WWII.

⁵³ Stock, *Better Than Rubies*, 107-108.

This type of gendered mindset led to a female education centered on “accomplishments,” which included music, needlework, and the fine arts.⁵⁴ Emily Davies, a feminist of the time who argued for equal access to education, noted that the usual reason for educating women had been “to make good wives and mothers.” This had become the case because “women have the power of pleasing. Accomplishments are cultivated as instrumental to the successful exercise of this power. ...The common sense of the world has long ago settled that men are to be pleased, and women are to please.”⁵⁵ This view of men and women serving different but complementary roles became common, and spawned the notion that anything that could be characterized as masculine must not be feminine and vice versa.⁵⁶ Since women learned to paint and draw, any man who showed an interest in art or practiced art must be at least slightly feminine.

While Davies objected to a purely “ornamental” education for women, she did not think that art should necessarily be neglected. For her, “The business of the imagination...[has] important duties to perform. For, manifestly, an unimaginative person is destitute of one of the main elements of sympathy,” and “defective sympathy brings in its train all sorts of vague and intolerable evils.”⁵⁷ By the latter part of the nineteenth century, art education for women as a means to attain ornaments or accomplishments faded and its real value came to be seen in the production of culture. In other words, rather than use art to create a beautiful, cultured individual woman, it should

⁵⁴ Nash, *Women’s Education*, 36.

⁵⁵ Emily Davies, *The Higher Education of Women* (1973 reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1866), 10-11, 26.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 138-140.

be aimed at beautifying and bringing culture to society.⁵⁸ Despite this, the argument that the teaching of art belonged to elitist societies and not to a republic persisted. Such an argument was reinforced by schools that did not include art or music in their regular curriculum, but rather offered these subjects for an extra fee.⁵⁹

Art Curriculum and Discourse at the
Third State Normal School

Although normal schools were not the first institutions to promote women's education beyond the basics and the "ornamental," they had a large part to play in its expansion. As more and more people demanded better teachers for common schools, normal schools proliferated and women had greater educational opportunities. The Third State Normal School in St. Cloud emerged in this milieu. Both art and education had contributed to the development of the nation and state, and both fostered ardent debate. As previously noted, an underlying current of cultural and aesthetic concerns had been attached to the school's establishment. The school's stated objectives as they appear in its earliest catalogues, however, show that the institution intended its focus to be on the academic, professional, and practical. The school had a steadfast purpose and its program left little room for extracurricular activities or anything else that might detract from that purpose.⁶⁰ In line with the strict objectives, the curriculum included a course called Elements of Isometric and Perspective Drawing, just the type of practical,

⁵⁸ Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 54.

⁵⁹ Nash, *Women's Education*, 72-73.

⁶⁰ Brainard, *History of St. Cloud State Teachers College*, 14-15.

industry-minded course Horace Mann and Walter Smith would have appreciated.⁶¹ In fact, when the school began listing its textbooks (sans titles) in the 1879-1880 catalogue and circular, none other than Walter Smith appears under the heading for drawing. He would remain there for several more years.

Drawing continued to appear in the annual catalogues through 1900. Sometimes the type of drawing would be listed, such as freehand or blackboard, and other times drawing would be described in conjunction with something else, such as drawing of states, natural history and drawing, or drawing in the model school (where normal school students practiced teaching). Through this period, the drawing course always had but one instructor, though not always the same one, who always happened to be a woman. These teachers often taught other subjects as well. Up until the 1880s these included physiology, botany, geography, mathematics, and zoology. In the early 1890s they shifted to the far less scientific areas of music and vertical writing.

For the most part, very little is said about the courses, especially drawing, in these early catalogues. The catalogue of 1885-1886, though still limited in course description, finally opened up in other respects. In a section detailing what teachers should strive to achieve in educating their students (“Outlines of the Art of Training”), the catalogue listed ten “arts.” Number nine is “The art of cultivating aesthetic power,” which insisted that “We learn to appreciate the beautiful by attempting to produce it,” and that “Much

⁶¹ *First Annual Catalogue and Circular of the State Normal School, at St. Cloud, Minnesota* (St. Cloud: Journal Book and Job Print, 1870), 13.

attention should be paid to the function of discrimination in the cultivation of taste.”⁶² Clearly, by this point the school sensed that drawing and art had a value beyond their practical applications, and that students should be encouraged to explore these other facets, especially as it applied to their teaching. Interestingly, this “art” is preceded by number seven, “The art of cultivating moral power.” The fifth and sixth principles it outlined read: “Order, neatness, beauty of surroundings, discipline, are means toward a moral effect,” and “Injustice and unkindness arise chiefly from incapacity for ‘imagining oneself to be somebody else’; hence cultivate sympathetic feeling.”⁶³ This emphasis on morality in education and the recognition of the power of beauty and imagination toward achieving it sound remarkably like Horace Mann and Emily Davies.

The 1889-1890 catalogue and circular introduced an entire section dedicated to the department of art. Though the section is small, it is as though a dam burst, for the amount of information it contains far exceeds anything that came before it. For the first time, the benefits of drawing and form study are fully articulated. These include an educational value in the use of observation, memory, and comparison, among other things, as well as the assertion that art could be a refining and elevating influence for the mind and general culture. The school also believed that “Education in art should be an outgrowth of industrial education” and “a supplement to other subjects.”⁶⁴ A need to justify the use of art is evident in the emphasis of its practical value, yet it is also shown

⁶² *Annual Catalogue of the State Normal School at St. Cloud, Minnesota, for the School Year Ending May 27th, 1885, with Annual Circular for the Year 1885-86* (St. Cloud, Minnesota: Journal-Press Steam Print, 1885), 26.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁴ *Annual Catalogue of the State Normal School at St. Cloud, Minnesota for the School Year Ending June 1, 1889 with Annual Circular for the Year 1889-1890* (St. Cloud, Minnesota: Journal-Press Steam Print, 1889), 64.

to have significance beyond this. In this way, the normal school diplomatically engaged both sides of the argument surrounding art and education.

Other sources also help shed light on the discourse surrounding drawing and art at the school. For many years, particularly when graduating classes remained fairly small, each graduating student would read an essay at commencement. Unfortunately, the full text of most of these essays is not available, but the titles offer a glimpse of what to expect. Essays from the 1870s through the 1890s, as listed in their commencement programs, included “We Paint for Eternity,” “The Cost of Culture,” “Drawing and Music,” “Drawing in Education,” “Drawing, an Element in Education,” “The Value of the Aesthetic in Education,” “The Essential in Art” (written by Winifred Kenely, who would go on to become the school’s art instructor in 1898), and “Art as a Factor in Education.” These essays indicate that art had an audience at the normal school, and that students thought about and discussed it, especially as it related to education. This is further evidenced by the *Normalia*, a source that allows for further insight into students’ interests and activities on campus. The school began printing this newspaper or journal of sorts in 1892, consisting largely of student contributions. Most issues had a section titled “Rostrum” in which a brief description of recent events, exhibits, or lectures received notice. The year 1893 seems to have been a particularly strong one for art. In April, one Mr. Mitchell, perhaps the geography instructor, presented rhetorical readings of selected readings from Ruskin’s *Modern Painters*. In May, the editors noted that the “last two series of rhetorical readings, on the subjects, ‘Art Education,’ and ‘The History of Music,’ have been excellent.” And the December issue outlined rhetorical readings taken from

Charles H. Adams' "The Relation of Art to Nature," which discussed art philosophically. Adams asserted that art worked "with reference to the soul of man" and that an artist "sees [things] as they ought to be," yet "art is the product of reason."⁶⁵ This must have inspired rather interesting conversations.

Over the years, a number of students ventured to publicize their thoughts about education, culture, and art in the *Normalia*. In June of 1892 R. W. Manuel wrote "The Culture Value of Geology." Though devoid of any discussion of art, Manuel made a statement that when thought of in terms of art, immediately brings to mind the debate surrounding it in society: "Whether or not a subject has a right to a place in a school curriculum depends primarily upon its culture value." This shows the seriousness of thought that went into choosing subject matter to fit the needs and expectations of society. The statement also points to a reason why art may have struggled to find a place in curriculum: it was not valued or as highly in demand as other subjects. This same issue contained excerpts from Margaret Jerrard's commencement essay, "The Value of the Aesthetic in Education." She argued that "the aesthetic is necessary in order to cultivate the emotions," which sounds awfully close to the notions Emily Davies had about sympathy. Jerrard also believed that when we study music, drawing, and literature for their beauty, we are "led to see beauty in all objects."⁶⁶ For her it would seem the aesthetic has value in producing greater enjoyment and appreciation of the world around us. In November of 1895 Florence Burlingame wrote an article titled "Literature as a

⁶⁵ "Rostrum," *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), April 1893, 6; "Rostrum," *Normalia*, May 1893, 6; "Rostrum," *Normalia*, December 1893, 11-12.

⁶⁶ R. W. Manuel, "The Culture Value of Geology," *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), June 1892, 1; Margaret Jerrard, "The Value of the Aesthetic in Education," *Normalia*, June 1892, 6.

Fine Art.” She dispensed the common belief of the time, namely that “The works or arts of man are divided into two great classes, the useful and the beautiful; those which minister to the body and those which minister to the spirit.” She then stated that “The first is by far the greater class.”⁶⁷ Mann would have been proud. The following January, a different perspective, championing the aesthetic, appeared in an article titled “The Place of Aesthetics in the Education of Man.” According to the author, around the adolescent age, “aesthetic, social, ethical, and religious feelings...take enormous strides forward,” and we find the child “ready to discover beauty in every form.” Unfortunately, “our civilization in its extreme objectivity, and its consequent system of education with its one-sided emphasis on the intellect, starves the better part of this aesthetic nature.”⁶⁸ The author could not have made his or her opinion more evident, and it turned out to be an opinion with which other students agreed. In a September 1898 article about languages, the author argued that “culture, refinement, proper emotional life, is the most neglected side of our education,” and that the “aesthetic side [of some people] has had no adequate training.”⁶⁹ Then in January of 1901 another student wrote a piece reflecting on the last century, titled “The Nineteenth Century,” in which he or she stated that “The education of the nineteenth century was of an intellectual nature. Intellect and reason ruled supreme.” The writer admitted that the century produced “marvels in material science and invention,” yet “The beautiful side of human nature, that which appreciates and produces the higher and nobler kind of literature, music, and fine arts, has received comparatively

⁶⁷ Florence Burlingame, “Literature as a Fine Art,” *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), November 1895, 4.

⁶⁸ “The Place of Aesthetics in the Education of Man,” *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), January 1896, 6.

⁶⁹ “Two Languages at Least,” *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), September 1898, 5.

but little nourishment.” Ideally, he or she wished for a balance of the intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual aspects of life.⁷⁰ Normal school students had clearly become aware of the debates regarding art and its role in society and education, and some of them felt the need to participate.

Art Discourse in the Nation

Those familiar with much larger metropolitan areas generally looked upon St. Cloud as an unsophisticated country town, especially with regard to culture, despite it being a sizable city for Minnesota. The interests of the normal school and its students, however, belie this perception. The level of interest and knowledge about art and culture, and the need to defend that knowledge, in St. Cloud paralleled the regional and national current. Just a few years before the Third State Normal School opened, one art journalist wrote of American art, “There are no branches of our intellectual life that have made so rapid an advance in positive excellence and in material value as...painting and sculpture.” This is impressive in part because “Twenty-five years ago art culture was at a very low ebb.”⁷¹ No doubt art had come a long way in America by the 1860s, but the advance of technology and industry continued to consign painting and sculpture a marginal position. Still, the journalist reflected a growing public eagerness to show progress and a desire to stand equal to those who were known to possess culture, namely Europe. One might guess such statements had been intended for Sir M. A. Shee, a former president of the Royal Academy in London, who in 1867 is reported as having said:

⁷⁰ “The Nineteenth Century,” *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), January 1901, 4.

⁷¹ “American Art,” *American Art Journal* 5, no. 5 (May 23, 1866): 68.

It should be the policy of a great nation to be...gorgeous in her public works. These are not the expenses that sap and mine the foundation of public prosperity. ...They produce large sums of respect from neighbors and competitors, and of patriotic exultation among ourselves. They make men proud of their country, and from this pride, prompt in defending it.⁷²

In theory, Americans despised aristocracy, which at the very least encouraged wariness toward art. At the same time, they wanted to be seen as equals to the best, if not better. Condescension would not be tolerated. America's leeriness toward art, however, worked against its attempts to gain the respect of countries that viewed cultural attainments as a mark of civilization. No wonder people wrote such glowing reports of artistic advancement.

Eugene Benson, writing for *The Art Review* in 1870, noted that "The progress of art in America is wholly a matter of individual effort. No State aid has evoked or supported men of genius or of talent..." Inflection is of course difficult to read, but a note of pride comes through with this. In essence, he has said that America is something special and needs no national policy to encourage art and culture. Benson further argued that though art interest tended to be strongest in larger cities, "there is no reason why cities of less wealth...should not afford some encouragement to art." The cultural activities of some of St. Cloud's more prominent citizens may be viewed in these terms of encouragement and growth. Such encouragement also occurred in Minneapolis during this period with the establishment of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts in 1883, which aimed to show the community the necessity of art museum activities "for the perfect

⁷² "Advantages in Cultivating the Fine Arts to a Nation," *American Art Journal* 6, no. 21 (March 16, 1867): 332.

growth and development of a modern live American city.”⁷³ Additionally, in 1886 the Minneapolis School of Art opened, the first professional art school to exist in Minnesota.⁷⁴ The small city of New Ulm even opened an art school in 1892. Though it folded after a few months, it marks an effort to encourage art professionally outside of Minnesota’s metropolitan areas.⁷⁵ To Benson, this encouragement had been obstructed in most places by a public opinion that had not been sufficiently educated in the “use of the beautiful.” With education, towns of all sizes might then be inclined to set up their own galleries and museums, and “Such a public patronage of art would show a democratic society not less intelligent than an aristocratic society.”⁷⁶

George Dowell Austin, an art critic and writer, agreed with Benson’s assertion for a better art educated public, writing in *The Art Review* in 1871 that he knew of “no subject more deserving of attention on the part of our citizens.” He lamented classrooms that lacked art, for he believed art could be highly useful in schools, particularly as a moral influence. For him, “Pictures are as great educators as [teachers], - they polish and refine the work that [teachers] have laid, only as a foundation.” Teachers could “cultivate taste and art by procuring pictures, that will convey some idea of beauty, of nobleness, of virtue, and of endurance.”⁷⁷

The acquisition of an art collection for the normal school is first mentioned in the March 1900 issue of the *Normalia*. The article’s title, “Our New Pictures,” and contents

⁷³ “A Fine New Art Museum: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts,” *Art and Progress* 6, no. 2 (December 1914): 48.

⁷⁴ Coen, *Painting and Sculpture*, 106.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁷⁶ Eugene Benson, “Art-Progress in America,” *Art Review* 1, no. 2 (September 1870): 1-2.

⁷⁷ George Lowell Austin, “Art in Schools,” *Art Review* 1, no. 6 (August 1871): 11.

express a certain degree of pride in possessing an art collection, even though it consisted of reproductions. In the article, the author, Marianne Clarke, first discussed art, insisting that it “is a means of comparison as to the civilization of nations” and “can help us more than books.” She followed this with a description of the merits of each work and its creator, and concluded that since the reproductions “have come to grace our own environment, let us study to appreciate them.” These included fourteen pieces that ranged from Raphael and Botticelli to John Constable and John Singer Sargent.⁷⁸ The following spring, readers learned that “To our last year’s purchase we have added another valuable collection of pictures.”⁷⁹ Though the normal school had never been overtly hostile toward the arts, over the course of thirty years it gradually warmed to them, and welcomed their presence by making the effort to purchase works, as well as providing a space for art. When the Old Main building underwent construction of a second addition in 1897, the plan included “a large, well-lighted room for art work.”⁸⁰ Whether or not this room housed the new picture collection is unclear. Perhaps for a time it did. What is clear, however, from a brief perusal of photographs from the era, is that many classroom walls displayed artwork. This must have made heeding Miss Clarke’s suggestion that much easier.

Dollars and Cents

Even with the growth of art in the United States and the pressure these voices applied in pushing the arts forward, art still met with resistance in patronage. For once,

⁷⁸ Marianne Clarke, “Our New Pictures,” *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), March 1900, 5-11.

⁷⁹ “Pictures,” *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), May 1901, 8.

⁸⁰ Cates, *A Centennial History*, 106.

the federal government felt the need to actively do something about it in 1867. That year Congress presented a bill meant to protect American artists by applying a tariff to imported foreign pictures. Apparently, to the detriment of American artists, the market had “been flooded by inferior pictures...manufactured in France and Germany” and then bought by “the good-natured and gullible public.” Because of this, “it is right therefore to protect those willing to purchase but unable to discriminate, from imposition and possible fraud.”⁸¹ Here again is the argument that the interests of art had been hampered by a lack of art education. Many artists welcomed this move, yet others saw elements of danger. For instance, Hiram Powers felt that import duties, if too high, “would cripple art commerce, break up our art schools, by preventing free importation of specimens, and urge European governments to retaliatory measures.” Some argued further that “The buyers of pictures are men of wealth, and the article being one of luxury, and the price a question of fancy, they are not likely to be deterred in its purchase.”⁸²

If any positive effect resulted from this bill and Congressional support, it must have been fleeting, for by the 1880s very little had changed regarding patronage and the public’s art knowledge. For many, it came down to money. To be sure, becoming an artist required both time and money.⁸³ One writer noted that those who did become artists in America soon found their “achievement is limited by the discouraging conditions with which they are surrounded.” Artists had to paint what they could sell, and what sold did not always match what they wanted to paint. Furthermore, they had no

⁸¹ “Government Protection to Art,” *American Art Journal* 6, no. 14 (January 26, 1867): 216.

⁸² “Legislative Protection for Art,” *American Art Journal* 6, no. 24 (April 6, 1867): 375.

⁸³ P. Fishe Reed, “Being an Artist,” *Art Review* 1, no. 5 (May 1871): 2.

chance of winning government patronage when “Congress...degrades the whole business to flagrant jobbery.”⁸⁴ Even in Minnesota, despite the encouraging art developments, many artists found it difficult to earn a living and did not or could not stay in the state.⁸⁵ This is made all the more disheartening, as another writer noted, when compared to the amount of money (upwards of \$2.5 million) France had paid for purchases, commissions, and art education over a fourteen year period. The writer further claimed that “the United States pays many millions of dollars every year” for this education by way of importing French art. He then scolded the government by asking, “How much has our government paid out for art works or art education in the same time?”⁸⁶ Another writer, W. T. Stillman, made the case that since the United States had a decentralized government, unlike many nations of Europe, “no branch of education has attention paid it except by the growth of a public demand for it.” With a government unwilling and seemingly unable to foster art, and a public wanting in art education, for Stillman art seemed to be in desperate straits. To remedy this, he suggested taking a cue from England, which used its resources to apply art to manufactures, proving that “beauty pay[s].”⁸⁷ He clearly felt the possibility of profits would be great motivation to back art and spur public demand.

Late in the century, another writer-artist took a particularly damning view of this pecuniary focus, stating that “we live in a mercenary age in the most mercenary country of the world.” He saw Americans transplanted to Europe disparage their own country by saying Americans had no taste and the country only cared about making money. Artists

⁸⁴ *Phila. Times*, “The Encouragement of Art,” *Art Union* 2, no. 1 (January-March 1885): 20.

⁸⁵ Coen, *Painting and Sculpture*, 66-67.

⁸⁶ “French Interest in Art,” *Art Union* 2, no. 1 (January-March 1885): 20.

⁸⁷ W. T. Stillman, “Encouragement for Art Education,” *Art Union* 1, no. 6/7 (June-July 1884): 131-132.

suffered even more at home from the public, in his words, “The inconsiderate brutality of the stupid, inconstant, shameless, insatiable, insolent monster called the public.”

Furthermore, he felt society considered artists with contempt and did not include them in inner circles, and only patronized them “for charity’s sake or speculative purposes.”

Then the art dealers, whom he believed to be “ignoramuses on American art,” went about selling everything they could “no matter how bad.”⁸⁸ All of this talk of money occurred during the Gilded Age when wealth preoccupied many minds, yet this relationship between art and money in America was not confined to this period.

Art for Life and Civilization

As the normal school moved into the new century, art continued to steadily grow as if to answer all those calls and admonitions regarding the status of art in the United States. In fact, in the description of the drawing course for 1901-1902, the catalogue and circular stated that “The demand of the times requires that the school shall make its pupils familiar with the world’s greatest works of art. ... We have in the Assembly Hall and various recitation rooms reproductions of some of the greatest pictures and pieces of statuary.”⁸⁹ Surely some, if not all, of these reproductions are the ones mentioned in the *Normalia*. Beginning some years later, this Old Main assembly room also received artists and lecturers in the evenings during every winter. One historian of the school noted that these “appearances of ‘culture’ in a little town... attracted attendance by the

⁸⁸ “On American Art,” *Art News* 1, no. 4 (June 1897): 1-2.

⁸⁹ *Annual Catalogue of the State Normal School, St. Cloud, Minnesota, for the School Year Ending May 29, 1902 with Annual Announcement for the Year 1902-1903*, 34.

‘high society’ clique of the city.’⁹⁰ A *Normalia* article also briefly detailed social gatherings students had enjoyed during the school year, noting that a teacher’s knowledge of “how to deport himself in society” is just as important as knowing the subject matter he teaches. Thus, “The St. Cloud Normal tries not only to train its teachers but to give them culture.”⁹¹

Until the turn of the century, the normal school taught drawing largely as a supplementary tool to teaching, though it had the added benefit of providing a technical skill useful in industry. The 1908-1909 catalogue marks a slight shift in this emphasis. The aim of the drawing department came to be the preparation of students to teach drawing. Students would study both the industrial and fine arts “in their relation to the actual needs of today and to other subjects in the curriculum from a pedagogical and psychological standpoint.”⁹² The following year the catalogue explained that having children use drawing helped them “to see and appreciate beauty in their environment, broaden their field of vision, to stimulate their creative faculty and to give technical ability.”⁹³ Art and drawing had come a long way at the normal school; personal and intellectual merits now gained notice while still retaining some elements of the original practical and economic interests.

⁹⁰ Cates, *A Centennial History*, 169.

⁹¹ “Social Events for the Year,” *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), May 1901, 16.

⁹² *Annual Catalog of the State Normal School, St. Cloud, Minnesota, for the School Year Ending June 5, 1908 with Annual Announcement for the Year 1908-1909* (Sauk Centre Herald Print), 28.

⁹³ *Annual Catalog of State Normal School, St. Cloud, Minnesota, for the School Year Ending June 2, 1909 with Annual Announcement for the Year 1909-1910* (Journal-Press Co., St. Cloud, Minnesota), 31.

Around this time, art exhibits began to appear on campus as well.⁹⁴ Outside of campus, for many years the St. Cloud Reading Room Society had sponsored art exhibits. In 1904 they proudly hosted the Juried State Arts Exhibit presented by the Minnesota State Art Society. St. Cloud had never before hosted such an art event. The attention the exhibit gained from art circles around the country made it all the more special. For the women of the Society, the exhibit proved to be a real coup because, as one of them put it, “It will show our sisters of the Atlantic that we have a few microbes of culture ourselves.”⁹⁵ This statement is a wonderful illustration of the way in which people perceived art and cultural rankings within the country. Interestingly enough, St. Cloud’s relationship to the East Coast mirrored that of the United States to Europe.

As the normal school grew in population and physical size, it could not help but come into contact with the surrounding community and organizations. Over the years, many teachers and school presidents lived in the community and actively participated in it.⁹⁶ Over time, the women of the Reading Room Society and of the normal school grew more connected to one another.⁹⁷ Perhaps this connection encouraged or reinforced the pursuit of art and exhibitions on campus. The continued appearance of exhibits speaks to their success. The *Normal School Recorder*, successor to the *Normalia*, described an exhibit on campus in early 1917 of 200 prints “of the best pictures and statues in the world.” According to the article, the exhibit aimed “to bring culture and refinement

⁹⁴ Photograph of “Normal School Exhibit,” *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), May 1901, 21; “Locals,” *Normalia*, November 1902, 13.

⁹⁵ Witte, *Indomitable Ladies*, 27-28.

⁹⁶ Ames, “Mansions of Memories,” 130.

⁹⁷ Witte, *Indomitable Ladies*, 48.

within closer touch of the students, and to purchase new pictures for the school with the proceeds from the exhibit.”⁹⁸

The collection and display of art grew in the state during this period as well. The Minnesota State Art Society, briefly mentioned above, formed in 1903. Charles W. Ames, the president of the St. Paul Institute (an arts organization), explained, “[the Minnesota State Art Society] has for its object the fostering of an art feeling and a recognition of beauty throughout the rural districts of the State.”⁹⁹ In addition, the society sought “to develop the influence of art in education.”¹⁰⁰ Since St. Cloud occupied a rural district and the normal school used art in education, the city was a reasonable choice for the society’s 1904 exhibit. Annual exhibits became a large part of the work done by the State Art Society. The pieces came from all over the country and showed media ranging from the traditional fine arts to architecture, landscape gardening, and handicrafts. These exhibits also featured competitions for students and local artists, which brought much attention to homegrown artistic activities. The jurors of the Minnesota State Art Society’s Tenth Annual Exhibition, all from Chicago, had nothing but praise for what they saw:

The State is doing pioneer work that is blazing the way for much future progress in other States. It stands in the vanguard among the States of the Union which are endeavoring to encourage talent in the fine and industrial arts, and a more general appreciation of art and its relations to life. This encouragement comes very appropriately and most effectively as a function of the State government.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ “Locals,” *Normal School Recorder* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), winter term 1916-1917, 20.

⁹⁹ Charles W. Ames, “The Minnesota State Art Society’s Tenth Annual Exhibition,” *Art and Progress* 5, no. 8 (June 1914): 280-281.

¹⁰⁰ Jane H. Hancock, *Clement Haupers: Six Decades of Art in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1979), 9.

¹⁰¹ Charles W. Ames, “The Minnesota State Art Society’s Tenth Annual Exhibition,” 282-283.

In these early years of the century, Minneapolis and St. Paul also began expanding their art offerings beyond the well-established private galleries of local industrial tycoons. Minneapolis organized an art society which soon built a museum, while St. Paul created the St. Paul Institute in 1908. In describing the latter, Charles W. Ames made it a point to note that “it is a civic body, resting on the general support of the public rather than on the munificence of a few wealthy men.”¹⁰² Emphasizing the civic nature of the St. Paul Institute reflected a growing trend among American museums of the time. Beginning in 1905 with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, curators and administrators who embraced the progressive ideas of the time sought to fundamentally change their institution. Such museum leaders shifted away from earlier beliefs that art could help the poor “by providing civilizing influences” and instead argued that “people had a civic right to beauty and tasteful surroundings.” No longer would museums serve only as storehouses for the elite; they would now be educational institutions serving the people, providing democratic access, and linking citizenship to art and beauty.¹⁰³

This corresponded with another development in 1909: the formation of the American Federation of Art. Secretary of State Elihu Root proposed the idea at a convocation at the National Academy of Arts as a way to link the nation’s art institutions and provide “the hinterlands of the United States” with access to original works of art.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid., 280-281.

¹⁰³ Jeffrey Trask, *Things American: Art Museums and Civic Culture in the Progressive Era* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 1.

¹⁰⁴ “AFA History,” *American Federation of Arts*, accessed August 31, 2012, http://www.afaweb.org/about/history_page1.php.

Likewise, the Minnesota State Art Society, in searching for greater means of bringing art to as many Minnesotans as possible, hit upon the notion of exhibiting at the State Fair, an event which drew many tens of thousands of visitors on a daily basis. Not every visitor would seek out the art exhibition, of course, but State Fair executives thought it would be an added attraction, and the State Art Society believed it “evident that the wider contact thus provided will furnish a direct and helpful stimulus toward enhancing art in Minnesota, both from the standpoint of the producer and consumer.”¹⁰⁵

Though the future of the arts again looked bright, some of the old stumbling blocks remained. One writer for *Art and Progress*, an appropriate name given the time, made the case that literary figures and history-makers had been given a greater place in the nation than artists. Based on the subjects of the nation’s monuments, outsiders might easily guess that Americans reserved their pride and glory for military achievements. He felt the sting most from those who had the benefit of being educated and in positions of leadership. These people should have appreciated art the most, but often treated artists “without regard to brains, inspiration or technical training and skill.” Fortunately, he saw a bright spot in the various efforts across the country to make children familiar with artists. This had been helped along by the appearance of organizations largely dedicated to the decoration of public schools. At the same time, he noted the difficulty of obtaining good reproductions at reasonable prices, especially for more recent works of American artists.¹⁰⁶ This could have been the case for the normal school, given that only one of the

¹⁰⁵ Harvey B. Fuller, Jr., “Making Art Democratic: An Account of the Eleventh Annual Exhibition of the Minnesota State Art Society, September 7-12, 1914,” *Art and Progress* 6, no. 2 (December 1914): 59-60.

¹⁰⁶ “Art and the Nation,” *Art and Progress* 2, no. 12 (October 1911): 370-371.

previously mentioned reproductions represented a recent American artist (Sargent). Much more of the collection consisted of European works from the 1400s through the 1600s.

Children could learn from more than just seeing works of art, however, and in many public schools, teachers encouraged their students to use art or creativity to solve problems. The thought behind this being “that if he takes to-day’s problem in his own life and solves it beautifully, according to his ability, that is the best possible preparation for taking tomorrow’s problem and solving that beautifully and for working out” problems in the future.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, promoters of art in schools believed its presence would put emphasis on the fact that “Art is not something remote from daily experience,” and that it has value “as a record of contemporary life.” They wanted to make the point that art could be, should be, for life’s sake.¹⁰⁸ This approach would gain ground and play an important role in Minnesota’s art activities in the years to come.

The basic attitude toward the arts in America had noticeably changed. Once they had been looked down upon as aristocratic and frivolous, and had only a few voices trying to convince people otherwise, but by the early twentieth century a belief in their democratic and essential nature was gaining acceptance. Again and again, writers and artists put forward the argument that art is a part of everyday life and is a sign of a healthy, civilized nation. One writer noted that America’s pursuit during the nineteenth century for material growth and progress through the exploitation of nature and industry did not create conditions favorable for growth in art. For art to have a chance to be seen

¹⁰⁷ Henry Turner Bailey, “Art in the Schools,” *Art and Progress* 2, no. 12 (October 1911): 357.

¹⁰⁸ F. W., “Art in the School,” *American Magazine of Art* 7, no. 7 (May 1916): 286-287.

and appreciated, people must first have time, and if they spend their lives working in pursuit of wealth, this is something they lack.¹⁰⁹ This began to change around the turn of the century. Some even pinned the impetus to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. This huge event, which drew millions of visitors despite an economic depression, apparently sparked an interest in art and culture among the American public, and for one writer it marked the point when "this nation first realized the extent and possibilities of its artistic resources and capabilities." Many believed that all countries that ever played a significant role in history appreciated and encouraged art and considered it to be important and valuable in their development.¹¹⁰ The United States had the potential to take its place among those nations, but only if it continued to grow intellectually and artistically. The writer also noted a general improvement of taste and interest in art throughout the country, attributing it to the teaching of art in public schools.¹¹¹ Of course, many of those teachers came from normal schools.

This attention to greatness and civilization received notice elsewhere as well. Remarking on the American Federation of Arts Convention held in 1916, one writer contended,

If our Nation is to become one of the great Nations of the world, it must be through a general realization on the part of the people that material prosperity is not the goal of existence. There must be a recognition of the fact that art is not only the interpreter of beauty but a measure of civilization.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ James Bryce, "The Hope of Art in America," *Art and Progress* 3, no. 1 (November 1911): 383-384.

¹¹⁰ Henry White, "The Value of Art to a Nation," *Art and Progress* 7, no. 2 (December 1915): 45.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 49, 51.

¹¹² "Art and the People," *American Magazine of Art* 7, no. 8 (June 1916): 332.

He too pointed out the abundance of opportunity to learn art in public schools, though they aimed at cultivating taste rather than creating artists. Unfortunately, these opportunities did not extend into colleges, where relatively few institutions offered art instruction at the time (of 620, only 231 offered any form of art instruction).¹¹³ If the United States wanted to reach its full potential as a nation, it needed to allow art a greater place in society and education. Writing in 1916, Charles L. Hutchinson, then president of the Art Institute of Chicago and vice president of the American Federation of Arts, felt that art had forged a place for itself in American life, but just needed to be better recognized. For him, the division of arts into the useful and the fine led “unthinking people” to view the fine as something separate from daily life. In reality, art “exists for the common heart and for ordinary culture,” the “sense of beauty is present everywhere,” and beauty and art are closely linked. If we could but see this, we would understand the democratic nature of art, that art “is of the people and for the people.”¹¹⁴ He further encouraged the idea of art for humanity and instilling a love for the beautiful among children, which would help stimulate imagination, “for without imagination there can be no advance in the civilization of the world.”¹¹⁵

What much of this boils down to is a belief that art is a great vehicle for the presentation of valued American ideals. Democracy, civilization, humanity – these are big, often muddy, concepts, yet they are ideals by which people define themselves and

¹¹³ “Art and the People,” 332; Ellsworth Woodward, “Technical Art Courses in Colleges,” *American Magazine of Art* 7, no. 5 (March 1916): 188. This data neglects the contribution of normal schools, for many studio art departments at the post-secondary level emerged from teacher training programs, like the one offered at St. Cloud. Singerman, *Art Subjects*, 58.

¹¹⁴ Charles L. Hutchinson, “The Democracy of Art,” *American Magazine of Art* 7, no. 10 (August 1916): 397-398.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 398-399.

for which they strive. That they should be so dominant in the discussion of art at this time is no surprise considering that the world found itself engulfed by a war that challenged these very ideals. Of course, not all art is created equal. This came through loud and clear with the reaction to the Armory Show of 1913 and the introduction of modern, abstract art to America. While most artists found themselves in awe of what they saw at the exhibition, some critics and most of the lay public simply did not understand it.¹¹⁶ In fact, some museum officials hesitated to accept or exhibit modern paintings because they had come to be equated with socialism and anarchism.¹¹⁷

Even in the midst of all this talk about art and civilization, one writer remarked in 1913 that “Congress has been extremely slow to realize that art is an element in the development of civilization and a large factor in the upbringing of nations. It has not seemed to comprehend that it had an economic as well as an esthetic [sic] side.”¹¹⁸ On the one hand, this is a fair criticism given the history of the hands-off relationship the government had with art. On the other hand, one cannot expect a long-established behavior of a government to change overnight, even in a government that changes its members as frequently as the United States. This remark came just three years after Congress took the bold move (bold only because it seems so out of character) of passing a bill that established the National Commission of the Fine Arts, which had as its purpose to advise the United States government in the selection of statues, monuments, and

¹¹⁶ Jerome Mellquist, *The Emergence of an American Art* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1969), 201, 220-223.

¹¹⁷ Trask, *Things American*, 124.

¹¹⁸ “Government Art,” *Art and Progress* 5, no. 2 (December 1913): 66.

artists, as well as make general advisements in art matters.¹¹⁹ Of course, this commission dealt largely with concerns raised in the Washington, D.C., area, but a baby step is better than no step at all. Considering the stance of an article published in *Art and Progress*, only two months prior to the passage of this bill there appeared to be no hint of any movement from Congress. The author of the article cited several incidents that to his mind showed no increase in respect for advice or any appreciation for art outside its commercial worth. With fifteen bills regarding art supervision or advice having been brought before Congress in the previous fifty years, all of which came to naught, he did not think anything would ever take effect unless a “broader interest” be developed, in the public especially, and be sustained.¹²⁰ Even then Americans had the reputation of short attention spans. The disappointed author of 1913 saw a solution to the slow progress in educating the public, arguing that “What is wanted is a universal knowledge and love of art.”¹²¹ If the discussion of public school education in art during this period is any indication, the public at large had started to gain access to the means to develop this knowledge and love. And for all the urging of government support and criticism for its indifference, no one seems to have put forward the argument that perhaps if the government showed greater interest in art, its constituents might think to do the same. America is a nation of individuals who take pride in being individuals, in making their own decisions, and in thinking accomplishments may be reached through sheer will. But it is also a nation that looks up to its leaders and follows by example.

¹¹⁹ “A Federal Art Commission,” *Art and Progress* 1, no. 6 (April 1910): 168-169.

¹²⁰ “The Government and the Fine Arts,” *Art and Progress* 1, no. 4 (February 1910): 102.

¹²¹ “Government Art,” 67.



Figure 1

Corridor, Old Main Building, 1904.

Image courtesy of the St. Cloud State University Archives.



Figure 2

Watercolor sketch of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* from the inside cover of the 1936 yearbook. Image courtesy of the St. Cloud State University Archives.



Figure 3

Students standing in front of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, 1945.

Image courtesy of the St. Cloud State University Archives.

Chapter II

DEVELOPING AN APPRECIATION OF ART

“Could this be main floor corridor of ‘Old Main’ – looking north?”
“Yes. Where is ‘Winged Victory’ statue? By the ladies?”

This clipped sounding dialogue appears handwritten on the back of an old photograph of Old Main. (Figure 1) The piece it speaks of is a reproduction of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, a statue unearthed in Greece in the mid 1860s and housed in the Louvre ever since. It is one of the best-known sculptures in the world, but its life at St. Cloud has proved to be enigmatic. Much like the dialogue above, the statue is acknowledged but goes unseen.¹

Only a few images of this reproduction remain. One is a watercolor sketch on the inside cover of a yearbook from 1936. (Figure 2) The statue also appears in the background of four other yearbook photographs from the early 1940s (one example is Figure 3). No record of it exists after this point, which suggests that it disappeared with the demolition of Old Main in the late 1940s. What is known about the piece is that the senior class of 1921 presented it to the school to memorialize those who had fought during the Great War and they dedicated it to Isabel Lawrence, a much beloved faculty member and significant figure in the growth and success of the normal school, who began

¹ The photograph dates to 1904, seventeen years before the school acquired the statue; therefore, “Winged Victory” is not by the ladies.

working there in 1878. By the late 1920s, its significance had already begun to wane. As a couple of students passed by the statue in the alcove of Old Main where it resided, a faculty member overheard one of them say, “I don’t see the sense in the College’s keeping that old broken statue any longer,” referring to its lack of arms and a head. This roused “sympathy for the student’s lack of appreciation and probable ignorance” and sent the observer to explain the work’s historical, artistic, and educational value in the *College Chronicle*.²

In addition to *Winged Victory*, photographic evidence shows that the school also had a copy of the *Apollo Belvedere* statue, another piece that had been highly revered for many decades. Based on photographic evidence, it appears to have been used mainly as a model for drawing classes. One *Chronicle* article, however, mentions an “Apollo of the upper hall” being purchased at the time of the school’s construction.³ The school possessed some remarkable works of art, albeit in reproduction form, and while some students and faculty knew their worth, they had to work to convince others and raise the profile of art on campus.

New Territory

The 1920s brought remarkable changes to the normal school. Perhaps the most significant pertained to its name, for in 1921 the state legislature changed State Normal Schools into State Teachers Colleges. Thus, the State Normal School at St. Cloud (changed from the Third State Normal School in 1873) became St. Cloud State Teachers

² “‘Winged Victory’ is Valued Memorial,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), April 12, 1929, 3.

³ “School Art Sources are Interesting,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), February 27, 1925, 1.

College.⁴ As ever, the institution existed, as outlined in the catalogue for 1925-1926, “for the purpose of preparing teachers for the public schools. The college is, therefore, a professional institution.”⁵ The school clearly hung on to the practical roots it set down some fifty or sixty years before, yet even as early as 1892 “its professional work upon the common school branches and other subjects include[d] a preparation for business.”⁶ The school began to see a need to cater to students who did not intend to teach their whole life and instead prepare them to be successful in any field.⁷ School officials particularly felt that the moral education a student received at St. Cloud prepared him or her “for complete living.”⁸ With “college” in its name now, the school could continue on this track, especially after introducing a Bachelor of Art degree in 1924, which would prove attractive to new students.⁹

Art had begun to change at the college as well. Carrie Minich joined the faculty in 1908 to teach art, and a 1929 *Chronicle* article about her said that on arrival “She found an architectural structure devoid of almost every artistic touch and a student body blindly ignorant of any application of art.”¹⁰ Apparently the picture collections acquired a few years before her appearance and the work of those students who wrote about art had little effect or had been so overshadowed as to go unnoticed. She worked to rectify this, and by the 1920s the art department also changed. For the first time ever, beginning

⁴ Edwin Cates, *A Centennial History of St. Cloud State College* (Minneapolis: Dillon Press, 1968), 40, 160.

⁵ *State Teachers College, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Fifty-seventh Annual Catalogue, Announcements for 1925-1926*, 13.

⁶ Joseph Carhart, “The Normal School,” *Normalia* (St. Cloud State Normal School, MN), April 1892, 2.

⁷ Cates, *A Centennial History*, 101.

⁸ Carhart, “The Normal School,” 2.

⁹ Cates, *A Centennial History*, 174.

¹⁰ Untitled, *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), April 12, 1929, 3.

in the 1928-1929 school year, it had more than one art instructor.¹¹ The following year, the catalogue listed art courses rather than drawing courses. The purpose of these courses largely remained the same as it had been for years, namely exploring the uses of art and drawing for teaching and training teachers to teach drawing. As an elective, however, art had a “purely cultural” purpose. A history of art course, which aimed “to build up intelligent appreciation of the Fine Arts of the ages,” also appeared for the first time.¹²

Despite emphasizing its professional nature, the school finally made room for the extracurricular. A number of student organizations and activities developed during this period, which suggests, beyond the slightly relaxed code of the school, that students needed and sought out social and intellectual stimulation away from the classroom. Most noteworthy of these organizations for the purposes here is the creation of an art club. In October of 1924, the *College Chronicle*, the now long-standing second successor to the *Normalia*, announced the formation of the Art Club and noted that over 180 students turned out for its organizing. As art teacher and club advisor, Minich is said to have listed the possible aims for the club as the “study of architecture, study of noted pictures or artists, study of good furniture, [and] study of the art of homemaking.”¹³ Another article a few weeks later elaborated on this, explaining that the club would provide lectures, which it “obtained through the American Federation of Art and the Minnesota

¹¹ *State Teachers College, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Sixtieth Annual Catalog, Announcements for 1928-1929*, 12.

¹² *State Teachers College, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Sixty-first Annual Catalog, Announcements for 1929-1930*, 39.

¹³ “Art Club is Organized,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), October 3, 1924, 1.

State Art Association.”¹⁴ The art club made an appearance in the 1925-1926 catalogue as well. Here we learn that it “sponsor[ed] exhibits of Minnesota artists and art exhibits and lectures from abroad,” and that it had been “organized to offer an opportunity to those who wish further study of Art than the curricula provide.”¹⁵ The college had always provided some element of art education to its students, which made it anomalous among higher learning institutions. And whether or not the college responded directly to the national arts discourse, it clearly worked toward the goals of all those who made the case for art education and appreciation. The description of the art club in the catalogue and the number of students who joined it, however, indicate that not enough had been done, that students longed for more opportunities with art. To be sure, the number of members may be misleading in that the club had been made compulsory for art students, but it is still a large figure.¹⁶

The *Chronicle* also did well in making known the presence of exhibits sponsored by the art club, and even encouraged students to attend the “cultural and interesting” events.¹⁷ Because of this reporting, we know that Minnesota artists received attention, as did prints from modern American painters and “old masters,” and that most prints came from the Colonial Art Publishing Company or the American Federation of Art.¹⁸ Besides

¹⁴ “Art Club Outlines Plans for the Year,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), October 31, 1924, 1.

¹⁵ *Fifty-seventh Annual Catalogue*, 21.

¹⁶ “Organizations on S.T.C. Campus,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), March 18, 1927, 2.

¹⁷ “Art Exhibit Held,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), January 29, 1926, 1.

¹⁸ “Art Exhibit,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), May 8, 1925, 1; “Art Exhibit Held,” 1; “Art Club Sponsors Art Exhibit March 10 to 12,” *College Chronicle*, February 25, 1927, 1; “Art Exhibit is Success,” *College Chronicle*, March 18, 1927, 3; “Art Club Exhibits Pictures,” *College*

providing temporary exhibits, the art club presented the school with an art gift every year, paid in part by proceeds from the exhibits. In 1928 they gave an amber glass window for the alcove of the Old Main building, with the hope of making “the alcove a spot of beauty instead of an unattractive place,” for the art club wished “to beautify the buildings in every way within its power.”¹⁹ The following year, they gave the school four new pictures. At the presentation, President George Selke remarked that he “considered the Art Club one of the most worth while organizations in the school.”²⁰ A student writing about campus organizations also called it “one of the most worthwhile” because it “educates its members in the knowledge and appreciation of art,...encourages the study of art,” and “affords greater field of study than the students can get in the regular curriculum.”²¹ Overall, the club felt that its activities made it a “valuable factor in the development of an artistic sense in the student body.”²²

The benefits, educational and otherwise, of art received rather frequent notice in the *Chronicle* at this time as well. It deemed a Dennison Art display, a crepe paper display provided by the Dennison Company of New York, which went around to all State Teacher’s Conventions, as “valuable to teachers, offering many suggestions, especially for primary work.”²³ Regarding a discussion about art in the home, Minich is reported to have said that “we should be reduced to the crudities of primitive man” without art and

Chronicle, February 15, 1929, 3; “Art Club Exhibits Colonial Art Prints of Renowned Pictures,” *College Chronicle*, January 17, 1930, 1.

¹⁹ “Art Club Gives Window,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), April 20, 1928, 1.

²⁰ “College Art Club Gives School Four New Pictures Wednesday,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), April 12, 1929, 1.

²¹ “Organizations on S.T.C. Campus,” 2.

²² *Talahi* (1926), 124, St. Cloud State University Archives.

²³ “Dennison Art Display,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), April 30, 1926, 1.

design, noting that everyday objects of the home “are a part of our lives, and our unconscious educators.”²⁴ Another writer found that “Art lectures are especially helpful to the prospective teacher. Besides giving him a new vision and an increased knowledge, they tend to enrich his life, making him more observing and more appreciative of finer things.”²⁵ These expressed sentiments and activities show a great commonality to the temper of the art world at the national level. In fact, both Minich and an art instructor who joined the school in 1931, Elizabeth Gurney, attended art institutes, and Gurney even worked at the U.S. National Museum of the Smithsonian Institution prior to coming to St. Cloud.²⁶ Clearly, some of those experiences influenced their tenure in St. Cloud.

With the onset of an economic depression in the 1930s, the college faced challenges. It became more difficult for students to attend, and beginning in 1933 they could no longer attend tuition-free.²⁷ At the same time, educational standards began to rise.²⁸ Surprisingly, the attention paid to art on campus persisted. Throughout the decade, the course offerings in art expanded to include, among other things, Art Appreciation, which aimed at helping students “develop an ability to appreciate and discriminate,” as well as what appears to have been a one-time course, called Special Art, for students who showed a “special ability” with art. The art faculty expanded as well,

²⁴ “‘Art in the Home’ is Subject of Fine Talk,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), February 24, 1928, 3.

²⁵ “Campus Notes at St. Cloud T. C.,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), April 4, 1930, 3.

²⁶ Minich “prepared herself in some of the best Art Schools in America” according to the Untitled article in the April 12, 1929 *Chronicle*, while Gurney went to the Chicago Art Institute and the Howard Pyle Art School. “Miss E. Gurney Joins Faculty as Art Director,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), January 30, 1931, 1.

²⁷ Cates, *A Centennial History*. 192; Dudley S. Brainard, *History of St. Cloud State Teachers College* (1954), 75-77.

²⁸ Brainard, *History of St. Cloud State Teachers College*, 77.

adding a third instructor. For the most part, however, the courses taught remained oriented toward the needs of teachers in a classroom environment and not the teaching of future artists.²⁹

The art club remained active as well, presenting lectures and gifts to the college, and adding variety to its routine.³⁰ In a *Chronicle* article about the art club discovering “art in things besides art,” the programs offered by the club are described as having “changed from ones of the matter of fact type to ones of the spicy and entertaining type,” which included “music and tapping” (presumably tap dancing).³¹ In 1933, the club reorganized and students had to “try-out” to be selected for membership. Moreover, practical work replaced lectures, and rather than have members pay dues, the club created and sold posters to other organizations on campus.³² This last change may have made the club attractive since it lightened a student’s financial burden during a difficult period, but thanks in part to the “try-outs,” by 1935 the club only had twenty-two members.³³ The club reorganized again in 1939, changing its objective from one that aimed at giving art students a chance to gather to one that would give any student a chance to join so long as they had an “interest in art appreciation or art promotion in the College.”³⁴ The art teachers also became more active outside of the classroom and the club during this period

²⁹ *State Teachers College, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Sixty-second Annual Catalog, Announcements for 1930-1931*, 37; *State Teachers College, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Sixty-fourth Annual Catalog, Announcements for 1932-1933*, 13,15; *State Teachers College, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Sixty-fifth Annual Catalog, Announcements for 1933-1934*, 42.

³⁰ “Art Club Completes Sculpture,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), May 29, 1931, 1; “Art Teacher from Tech Presents Interesting Lecture -Demonstration to Art Club Monday,” *College Chronicle*, March 10, 1939, 3.

³¹ “Art Club Discovers Art in Things Besides Art,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), February 9, 1934, 1.

³² *Talahi* (1933), 100, St. Cloud State University Archives.

³³ *Talahi* (1935), 64, St. Cloud State University Archives.

³⁴ “Art Teacher from Tech,” 3.

by putting on an exhibit of their own works, something that would become very common in future decades.³⁵ The art department even set up a gallery, the first real art gallery the school had ever known, in a “nook” of the art room where original works rather than reproductions went on display.³⁶

Making a Case for Art in Education

A 1931 report released by the Interior Department’s Office of Education discussing the developments in art education from 1928 to 1930 stated that

Art education in the United States has never been on a firmer footing than at the present time. It faces a future secure in the knowledge that during the past ten years its social, economic and educational values have been demonstrated and acknowledged and generally put into practice.³⁷

Given the prosperity of the 1920s, the optimism of this report is reasonable. Yet, it was released more than a year after the Depression had set in, thereby neglected to acknowledge the potential consequences art would face in such a difficult economic setting. Still, some remained optimistic well into the Depression. For instance, in 1935 the *Chronicle* paid particular notice to a lecture given by Edmund Kopietz, an instructor at the Minneapolis School of Art, who, according to the article, expressed “Many Interesting and New Viewpoints on Art.” He saw a good “outlook for progress in art,” and rejoiced in the fact that “Finally we have turned away from our imitation of European masters and paintings.” At one time, Americans would spend much time in Europe

³⁵ “Art Teachers Exhibit Paintings at College,” *College Chronicle*, February 3, 1939, 2.

³⁶ “New Etchings, Prints, Water Colors Placed in Art Room Gallery,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), January 21, 1938, 3.

³⁷ Arthur D. Efland, “Art Education during the Great Depression,” *Art Education* 36, no. 6 (November 1983): 38.

“examining the works of contemporary artists there and copying their work,” but fortunately “Americans today understand art principles.”

Kopietz’s lecture moved beyond art’s outlook to discuss children and art, of special concern for an audience of future teachers. He explained that drawing was “as natural as talking” and that it “should by no means be repressed or put into a mold.” His experience showed him that “Art for a child is a natural development,” and that by teaching children to observe fine works, they might “become dissatisfied with their own efforts” and strive to become better.³⁸ These comments are interesting in light of other noteworthy occurrences of the time. In 1934, John Dewey published a book called *Art as Experience* in which he urged the recognition of art in relation to everyday events and happenings that make up human experience. To him, the separation of art from life could be traced back, in part, to the establishment of European museums during the rise of nationalism and imperialism. These institutions tended to glorify a nation’s greatness and the spoils it had acquired, making them something remote and to be revered. Capitalism exacerbated this because art had gained the reputation of being rare and rarity made it costly.³⁹ Dewey did not see the sense in separating art from experience, for he felt that art proved “that man uses the materials and energies of nature with intent to expand on his own life,” and moreover, “that man is capable of restoring consciously...the union of sense, need, impulse, and action.”⁴⁰ Above all, he stressed the role of art in communication, for painting and music would not exist “If all meanings could be

³⁸ Richard Kallsen, “Mr. Edmund Kopietz Expresses Many Interesting and New Viewpoints on Art,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), February 1, 1935, 1.

³⁹ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1934), 3, 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

adequately expressed by words.” He considered art the most universal of languages because “it can continuously inspire new personal realizations in experience” and “because it expresses. It enables us to share vividly and deeply in meanings to which we had been dumb.” Dewey viewed communication as a means of “creating participation, of making common what had been isolated and singular.” In this way, art could cross lines that divide people. By using imagination and the emotions it prompts, art helps us to enter “into other forms of relationship and participation than our own.”⁴¹ Because of this strong connection to communication, Dewey felt that art would be a great means of instruction, but because it did not fit the accustomed mold for education and instruction (one of “methods so literal as to exclude the imagination and one not touching the desires and emotions of men”), this notion repelled people, or at the very least made them hesitant.⁴²

Around this same time, an interesting experiment took place in Owatonna, Minnesota, called the Owatonna Art Education Project. The impetus for the project came from a 1931 address delivered by Melvin Haggerty, Dean of the College of Education at the University of Minnesota, to artists and art teachers in which he discussed and challenged the “inferior status of art in education.” His speech grabbed the attention of the Carnegie Corporation and the Carnegie Foundation, which approached him with the idea of carrying out an experiment to test the ideas of which he spoke.⁴³ Writing about the project, Haggerty described it as “an experimental study...to discover how the art

⁴¹ Ibid., 74, 109, 244, 270, 333.

⁴² Ibid., 347.

⁴³ Edwin Ziegfeld and Mary Elinore Smith, *Art for Daily Living: The Story of the Owatonna Art Education Project* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944), 4, 6.

needs of current American life can be picked up and made the basis of a school curriculum.”⁴⁴ Despite the fair amount of attention art received at the St. Cloud State Teachers College, elsewhere many considered art to be a frill and something that denoted unnecessary decorative objects. Most schools gave art little function in the way they taught it to children; it still had the tendency to be seen as part of female accomplishments, something pleasant but unimportant, and girlish in nature.⁴⁵ For those involved in the project, and in line with Dewey’s thoughts, the root of the problem had to do with the isolation of art from everyday life. This isolation resulted in part from misunderstandings or assumptions about art, art practitioners, and the public. Haggerty observed that “To men absorbed in the work of the world artists appear to be a cult and their work and conversation seem esoteric and almost mystical. To artists ordinary folks appear ignorant and unappreciative.”⁴⁶ Neither side understood the other; thus, each ended up applying negative labels that proved difficult to remove. Haggerty saw this affecting schools in that art seemed “alien to basic education;” it had become something accepted as a fad during good economic times, but quickly became trifling when economic problems struck.⁴⁷ On top of this, colleges typically did not have art as a requisite for admission; therefore, high schools offered it as an elective, which cast it as non-essential and peripheral in education.⁴⁸

Haggerty believed art to be a way of life, and that, as with Dewey, it could not be separated from our experience of life. It came from “universal human needs” and formed

⁴⁴ Melvin E. Haggerty, *Art A Way of Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1936), 5.

⁴⁵ Ziegfeld, *Art for Daily Living*, 1, 3.

⁴⁶ Haggerty, *Art A Way of Life*, 6-7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁸ Efland, “Art Education during the Great Depression,” 41.

an integral part of “a completely satisfying existence,” evidence for which is found in all the attempts people make “to enrich life through improvement in the visual aspect of the things [they live] with.” Overall, to Haggerty, this view of art and this acceptance of it as natural and necessary would be “of great importance to education and to civilized life.”⁴⁹ In this regard, he argued that we, or more accurately our brains, seek to systemize all that we encounter and form it into an organized body of knowledge. This requires abstract thinking that pulls away from the realities of life. In conjunction with this, any “normal civilized person” dislikes discord, and thus is happier and more satisfied when confusion is removed and order is put in place. With this in mind, art had a place in education because it requires abstract thought and the use and stimulation of imagination and creativity.⁵⁰ Whether we set out to make a piece of art or not, we constantly use our capacity for imagination and creativity to solve problems. Therefore, the attention paid to art objects and activities had been too narrowly focused and literal-minded, distracting from rather than highlighting the role art had in helping to improve life and make it more satisfying, something which Haggerty saw as a common human need.⁵¹ To this end, Haggerty believed that students should learn art throughout their developing years and learn to use it effectively. Moreover, beyond training in art and art instruction, teachers must know the way in which art relates to other fields, and most importantly for Haggerty, be able to “understand life, interests and impulses of living individuals.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Haggerty, *Art A Way of Life*, 6, 9, 13.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵² Ziegfeld, *Art for Daily Living*, 89, 96; Haggerty, *Art A Way of Life*, 42.

The organizers for the project chose Owatonna because it embodied a “typically American” community, and the results there would be a good measure of how other towns in America would react to such an infusion of art and art education. The project began in 1933 and lasted until 1938, but citizens of Owatonna attempted to carry on the principles introduced by the project for several years afterward. Further evidence of its success is found in positive comments project organizers recorded from residents, the frequent requests for talks and lectures in art and design, and the eagerness and willingness of students to participate in art offerings at their school. The local school even bought a collection of painting reproductions, which rivaled the public library’s collection and proved unique for a town the size of Owatonna and one lacking an art museum.⁵³ All of this provided hope for broader success throughout the country. What is interesting in relation to St. Cloud is the similarity of principles and goals between the project and the college’s art department. Whether or not the college, or more particularly the art faculty, knew of this project is unknown, though it would not be surprising if it did since the project received attention outside of Owatonna and the Twin Cities. Regardless, what this shows, consistent with its earlier curricular trajectory, is that the college always managed to have its finger on the pulse of the time when it came to art. It may not necessarily have been a leader, but neither did it have to play catch up.

Art and the Government: Part I

Any discussion of this period would be remiss without some mention of the Works Progress Administration and its involvement with art. For the first few years of

⁵³ Ziegfeld, *Art for Daily Living*, 75-76, 80.

the Great Depression, white collar workers received little help from the federal government, but that began to change with the introduction of the Civil Works Administration (later to be replaced by the WPA), which offered cultural relief programs.⁵⁴ This proved to be the government's first extensive foray into supporting the arts. At the time, artists found exhibition and employment opportunities scanty, but the government offered some relief, first with the Public Works of Art Project and then the Federal Art Project. Through the first program, the government purchased work from unemployed artists.⁵⁵ In Minnesota it also employed fifty artists, who produced hundreds of images of the state, with the goal of creating the best works of art possible and making them available to the public.⁵⁶ The latter program offered employment opportunities to artists in the form of art commissions, and as teachers providing art instruction to the public. Besides providing much needed work, the program also sought to make art more accessible, promote artistic creativity, and enlarge the audience for art.⁵⁷

Even before the advent of these government programs, an artist named Clement Haupers worked toward filling these gaps in Minnesota. As a young man, he found art viewing prospects in the Twin Cities to be scarce, which prompted him to find a way to improve the situation. During the 1920s and 1930s he worked for the Minnesota State Art Society, where he helped develop statewide exhibitions for local artists. He also had a hand in administrating the exhibitions held at the State Fair. In the late 1920s,

⁵⁴ Kenneth E. Hendrickson, "The WPA Federal Arts Project in Minnesota, 1935-1943," *Minnesota History* 53, no. 5 (1993): 170, 172.

⁵⁵ Jane H. Hancock, *Clement Haupers: Six Decades of Art in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1979), 15, 17.

⁵⁶ Hendrickson, "The WPA Federal Arts Project in Minnesota," 172.

⁵⁷ Hancock, *Clement Haupers*, 17; Hendrickson, "The WPA Federal Arts Project in Minnesota," 180.

Minnesota artists were no longer the predominant feature in exhibitions at the Fair. In 1931 Haupers brought the focus back, seeing it as a chance to help his fellow Minnesota artists. He knew the difficulty of being an artist, and felt the need to do what he could to ensure opportunities for other artists. As part of this effort he pushed for greater public understanding and support of art through lectures, classes, and exhibitions.⁵⁸ In the New Deal government programs, Haupers not only found support for his own artwork but for his broader interests in art awareness. His extensive experience as an artist and art administrator led to his being named the director of the Minnesota branch of the WPA in 1935. Under his leadership, artists created a great deal of work, much of which found permanent homes throughout the state in public buildings, and the public gained access to this work through exhibits. Haupers made it a point that whatever WPA artists created “would go down as great art.” Because the government backed the art with taxpayer dollars, the level of scrutiny and attention it received would be greater; therefore, negative reactions could be devastating for the artists and to the program. Since art already had an underdog reputation, he used publicity for the projects to raise public awareness. Overall, he felt the WPA helped prove that what artists did had a social function and that people in fact wanted art. To the latter point, he saw art become more accessible as the FAP helped make affordable art available to everyone.⁵⁹

For whatever benefits resulted from the WPA and FAP, the programs could not avoid the shadow of controversy and disapproval that must come with government

⁵⁸ Clement Haupers, “Clement Haupers: Conversations on Six Decades of Painting in Minnesota,” ed. Nicholas Westbrook, *Minnesota History* 46, no. 7 (1979): 297; Hancock, *Clement Haupers*, 7, 13.

⁵⁹ Haupers/Westbrook, “Clement Haupers,” 297-299; Hendrickson, “The WPA Federal Arts Project in Minnesota,” 179; Hancock, *Clement Haupers*, 19.

involvement in something that is as ambiguous and personal as art (even though the arts budget accounted for only about two percent of WPA funds).⁶⁰ Its involvement, however, opened a door that could not easily be closed for all those who had heartily advocated for the arts and government support, and it has fueled a debate that has yet to cease. In point of fact, the debate brings up issues that resemble those that existed long before the New Deal, such as questions about democracy, necessity, and civilization. It is as if each generation must fight the battle to prove or disprove the case for art. Be that as it may, the debate became more active in post-New Deal years in part because the government had now set a precedent. By opening that door, it changed the state of play.

War and Stasis

As America rolled into the 1940s and World War II, art at the college strayed little from the path it had established in the previous decade. The catalogue for 1941-1942 described the art club as a “Functional club most active as the committee on school decorations and as the operator of a steadily developing poster bureau.”⁶¹ Indeed, the club contributed to the wartime effort in 1943 by creating and donating defense posters.⁶² Though the poster bureau continued, for the next few years the art club appears to have languished. It returned in 1947, “smaller in number” according to the *Talahi* yearbook, and offered monthly speakers either from campus or from St. Cloud who had a “talent to

⁶⁰ Gary O. Larson, *The Reluctant Patron: The United States Government and the Arts, 1943-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 14.

⁶¹ *State Teachers College, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Seventy-third Annual Catalog, Announcements for 1941-1942*, 29.

⁶² *Talahi* (1943), 43, St. Cloud State University Archives.

exhibit or lecture.”⁶³ The courses in art continued as before with offerings like Principles of Art, Crafts, Art in Clothing, Clay Modeling, and Teaching of Art in the Elementary Schools. The priority, as the last course makes clear, always tended toward the use of art in teaching.⁶⁴ It would be several more years before any other use would be broached.

In terms of exhibitions, the school stepped outside of its boundaries. The Riverview Model School, the grade school on St. Cloud’s campus where teaching students put their training into practice, put on an exhibit in 1940 of its students’ works with the intent of interesting “the public in creative work being done in the Riverview art classes.” Three drawings would then be entered into a national exhibit in New York for a national arts organization called “Young America Paints.”⁶⁵ One can only imagine the excitement brought on by the chance to be recognized nationally. Later in the year, four representatives from the college had work displayed in an exhibit in downtown St. Cloud as part of National Art Week. Organizers hoped that the event would open up a market for local artists by making the general public “art-conscious.”⁶⁶ This sounds remarkably like the efforts and mission of the FAP, which indicates, on the one hand, that the impact of the FAP persisted, but also that its impact had not penetrated very deeply. If it had, local artists would not need to struggle and the public would already be “art-conscious.” Clearly, even while some proffered good news about art and Americans’ relationship with it, much labor went into keeping that news good. Soon after this exhibit, the art

⁶³ *Talahi* (1947), 79, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁶⁴ *Seventy-third Annual Catalog*, 47-48.

⁶⁵ “Riverview Conducts Art Exhibit March 4 to 9,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), February 23, 1940, 2.

⁶⁶ “T. C. Contributes to Art Observance,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), December 6, 1940, 1.

department sponsored a trip to the Minneapolis Institute of Art for anyone interesting in going to see a Picasso exhibit there.⁶⁷ Museums had finally overcome their aversion to modern art. And St. Cloud students had a faculty that would bring them to the art if the art could not be brought to them.

The Difficulty with Art Education

By the late 1940s, some educators began to lament the condition of art education in public schools once again. For them, it came down to a teacher shortage and the difficulty of finding well-trained art teachers. According to one writer, it had become so bad that many elementary and even high school systems had no art teachers or art curriculum.⁶⁸ For those that did, teachers generally only had a semester or two worth of college art credits, and thousands did not even have a college degree.⁶⁹ Those who saw the public art education in this state of disrepair found it damaging to the welfare of the students. The absence of art denied students an avenue of intellectual and emotional growth, and put an obstacle in their path toward becoming happy, healthy, and intelligent members of society.⁷⁰ Others, however, did not see this happening. Instead, they saw the school of the twentieth century recognizing the need to know how to make a living, but also stressing the “importance of learning how to live fuller, richer lives,” something with which art had long been associated. Furthermore, art education had come such a long

⁶⁷ “Chartered Bus Will Take Art Students to Exhibit,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), January 24, 1941, 3.

⁶⁸ Ruth Blankmier, “Training Teachers for Art Education,” *Art Education* 2, no. 5 (November-December 1949): 4.

⁶⁹ F. Louis Hoover, “Who Are the Teachers of Art?” *Art Education* 2, no. 1 (January-February 1949): 3.

⁷⁰ Blankmier, “Training Teachers,” 4; Hoover, “Who Are the Teachers of Art?” 4.

way that music and visual arts now had a “well-defined” spot in school curriculum and all students had access to the fine arts. One writer asserted (sounding much like the journalist from 1866) that “in few other areas has more progress been made than in music and visual arts.” Part of the credit for this belonged to the teaching of art becoming a part of the profession of education in the previous quarter century.⁷¹ As is the case with most things in life, reality probably fell somewhere in between these two viewpoints, though it is worth noting that both stressed the importance of art to student growth. The State Teachers College may be used as an example of a more balanced assessment of the time, at least for Minnesota. The curriculum offered at the time did not set out to produce only teachers of art, but students typically took more than one or two art classes. The Riverview Model School also clearly had allotted a place for art.

A belief espoused by Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, that art cannot be taught, complicated matters. American educators repeated this through mid century, and by 1951 the *College Art Journal* reported that it had become a “widely held opinion [that] all one can teach are techniques, but that artistry is completely a matter of endowment and self-induced personal growth.”⁷² Nevertheless, art academies and institutes had been around for years, and most art departments, like the one at St. Cloud State Teachers College, aimed at “the visual education of the nonartist.”⁷³ St. Cloud went a little further than some in that it also taught art skills to future teachers so that they could teach them in public schools. Colleges did not typically produce artists; they left that up to the

⁷¹ Willard Givens, “The Arts Do Have a Place,” *Art Education* 2, no. 3 (May-June 1949): 3.

⁷² Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8.

academies and institutes. This began to change in the 1930s with the introduction of the Master of Fine Arts as a professional rather than teaching degree. The key word here is professional, since many viewed it as a male gendered word.⁷⁴ As previously discussed, in the late nineteenth century art had a strong association with the feminine, and any male interested in art faced the suspicion of being less than masculine or the threat of being feminized. If art was professional, however, then men could freely pursue it and women could be excluded. The GI Bill reinforced this when it came along in the 1940s, for it “worked to segregate the university-trained artist, even the artist-teacher, from the art teacher along gender lines.” Indeed, the career needs of the returning veterans, along with the stance of the federal government, demanded that art teaching be streamlined and its goals professionalized.⁷⁵ Art at the post-secondary level had begun to change and impede on territory traditionally reserved for art schools. The GI Bill accelerated this since the presence and needs of the new students altered, or at least modified, the schools they attended and what they had to offer. The college at St. Cloud experienced this fully, as will be seen.

Art and the Government: Part II

The events of World War II and its aftermath helped shape more than just the perspective on art students and programs. The precedent set by the New Deal gave art an advantage it had never had before, and the consequences of World War II added a new dimension to the arguments for and against government support of art throughout the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 58-59.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 58, 129.

1940s and beyond. Those in favor saw the arts as a way to win friends and allies overseas, an idea which would gain momentum with the Cold War. At home, they raised concerns about the future of the American civilization, feeling that art could spark democratic thought and should be given wide access rather than continue to concentrate only in cities. Those against government support thought it would be too expensive and that the government had no place in the affairs of artists, for it might introduce interference and control rather than help artists. Above all, they argued that the government had more important things on its agenda.⁷⁶ With the state of world politics and efforts to help nations rebuild and recover from a devastating war, this argument had perhaps the greatest impact. Of course, this was not the first time there had been something more important to do. Those against bringing art into education had long made this argument. With the war and its aftermath turning all attention to matters of defense, art advocates learned to tie their arguments to defense efforts. One example of this is the development of a cultural information and exchange program aimed at combating the materialist image of Americans.⁷⁷ As had been the trend with education, art found greatest acceptance when being used in service of another subject.

With the end of the WPA, few of the projects created under the program received proper storage or handling. Artists like George Biddle, who had a major hand in forming the FAP, attempted to rectify this and continue the mission of the WPA and FAP. In 1942 he proposed a plan for a Bureau of Fine Arts that would organize government art activities and ensure that the quality, availability, and training of art started under the

⁷⁶ Larson, *The Reluctant Patron*, 6-7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 16, 23-24.

New Deal would be maintained. To be sure, similar attempts at a Bureau of Fine Arts had been made during the 1930s, but all found opposition and ultimately rejection because of their association with the WPA and relief, which for some spelled mediocrity in art and too much political influence.⁷⁸ Even where the government took advantage of art, as with a cultural information and exchange program, controversy struck, especially with the style of art used or purchased. Despite museums coming to accept modern art, others saw it again as a sign of foreign radicalism. For some, post World War II art also began to represent the ills of America, a symbol “of moral laxity, of government profligacy, of Communist infiltration.” One representative of the American Artists Professional League, a conservative group, said in 1946, “Our associated groups question the cultural value of any exhibition which is so strongly marked with the radicalism of the new trends in European art. This is not indigenous to our soil.” Ironically, the Soviet Union, the bastion of communism, rejected this art even more than the United States.⁷⁹ On top of this fear of radicalism, many in Congress also saw art as a frill, much like past Congresses.⁸⁰

The arts did have supporters in Congress, though, and they teamed up with artists and art advocates to introduce arts legislation and refute political attacks. Such legislation included a proposal for a National Arts Foundation in 1947, followed the next year by a proposal for a committee on Government and Art. Arts legislation appeared again in 1949 that called for the consideration of federal arts support based on the fact

⁷⁸ Ibid., 17, 19-21, 42.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 24-25, 27-28, 31.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 44.

that the federal government had failed to promote the arts and that many Americans lacked access to them. Minnesota's Representative Eugene McCarthy supported this bill and spoke out against the "oversimplified analysis" of modern art and accusations of its being communist, saying:

Is America to be made safe by the suppression of every expression of social criticism by the smothering of every new approach either to the understanding of problems or the presentation of them? Let us judge each work of art in itself, rather than in terms of [the] school in which it is classified, or in terms of our feelings about the artist.⁸¹

Here, we again see the defensive stance art advocates had to take, for they faced hostility in addition to indifference. McCarthy highlighted the prejudices art faced during this period and the danger of allowing such intolerance to take hold. His words further suggested that art should not be feared but be seen as a tool for the betterment of American society. Even with support like McCarthy's, these legislative efforts never made it very far, but the more important thing is that they persisted. The arts had finally gained a strong enough minority following in Congress to have a continual presence there. In fact, all Congressional sessions through the 1950s would see legislation about the arts.

Eventually, advocates learned that if they wanted to receive serious attention and consideration for the arts, their legislative suggestions should include a discussion of the international implications and possibilities for art.⁸² This meant, in part, jumping on the propagandistic value of art, to use it to win over other nations, as previously mentioned.⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid., 35-36, 38-39, 44.

⁸² Ibid., 46.

⁸³ This would continue for many more years. For example, a program called Art in the Embassies began in 1964 "based on the belief that it is important for embassies of the United States to reflect current

Some felt that the American image had been tarnished by its lack of support for the arts because it implied that “American civilization lacked an essential humanizing element.” The amount of money spent on defense underscored this. Using art as a “cultural weapon” could change this perception and contrast the United States, with its support of culture and expression, favorably against the Soviet Union. An international exchange program could be one such weapon.⁸⁴ In this way, America’s cultural circumstances became part of the political life of the nation.

Once again, opposition arose based on cost and the idea that money could be better spent elsewhere. Representative Clarence Young highlighted this by saying, in reference to a plan to bring art to schools, that he hated “to see us spend money for this kind of thing when there is a need for so many schoolrooms...and some American boys and girls aren’t even learning to read and write.”⁸⁵ The arts received a surprising boost, however, by President Eisenhower, who gave a speech in support of the arts in 1954 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He then followed this with his State of the Union address in 1955, wherein he stated that “the Federal government should do more to give official recognition to the importance of the arts and other cultural activities.”⁸⁶ To some degree, Congress did just this in the summer of 1955 with the passage of the American National Arts, Sports, and Recreation Act. With regard to art, Congress declared “it to be the policy of the United States

and traditional culture of this country in an effective manner.” Those behind the program considered it “cultural diplomacy in action.” Interestingly enough, St. Cloud State’s Bill Ellingson, who will be discussed later, had two of his prints selected for the program in 1966. Press release, News from Information Services, December 8, 1966, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁸⁴ Larson, *The Reluctant Patron*, 57, 71-72.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 79, 86.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 96, 98.

that the encouragement of creativity in the performance and practice of the arts, and of a widespread participation in and appreciation of the arts, is essential to the general welfare and the national interest; and...that the encouragement of the arts, while primarily a matter for private and local initiative, is an appropriate matter of concern for the United States Government.⁸⁷

Finally, Congress affirmed the necessity of the arts, yet little more immediate or pronounced attention resulted. (In the long run, this would be one more step in the build-up to much larger developments to come.) In hindsight, these words seem even more like lip-service in light of a continued backlash against art based on charges that communism kept infiltrating American art. Even so, Congress again managed to pass a piece of domestic arts legislation (S. 3335) in 1958, which authorized the construction of a National Cultural Center, now known as the Kennedy Center. With its passage, Representative James Wright said we “have to grow up and stop poking fun at things intellectual and cultural.”⁸⁸ Whether intentional or not, this sounds a note of weariness rather than triumph; art clearly remained a touchy subject.

In Defense of Art Education

Just when art finally started to gain significant ground, albeit slowly, art in education received a particularly damaging blow: the Soviets put a satellite in space. With the successful launch of Sputnik in 1957, many Americans came to believe that their “schools had failed to provide good enough scientists;” thus, schools had to reform and more attention needed to be given to math and science.⁸⁹ Earlier in the decade, a

⁸⁷ Arne W. Randall, “Federal Government and the Arts,” *Art Education* 9, no. 2 (February 1956): 4, 16.

⁸⁸ Larson, *The Reluctant Patron*, 116, 135-136.

⁸⁹ Peter Smith, *The History of American Art Education*, 206. Based on President Obama’s 2011 State of the Union address, America has this problem again. Stating that “The quality of our math and

Columbia University philosophy professor, Irwin Edman, insisted that teachers of art contribute “to the defense and to the very life of freedom.” He felt the teaching of art to be important because it involved the imagination and the “rediscovery of feeling.” This proved especially significant at the time because “In a standardized or regimented society, feelings do not count” (a clear reference to the Soviet Union).⁹⁰ Another education writer, and the superintendent of schools in Chicago, Herold Hunt, argued for art’s place in the promotion of understanding, what he considered one of the main tasks facing people and nations, because he saw it as “the most universal of all of the phases of the educational program.” Furthermore, art allowed children to express themselves and grow in personality, and educating in art appreciation met with the objectives of “democratic living” because it “is education for something better.” What is more, part of democratic living is “having respect for the individual personality.”⁹¹ An art professor from the University of Washington, Pauline Johnson, expressed similar feelings about art, stating that though it “places a premium on individual differences...It fosters the democratic ideal of the dignity and integrity of each person, promoting the free spirit of man.” To her, its values went beyond this to include self-realization, the cultivation of imagination, and developing the ability to be resourceful. Above all, children needed to

science education lags behind many other nations,” and faced with competition from China and India, he encouraged an investment in research and technology. He even went so far as to say, “This is our generation’s Sputnik moment.” Meanwhile, Michelle Obama has said, “Our future as an innovative country depends on ensuring that everyone has access to the arts and to cultural opportunity.” “Remarks by the President in State of Union Address,” *The White House*, January 25, 2011, accessed August 30, 2012, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address>; Jeffrey Trask, *Things American: Art Museums and Civic Culture in the Progressive Era* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 237.

⁹⁰ Irwin Edman, “Art as Education in Freedom,” *Art Education* 4, no. 2 (March-April 1951): 2-4.

⁹¹ Herold Hunt, “The Arts: Promoters of Understanding,” *Art Education* 3, no. 4 (September-October 1950): 2-3.

be allowed to explore and experiment and make choices, all of which play an important role in solving problems.⁹²

These art educators and writers, whether consciously or not, attempted to make a case for art in an American society preoccupied with the Cold War. They argued that art helped make a better person, and thus a better citizen, a democratic citizen no less. The emphasis on imagination and experimentation from the last writer also hinted at art's role with innovation, something essential to science and math. What these statements and beliefs show is that leading up to Sputnik, a good case for art in society and education could be made, yet the Soviet's scientific success jolted the nation so much that it created a "we-can't-let-them-best-us" mentality and a professed tunnel-vision focus on science and math. In 1957 one observer and professor of fine arts noted the rather frequent occurrence of hearing someone say, "I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like." The fact that these speakers said this without any signs of embarrassment or shame struck him. What is more, they seemed to say it as "a mild boast, a proof of some nebulous theory concerning the American standard of success." It proved to him that "as a nation, we are illiterate in the arts...[and] also unashamed and unaware of the situation."⁹³ Be this as it may, just two years later an article in *Art Education* reported that a "Growing number of adults are turning to adult education programs for guidance and instruction in art" and doing so to an unprecedented degree with over ten million enrolled in courses in the United States.⁹⁴ While science and math remained a top

⁹² Pauline Johnson, "The Skills and the Frills," *Art Education* 7, no. 4 (May 1954): 9-10.

⁹³ Jack Arends, "Illiteracy in the Arts," *Art Education* 10, no. 2 (February 1957): 12.

⁹⁴ Burton Wasserman, "Art Education for Adults: A Proposal for a Course," *Art Education* 12, no. 9 (December 1959): 11.

priority, more than a few Americans wished to pursue their interest in the arts, a trend that tempers the notion of a nation illiterate in the arts, or at least shows the situation to be a complex one that was neither as dire nor as fruitful as pundits would have us believe.

Expanding Art on Campus
and in the Community

The year 1957 happened to be a big one for the college as well, for it marked another name change. What had been St. Cloud State Teachers College now became St. Cloud State College. The change may seem minor on the surface, but it signified that the school offered more than just training and education for future teachers. To be sure, this shift to include more than teacher-oriented coursework began well before 1957 and received a boost from the GI Bill and the influx of students with broader or different career goals that came with it. The proposal to change the college's name came as early as 1947, and actually applied to all State Teachers Colleges in Minnesota. Thus, approval took some time.⁹⁵ In the meantime, a profound change occurred during the 1951-1952 academic year, as evidenced by that year's catalogue. Whereas prior to this year the institution's purpose or philosophy had always emphasized the preparation of teachers, it now framed the matter differently, stating that:

A democratic society depends for its success upon the ability of education to create an enlightened electorate and a wise leadership. Widely disseminated and purposeful public education is essential...Education, if it is to be effective,...must create situations favorable to the development of discriminating judgment; it must encourage self-development and self-realization; it must furnish the impulse

⁹⁵ Cates, *A Centennial History*, 224-225.

toward wider understanding and sympathy; it must instill an attitude of personal responsibility.⁹⁶

Around this same time, George Budd took over as president of the college, a position he would hold until 1965. In an interview conducted many years after his retirement, he recalled thinking at the time that the college's "purpose must be to satisfy the higher education needs of the people of a region," which is why it "changed from an institution preparing teachers for the elementary and high school to an institution which was meeting all of the higher education needs of the people of this area."⁹⁷ Not everyone looked favorably on this change. He noted that:

Philosophically, some people [particularly at the University of Minnesota] believed that we were trying to build an empire. ...Then, some people on our faculty thought it was a mistake to leave our single purpose...to expanding to something that we didn't have any business fooling with. But the truth is that the students wanted a choice. ...[The college] grew because there was a demand for it.⁹⁸

For the first time in decades, the catalogue's description of departments received greater attention and provided more information as well. According to the section on fine arts:

The Department of Art has as its primary purpose the training of art teachers and supervisors on the secondary and elementary levels. Its secondary purpose is the providing of enriched art experiences for all students.

Art is the expression of man's experiences, through which he can better understand and appreciate his fellowman [sic]. Through encouraging the development of the creative side of his personality and helping his appreciation of the beautiful...it is hoped the student will become a more mature, discerning, and poised individual and a more alert and intelligent citizen.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *State Teachers College Bulletin, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Eighty-third Catalog Number, Announcements for 1951-1952* (State Teachers College: St. Cloud, Minnesota), 23.

⁹⁷ George Budd, interview by Calvin Gower, July 28, 1981, transcript, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Eighty-third Catalog Number*, 74.

The goals of the art department matched or at least complemented those of the college itself, and both sound remarkably familiar to the discussion at the national level. The art department clearly still kept its focus on art teachers, but the secondary purpose began to gain ground with the introduction of courses (on top of those previously mentioned) more directly related to art making than teaching, such as Weaving, Painting for Pleasure, Modern Art, Photography, and Printmaking.¹⁰⁰

The Kappa Pi art fraternity, a national honorary art society, also appeared in 1951 for the first time. Over the next several years, it worked alongside, and sometimes seemed to replace, the art club, sponsoring all of the college art exhibits, evening classes, and trips to art galleries in the Twin Cities. In 1955 it professed to have two main purposes: first “to encourage an interest in art for all college students,” and second “to keep members posted on what other schools in the nation are doing in the field of art.” A few years later it also wanted to “bring together people who are interested in art to exchange ideas.” As a means to raise funds, Kappa Pi began to sell original Christmas cards around the holidays. In response to the popularity of the cards, one member commented, “We hope this means the artistic taste of the college is improving!”¹⁰¹ The group also ran a “rent-a-print” program wherein woodblock prints made by art students could be “rented to students, faculty members and other interested persons.” It charged a going rate of fifty cents a month and used the proceeds to buy more prints.¹⁰² A segment

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 74-75.

¹⁰¹ *Talahi* (1951), 82, 84; *Talahi* (1952), 58; *Talahi* (1955), 85; *Talahi* (1958), 81; *Talahi* (1959), 84, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹⁰² News from Ray Rowland, Information Services, February 9, 1960, St. Cloud State University Archives.

of the student population clearly continued to have an interest in art, and now with Kappa Pi they could be nationally informed and connected.¹⁰³ The comment of the student also indicates that the mission to aesthetically improve the school and the student body persisted. This is not surprising, given the continuous rotation of new students and the growth of the school.

A new Art Advisory Committee took on this mission as well. Consisting of students and faculty members, its responsibilities included the “supervision of all posters, exhibit board planning, supervision of placement of pictures, plaques and displays in the buildings and decorations for special occasions.” It also acted “as an advisory group for purchasing materials related to interior decorating.” The committee created rather strict regulations, all meant to foster an attractive and neat campus environment.¹⁰⁴ As part of its duties, the committee oversaw the poster bureau, giving its approval of every poster before it went on a wall. Art students made all of the posters, and in 1960 the committee reported to President Budd that the students had not been “willing to do the work that Poster Bureau requires for student help salary, or for financial remuneration at all.” Thus, they proposed offering course credit because they felt that the learning involved in creating the posters was valuable and contributed “a great deal to the preparation of

¹⁰³ This is not to say the art club or students had no national involvement before, for the school had had exhibits from the American Federation of Arts, art instructors and advisors had traveled and had knowledge of art happenings in other areas of the country, and the club became a chapter of the National Federation of Arts in 1928. *Talahi* (1928), 180, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹⁰⁴ “New Art Committee Considers Poster Space, Lounge Problems,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), October 13, 1950, 8; “Art Committee Sets Regulations,” *College Chronicle*, September 21, 1954, 4.

future art teachers.”¹⁰⁵ The committee resembles the committee formed at the federal level several decades prior to this. Both operated in service of larger organizations that did not have expertise in art and dealt with matters largely unrelated to art, but for one reason or another felt that the presentation of oneself visually and aesthetically mattered.

The *Chronicle*, of course, helped make St. Cloud students aware of these developments and more. It often reported on Kappa Pi’s activities and encouraged students to attend the exhibits, classes, and workshops the group offered. It also made note of a permanent art display on the ground floor of the new Kiehle Library and the student work shown in the art display windows of the lounge.¹⁰⁶ In 1950, one intrepid student published a parody of the 23rd Psalm, applying it to his art classes. He lamented:

She is my teacher; I shall not pass. She maketh me to draw abstract art; she maketh me to display my drawings before the class for criticism’s sake. Yea, though I draw until all hours of the night, she is not satisfied for my paint and brush will not comfort her. Surely flunking shall follow me all the days of this quarter and I shall dwell in her art class forever and ever.¹⁰⁷

This implies the difficulty and high expectations of the art classes, that they should not be seen as an “easy A,” but rather as challenging, and apparently as frustrating, as any other course. Later in the year, the paper made special mention of a publication in *Exchange* (from the Minnesota Art Education Exchange) of an article written by a member of the psychology department, Dr. E. M. Van Nostrand, entitled “Art and Mental Health.” As

¹⁰⁵ Art Advisory Committee, “Poster Bureau” letter to George Budd, January 9, 1960, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹⁰⁶ “Evening Art Classes to Begin Soon,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), January 29, 1952, 5; “Art Exhibit to Be Held in Stewart Hall,” *College Chronicle*, April 29, 1952, 1; “Students Urged to View Kappa Pi Art Exhibit,” *College Chronicle*, May 13, 1952, 2; “Art Work Shown in New Library,” *College Chronicle*, November 17, 1953, 1; “Art Workshop Holds Open Sessions,” *College Chronicle*, November 6, 1956, 5; “Art Exhibits Made by Class,” *College Chronicle*, May 29, 1957, 2.

¹⁰⁷ “23rd Psalm Applies Well to Art Classes,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), October 20, 1950, 3.

the title suggests, he discussed the influence of art in relation to mental health, but also went on to assert that a teacher helps others “learn to live happier, healthier, more creative and expressive lives.”¹⁰⁸ The number of students who attended his lecture is unknown, but if they found his argument for art’s influence convincing, such a statement must have impressed upon them the importance of their positions as teachers and the need for creative expression. This may have been further reinforced by reports on a meeting of the Minnesota Art Education Exchange, which the Riverview Model School principal attended. The paper reported that the meeting revolved around the developing of art education programs and the relation of art to the community.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps the principal even discussed this with his student-teachers afterward. An art workshop held by the American Council on Education a few years later broached a similar topic and meant to “try to help the members remember the importance of art in the elementary school system.”¹¹⁰

Activities off campus also received notice, such as the Regional National Student Association Art Tour, which included thirteen other Minnesota colleges. The tour had as its purpose the exhibition of student work, but also wished to stimulate cultural exchanges among colleges. College art students and art instructors opened up a gallery for local artists in downtown St. Cloud in the late 1950s as well. Known as Gallery One, organizers intended to showcase local artists and provide lectures on “all phases of the

¹⁰⁸ “Instructor Discusses Art Influence,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), April 13, 1951, 8.

¹⁰⁹ “Art Exchange Holds Meeting,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), November 4, 1952, 1; “MAEE Meet Well Attended,” *College Chronicle*, November 11, 1952, 8.

¹¹⁰ “Art Workshop Held by ACE,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), February 26, 1957, 2.

fine arts” in addition to selling and renting art work and renting the space for cultural meetings.¹¹¹

Those behind Gallery One clearly wanted art to be part of the larger community, but generating enough community excitement and involvement to sustain the gallery would prove difficult. This had been a noticeable trend for some time. Up to this point, the school and the community had not experienced bad relations. In its early years, some elements of the community, particularly those in closest proximity to the school, appreciated the cultural and learning opportunities offered by the school, as has been previously mentioned. Recalling his tenure as a student in the normal school, Carl Buckman, a graduate from 1922, said, “I think the Normal School was the life-line of the city. I think everybody was interested in whatever the Normal was doing. The auditorium was full of public people at every kind of a concert, or play of any kind, or any speaker.”¹¹² But by the 1940s and 1950s the relationship had changed. In former student Lorraine Perkins’ experience, “the student body had very little to do with the community as a whole. Some of the community would come to the athletic games. But as a college student those four years, my relationship with the townspeople – well there wasn’t any.”¹¹³ Another student, LaVerne McDonald, remembered the way she and fellow students “would go downtown and shop a lot, and we found the people very warm and friendly, but not really an awful lot to do with the community.” Her husband,

¹¹¹ “TC to Join Other Colleges in Regional NSA Art Tour,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State Teachers College, MN), December 21, 1948, 3; “Art Gallery Will Open,” *College Chronicle*, October 15, 1957, 1.

¹¹² Carl Buckman, interview by Calvin Gower, April 28, 1981, transcript, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹¹³ Eugene and Lorraine Perkins, interview by Calvin Gower, April 2, 1982, transcript, St. Cloud State University Archives.

Brendan, thought that “the community sort of looked upon the college as over there on the edge of the river. There wasn’t a great deal of inter-relationships as I observed. They were not unfriendly or anything, but there didn’t seem to be a lot of activities that brought them together.”¹¹⁴

Some attributed this to the presence of other colleges and universities in the area. Don Sikkink, a professor in the speech communications department (and eventual dean of the School of Fine Arts), who came to the college in the early 1960s, recalled that “when I came here this was St. John’s [University] and [College of] St. Ben’s [Benedict] country. The little Normal School or State Teachers College down the road got some recognition but it really was sort of – we were second fiddle to St. John’s clearly.”¹¹⁵ Well before Sikkink’s arrival, Robert Wick, a teacher and administrator at the college beginning in 1948 (and Budd’s successor as president), felt similarly, saying that he did not believe “the downtown noticed the college here that much” and that more people favored St. John’s and St. Benedict over St. Cloud at that time.¹¹⁶ Mrs. Perkins referred to St. Cloud as the “poor sister,” remarking, “If you couldn’t go to St. John’s or St. Ben’s, well you went to St. Cloud.”¹¹⁷ George Budd reiterated all of this, noting that “at the time that I came there was rivalry between St. Cloud State, St. Ben’s and St. John’s and

¹¹⁴ Brendan and LaVerne McDonald, interview by Calvin Gower, October 18, 1982, transcript, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹¹⁵ Don Sikkink, interview by Jerry Westby, May 1, 1990, transcript, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹¹⁶ Robert Wick, interview by Calvin Gower, August 17, 1981, transcript, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹¹⁷ Perkins interview.

not very much cooperation. In fact, not any cooperation. There was competition for students.”¹¹⁸

The strained relationship with the local community could be traced to other sources, too. Under the leadership of George Budd, the college would undergo extensive growth in several areas, which could not help but grab the attention of the surrounding community. It would also have a substantial effect on the art department and its curriculum. By the early 1960s, Budd became rather vocal about his views on the state of education in the United States. In 1959 he toured parts of Europe and the Soviet Union. He felt the latter had a “secret weapon” in its “commitment to education as the foundation of national power,” which showed him the urgency of improving education at home.¹¹⁹ In a speech at a Faculty Day convocation a couple of years later, he stressed the need for standards of excellence that are “geared to our society and our national goals;” account for the background, abilities, and economic position of an individual; are flexible; and involve more than a student “passing prescribed tests.” For him, this depended on expanding curriculum, taking advantage of technology, and above all developing teachers of the highest caliber.¹²⁰ St. Cloud State College clearly had a vital mission to perform and to achieve it the school had to transform.

Additionally, while the Korean War had caused enrollment to decrease significantly, it quickly rebounded and the student population increased rapidly. President Budd noted “pressure to begin building the enrollment from people who had

¹¹⁸ Budd interview.

¹¹⁹ News from Ray Rowland, Information Services, January 18, 1960, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹²⁰ News from Ray Rowland, Information Services, September 18, 1962, St. Cloud State University Archives.

not had an opportunity to get to college.” Moreover, “if the enrollment grows and the clientele changes, then you have to make some changes in your curriculum, and in the faculty, and you have to have buildings and facilities to accommodate them.”¹²¹ The latter is what caught the attention of the local community because the school had to physically expand its territory into the surrounding neighborhood, and not by any small degree. Because of this, Budd felt it “inevitable that the people in town would get involved on a fairly broad base...[thus] gaining support from people in town became very important.”¹²² Apparently, gaining support did not come as easy as he would have liked, for in a 1963 meeting with the Lions Club, Budd said that “The city of St. Cloud is not doing all it can to keep St. Cloud State College moving forward as it should.” He then asked for their advice in obtaining greater support from the community.¹²³ Eventually, he saw community interest in the college increase as the school gained new faculty members, many of whom had an interest in community affairs.¹²⁴ Several art faculty members would be counted among them.

¹²¹ Budd interview.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Press release, News from Information Services, October 18, 1963, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹²⁴ Budd interview.



Figure 4

Untitled. Woodcut print created by Bill Ellingson, 1966.

Currently located in the Apocalypse Room in Atwood Memorial Center.

Image reproduced with permission from the Atwood Permanent Art Collection

Committee.

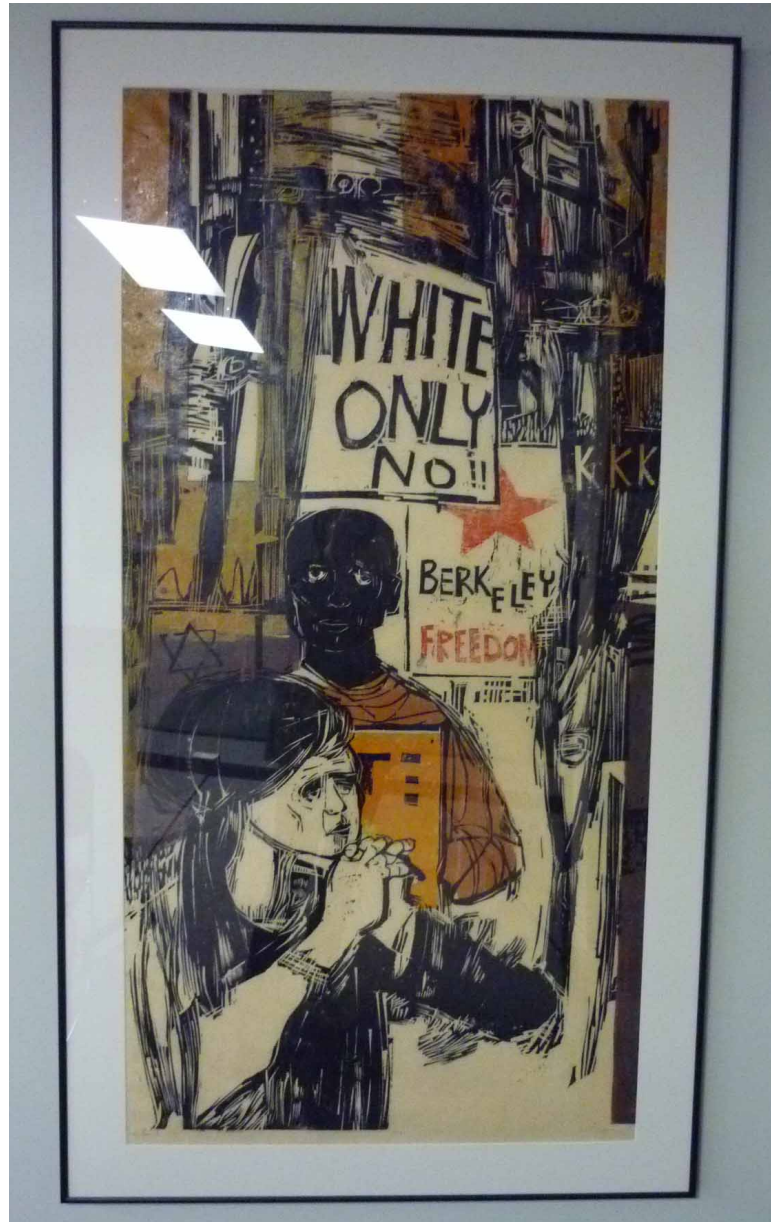


Figure 5

Untitled. Woodcut print created by Bill Ellingson, 1966.

Currently located in the Apocalypse Room in Atwood Memorial Center.

Image reproduced with permission from the Atwood Permanent Art Collection

Committee.

Chapter III

A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT FOR ART

“I recently heard...about some complaints related to an art piece in the Brickyard. The piece is Bill Ellingson’s tandem wood cut print on the social issues of the 1960’s. One deals with racial tensions and the other with the war.

“The piece on the war has a protester carrying a placard telling youth to go to jail rather than fight in the war. This piece has resulted in a couple complaints from parents. ...This piece could be considered negative to some of the veteran parents or even some of the vet[e]ran students coming in for orientation.

“I feel that they truly are excellent quality pieces. ...They are very effective in capturing the mood of the nation at the time and capturing the issues that were very important to our students at that time.”¹

Edward Bouffard, director of the University Conference and Information Center in the Atwood Memorial Center, wrote this in 2001, referring to prints art instructor Bill Ellingson had made in 1966. (Figures 4 and 5) It is easy to understand that art about the war in Vietnam would be controversial in the 1960s, but the fact that it remained so thirty-five years later attests to the power of imagery on memory and emotions, as well as Ellingson’s ability as an artist to remain relevant. This did not go unnoticed, as Ellingson’s colleague Merle Sykora eulogized in 1994, “Bill never compromised his beliefs and often marched to a drummer not everyone heard. He championed causes

¹ Edward L. Bouffard, e-mail message to Janice Courtney, August 15, 2001, Atwood Permanent Art Collection Committee, St. Cloud State University.

often unpopular at the time, but which were later proven to be valid.”² Ellingson’s son, TyRuben, considered him an activist of sorts with his artwork because he broached issues relevant to society.³ Ellingson would have a tremendous impact on the art department, the place of art on campus, and in the community. He was a prolific artist; at least fifteen of his pieces may be found around campus. The two prints mentioned here are notable in particular for being created during and depicting a time of remarkable change. TyRuben said that “He challenged people to evolve.”⁴ That is one way of looking at what happened to the arts in this period.

Boom Times on Campus

The first inklings that the expansion of campus and curriculum had reached the art program at St. Cloud appeared in the late 1950s. Jim Crane joined the existing faculty of three in 1958 to teach a studio course, a first for the school. According to him, St. Cloud’s art department, like most state colleges, emphasized art education. Art history had become an established academic field but studio art had not, for art schools still trained most artists during the 1950s. Some universities did offer a Master of Fine Arts degree, but very few state colleges did, and it had yet to become a standard and terminal degree for studio teachers.⁵ Jim’s experience teaching a studio course points to a moment of transition, a period in which the art program primed itself and prepared for bigger developments.

² Merle Sykora, “William Ellingson (As I knew him),” eulogy, 1994, Atwood Permanent Art Collection Committee, St. Cloud State University.

³ TyRuben Ellingson in discussion with the author, February 27, 2012.

⁴ Jane Laskey, “Exhibit Highlights Local Artist Remembered for Inspiring Others,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), November 24, 2011, E4.

⁵ Jim Crane, e-mail message to author, March 14, 2012.

Jim stayed with the school for only a year, but recommended his brother, Charlie, as a replacement. Charlie taught studio and art history courses, and in his early years especially he witnessed the growing pains of the art department. He faced a “totally inadequate” slide collection for his art history classes, as the previous instructor had taken the collection with him when he left and the remaining instructors struggled to cobble together a new one. Worse yet, the department consisted of three classrooms in Stewart Hall (a relatively new building that had replaced Old Main) and none of these classrooms had been “designed for the needs of studio courses or lectures.” He and another instructor, Mary Barrett, team taught the one required art course, Introduction to Art, to 500 students in the Stewart Hall auditorium, using a projector that had to sit so far from the screen that the image typically appeared weak. In a third floor classroom, a rubberized curtain that covered a wall of windows had been riddled with holes from windows that opened inward, and the room’s one electrical outlet sat beneath the screen, necessitating the use of a long extension cord for the projectors.⁶ Design flaws in the available facilities and execution of classes clearly abounded, something that would remain problematic for a number of years.

The art faculty, however, did not let such difficulties deter them from their goals. Indeed, when Algalee Adams took over the department in the early 1960s, the workload, according to Charlie, became “heavy for all of us because [she] was determined to build a larger department.”⁷ In an introduction she wrote for an alumni exhibition celebrating the ceramics program in 1996, Adams explained that this move reflected a new drive on

⁶ Charlie Crane, e-mail message to author, March 5, 2012.

⁷ Ibid.

campus, for “At that time St. Cloud State College was a school which primarily trained teachers and, college-wide, there was a commitment to strengthen the quality of the education future teachers were receiving, by substantially increasing the academic content of the subject matter they were preparing to teach.” Her department realized that “an art teacher needed much more education in art than the curriculum provided at that time.” They needed knowledge of art history but also studio experience in a variety of mediums, as well as in-depth experience in at least one. The department did not want to prepare generalists in art, but teachers that had both breadth and depth in their art experience. Perhaps most importantly for the future shape of the art program, “the art department faculty also wanted to attract serious art students to study at St. Cloud State, students who wanted to pursue art as a career.” To make this happen, they would need artist-teachers for each art area as well as improved facilities for them and the new curriculum.⁸

These changes are evident in the catalogue for the 1962-1963 school year. In the description of the art department’s purpose, the preparation of studio artists first appeared sandwiched between the preparation of teachers and the provision of “enriched experiences” for the regular student. The course offerings also began to show the variety of mediums of which Adams wrote. Interestingly, the courses oriented toward the use of art in schools emphasized the child’s needs, development, skills, and confidence.⁹ Where once the focus had been on developing an appreciation of beauty and cultivating taste and

⁸ Algalee Adams, “Alumni Exhibition: 32 Years of Ceramics at St. Cloud State,” brochure, March 1996, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁹ *Saint Cloud State College General Bulletin, 1962-1963*, 32-33.

refinement – in other words, the social and aesthetic side of art – there now emerged a more personal, psychological interest. The former did not wholly disappear, of course. In 1961, Charlie Crane taught a television course called Current Concepts in Art Appreciation for the Classroom, which intended to “show teachers and parents how to help children understand and evaluate art during their formative years.” He argued:

Today it is possible for a person to know and enjoy art more than ever before, and yet an amazingly small percentage of our population takes advantage of this opportunity. Teachers and parents must counter the cultural lag by helping themselves, and then helping their students and children, develop an appreciation for the arts.¹⁰

As for the artist-teachers, the first of these came in 1963 with the hiring of Bill Ellingson and Laurie Halberg. Charlie described them as “young, ambitious, hard working professors...[that] both wanted their areas to attract students that would have the potential to excel.”¹¹ New art facilities came with the opening of Headley Hall in 1962, which the art department shared with the industrial arts department. The art faculty had a hand in the design of the building, and it included a space for use as an art gallery. Charlie described it as “a relatively small room in the middle of the building. It was not wonderful but was better than nothing.”¹² The growth of the department, student body, and curriculum, however, soon made the department’s new home inadequate. For the next several years, classes would be taught wherever space could be found, which included a locker room next to the pool in Eastman Hall, the gymnasium in Eastman Hall, a lab room in Brown Hall, a corridor in the basement of Mitchell Hall, and the

¹⁰ Press release, News from Information Services, December 7, 1961, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹¹ Charlie Crane e-mail.

¹² Ibid.

basement of Lawrence Hall.¹³ Even the gallery could have benefited from more space. The 1969 *Talahi* explained that “the often unknown but real outlet for Headley Hall artists...sometimes had to be expanded to the hallway to accommodate the volume of art.” For a time, the art department also took over the pool (drained, of course) as a sunken studio and gallery space.¹⁴ Clearly, the school had not prepared for an art program this successful. This lack of space, which could be construed as a lack of respect for the art program if extenuating circumstances are ignored, turned some students and faculty away, but it is rather surprising it did not turn away more. The fact that the department continued to attract students in spite of this speaks to the quality of the program, and the ability of the faculty to work creatively with what they had.

Fighting for Attention

The growing faculty once again wished to bring art into the community. Soon after he arrived, Ellingson proposed the idea of a cooperative gallery downtown. He and his colleagues found a space above a bar on St. Germain Street in which they opened a gallery they called the Art Mart. All of the work they exhibited came from the faculty. Unfortunately, this venture barely lasted a year, largely due to a lack of buyers. To those involved, it seemed St. Cloud residents, for the most part, just did not care about the visual arts, even referring to them as “an unappreciative citizenry.” To be fair, the gallery had “lively openings,” yet even those with money and an interest in art simply did not

¹³ Merle Sykora, e-mail message to author, January 26, 2012.

¹⁴ *Talahi* (1969), 204, 206, St. Cloud State University Archives.

buy locally.¹⁵ To some, the rivalry with the other local educational institutions played a role as well. For Merle Sykora, who joined the art faculty in 1964 after completing his Master's degree at the college, "St. Cloud State seemed to be the poor stepchild to a very affluent community more interested in supporting St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict." However hard the art faculty tried to get into the community, it received little reciprocation, at least in these early attempts.

The relationship began to improve with the results of an economic impact report that revealed just how much money the school put into the local economy, and with the introduction of the May Bowle.¹⁶ This annual arts fundraising event, which typically consisted of a dinner and ball, originated with St. John's and St. Benedict in 1966, but St. Cloud State soon asked to be included. The three schools worked together to host the event and divided any proceeds evenly, with the money for St. Cloud going to scholarships for art students. The schools also created artwork for it. For instance, in 1967 the Germain Hotel held the May Bowle and under the supervision of Sykora the participants painted a 2,000 square foot mural, the largest in St. Cloud. The hotel management said it would keep the mural so long as it met with "community approval."¹⁷ In this way, the schools brought art into the city. At the same time, Elaine Luckman, who chaired the May Bowle in 1978, said the event served as "a public expression of appreciation to the three area colleges for their invaluable contributions to the

¹⁵ Charlie Crane e-mail; Charlie Crane, e-mail message to author, March 8, 2012; Sykora e-mail.

¹⁶ Sykora e-mail.

¹⁷ Press release, News from Information Services, April 24, 1967, St. Cloud State University Archives; Barb Volp, "Local Social Extravaganza has 12-Year History of Success," *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), April 5, 1978, 9.

community, especially in the arts.”¹⁸ Overall, the May Bowle met with popularity in St. Cloud for many years. One student recalled it being a “very fun, artsy, high-profile, well-attended, high-end mixer.”¹⁹ Overall, Charlie Crane felt that things gradually changed for the better because “the Art Department faculty cared so much about being relevant. [They] wanted the visual arts to be important to their colleagues and to the community.”²⁰ Sykora underscored this by remarking that the community’s initial lackluster welcome “did not deter any of the producing artists from productivity and vigorous advocacy.”²¹

Original Art, New Opportunities,
and Old Challenges

All of the school’s previous art instructors had an obvious appreciation of and love for art, and many of them put great effort into making art a noticeable presence on campus. Yet, these instructors had few if any departmental colleagues and teaching tended to overshadow any production of artwork. As a result, as Charlie Crane put it, “the campus was not a place to find yourself confronted with artworks in the late 1950s.”²² The 1960s mark a watershed moment, however, when all of this began to change. The faculty grew to include several “professional, well-prepared, studio-art oriented” instructors who practiced art as much as taught it.²³ It is their effort that initiated the surge of art on campus and started the collection that the university has

¹⁸ Press release, News from Information Services, March 8, 1978, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹⁹ Ellingson in discussion.

²⁰ Charlie Crane e-mail, March 8, 2012.

²¹ Sykora e-mail.

²² Charlie Crane e-mail, March 8, 2012.

²³ Sykora e-mail.

today. For instance, Bill Ellingson would take a print from each student in his print classes, and the art department also took one piece from every graduate exhibition (St. Cloud began offering graduate programs in 1954). These pieces would be framed and made available to any office on campus. Moreover, the school or individual departments often bought pieces from exhibitions of guest artists and gallery shows. The faculty, of course, donated much work as well.²⁴

Art activities picked up on campus too, and in many ways exemplified the competing perceptions of art, an affliction in chronically battles. While art garnered much respect and recognition from one segment of society, it went largely neglected from another, often larger segment, and even received hostility from some. In 1960 a new art club formed called Les Jeunes Artistes. The original art club, which had experienced some fits and starts, had faded in the 1950s, especially with the establishment of Kappa Pi, though it did not totally disappear until the end of the 1960s. This new club, however, had backing from the fraternity, and much like that organization and the club's predecessor, it invited all students interested in art to participate and declared its purpose to be the "promotion of art through workshops, entertainment, study, exhibitions, and other activities, on the campus and in the community."²⁵ After its first year, it had fifty active members but wanted more.²⁶ Unfortunately, it appears this club did not last very long; unlike the art club and Kappa Pi, the school's catalogues and yearbooks made no mention of it and the *Chronicle* reported on it only a few times. Why the club failed is

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "New Art Club Opens on Campus," *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), May 6, 1960, 3.

²⁶ "Art Club Offers Variety for Prospective Members," *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), February 3, 1961, 8.

unclear; considering the other art organizations, it may have been seen as redundant, which could have deflected interest.

Students brought art to campus in other ways, however, as exemplified by Larry Invie and Allan Meyer, who designed and installed two eight foot by sixteen foot mosaic murals in the new food service building, Garvey Commons, in 1963. Their designs originated in the new Mural Painting course, and the endeavor proved worthwhile enough that more students received requests for murals for other college and community buildings. Algalee Adams, who taught the course, thought it provided her students with a chance to balance aesthetic and practical considerations involved in executing a real project for patrons.²⁷ A graduate student named Roger Schwitalla donated his Master's degree project, a relief sculpture depicting Odin that he sandblasted out of granite, to the school for permanent display in 1964.²⁸ It can now be seen outside of the entrance to the Kiehle Visual Arts Center, but it took a couple of decades to get there. A 1988 *Chronicle* article titled "Sculpture Lost for More Than Two Decades is Found" explained that the piece had not been mounted immediately because of plans to change the art department's building, thus it went in to storage and then lay there forgotten.²⁹ (Unfortunately, this would not be the only incident of misplaced art.) During the spring of 1962, a new art and literary magazine started up on campus called *Parallels*. The *Talahi* of 1963

²⁷ "Mosaic Murals Completed by Student Artists," *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), January 18, 1963, 5; Ray Rowland, "Special to St. Paul Pioneer Press Sunday Pictorial Magazine," Information Services, August 1963, St. Cloud State University Archives.

²⁸ Press release, News from Information Services, August 18, 1964, St. Cloud State University Archives.

²⁹ Karen Jacobs, "Sculpture Lost for More Than Two Decades is Found," *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), April 1, 1988, 8.

described it as a “creative outlet for student artists, writers, and poets.”³⁰ A few years later, the *Talahi* described it again, but with a little more attitude:

Insisting strongly that their avant-garde publication is justified by its very nature, the movers behind *Parallels* disregard the fact that no one on campus is much interested. Since its inception at SCS, *Parallels* has been a financial nuisance. ...the SCS student body, when given a choice in the matter [to buy the publication], remains unconvinced. [Yet]...the publication has been officially recognized as a leader among student art and literary magazines.³¹

The *Chronicle* also reported on art classes and the role of art in education. One issue in 1961 included an interview with Charlie Crane wherein he insisted the study of art should be part of a humanities sequence because when the arts are understood, it leads to a “more enri[c]hed life.” Furthermore, “A teacher in any field must be able to recognize the communication and expression produced by their students in an art medium.”³² Another article discussed Dr. Algalee Meinz’s (nee Adams) Art Education course, which looked at the way in which art could contribute to the total growth of a child and be used in education. This article also commented on the new gallery to be established in Headley Hall, where “Continuous showings of art exhibits will be held for the students and other members of the community.”³³ Just a month prior to this article, Stewart Hall (where temporary exhibits occasionally appeared) held an exhibit of this type, which included works from eleven contemporary artists, handpicked by the art

³⁰ *Talahi* (1963), 130, St. Cloud State University Archives.

³¹ *Talahi* (1966), 206, St. Cloud State University Archives.

³² Deloras Sarsland, “Understanding Art Helps to Fill Cultural, Social, Personal Needs,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), March 3, 1961, 3.

³³ Marie Krolzek and Jack Zander, “Wide Range of Activities Occupy Time of Dr. Meinz,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), March 3, 1961, 3.

department, and even had work by Gustav Klimt.³⁴ One non-art student from the period, reflecting on the courses he had taken, recalled classes that had been “important in a different sort of a way,” and particularly noted an art appreciation class that “opened a whole new arena” for him.³⁵ Art students had a new arena opened to them too thanks to Merle Sykora’s Master’s thesis wherein he discussed the use of the nude model in post-secondary art departments of the Upper Midwest. A number of art faculty used his research when they approached the State College Board to argue for the use of nude models in art instruction. In winning approval, St. Cloud became the first state college in Minnesota to use them.³⁶ The art department clearly strove to instill and illustrate the relevancy of art to its students and others.

Another way in which this could be achieved came with the annual Fine Arts Festival, which began in the winter of 1961. This proved to be no small event. It typically lasted two to three weeks, but the first festival encompassed an entire month. The festivals consisted largely of lectures, performances, and exhibits (from groups and artists ranging from the local to the international) with the intent to “encourage interest, and inform students in the field of fine arts.” As the *Chronicle* reported, “Seldom is such an opportunity offered to students in our area.” During the first festival, they had the opportunity to hear from Agnes de Mille, a renowned choreographer who would play a significant role for the arts at the national level shortly after this, and Basil Rathbone, the British actor famous for his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes. One especially important part

³⁴ JoAnn Nelson, “Eleven Contemporary Artists Display Paintings, Ceramics, Sculpture, and Individual Art,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), February 17, 1961, 4.

³⁵ Winston Borden, interview by Calvin Gower, May 3, 1982, transcript, St. Cloud State University Archives.

³⁶ Sykora e-mail.

of the event in terms of attracting students and building the art program involved a day-long art workshop for high school students interested in art. These students were given a campus tour, which highlighted the art studios and work done in them, and gave them a chance to meet the art faculty and see students at work. They also learned about education and career opportunities in the arts, and had the opportunity to work on an original project that would then be exhibited and juried for a small scholarship prize. One student of the college who attended the festival remarked that the “popular concept of art is that of a mad painter, complete in smock and beanie, slapping his oils across a brilliant canvas,” but the festival showed just “how false this impression is.”³⁷ This annual festival put a spotlight on the arts on campus like nothing had before.

Early in 1964, a truly unique experience for art students at St. Cloud began to take shape in the form of a summer art colony in Alexandria called Studio L’Homme Dieu. Evidence suggests that Bill Ellingson first came up with the idea, which shows that as a recent faculty addition he wasted little time in making his mark on the department and campus. A news release described him as having been “instrumental in establishing” the colony, and his son, TyRuben, suspects that the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, which his father attended in the 1950s, was the inspiration for the colony.³⁸ It was Algalee Adams, however, who first sent a rough proposal to Robert Wick, an

³⁷ “St. Cloud to Hold Fine Arts Festival,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), January 20, 1961, 2; “de Mille Opens Fine Arts Festival February 16; Rathbone Speaks March 6,” *College Chronicle*, February 3, 1961, 1; “Fine Arts Festival Provides Opportunities for Students,” *College Chronicle*, February 17, 1961, 2; “Fine Arts Festival Will Include Emphasis on All Fine Arts Areas,” *College Chronicle*, January 24, 1964, 1,4; “Shakespeare, Gregg Smith Singers, Art Workshop Featured in Arts Festival,” *College Chronicle*, February 14, 1964, 1.

³⁸ Press release, News from Information Services, October 10, 1966, St. Cloud State University Archives; Ellingson in discussion.

administrator, in January of 1964. In it she explained that “The study of nature has always played an important part in the development of art...[and] can not be overlooked when we consider the needs of the college art major or minor.” Moreover, she continued:

[The art student] needs a place to study...where he can have the experience of isolation and concentration in gaining a better understanding of form.

It would seem important therefore, that the St. Cloud State College investigate the possibility of providing their students with a good summer art program that will give the St. Cloud art major or minor something unique and stimulating. The answer to this is in a professionally orientated summer art program so vital and inspiring that the student could not find anything like it anywhere else in the state.

The student during this six or eight week period is constantly doing, thinking and talking art. ...With a program of this kind, the Art Major or Minor becomes the professional artist...[in other words,] functioning in the same manner as is the professional artist.³⁹

In October of the following year, Don Sikkink sent another proposal to Wick, who by then had become the college president, which looked almost exactly like Adams’ but added that “Student interest in art at St. Cloud State College has increased dramatically over the past few years...[and] it is reasonable to expect that enrollment will continue to climb.” He doubted that the art colony would hinder summer session enrollment, but would in fact “enhance...the existing program.”⁴⁰ Though he did not say it outright, Sikkink seems to suggest that given the increased enrollment of art students, the college proved itself to be a viable option for art students and that the art colony would be an added incentive for such students to choose to attend St. Cloud over other institutions. Indeed, Merle Sykora contends that Mankato State College had been the

³⁹ Algalee Adams, “Summer Art Colony at Alexandria, Minnesota” proposal to Robert Wick, January 6, 1964, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁴⁰ Don Sikkink, “Department of Art Proposed Summer Art Colony at Alexandria” proposal to Robert Wick, October 28, 1965, St. Cloud State University Archives.

“premier State College for Art” in Minnesota in the 1950s, but by the mid 1960s St. Cloud had surpassed them all.⁴¹

These proposals ultimately proved successful, for in the spring of 1966 the school sent out a news release promoting the art colony as “offering fully-accredited collegiate courses, the first of its kind in Minnesota.” It is also one of the first times the name Studio L’Homme Dieu is used, which described its location on Lake L’Homme Dieu and differentiated it from the nearby Theatre L’Homme Dieu, the college’s summer theater that started in 1961. The news release further noted that the college’s art faculty would teach the courses and be assisted by guest artists from other institutions in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest.⁴² A brochure for the summer 1966 sessions also mentioned “Prominent persons in art” being available for “seminars, critiques and discussion groups.”⁴³ Ted Sherarts, who joined the art faculty in the mid 1960s, recalled that nationally recognized artists came to reside and teach at the art colony, and many did so because of the uniqueness of the situation.⁴⁴

The art colony attracted students, and controversy, almost immediately. Apparently some residents in the area disapproved of seeing a bikini-clad girl and wrote to President Wick to complain.⁴⁵ Supporters of the program, however, jumped into action just as quickly. For instance, late in July of 1966, Hollis Conrad MacDonald, who

⁴¹ Merle Sykora, e-mail message to author, January 28, 2012.

⁴² Press release, News from Information Services, March 11, 1966, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁴³ “St. Cloud State College Studio L’Homme Dieu,” brochure, ca. 1966, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁴⁴ Ted Sherarts in discussion with the author, February 23, 2012.

⁴⁵ Letters of support mention a girl in a bikini being photographed and the image appearing in the *Star and Tribune*. D. Flick, letter to Robert Wick, July 29, 1966, St. Cloud State University Archives; Dr. E. R. Sather, letter to Robert Wick, August 1, 1966, St. Cloud State University Archives.

had been a guest artist-lecturer at the colony that summer, wrote to Wick to praise the program and its instructors and rebuke those who criticized. He offered advice, writing, “I think when one receives outside pressures in relation to the teaching of art, one should evaluate the teachers and the people who bring criticism against the school or artists.” Furthermore, “My observations show this to be a professional school taught by well qualified instructors who teach Adults who are interested in working.” He closed by asserting “it would be a shame to discontinue [the art colony] after just laying the ground work.”⁴⁶

Fortunately, the art colony survived for several more years, over which time most of the art faculty had come to agree that the experience proved to be great for students. In fact, many of them saw students who attended the summer program thrive during the academic year.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, survival, was precariously dependent on funding, a continual problem for the arts in general. In the fall of 1966, the art department sent out a letter to potential art patrons that began by stating, “The art of the High Renaissance was built on the generous contributions and commissions of the leading citizens of the western world.” It went on to describe how Lorenzo Medici, a concerned art patron, set up an academy for young sculptors in 1489 that would eventually produce none other than Michelangelo. Art faculty members claimed Studio L’Homme Dieu belonged to this tradition and felt “that it is one of the most exciting contributions to art education ever attempted in the upper-midwestern states and should be continued on a more

⁴⁶ Hollis Conrad MacDonald, letter to Robert Wick, July 27, 1966, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁴⁷ Sherarts in discussion.

permanent basis.” The letter then urged these potential art patrons to become active, and thereby make themselves “one of the most significant influences in the lives of a lot of young artists.”⁴⁸

The following year, the art department wrote to President Wick with a scheme to acquire a more stable base of funds for the colony. The letter first described Studio L’Homme Dieu as a “non-profit corporation formed by the art faculty of St. Cloud State College, financed by them and contributions from the general public.” Now they had the opportunity, however, if they gathered enough funds for their third year, to “be considered for state or federal aid, putting the whole program on a sound financial basis and causing one of the most unique educational projects in the mid-west to be realized on a permanent basis.”⁴⁹ It is unclear whatever came of this, but it sounds as though the letter writer referred to support from the National Endowment for the Arts, which will be discussed later.⁵⁰ The program in some way managed to scrape together enough money to sustain itself for nearly a decade. News releases advertised the program every year between 1966 and 1974. Then in 1975 the Student Activities Committee denied the program’s budget request in total (along with the budget for *Stick and Stones*, the latest

⁴⁸ “Dear Art Patron,” letter from Studio L’Homme Dieu/Department of Art, St. Cloud State College, November 16, 1966, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁴⁹ St. Cloud State College Art Department, letter to Robert Wick regarding Studio L’Homme Dieu, December 15, 1967, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁵⁰ Interestingly, a few months prior to this letter, the *Chronicle* reported on a \$2,000 grant awarded to the Theatre L’Homme Dieu from the Minnesota Arts Council to study the feasibility for “the expansion of Theatre L’Homme Dieu into a professional center for the arts.” Furthermore, “the center would be affiliated with the college and would help bolster the college’s development in the fine arts.” Undoubtedly, given the nature of the program, Studio L’Homme Dieu easily could have been incorporated into this project; however, no such arts center developed. “Arts Council Awards Study Grant,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), August 9, 1967, 1.

version of *Parallels*).⁵¹ Presumably the art colony still received donations and funds from the art faculty, but since any mention of it disappears at this point, this budgetary denial became its death knell.

Back on campus, a significant step forward for the presence of art came with the opening of the Atwood Memorial Center in 1966. This student center included a gallery space and almost immediately began building a collection of art. Arlene Helgeson, a St. Cloudite and former student with a passion for art, spurred this on as she chaired the Atwood design committee. The collection began with the purchase of a sculpture entitled *Cathedral* created by the Minnesota artist Anthony Caponi, who would go on to make an even bigger mark on art in St. Cloud.⁵² Since that purchase, the collection has grown to include over 160 pieces. It is very important to stress that this collection is separate from the university collection and the collecting done by the art department. It is unique on campus because it is funded by student fees, is systematically organized, and every piece is put on display. As the current director, Margaret Vos, phrased it, “We don’t store art. We share art.”⁵³ The Atwood collection was established with a plan, a system for purchasing art, and detailed records of its holdings and the artists involved. The maintenance of its collection is also constantly monitored, especially since everything is on display.⁵⁴

⁵¹ John Ritter, “SAC Denies Magazine Budget,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), April 15, 1975, 2.

⁵² Margaret Vos in discussion with the author, January 11, 2012.

⁵³ Marge Proell, “Committed to the Arts,” *Outlook* (St. Cloud State University, MN), October 27, 2005, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/news/outlook/story.asp?storyID=16649&issueID=12343>.

⁵⁴ Vos in discussion; Sykora e-mail, January 26, 2012.

Meanwhile, the school never set up a commission or a director to oversee the college collection and ensure its maintenance. Up until the 1960s, whatever the school had largely consisted of reproductions, and though they received recognition and appreciation from most on campus, especially around the time of purchase or acquisition, they had minimal monetary value. In Merle Sykora's opinion, in comparison to originals, reproductions "would have been viewed as insignificant."⁵⁵ Perhaps this is why no one ever made an effort to keep track of what the school had. If a piece was lost or damaged, the financial loss would be low and a piece could be easily replaced if need be. That this policy did not change once the school began acquiring original works is puzzling, especially since the Atwood collection started around the same time. It may be due in part to the more haphazard, almost accidental way the school's collection started. Initially, much of the original artworks acquired by the school came as donations or gifts and through the activities of the art department previously discussed. The current dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Mark Springer, described the school as "a sponge without any filter."⁵⁶ The school seemed to willingly accept whatever was offered, but without any system of tracking or maintaining the art, it created conditions susceptible to negligence.

Though the Atwood collection is separate from the school and art department, those responsible for it have sought input from the department from the beginning and art faculty members have consistently been on the Atwood Art Committee, which formed in

⁵⁵ Sykora e-mail, January 28, 2012.

⁵⁶ Mark Springer in discussion with the author, February 15, 2012.

1986 and is responsible for purchasing pieces.⁵⁷ For a number of years now, the two have worked together in purchasing at least one student work from the annual juried show for graduating art students. According to Margaret Vos, the purchase is viewed as a scholarship and serves to encourage art as a career. It gives students a chance to say that they have work in a permanent collection.⁵⁸ The Atwood collection and gallery is very much oriented toward serving the school's students and campus, as one might suspect. But the committee's mission goes beyond this. Its Goal Statement declares:

The acquisition of art is viewed as an integral part of the student center's mission. As the central meeting place on campus for students, faculty, staff and community members, art provides an aesthetic and educationally enriching addition to the environment in which the university community interacts.

One of its goals in terms of purchasing art is to give priority "to works from university (student and alumni), local and regional artists."⁵⁹ The Atwood Art Committee intends to develop art on campus, but with an eye toward the wider community and art activities beyond school grounds. In return, Margaret Vos noted that the community on campus has been very respectful and appreciative of the art.⁶⁰ This is not universal, of course; according to the collection's records, over the years a handful of works have been stolen or damaged. In fact, in 1969 someone stole five works on loan from the San Francisco Art Institute. The committee had instituted a program of renting displays throughout the year to enhance and add variety to its collection. An incident like this, however, threatened to derail such a program because, as the *Chronicle* reported, "exhibitors can refuse to rent to an institution with a record of loss due to thievery...and the cost of

⁵⁷ Sykora e-mail, January 26, 2012.

⁵⁸ Proell, "Committed to the Arts;" Vos in discussion.

⁵⁹ "Goal Statement," Atwood Permanent Art Collection Committee, St. Cloud State University.

⁶⁰ Vos in discussion.

insuring becomes prohibitive.”⁶¹ The following year, an original banner from a show of fifty-five banners on display in Atwood also disappeared. As a result of this theft, the exhibit closed and it brought into question whether or not the nine remaining art shows for the year would go forward.⁶² The Atwood Center put much effort into promoting and creating a place for art on campus, making it a signature of the school, yet such acts of theft or vandalism threatened its reputation and its very ability to keep and grow a collection.

The Challenges of Accelerating Change and Growth

Growth continued on St. Cloud’s campus, outpacing the institution’s ability to keep up, and not just with the art department. By the late 1960s, talk of the need for change and expansion arose once again, spurred on by national events of the time. In the spring of 1969, a committee called Operation St. Cloud State College, which looked at the future development of the school, presented a report with eleven areas of concern and subsequent recommendations. Two of the concerns included “Development of a Greater and More Meaningful Intellectual Climate on Campus” and “Extended Involvement of St. Cloud State College in a Variety of Community Affairs.” Recommendations for these concerns included “Increased and more meaningful relationships” between members of the campus community and the community-at-large, the expansion of programs that cultivate an intellectual climate, “free community use of college facilities,” “more

⁶¹ “Atwood Artwork Stolen,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), December 2, 1969, 1.

⁶² Press release, News from Information Services, October 15, 1970, St. Cloud State University Archives.

visiting lectures, conferences, art exhibits and artistic performances,” and changing the name of the institution from college to university.⁶³ Those on the committee obviously wanted the school to be more integrated into the community, perhaps to combat some of the alienation caused by the acquisition of property. They also seemed to think intellectual and cultural activities could help with this. They could certainly add to the school’s gravitas, as would the title of university.

That fall, in his remarks to the incoming freshmen, President Wick showed a concern for the changing culture in America. He assured them that “[c]ultivating student talents and preserving the essence of America through its youth are basic to life at St. Cloud State College.” Wick did not condescend or dismiss the students as others of the time might have done.⁶⁴ Instead, he insisted “A mutual respect must be developed between older people and younger people, and the mutual respect comes from a willingness to listen to each other.” He acknowledged the power of student activism by saying that “ferment on campus is not new,” but the influence and impact of the outside world on campus and vice versa is. By this time, the war in Vietnam had been in full

⁶³ Press release, News from Information Services, March 31, 1969, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁶⁴ This is telling, considering that the previous November a group of students from the Black Student Union for Racial Equality held a conference with him in his office in the Whitney House to discuss demands they had raised concerning racism on campus and the recognition of minority cultural contributions. The conference went on for seven hours, during which time black students guarded the door to Wick’s office. One professor from the time, William Nunn, remembered the event as Wick being locked in his office by these students. “President’s Statement Monday,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), November 22, 1968, 1; “Black Students List Nine Demands,” *College Chronicle*, November 22, 1968, 5; “This Week in Pictures,” *College Chronicle*, November 22, 1968, 15. William Nunn, interview by Robert Nelson, May 11, 1989, transcript, St. Cloud State University Archives.

swing for several years and reactions to it had infused the campus.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Wick argued that higher education's purpose "is to elevate the worth, dignity and unique character of each person."⁶⁶ These statements echo what the college catalogue had espoused as the school's purpose since 1967. Though fairly similar to the philosophy found in the early 1950s, the differences clearly are attuned to the time. Now it read: "A democratic society depends on citizens who are alert, tolerant, and responsible, [and] leaders who are intelligent, educated, and committed to the public good." The college helped build these characteristics by providing

a setting where each student can improve his talents, become more concerned about his obligations to his fellowmen, and recognize that knowledge serves to identify man's past achievements as well as provide the basis for further progress. The college helps the student to develop a respect and enthusiasm for learning, [and] an appreciation for both continuity and change...[culminating] in the development of knowledge, skills, and a philosophy suitable for living in an age of accelerating change.

St. Cloud State College strives to...prepare graduates who will (a) continue to learn..., (b) have an accurate sense of the heritage of Western and non-Western peoples, (c) critically appraise their values and the values of society, (d) have a personal commitment to serve society, [and] (e) be aware of the rapidly changing nature of our world.⁶⁷

Considering Wick's remarks and the school's mission, both wanted to shape students in such a way that they would leave as prepared as they could be to live fulfilling, understanding, and unselfish lives in a world that seemed more challenging than ever before. This would require a broader and more thoughtful education, one in

⁶⁵ Andrew Marlow, a student from the period, remembered issues regarding personal freedom and responsibility on campus becoming tied into the war issue. Andrew Marlow, interview by Calvin Gower, April 28, 1982, transcript, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁶⁶ Press release, regarding Robert Wick's address to the freshmen class, News from Information Services, September 15, 1969, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁶⁷ *St. Cloud State College General Bulletin 1967-69* (St. Cloud State College: St. Cloud, Minnesota), 9.

which art might play a strong role. Only a couple of days after speaking to the freshmen, Wick spoke to the faculty, acknowledging the educational challenges they faced and stressing the “need for change in a rapidly-growing state college system.” He felt that the school had to change to meet the demands of expanding educational purposes aimed at meeting the needs of a changing student body. The school had gone through periods of expansion in the past, of course, but not as fast as it experienced at this point, nor in the same cultural environment.⁶⁸

The school experienced such growth that the art department quickly outgrew its new home in Headley Hall. In 1965 the department sought additional space for its studio courses to accommodate a growing faculty and enrollment.⁶⁹ By the late 1960s, with needs still unmet, the department had begun sending space complaints and requests to the vice president and president of the college. In 1968, Don Sikkink wrote to them and explained that the department currently operated in three buildings, “desperately” needed adequate space and better rooms, and found using a residence hall (Lawrence Hall) for classroom and studio work undesirable.⁷⁰ About a year later, Alfred Lease, vice president for administrative affairs, wrote to the chair of the art department, James Roy, and described the administration’s position. He first noted that he and President Wick had “expended considerable effort” to secure Lawrence Hall for the department, perhaps implying ungratefulness on the part of the art department. Yet, he also called the

⁶⁸ Press release, regarding Robert Wick’s address to the faculty, News from Information Services, September 15, 1969, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁶⁹ James Roy, “Instructional Space for Art” memo to Marvin Holmgren and Don Sikkink, December 9, 1965, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁷⁰ Don Sikkink, “Space Request from the Art Department” memo to Marvin Holmgren, March 11, 1968, St. Cloud State University Archives.

department “excellent” and lamented the hindrance to growth that the lack of funds and space would cause, but described the needs of the college on all fronts at that time as “overwhelming.” In a way, he then passed the buck and said “we can only ‘do’ for our college what the legislature and the governor see fit to provide,” and suggested the department consider restricting the number of students it admitted until needs could be met.⁷¹ In other words, the administration offered a limited commitment to art as a discipline.

A little more than a month after this missive, however, President Wick reached out to Chancellor Theodore Mitau expounding on the complaints he had received from both students and faculty of the art department. In addition to the space issues, students had had trouble enrolling in courses they needed because the restricted availability of space necessitated limited enrollment size; thus, classes filled quickly and waiting lists grew ever longer. Wick remarked that “[s]ome of them have given up on the idea of majoring in Art while others have decided to transfer elsewhere.” For those who remained, many of them would be “delayed in graduation because they are not able to develop full programs in many quarters.” Worse yet, the lack of good facilities and the dispersal of the department across campus led to the isolation of art staff members with resultant morale and unity concerns. Some faculty members had even chosen to leave because of this. Wick felt the department had good leadership and potential, but if things remained in this state, he feared it would take on a “mediocre role in our total college

⁷¹ Alfred A. Lease, “Art Department Needs for 1969-70” memo to James Roy, February 28, 1969, St. Cloud State University Archives.

offering.”⁷² At this point, it is worth remembering that only a decade before this the art department had consisted of three faculty members and offered little in the way of full-blown studio courses. When Algalee Adams and her team had set out to transform the department, they could not have foreseen where exactly it would go, but clearly it reached critical mass exceedingly quickly, and no one had fully prepared for the consequences.

A couple of months after President Wick wrote to the chancellor, the art department chair, James Roy, wrote to the vice president offering some alternative solutions if the Legislative Building Commission did not come through for the college. This included extending the school day, dropping certain art programs (namely weaving), waiving some required courses, and dropping the art minor. To him, these steps would dilute the program and make it “second rate.” He then asserted, “I, personally, will want nothing to do with its leadership and will resign as Chairman effective at the close of this summer and as soon as I can locate suitable employment elsewhere I will resign from the department and from St. Cloud State College.” Moreover, “The staff and I have worked hard to make our department a top department in the state. At this time, it is imperative that we be shown good faith on the part of the administration at St. Cloud State College.”⁷³ Clearly, Wick had not exaggerated the depth of the faculty’s dissatisfaction to Mitau.

⁷² Robert Wick, “Inadequate facilities for Art course work, St. Cloud State College” letter to Theodore Mitau, April 16, 1969, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁷³ James Roy, “Requests for additional classroom space for art” memo to Marvin Holmgren, June 16, 1969, St. Cloud State University Archives.

The Struggle to Gain and Maintain
Positive Status

While all of this happened on St. Cloud's campus, the state experienced artistic highs and lows as well. On the positive side, the Studio L'Homme Dieu art colony, as it happens, had an older sister in Grand Marais. In 1947, Birney Quick, a faculty member at the Minneapolis School of Art, started the Outdoor School of Painting there. Much as the St. Cloud faculty would argue nearly twenty years later, Quick felt the colony would be beneficial to students because there they could be "near to nature, in other words, near the source of material which most great art has come from."⁷⁴ Writing in the late 1950s, a Minnesota art historian, Donald Torbert, noted in particular the influence of the Walker Art Center and various art clubs that had cropped up in the Twin Cities region in fostering an interest in art and making sure art would be available to the general public. He also highlighted the importance of teaching art in public schools as a means to developing artists and interests in art in the state. Moreover, between 1930 and 1960, liberal arts colleges in the state, including St. Cloud State College, had largely grown to accept the study of art in their curriculums. Yet, despite this, artists still struggled to sustain themselves in the state. Those who did not move to larger cities or art centers most often turned to teaching, which became the economic base for artists in Minnesota. City and state government agencies patronized artists, but only to a very minor degree. For Torbert, the future for artists in Minnesota seemed unclear. "There is no lack of talent in the state," he remarked, "but whether or not Minnesotans will make it possible

⁷⁴ Colleen Josephine Sheehy, "Making a Place for Art: 50 Years at the Grand Marais Art Colony," *Minnesota History* 55, no. 6 (1997): 250, 252, 254-256, 258.

for talented young artists...to stay in the state remains to be seen.” He concluded by urging the support of resident artists if the state or any town within it wanted “to be known as a center of art activities.”⁷⁵

The nation at large faced a similarly mixed situation. On the one hand, as modernism in art trended toward the abstract, minimalism, and a focus on form to a greater degree than ever before, it appealed to a smaller audience.⁷⁶ Modern art became harder to read, and its apparent simplicity gave the deceptive impression of being created with ease and little skill. Most people could easily reject or ignore such art since it either looked as though it lacked skill and talent, or was beyond comprehension. Moreover, since only a minority of people actually appreciated and understood modern art, the idea that art belonged to the elite (those with time to learn to appreciate and understand art) persisted.⁷⁷

In addition, many Americans in the 1960s still isolated the arts from the real world despite the numerous efforts made to highlight the significance of the arts in everyday life. This could even be seen at some institutions of higher education. One report from the late 1960s explained that in the past students often did not take art courses in high school because many colleges would not accept the credits, but noted that this had

⁷⁵ Donald R. Torbert, “Art and Architecture,” in *A History of the Arts in Minnesota*, ed. William Van O’Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), 21, 56-57, 60-61.

⁷⁶ Arthur D. Efland, “Change in the Conceptions of Art Teaching,” in *Context, Content, and Community in Art Education: Beyond Postmodernism*, ed. Ronald W. Neperud (New York: Teachers College Press, 1995), 35.

⁷⁷ Ellen Dissanayake, “The University of the Arts in Human Life,” in *Understanding the Arts and Creative Sector in the United States*, eds. Joni Maya Cherbo, Ruth Ann Stewart, and Margaret Jane Wyszomirski (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 64.

finally begun to change.⁷⁸ At the same time, art departments frequently had been made totally separate from other departments. St. Cloud does not fit this description exactly, since many of its art courses tried to draw connections to other subjects. Another related problem, though, squares well with the St. Cloud experience: “the lack of correlation between curriculum planning and physical design of facilities for the arts,” as the authors of *The Arts on Campus* phrased it. Their explanation of the role of education and art programs sounds strikingly similar to what St. Cloud espoused at this time as well. To them, “The role of education...is to make the past accessible to the student at the same time that it allows him to explore his own capacity for thought and action,” and “[t]he function of a college art program is to offer general rather than professional education, and to expand the scope of a liberal arts education by offering alternative ways of perceiving and communicating.” Even so, they reported that about half of students said they went to college to gain “a marketable skill” and make friends, and they did not find the arts to be directly applicable to those ends.⁷⁹ The Occupational Outlook Handbook of 1961 echoed this, explaining that “The difficulty of earning a living as a performer is one of the facts young people should bear in mind in considering an artistic career. ...It is important for them to consider the possible advantages of making their art a hobby rather

⁷⁸ “College and University Acceptance of High School Art Credits for Admission,” *Art Education* 21, no. 7 (October 1968): 33.

⁷⁹ Margaret Mahoney, “Overview of the Present,” in *The Arts on Campus: The Necessity for Change*, ed. Margaret Mahoney (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1970), 22-23; Jon Roush, “The Humanities Museum,” in *The Arts on Campus: The Necessity for Change*, ed. Margaret Mahoney (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1970), 36; James Ackerman, “Education of Vision,” in *The Arts on Campus: The Necessity for Change*, ed. Margaret Mahoney (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1970), 68, 72.

than a field of work.”⁸⁰ That stings even today, but fortunately for art programs, the other half of students went to college with enough interest in art to allow programs like the one at St. Cloud to grow.

Of course, advocates for the arts and art in education continued to argue their case. In the early 1960s, the journal *Art Education* conducted a survey of personnel from over eighty western colleges and universities regarding art appreciation courses. Of those that responded, nearly all said the course had “considerable value and can satisfy a definite need for students majoring in other departments.” Furthermore, such a course encouraged the “cultural and esthetic [sic] growth of the general college student.” Respondents also felt their course could fulfill several goals, which included the creation of intelligent patrons through the development of critical judgment, an enriched life, and “respect for art in the everyday life experience.” They also believed it could spark creativity and break down prejudices related to art.⁸¹ Some in the education community also tried to link the world of arts with the world of science and technology, which had received so much attention since the launch of Sputnik.⁸² Since these views arose from art instructors, whose livelihoods depended on the success of their courses, their positive attitude is not surprising. The remarks show, however, that art still struggled to prove its worth.

Later during this period, an emphasis on visual communication became important, perhaps in recognition that media, such as television and films, had caused images to

⁸⁰ Gary O. Larson, *The Reluctant Patron: The United States Government and the Arts, 1943-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 163.

⁸¹ Roy W. Mallery, “Art Appreciation: The Report of a Study of College Courses,” *Art Education* 15, no.5 (May 1962): 9-10.

⁸² Larson, *The Reluctant Patron*, 173-174.

become more pervasive than text.⁸³ Marylou Kuhn, a professor of art at Florida State University, noted at a conference on art in education that “Authorities in human development have stated that a sensitive awareness to the nuances of one’s environment is necessary in order to relate to it.” In other words, we must grasp the visual cues around us to fully appreciate the world we live in, which is complicated by the extraordinary pace of change and “conceptual regeneration.” Therefore, an education in art would be of great importance because it would foster the imagination and thereby help stimulate the ability to formulate visual information conceptually. She further argued that innovators, those who can structure information into new patterns, will always be needed. Thus, art had a role in fostering innovation.⁸⁴

The Arts Reach a National Milestone

The 1960s also marked a turning point in patronage. Corporations and businesses became stronger patrons of the arts, increasing support in the last half of the decade by 150 percent.⁸⁵ This surge in patronage likely has its roots in the first half of the decade. As has been discussed, art legislation leading up to the early 1960s struggled to make it through both houses of Congress without being killed, though legislative proposals favoring the arts had become more frequent. Art received further challenge during this period from Americans who looked upon artists with suspicion or considered them

⁸³ Graeme Chalmers, “Visual Culture Education in the 1960s,” *Art Education* 58, no. 6 (November 2005): 6, 8.

⁸⁴ Marylou Kuhn, “The Relevance of Art Education to the Future,” *Art Education* 20, no. 6 (June 1967): 5-6.

⁸⁵ Although many businessmen admitted that art could help move goods in the marketplace, they often viewed art as separate from ordinary life. Gideon Chagy, *The New Patrons of the Arts* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1973), 15, 38.

“undesirables,” associating them with “un-American” activities, such as communism and homosexuality. In the early 1960s, however, significant changes occurred at the federal level regarding support for the arts. Perhaps most notably, John F. Kennedy became president. In 1963, just days before his death, Kennedy gave a speech wherein he promised to put an end to the American artists’ status as second-class citizens. This speech showed greater confidence and support for art from a president than ever before and implied that the United States government did not fear criticism from its creative people (an effective challenge to the Soviet Union).⁸⁶ Moreover, Kennedy once said that “The life of the arts...is very close to the center of a nation’s purpose...and is a test of the quality of a nation’s civilization,” by no means a new argument, but powerful words nonetheless.⁸⁷

To be sure, the Kennedy Administration’s involvement with the arts started before this speech. For instance, in 1961 the New York Metropolitan Opera went on strike, which garnered much attention and pulled in the government as Kennedy sent his Labor Secretary to help settle the pay dispute.⁸⁸ Early on, Kennedy recognized that the United States had “hundreds of thousands of devoted musicians, painters, architects, those who work to bring about changes in our cities, whose talents are just as important a part of the United States as any of our perhaps more publicized accomplishments.” With this in mind, he appointed a special consultant to the arts, August Heckscher, founder of the

⁸⁶ Michael Brenson, “Where Do We Go from Here? Securing a Place for the Artist in Society,” in *The Artist in Society: Rights, Roles, and Responsibilities*, eds. Carol Becker and Ann Wiens (Chicago: New Art Examiner Press, 1995), 68-69, 71, 73.

⁸⁷ Mark Bauerlein and Ellen Grantham, eds., *National Endowment for the Arts: A History, 1965-2008* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, 2009), 9, <http://permanent.access.gpo.gov/LPS113863/LPS113863/www.arts.gov/pub/nea-history-1965-2008.pdf>.

⁸⁸ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 6; Larson, *The Reluctant Patron*, 157-158.

Heckscher Museum in Huntington, New York, who completed a report in 1963 called “The Arts and the National Government.” In it, he noted that “a rapidly developing interest in the arts” among Americans had occurred in recent years as evidenced by a dramatic increase in attendance at museums and concerts. He believed this to be due in part to people having more free time than ever before, as well as greater prosperity and expectations. This contrasted with earlier periods where the most noticeable interest in the arts came from the very wealthy (the Gilded Age) or from a government dealing with a nation facing unprecedented economic strain (the New Deal).⁸⁹

Just prior to this report, a handful of Senators presented arts legislation, and this time they had a fighting chance. The first of these bills was sponsored by Jacob Javits and co-sponsored by Hubert Humphrey, among others, which sought “to establish a U.S. National Arts foundation.” Following this, Humphrey presented another bill “to establish a National Council on the Arts and a National Arts Foundation to assist the growth and development of the arts in the U.S.” Interestingly, these bills had backers from both sides of the political aisle, and in conjunction with Heckscher’s report they led to the creation in 1964 of the President’s Advisory Council on the Arts, later known as the National Council on the Arts.⁹⁰ Later in the year, when debate over the now combined legislation began, the main sponsors presented their arguments with an emphasis on the belief that America is and should be “a dominant world leader in culture and education,” and that this legislation worked to those ends. The first remarks on the Senate floor came from Humphrey, who stated:

⁸⁹ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 6, 9.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

This is at best a modest acknowledgement...that the arts have a significant place in our lives, and I can think of no better time to place some primary emphasis on it than in this day and age when most people live in constant fear of the weapons of destruction which clouds man's mind and his spirit and really pose an atmosphere of hopelessness for millions and millions of people. ...The arts seldom make the headlines. We are always talking about a bigger bomb...I wonder if we would be as willing to put as much money in the arts and the preservation of what has made mankind and civilization as we are in...the lack of civilization, namely, war.⁹¹

Humphrey's words highlighted the ever present tension in managing priorities and made it clear that the arts have a habit of being on the losing end. Though he spoke of art in relation to war and civilization, his point trickles down to a much smaller scale, to the way in which a community or a school treats the arts. His challenge to America was to prove that America had concern for something other than war. The country's reputation as a materialistic culture had not disappeared, and now it had an even more unsightly impression with which to contend, one that had an effect on its own youth, as seen to some degree on St. Cloud's campus, and not just the views of foreigners.

The National Council on the Arts quickly went to work in finding ways to promote and protect the arts, such as improving cultural facilities, presenting artists with awards, and developing professional arts administrators. Perhaps its most significant recommendation came in the summer of 1965 with the idea that "creative artists be aided financially, to release them from other employment so that they might concentrate on creative work." One of the many council members at this time, all of whom President Johnson appointed, had been Agnes de Mille, the famous choreographer who helped launch St. Cloud's first annual Fine Arts Festival. Around this same time, the Arts

⁹¹ Ibid., 14-15.

Council of America, an organization of state arts councils, expanded and David Rockefeller and some fellow corporate leaders established the Business Committee for the Arts, perhaps the first step toward that 150 percent increase in support.⁹²

Fortunately, when Lyndon B. Johnson took over as president after Kennedy's assassination, his administration continued vigorous support of the arts. The spring prior to the NCA's recommendation, Johnson submitted a plan to Congress for an independent agency called the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities.⁹³ Just six months later Congress passed an act that Johnson then signed, an act which allowed for the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, a huge milestone for the arts. The act made some very interesting declarations that shed light on America's (or perhaps more accurately, the government's) image of itself and the image it wanted to project. This included the idea that "[t]he world leadership which has come to the United States cannot rest solely upon superior power, wealth, and technology, but must be founded upon worldwide respect and admiration for the nation's high qualities as a leader in the realm of ideas and of the spirit." Furthermore, "[d]emocracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens and...must therefore foster and support a form of education designed to make men masters of their technology and not its unthinking servant." Finally, "it is necessary and appropriate for the Federal Government to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry but also the material

⁹² Ibid., 16-17.

⁹³ Larson, *The Reluctant Patron*, 200.

conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent.”⁹⁴ The government clearly had high hopes and ambitions for itself and its citizens in terms of art, education, and leadership – hopes that would not prove easy to fulfill.

The NEA immediately set to work on making arts education a large part of its investment.⁹⁵ As one historian of the organization noted, it had been “established to nurture American creativity, to elevate the nation’s culture, and to sustain and preserve the country’s many artistic traditions.”⁹⁶ What more effective way to accomplish this than through education. Education would, of course, also help achieve leadership in ideas and spirit, but other countries, most notably in Europe, had a significant head start, having had government support for several decades at the very least. In places like France and Great Britain, the arts had centralized, political support, which some critics have argued risks creating cultural insiders and outsiders.⁹⁷ In other words, it is not egalitarian or particularly democratic. This being America, however, when the government finally became involved it took a different tack. The NEA is federally funded, but it has no socio-political agenda (something with which its adversaries would disagree). It does not provide work or dictate policy; rather it is decentralized and works with various federal and private agencies, institutions, and foundations at all levels to provide a portion of the financial support individual artists or arts organizations need to

⁹⁴ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 18-19.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹⁷ Tyler Cowen, *How the United States Funds the Arts* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, 2007), v, <http://www.nea.gov/pub/how.pdf>.

create and survive.⁹⁸ Moreover, arts organizations are tax exempt.⁹⁹ In this way, the government can have a part to play in fostering the arts without controlling or interfering with them. To be sure, at this point, the NEA accounts for less than one percent of all arts philanthropy in the United States.¹⁰⁰ In its first year of operation, the NEA had a budget of \$2.5 million, a small sum even in 1965, and by 1967 it had increased to \$8 million. Even with these very limited funds, it managed to spread its wealth around in the form of grants and other awards to a surprising number and variety of artists and organizations.¹⁰¹

It must be noted, of course, that the successful creation of the National Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts did not come without detractors. Several members of Congress ridiculed the arts in arguing against the legislation before them in 1963 and 1964. Others considered government help, at worst, to be unconstitutional and even a communist conspiracy. At best, it would lead to mediocrity in art.¹⁰² Despite the earlier bipartisan support of the bills, in general Democrats could more likely be counted on to favor the NEA and government support, whereas Republicans felt the arts should be self-sufficient.¹⁰³ This and other doubts or criticisms came through loud and clear with the NEA's first Congressional review in 1968. Critics

⁹⁸ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 1-2; Cowen, *How the United States Funds the Arts*, v, viii.

⁹⁹ Joni Maya Cherbo, Harold L. Vogel, and Margaret Jane Wyszomirski, "Toward an Arts and Creative Sector," in *Understanding the Arts and Creative Sector in the United States*, eds. Joni Maya Cherbo, Ruth Ann Stewart, and Margaret Jane Wyszomirski (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 18.

¹⁰⁰ Cowen, *How the United States Funds the Arts*, viii.

¹⁰¹ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 19-21.

¹⁰² Livingston Biddle, *Our Government and the Arts: A Perspective from the Inside* (New York: ACA Books, 1988), 52, 69.

¹⁰³ Cherbo, Vogel, Wyszomirski, "Toward an Arts and Creative Sector," 18.

feared the agency would “escape federal oversight,” or get around cultural norms. Some, including one portrait painter, even argued that monetary support for new styles of art resulted in the censorship of traditional styles. Others still did not see the “wisdom” of spending federal dollars on art. A few members of Congress called some of the spending a “prime example of government waste and stupidity.” They argued that Congress must remember they had a war on, and as Representative Frank Bow said, “We cannot have guns and butter.” In fact, for him, the butter looked more like “strawberry shortcake covered with whipped cream and a cherry on top.”¹⁰⁴ Many of these arguments had been used against the arts in the past, and one in particular surfaced at this time that would become a continuous headache for the NEA in particular. Livingston Biddle, who would become head of the NEA in the 1970s, paraphrased it as such: “Why should government funds be spent on developing art that the American public, the taxpayer, at any given time might find of no particular appeal or worthy of criticism or even abuse?”¹⁰⁵ Given such detractors, arts advocates of the 1960s could delight in the relatively astounding success the arts received at the federal level, yet they still had a good fight ahead of them. Art at St. Cloud had a fight ahead of it too.

¹⁰⁴ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 27-28.

¹⁰⁵ Biddle, *Our Government and the Arts*, 222.



Figure 6

Hot Dog! Silkscreen print created by Gail Bamber, ca. 1970s.

Currently located at the Market Entrance in Atwood Memorial Center.

Image reproduced with permission from the Atwood Permanent Art Collection
Committee.

Chapter IV

ART ACKNOWLEDGED AND DISREGARDED

*“The actual structure was, as I recall, based on a photo I took of some sort of temporary booth at one of those fairs that comes around during the summer. I took an old photo of my mother’s cousin C.D. McCleary (not from Minnesota), added an apron, and turned him into the imaginary proprietor of the booth. I love that people are so sure they know who that is; this is actually fiction, after all, rather than documentary. But I am trying to make things that seem real! Which sometimes makes things more real than reality itself...”*¹

This is Gail Bamber’s description of *Hot Dog!*, a silkscreen print she made at the college as a student in the early 1970s. (Figure 6) With this and other pieces from her Master’s thesis she wanted to highlight the “smallness and gentleness” she found in the places of St. Cloud. Having only ever lived in larger cities, she felt that the contrast St. Cloud created “allowed her to recognize and appreciate qualities of the town that others may take for granted.” Though her piece is relatively bare and provides little context for the scene, by eliminating the excess, she brought forward what had been her experience of reality, what she saw in St. Cloud. She noted that her work would probably be associated most with pop-art style, “But most pop artists are more cynical about their subjects than I am.”² Other artists did not find the small and gentle side of St. Cloud of

¹ Gail Bamber, e-mail message to Diane M. Zoglauer, June 18, 2002, Atwood Permanent Art Collection Committee, St. Cloud State University.

² Press release, News from Information Services, October 15, 1971, St. Cloud State University Archives.

which she spoke so inspiring for the arts. Despite this, art on campus and in the city did not stagnate, though there is evidence that at times it was generally taken for granted.

Finally a Home

In 1970 the school underwent another reorganization resulting in the creation of a School of Fine Arts, the first state college in Minnesota to have one, which housed the theater, music, and art departments. This development resulted in part from another push for change, this time by President Charles J. Graham, who saw higher education's boom times slowing down. One of the more significant changes, for St. Cloud at least, had to do with teaching. For a number of years there had been a teacher shortage, which suited the school well since it could step in to train those needed teachers and attract students interested in a growing field. With the teacher shortage at an end, however, St. Cloud State began to lose its bread and butter purpose, the one it had had from the very beginning. In 1970, fifty-seven percent of graduates had been qualified to teach, yet only thirty-two percent of that year's freshmen said they planned to become teachers.³ By 1973 that number dropped to twenty-five percent.⁴ The school had to make adjustments to keep drawing in students. A few years later a news promotional piece reflecting on this period stated that the school recognized the need "to expand and diversify its educational offerings even further to fulfill its mission as a public service institution."⁵

³ Press release, News from Information Services, September 14, 1971, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁴ "Overview...from St. Cloud State College," Information Services, October 1974, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁵ Ibid.

Thus, even more than before, we begin to see the art department's primary focus shift away from preparing teachers to teach the creation and appreciation of art.

According to James Roy, the same professor who had earlier threatened to leave, a separate school would “strengthen [the fine arts] and as a result there will be a more coordinated effort to bring fine arts to the people of this area.”⁶ According to college catalogues, the School of Fine Arts sought to serve four groups of people: all students, fine arts students, faculty, and the surrounding community. For the community in particular, the programs offered by the students, faculty, and visiting artists offered “a continuing cultural opportunity.”⁷ The drive to reach and involve the community with art had obviously not faded. As the first group in the list, students and their education still had the highest priority, and the fact that the student body as a whole came before specialized arts students reflected the belief in the universal benefits of art knowledge, that it can be of value and use even if it is never used to make art. This purpose and mentality carried forward and became apparent in other schools in Minnesota. In 1975 the departments of art, music, and theater from all of the Minnesota State Colleges met to discuss the future of the fine arts at their institutions and in the state. Their concern at the time had been “that the arts departments of the state colleges should function as the public resource centers for the arts in their respective geographical regions.” They also developed a five-point mission that paralleled the purpose and services espoused by the School of Fine Arts, but expanded the scope to include people at the state and national

⁶ Punky Brower, “Fine Arts School in Operation July,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), January 30, 1970, 1.

⁷ *St. Cloud State College General Bulletin, 1973-1974*, 76-77.

level.⁸ These schools clearly wanted to make an impact, and by working together they increased their odds. This new School at St. Cloud, as articulated by Roy, intended to leave an impression on its students by helping them “to understand and enjoy communication through the various arts, to discover truth through the arts, [and] to develop some basis for discrimination against cheap, tawdry, and dishonest art.” Moreover, the broad general education it provided “helps [them] to understand and appreciate [their] heritage, [their] social obligations and responsibilities, and the possibilities of human achievement.”⁹ In this way the School of Fine Arts and the art department aligned themselves well with the goals and purpose of the college.

Roy’s statement is all the more interesting for its optimistic tone. It is as though having a separate school for the fine arts offered the hope of overdue attention to the art department’s concerns. Addressing its concerns would still take a while, for as late as February of 1973 Harry Menagh, dean of the School of Fine Arts, wrote to President Graham pleading for a new visual arts building, and included a report from Roy in support of the cause. For the most part, they cited issues that had existed in the late 1960s, such as students struggling to enroll in the classes they needed, a lack of space, and being spread out over four buildings.¹⁰ More than before, however, they stressed the anticipation of continued growth for the department, pointing out that in the last twelve years alone the number of art majors had increased almost 600 percent (from 56 to 328).

⁸ Press release, News, February 10, 1975, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁹ *St. Cloud State College General Bulletin, 1973-1974*, 76-77.

¹⁰ Another source claimed it to be five, the *Chronicle* noted six. In any case, it went up from three. Caroline Iammatteo, “Kiehle Designed for Effectiveness,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), October 29, 1974, 8; St. Cloud State College Art Department, “Report ‘D’ – Trends,” ca. 1973, 2, St. Cloud State University Archives; Harry Menagh, “The Need for a Visual Arts Building at St. Cloud State College: Summary” report to Charles J. Graham, February 21, 1973, St. Cloud State University Archives.

Interest in the visual arts did not come solely from students either, for they saw it growing among members of the St. Cloud community, hundreds of whom, they claimed, had looked to the college for instruction but had to be turned away because the department had no place to instruct them. Other reasons for growth included the increase of interest, or a “cultural renaissance,” in the fine arts at the national level, high school students recognizing the quality of programs, and the opportunities for careers in art related fields. Finally, St. Cloud’s central location made it ideal for a “continuous and expanding program” that could “contribute directly and continuously to the cultural life of the campus and Central Minnesota.”¹¹

The art department’s persistence finally paid off in the summer of 1974 when it moved into its new building. The building itself had been on campus since the 1950s serving as the library, but with the construction of a new library, Centennial Hall, in the late 1960s, Kiehle Hall sat empty. Ed Matill took over as the dean of the School of Fine Arts for the 1973-1974 school year, and in that short time managed to convince the Legislative Building Committee chair to allow the art department to take advantage of the building.¹² A college press release further noted that remodeling of the building had been delayed by the Commissioner of Administration freezing construction funds, which had been appropriated in 1971, in order to study enrollment trends.¹³ Finally, location and funding came together, and with renovation and remodeling designed for visual arts activities, Kiehle Hall became the perfect vessel to house the department and all of its

¹¹ James Roy, “The Need for a Visual Arts Center at St. Cloud State College” report sent to Charles J. Graham from Harry Menagh, February 8, 1973, 4-5, St. Cloud State University Archives; Menagh to Graham, February 21, 1973, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹² Merle Sykora, e-mail message to author, January 26, 2012.

¹³ Press release, News, May 11, 1973, St. Cloud State University Archives.

students and their needs. Indeed, Merle Sykora described the new facilities as “the envy of virtually every State University in Minnesota.” With this new space and equipment, the department could reinstitute its minor programs and start a Bachelor of Fine Arts program. It could also better serve the community by being able to accommodate programs such as Art for Area High School Students, In-Service Workshops for School Teachers, Art for the Elderly, Art for Children, and Art for the Handicapped, all of which would reach hundreds of participants. These improvements caused the department to anticipate a fifteen percent increase in art majors and minors for the 1974-1975 academic year, and a twenty percent growth in student credit hours and degrees conferred for the following academic year.¹⁴ The faculty was confident that the new visual arts center would improve the department’s image to both prospective and current students, as well as improve morale for students and faculty.¹⁵

The art department had finally come into its own after the faculty set out to transform it in the late 1950s. Art began to come into its own elsewhere on campus as well. First, the new building provided a larger, more accessible gallery space, which became a very active entity on campus, offering around twelve shows a year, often featuring regional artists but also the occasional nationally known artist, and all of them open and free to the public. Students and faculty also had opportunities to exhibit there. In fact, one art faculty member, David Brown, said that St. Cloud “probably [has] one of

¹⁴ “Report ‘D’ – Trends,” 1-2; St. Cloud State College Art Department, “Report ‘E’ – Unique Program Needs,” ca. 1973, 1-2, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹⁵ Iammatteo, “Kiehle Designed for Effectiveness,” 8-9.

the nicest university art galleries in Minnesota.”¹⁶ Atwood had its art gallery too, which operated much like Kiehle in terms of frequency of exhibits, but it also had a growing permanent art collection and catered to non-art students who had an interest in art and wanted to display their work.¹⁷

The spring of 1973 in particular saw several art developments of note. Art students formed a Student Art Union with the intent to “enrich the cultural environment of the SCS student body, encourage new ideas and aesthetic concepts, and to involve students in questions of curriculum.”¹⁸ According to its Statement of Purpose, the art union also wanted to make students better aware of world artistic activities, in other words, to be aware of things beyond their immediate surroundings as well as bring attention to activities within the art department, involve the community when possible, and provide informational and educational events on campus that would be open to the public, such as lectures, films, and exhibits.¹⁹ The students involved with the union saw room for improvement in terms of art awareness and participation on campus, and much like Kappa Pi, which still existed, felt it their mission to encourage art on campus. Despite its zeal, one art student from the time called it “a dysfunctional endeavor.”²⁰ A

¹⁶ “Kiehle Houses Studios, Gallery, Offers Variety of Art Courses,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), September 6, 1977, 9B; Robert Riseling, Form B-1 of “Student Activities Committee Gallery Budget 1973/1974,” February 14, 1973, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹⁷ For a time in the early 1970s it even had tentative plans for a craft shop, operated by art students, where regular students could receive help with independent art projects in things like pottery and weaving. This seems to have been a non-starter until 1977 when a press release described the Atwood Crafts Center as a “new service” on campus. Its quiet presence after this suggests that it proved less popular than hoped. Candy Irwin, “Moustache Party Set for Opening,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), February 4, 1972, 1; Press release, News, May 2, 1977, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹⁸ “Student Art Union Formed,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), April 13, 1973, 3.

¹⁹ “Statement of Purpose,” Student Art Union, ca. May 1973, St. Cloud State University Archives.

²⁰ TyRuben Ellingson in discussion with the author, February 27, 2012.

graphic art studio also appeared on campus at this time, organized and guided by Bill Ellingson, a graduate student named Charlene Zahn, and a St. Cloud area artist and alumnus named Gail Bamber. In an interview with the *Chronicle* they said they “wanted to create a working, professional, career oriented atmosphere where students can get experience and have contact with noted artists,” which involved bringing in local and regional artists in a sort of adaptation of the artist-in-residence concept. At the time, the studio could boast about being the only one of its kind in the Upper Midwest, something that helped make St. Cloud unique and attractive to students. At the same time, the studio had a policy of collecting a print from each of the students who worked there and the artists who visited. Thus, the college gained “a beautiful collection of prints.”²¹ Here again, Ellingson worked to grow art on campus and stimulate and bolster a relationship between the school and the surrounding art community. A few years later he had a hand in connecting the school and its art students to the state. He and another professor, James Pehler, who also happened to be a state Representative at the time, had a discussion in which Ellingson mentioned he had been looking for “prominent places to display art work produced by his students over a period of years.” Pehler noted that the public meeting rooms the House of Representatives used had many bare walls. Very soon the state Capitol building had almost sixty works of art created by St. Cloud students.²²

Meanwhile, another art faculty member, Robert Riseling, seemed to realize what others had missed or ignored, that the college’s permanent art collection desperately

²¹ “Graphic Art Studio Begins Operation,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), April 3, 1973, 11.

²² Press release, News, August 2, 1976, St. Cloud State University Archives.

needed to be documented and catalogued. In 1973 he took over as director of the Kiehle Gallery and in a Student Activities Committee budget request form for 1973-1974, he noted that “the work of this gallery staff goes beyond exhibitions. Our first concern will be with the permanent collection which will be brought together, cataloged, repaired and redispersed. We also plan to establish a rental program of this collection which will be available to students.”²³ At this time, the collection consisted of over one hundred pieces scattered across campus. Riseling described the works as being mostly by artists from the St. Cloud region, and some of them as “not too significant.” Nevertheless, he hoped that the project would increase appreciation of art among students and that it would generate enough interest to obtain funds “to buy works of more value.”²⁴ In order to get the project rolling, he sent a memo to all departments informing them that he or a gallery staffer would be stopping by to “present a form in authorization for the collection of all art works belonging to the permanent collection of St. Cloud State College.”²⁵ No record exists to document how well or poorly this project went, but based on current efforts to catalogue the collection, which will be discussed later, the effort could not be sustained. Merle Sykora did not remember these activities, saying that “If this actually happened[,] it didn’t last long. [It is] One of those good intentions with little follow through.”²⁶ One student recalled, however, that by the time he left in the early 1980s, there appeared to be

²³ Robert Riseling, “Student Activities Committee Gallery Budget 1973/1974,” February 14, 1973, St. Cloud State University Archives.

²⁴ Jan Pedersen, “SCS Art Gathered for Display, Rental,” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), April 27, 1973, 7.

²⁵ Robert Riseling, “St. Cloud State College Permanent Collection” memo to All Departments, February 26, 1973, St. Cloud State University Archives.

²⁶ Merle Sykora, e-mail message to author, February 3, 2012.

more art on campus, or at least more of it made it on to the walls.²⁷ Perhaps this is a small part of Riseling's legacy.

Setbacks

For the moment, art had a fairly prominent and increasingly visible presence on campus. The gallery and extracurricular activities just mentioned received funding from the Student Activities Committee. In the mid 1970s, according to Ted Sherarts, the committee had been "flush with money," so much so that it could pay some local artists to exhibit or at least buy one piece from every exhibition. Furthermore, leading up to and into the early 1970s the economy performed well enough that some students, particularly the artistically inclined, had less concern about majoring in fields with high monetary rewards and more about going to college "to discover truth and beauty."²⁸ Even some non-art students fell into this, such as John Derus, who said, "Nobody I knew knew what they wanted to do. We all were there and had this foggy idea about getting a BA and that it must be worth something."²⁹

With an economy in constant flux, however, this began to change by the mid to late 1970s. As a result, Sherarts saw a growing interest in fields like graphic design.³⁰ This is reiterated by TyRuben Ellingson, who became a St. Cloud student in the late 1970s. He recalled that around the middle of the decade a shift in culture was evident, where people began to look on artists as not having as relevant a voice. People had had

²⁷ Ellingson in discussion.

²⁸ Ted Sherarts in discussion with the author, February 23, 2012.

²⁹ John Derus, interview by Calvin Gower, April 21, 1982, transcript, St. Cloud State University Archives.

³⁰ Sherarts in discussion.

“enough with kooky art.” Where artists had tended to be romantic in the 1960s, they now became more commercial. There existed a tension between high art and making a living, hardly a new development, but TyRuben also remembered St. Cloud offering more commercial art classes and there generally being confusion in society as to why a student would go to art school.³¹ It seems the art program again had to adjust to meet shifting needs and goals of students.

Student Activities Committee money also began to dry up by the latter part of the decade. The damage this caused to Studio L’Homme Dieu in 1975 has already been mentioned, but it also struck *Sticks and Stones*, formerly *Parallels*. Two years later a similar publication called *Wheatsprout* tried to fill the void with skimpy funding (\$800) from the College of Liberal Arts. Critics of *Wheatsprout* and its predecessors emerged despite such meager funds, arguing that sports and other crowd-pleasing activities deserved the funding allocated for projects like *Wheatsprout* because thousands of people, rather than a few dozen, could benefit from such events. William Meissner, an English professor at the university, fired back by stating, “I think it’s unfortunate that thousands are spent on one-night concerts of no lasting value when more is needed for artistic and cultural projects that would help to develop students’ creative abilities.”³²

For much of the 1970s, the Kiehle Gallery kept going strong. Indeed, one report from 1975-1976 noted that attendance at preview openings had tripled over past years and that fifty to one hundred people visited the gallery daily. The report attributed this in

³¹ Ellingson in discussion.

³² Joel Stottrup, “SCS Literary Arts Magazine Faces Poor Funding Problems,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), March 18, 1977, 1.

part to the gallery being new and more accessible.³³ TyRuben remembered the school always having a nice gallery with good works and shows that had fairly good attendance. Perhaps some of the novelty began to wear off by the later 1970s, however, for in his memory, the art faculty made up most of those going to shows at that point. He felt this happened in part because the Minneapolis art scene had stayed more vital. To him, the St. Cloud area had regressed and became more of a farm town again.³⁴ These developments indicate how tenuous a foothold art often had, for it took very little to impinge on its positive growth.

Art in the Community

It would not be fair to say the St. Cloud community rejected art altogether of course, for just as in the heyday of the Reading Room, a handful of residents fought especially hard to bring culture to the community. During this period, much of the art faculty lived in the St. Cloud area, and could therefore be counted among those reaching out to the community. Not surprisingly, Bill Ellingson tried to build a stronger connection between campus and downtown St. Cloud, first by reaching out to community arts advocates like Arlene Helgeson, then by starting a private art school in an old church off campus (currently the Islamic Center of St. Cloud). According to Ted Sherarts, Ellingson opened the school because he “wanted to see a more lively art scene in the community.” Unfortunately, this became another short lived venture.³⁵ This did not discourage him, however, for his son remembered him always being interested in the

³³ Form B-1 from “Student Activities Budget Request Information and Evaluation Form,” 1975-1976, St. Cloud State University Archives.

³⁴ Ellingson in discussion.

³⁵ Sherarts in discussion.

community and keeping it involved in the arts. He also kept involved in activities off campus that brought artists together. He felt artists played the role of lightning rods for dialogue on social issues, especially in the 1960s and early 1970s. Art and artists had the capacity to help make change happen.³⁶ If for no other reason, these two things made them essential to any community.

A more successful community project, which still takes place on St. Cloud's campus, began in the mid 1970s as well: the Lemonade Concert and Art Fair. The fair began when a woman named Ginny Tennant approached the St. Cloud Arts Council and said she would "like to organize a little art fair," little meaning twelve to fifteen artists. Like Ellingson, she wanted to do something for the community and the area's art scene. It remains a much anticipated annual event. In fact, since that modest start, it has grown spectacularly to include nearly 300 artists and crafters. Not only does the fair provide a venue for artists; the proceeds go to help fund art activities in the community.³⁷ Being held on St. Cloud's campus, it is clear the school helped, and continues to help, support the fair financially, but from very early on it has also received grants from the Minnesota Arts Council by way of the Minnesota Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.³⁸ This is a great example of a truly broad based art project with local stakes.

The St. Cloud Arts Council that had so much to do with starting the fair was a new organization in town in 1973. An article in the *St. Cloud Times* explained its "[p]urpose and philosophy...is to bring people to the arts and arts to the people," and its

³⁶ Ellingson in discussion.

³⁷ Dana Drazenovich, "Fair Had Humble Start," *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), June 22, 2000, 21E.

³⁸ Press release, News, July 10, 1975, St. Cloud State University Archives.

“task is to coordinate, enrich and build on the existing cultural arts program in the St. Cloud area.” It undertook one of its first projects in 1973 raising funds for the commission of St. Cloud’s first major public work of art.³⁹ Created by Anthony Caponi, this sculpture consisting of three large granite boulders is aptly named *Granite Trio*, and sits prominently on St. Germain Street in downtown St. Cloud. Caponi said that he “wanted to make the sculpture equal to people. . . .to make people participants, more than observers.”⁴⁰ He meant for people to interact with the sculpture, for them to touch it and even climb on it.⁴¹ He wanted them to take ownership of it, which they did in part by watching him complete it. Moreover, a grant from the State Arts Board paid for half of the sculpture while the other half came from the community. People stepped up and made an investment, and three thousand of them attended its dedication.⁴²

Besides this work, the council also sponsored art shows, collected contemporary art pieces for display in St. Cloud’s public buildings, gave art scholarships, worked with education budgets, and helped support local arts groups.⁴³ As early as 1976, however, the council found that its role in the community had changed. Where requests formerly had been for non-financial assistance, the opposite had become the case. The council also wanted to become more effective by including representatives of arts groups in the council. Another issue that arose had to do with school art budgets, which had no money

³⁹ “St. Cloud Community Arts Council Brings Art to People,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), November 16, 1974, 21.

⁴⁰ John Ritter, “Mall Sculptures, ‘Equal to People,’” *College Chronicle* (St. Cloud State College, MN), October 4, 1974, 7.

⁴¹ “Park Founder,” *Caponi Art Park Learning Center*, accessed January 29, 2012, <http://www.caponiartpark.org/about/founder/>.

⁴² Jim Maurice, “The Large Granite Boulders In Downtown St. Cloud Were Dedicated – On ‘This Date In Central Minnesota History,’” *WJON* (St. Cloud, MN), August 30, 2011, <http://wjon.com/the-large-granite-boulders-in-downtown-st-cloud-were-dedicated-on-this-date-in-central-minnesota-history/>.

⁴³ “St. Cloud Community Arts Council Brings Art to People.”

because they had to compete with sports. Despite these challenges, a *St. Cloud Times* article reported that the arts in St. Cloud had a future growing “brighter.”⁴⁴ Though work still needed to be done, this holds true, based on developments to come. For instance, the following year, St. Cloud received a visit from an NEA representative named Robert Pierle to “check the route the arts are taking” and provide any necessary advice. In his assessment, the St. Cloud arts community had to respond to the arts boom that had been sweeping the nation. He asserted that the arts had “gone public” and that “Our ultimate objective is that every citizen has access to every kind of cultural development.”⁴⁵ In this report, he accurately represented the stance of the NEA at this time. More importantly, his presence marked a rare moment of fairly high profile concern for art in St. Cloud. It appears a noticeable segment of St. Cloud’s population heeded his words, for less than a year after his visit it became evident that events typically associated with formal attire and elites and held in the Twin Cities had begun to appear more frequently in St. Cloud, involving more people of all types in the cultural arts scene. The arts council also received more calls from citizens with suggestions for an arts center and artists in schools.⁴⁶ All of this is not to say St. Cloud found itself on the verge of becoming the next great art hub, but rather to show that it did not totally revert to a quaint farming community.

⁴⁴ Marc French, “Changing Area Art Scene Alters Arts Council Role,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), March 1, 1976, 17.

⁴⁵ “City Fortunate for Arts Help,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), March 11, 1977, 4; “Panel for ‘Arts Boom’ Suggested,” *St. Cloud Times*, March 18, 1977, 15.

⁴⁶ Mary Schaefer, “The Arts Have Fans in St. Cloud,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), January 30, 1978, 12.

National Developments

On a broader scale, a survey of Americans conducted in 1973 revealed that most no longer had an image of art as exclusively elite in nature. In fact, nine out of ten felt art to be essential to one's "sense of being and enjoyment of life."⁴⁷ Either directly or indirectly, the NEA played a role in this changing attitude. Some states had established arts agencies long before the NEA came around, but most of them formed after its creation. These in turn gave rise to more local arts agencies, like the council in St. Cloud. To be sure, local agencies had existed previously. A notable spike in city art commissions occurred after the 1893 Columbian World Exposition in Chicago. After World War II, urban involvement in the arts grew again. But the agencies that cropped up in cities in the 1960s and 1970s often had a distinct economic agenda. Local governments postulated that they could attract more tourists if their cities became recognized regional art centers.⁴⁸ Indeed, in speaking before Congress in 1990, Minnesota's Garrison Keillor, whose *A Prairie Home Companion* started with the help of an NEA grant in 1974, noted that "today, in every city and state, when Americans talk up their home town, invariably they mention the arts."⁴⁹ Reflecting this cultural change, by 1971 the NEA had expanded its mission and goals to be more populist and inclusive.⁵⁰ Its director at the time, Nancy Hanks, favored supporting "local and regional institutions

⁴⁷ Louis Harris, *Americans and the Arts* (New York: American Council for the Arts, 1981), i.

⁴⁸ Tyler Cowen, *How the United States Funds the Arts* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, 2007), 6-9, <http://www.nea.gov/pub/how.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Mark Bauerlein and Ellen Grantham, eds., *National Endowment for the Arts: A History, 1965-2008* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, 2009), 48, <http://permanent.access.gpo.gov/LPS113863/LPS113863/www.arts.gov/pub/nea-history-1965-2008.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Margaret Jane Wyszomirski, "The Road to Cultural Policy Studies in the United States," in *Understanding the Arts and Creative Sector in the United States*, eds. Joni Maya Cherbo, Ruth Ann Stewart, and Margaret Jane Wyszomirski (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 41.

that would extend access and foster broader creativity.” Furthermore, she viewed art “as a medium for public betterment.”⁵¹ She and Bill Ellingson would have gotten along swimmingly.

During this period, the NEA experienced its most substantial fiscal growth. In 1971 its budget doubled from approximately \$8 million to \$15 million. It doubled again the following year to \$31.5 million. By the end of the decade it would surpass \$100 million.⁵² Part of its success had to do with the “art-for-all-Americans” mentality, which many legislators supported. Moreover, Richard Nixon could be counted among its supporters, though the commonly held belief is that he did so “to quell discontent regarding foreign policy decisions in Indochina” – a polite way of saying “to draw attention away from the quagmire in Vietnam he had exacerbated.”⁵³ With Nixon’s resignation, Gerald Ford took office and like his predecessors, he supported the NEA. He knew firsthand the impact the agency and its work had on communities, for his hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, possessed an Alexander Calder sculpture that had become the symbol of the city, a sculpture made possible by a grant from the NEA. Ford’s vice president, Nelson Rockefeller, a man from a family known for its support of the arts, was another strong advocate.⁵⁴ In fact, in 1975, Rockefeller and twenty-five Congressmen contributed a piece to the *Art Education* journal in which they elaborated on the importance of art and art in education. Rockefeller opened the paper by stating: “Art education expands the mind. It sensitizes the child to new intellectual potentials.

⁵¹ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 36.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 36, 38, 40.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

Perhaps the teaching of art, more than any other educational experience, is concerned with growth of the human potential.” Furthermore, “art education teaches the child how to enjoy life, how to use the senses fully.”⁵⁵ The following remarks of the Congressmen, who represented both political sides, mentioned the role of art in building and sustaining a nation’s culture, preserving heritage, enhancing life, and leading to total development as a person.⁵⁶ Around this same time, education scholars stressed the importance of human expression and communication, noting that art had been recognized as equal in value to verbal expression. They further looked forward to “an educational process which embraces all aspects of human life...[and] regards the world of emotions as equal in importance to the world of ideas.”⁵⁷ Another milestone for the arts in the United States came in 1975 when Ford signed the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act, which facilitated the insuring of objects from other countries for exhibition.⁵⁸ Americans now gained access to world renowned art on their own soil as never before.

As the Carter Administration took over the presidency in 1977, Livingston Biddle became the director of the NEA. He had found that the words “elitism” and “populism” had been “used to suggest a polarization of the arts.” Based on the purer form of their definitions, rather than the ideological ones that had manifested, he urged that they be combined into a policy meaning “access to the best.”⁵⁹ Under his leadership, the NEA worked “to help develop excellence in the arts and to make that excellence more widely

⁵⁵ Nelson Rockefeller, et al., “The Value of Art Education,” *Art Education* 28, no. 6 (October 1975): 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 8, 10-11.

⁵⁷ Ronald Tyrell, Dorothy Williams, and Dorothy Blanchard, “Artists-in-Schools: Why Bother?” *Art Education* 27, no. 8 (November 1974): 21, 23.

⁵⁸ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 44.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

available and accessible to all our people.”⁶⁰ Once again, support could be found in the executive branch, this time in Vice President Walter Mondale’s wife, Joan. A ceramicist, she served as an honorary chairperson of the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, as well as on the board of directors of the Associated Councils of the Arts. While living in the vice president’s residence, she filled the house with contemporary American works of art and craft, encouraged the use of artworks in federal buildings, and testified before Congress about a federal tax code that put a heavy burden on the families of artists. Because of her enthusiastic interest and activities with the arts she earned the nickname “Joan of Art.”⁶¹ One can only imagine the initiatives she would have pursued had her husband won the White House.

Even with this unprecedented support for the arts through the 1970s, critics challenged their efficacy. Some members of Congress particularly objected to NEA money going to works or projects they found ridiculous or obscene. These included a “concrete poem” written by William Saroyan, who received \$750 for it, that simply read “lighght,” a theater outreach group for inner-city high school kids wherein they used profanity, and a novel written by Erica Jong that had strong sexual themes.⁶² Even Senator Claiborne Pell, a long-time supporter of the arts and the NEA, questioned whether some of the paintings the government paid for could be called “realistic” or consisted of “doodles and swirls.”⁶³ Here the subjectivity of art is profoundly evident, as is the danger of restricted artistic freedom when the purse strings are controlled by those

⁶⁰ Livingston Biddle, *Our Government and the Arts: A Perspective from the Inside* (New York: ACA Books, 1988), ix.

⁶¹ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 56.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 39.

who find fault or objection with what is produced. Biddle expounded on this dilemma well, arguing that the arts in America faced “the danger of fragmentation.” For him, when special interests are involved,

they can diminish the value of the art, for although art does a great many good things in the world for a great many people, it does them best when it is free. No task is more important now than to keep the arts free – free from their own politicization, free from limiting special interests, free to experiment and explore.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, criticism toward the agency and the arts from Congress would only increase and intensify in the coming years.

Spotlight on Art

Back in St. Cloud, in 1975 the school went through one last name change to become what it has been for nearly four decades now, St. Cloud State University. More significantly for the art department, it received accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Art in the spring of 1980, a process that took three years to complete. The association worked toward “promoting understanding and acceptance of visual arts in higher education, fostering the development of strong art curriculum, and establishing a national voice in matters pertaining to visual arts.”⁶⁵ Given these objectives, had St. Cloud stuck to its original focus of teacher preparation, accreditation would likely have been harder to achieve. As has been shown, however, the school had accepted the need to change, and the art department expanded its mission. By the late 1970s the undergraduate catalogue listed the department’s objectives as: “to introduce the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 63.

⁶⁵ Press release, News, May 5, 1980, St. Cloud State University Archives.

student to the visual arts, to provide preparation for the studio artist, art historian, and graphic designer, and to prepare teachers and supervisors in the elementary, junior high and secondary schools.”⁶⁶ The artist and the art teacher’s positions had finally reversed in terms of primary focus.

The profile for art on campus appeared to be growing, too. The university sent out a press release in the spring of 1979 describing “several tourist attractions tucked away in its buildings,” making the school a good place for sight-seeing. The list included the Atwood Gallery and the Kiehle Visual Arts Center Gallery.⁶⁷ This is echoed eight years later with an economic impact study that noted that the school’s fine arts presentations and galleries played “a role in enhancing area economic and cultural growth.”⁶⁸ After another report came out in 1993 that failed to mention the university’s non-economic contributions, some in the Chamber of Commerce and from the faculty stepped up to fill in the missing pieces. They expressed essentially the same conclusion as the earlier report, stating that the “non-economic amenities” that come with the university, like cultural enrichment and a more diverse population, helped improve the quality of life in the region as well as helped the growth of business and development.⁶⁹ A brochure for the art department from the early 1980s mentioned the department promoting activities on campus and in the wider St. Cloud community, as well as the workshops and exhibitions it offered throughout the year. It also highlighted the three student art organizations on campus: Kappa Pi, the Art Student Union, and the student

⁶⁶ *St. Cloud State University Undergraduate Bulletin, 1979-1980*, 53

⁶⁷ Press release, News, March 14, 1979, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁶⁸ Press release, News, September 14, 1987, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁶⁹ Press release, News, September 14, 1993, St. Cloud State University Archives.

chapter of the National Art Education Association. To top it off, it made note of its accreditation.⁷⁰ A similar brochure from the early to mid 1990s said much the same with the addition of noting the benefits of combining art with other areas of study.⁷¹ All of these must be judged on their merit as promotional pieces. Nevertheless, they show that the administration and department felt they had something to brag about in art, that their art assets would attract both respect and physical bodies to campus.

In addition to this, a number of fairly notable exhibits and collections appeared on campus around this time, many of which reached into the community. A show called “Central Minnesota Life – The Artist’s Viewpoint” came first, and consisted of artists from Stearns, Benton, Wright, and Sherburne Counties. After exhibiting on campus, this show, funded by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board that the university then matched, traveled around to exhibit in surrounding communities for the next six months.⁷² Next, the school received a collection of prints from Minnesota printmakers called “Portfolio 15.” Northwestern National Bank of Minneapolis gave the collection to the university, as well as three other institutions in the state, as a gift based on “how [it] would benefit from the collection and how the prints would be used for instructional purposes.”⁷³ In the summer of 1980, the art department gave the St. Cloud Public Library a collection of thirty prints, created in the department’s graphic studio by students and guest artists, as a gesture of thanks to the city. President Graham spoke at the

⁷⁰ “Department of Art,” St. Cloud State University Art Department brochure, ca. 1980, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁷¹ “Art and Graphic Design,” St. Cloud State University Art Department brochure, ca. 1990s, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁷² Press release, News, May 15, 1979, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁷³ Press release, News, May 8, 1980, St. Cloud State University Archives.

presentation, saying that “The contribution underscores the strong and lasting friendship between the university and the city of St. Cloud.” Moreover, “Community support has contributed to the quality of the SCSU art department and the department has, in return, helped enrich the artistic environment of the area.”⁷⁴ (Given the nature of the presentation, it is understandable that Graham would choose to ignore the difficulties experienced between the community and the university and its art department.) Later in the year, one guest artist to the studio would be the first lady of Minnesota, Gretchen Quie. Over a three-week period she produced around one hundred lithograph prints, fifteen of which she donated to the University Foundation for display.⁷⁵ The public library received yet another gift during this period, this time from the Reading Room Society, still going strong at 101 years old. The gift consisted of a large woven wall hanging created by St. Cloud State’s Merle Sykora. He had long supported the use of art objects in public places and buildings, believing they provided a positive influence. Letters he received from library patrons affirmed this, for they thanked him for the piece and told him how they used it to teach their children.⁷⁶ In addition to this piece, Sykora had other work on display in the area in St. John’s Episcopal Church, the First United Methodist Church, and a Windom bank.⁷⁷ All of this attention garnered by the art department testifies to the impression its students and faculty had made on both the immediate community and the Twin Cities art scene. Its interest in promoting and supplying art for the community is also very evident in these activities.

⁷⁴ Press release, News, July 9, 1980, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁷⁵ Press release, News, December 9, 1980, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁷⁶ Sykora e-mail, January 26, 2012.

⁷⁷ Press release, News, August 11, 1981, St. Cloud State University Archives.

Building Appreciation and Support

Attempts to increase, or in some cases spark, appreciation of the arts nevertheless continued.⁷⁸ For instance, the university held a workshop called “All the Arts for All the Kids” for teachers, parents, arts administrators, and anyone else interested in building school arts programs. The university’s Center for Continuing Studies sponsored the event along with the Minnesota Alliance for Arts in Education, a group of advocates for the arts “as a basic component of quality education.”⁷⁹ A couple of years later, the same sponsors held another workshop called “Artists in the Schools for Everyone’s Profit.” This one aimed at exploring ways to design and execute successful artist residencies in schools.⁸⁰ A third workshop for educators focused on “Classroom activities that foster creativity, the ability to see patterns and make connections, and other higher order thinking skills.”⁸¹ The St. Cloud Community Arts Council also sponsored workshops, such as “Arts in the Daily Curriculum.” They believed that “[e]ncouraging an interest in art among elementary school students is the best way to make sure there are artists in the future,” and since many schools no longer had a dedicated art teacher, regular classroom

⁷⁸ Attached to what appears to be an art history course description sent from President Brendan McDonald to James Roy in early 1983 is a vague and brief note. The subject line is “Art Collection” and the note reads in its entirety: “Sometime in the near future I would like to get together with you and others to talk about an art collection at St. Cloud State. Please let me know when we can have the conversation.” As far as this researcher has found, there is nothing left in the record about this conversation, about whether it happened or not, or what specifically McDonald wanted to discuss. Conjecturing, a project like Robert Riseling’s the previous decade comes to mind. It certainly would have been needed as much at this point as before, since record keeping tended to be woefully neglected. Brendan J. McDonald, “Art Collection” memo to James Roy, February 22, 1983, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁷⁹ Press release, News, October 2, 1981, St. Cloud State University Archives. According to a later press release, the event had to be canceled and may have been rescheduled for the following spring. Press release, News, October 20, 1981, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁸⁰ Press release, News, March 11, 1983, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁸¹ Press release, News, November 8, 1985, St. Cloud State University Archives.

teachers could use the workshop to gain ideas and methods in incorporating art.⁸² These workshops show that art had a place in education, but they also indicate that they still struggled to establish and maintain that place. For a time, the Center for Continuing Studies also conducted monthly art tours to the Twin Cities and area galleries led by Gary Loch, a university art instructor. These tours, open to the public, had as a goal the appreciation of art, but also wished to bring greater awareness to what private galleries are like and introduce participants to an “incredible range of arts experiences,” which included speaking with artists and gallery personnel.⁸³

This appreciation extended to art students, who had several opportunities during this period to gain greater exposure thanks to faculty members and galleries that had their interests in mind. One such example is the “Young Minnesota Artists” show held in Atwood in late 1984, which featured former St. Cloud students. The works in the show impressed those in charge of the gallery’s purchases so much that they bought some of them. They also praised the show as a way to help young or new artists get credentials and see that “someone other than their professors and peers [take] them seriously.”⁸⁴ Around this time, Atwood also offered a new student exhibit every month, partly to give students better visibility. Ted Aguirre, the Atwood Learning Exchange director at the time, felt the Kiehle Gallery to be too far out of the way, so much so that “you really have

⁸² Deborah Hudson, “Arts Group Sponsors Workshop,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), March 15, 1985, 1C.

⁸³ Press release, News, October 1, 1982, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁸⁴ Mary Steinert, “Past SCS Students’ Art Joins Tour,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), December 14, 1984, 6.

to look for it.”⁸⁵ This made the Atwood exhibits all the more necessary. The following year, a local business even stepped forward to encourage student artists. The Midtown Square Shopping Mall created a mural contest, and those selected would paint their work on the vacant storefronts. The Mall manager, Tom Rooney, remarked that “We feel that the project will provide exposure to some of the university’s young artists, while also serving as good community relations for the mall.”⁸⁶ Evidently, supporting the arts had some cachet that was good for business as well. His actions follow a path larger corporations had taken, for they found that charitable donations to things like the arts brought positive publicity, and putting money back into a community made for “good business.”⁸⁷

The students needed all the support and encouragement that came their way, if comments from one of their art instructors, Mark Rediske, are any indication. In an interview with the *Chronicle*, he said that “For every on[e] artist represented in a gallery, 50 others remain unrepresented. ...And of those with gallery representation, most rely on other incomes.” He reflected, moreover, that when he was an art student he felt no “economic push or career emphasis” forced upon him. Indeed, for a long time there had been a “bias against selling your work and making a living” because that had been associated with “selling out.” That no longer worked in the 1980s; artists had to be realistic and change their attitudes about what it took to survive as an artist. St. Cloud art students reflected this well with seventy-five to eighty percent of them majoring in

⁸⁵ John Fitzgerald, “Artistry to Change Lounge Tune, Look,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), February 3, 1984, 1.

⁸⁶ Press release, News, November 21, 1985, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁸⁷ Deborah Hudson, “Arts Programs Nourished by Grants,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), August 31, 1984, 1C.

graphic arts.⁸⁸ In these changing economic conditions, St. Cloud area artists worked together to support each other as well. A support group for local artists called the St. Cloud Area Visual Arts Group formed in 1984. Here, local artists could “share valuable information on how to market their work and where shows or exhibits are.” They needed this particularly in St. Cloud, since, according to one artist, the city “is into art production rather than art consumption.” Even though local institutions like St. Cloud State University had flooded the area with good art and artists through art programs, more often than not area residents and businesses turned to the Twin Cities to make art purchases, frustrating local artists to no end.⁸⁹

Despite this, artists continued to try to make inroads in downtown St. Cloud with galleries. In 1979, the Teekamp Galleries opened in downtown. Its director, Douglas Denny, intended to “awaken the cultural minds of St. Cloud,” and have the gallery “grow with St. Cloud and not away from it.” He also wanted the gallery to provide representation for area artists, which included St. Cloud faculty, something that the director found lacking.⁹⁰ The Fifth Avenue Gallery, a cooperative gallery whose members included university faculty and former students, Bill Ellingson and Gail Bamber among them, also set up shop for a while and exhibited in Atwood in 1981.⁹¹ At the time of the Atwood exhibit they had seventeen members, but just a few years later that number had dropped to nine. The decline in membership plus a rent increase crippled the gallery.

⁸⁸ Keith Thompson, “Art Instructor Discusses Travails Graduates Face,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), March 15, 1985, 6-7.

⁸⁹ Deborah Hudson, “Local Artists Work Together,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), January 10, 1985, 1B.

⁹⁰ Beth Schramm, “1st For City: Formal Fine Arts Gallery Opens in St. Cloud,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), April 25, 1979, 6.

⁹¹ Press release, News, October 21, 1981, St. Cloud State University Archives.

Even so, for those involved, the gallery seemed to have had a good run. For Ellingson, “The gallery knocked down some of the barriers that separated many St. Cloud residents from contemporary art.” Moreover, with the impression that the community did not support the university’s galleries so well, “the gallery downtown exposed more people to art” and helped them “find out that art isn’t such a hard thing to understand.” Finally, the artists knew that some in the public found art galleries intimidating because of their supposed high-brow atmosphere, but they believed their gallery helped quell this and made art more accessible.⁹² Even so, Gary Loch sensed that the gallery had “an elitist aura” that may have repelled some artists and patrons. At the same time, he believed the community could have done more to support visual arts, saying “St. Cloud has taken a long time to wake up to an arts community.”⁹³ This unfortunate fate did not stop Loch from opening his Gary Loch Fine Arts Studio only a few years later. In an interview with the *Chronicle*, and sounding very much like Douglas Denny, he said he wanted a place where local artists’ work could be represented in the community, saying it gave St. Cloudites “the opportunity to come in and see what (artwork) is being done in the community.” Furthermore, he saw a need for such a gallery because the growth St. Cloud experienced created a market for art.⁹⁴ Like its predecessors, this gallery had a fairly short run.

⁹² Lisa Almquist, “Art Gallery’s Financial Picture Painted Red by Rent Increase,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), January 27, 1984, 10.

⁹³ Bill McAllister, “Artists Organize for Marketing Help,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), June 14, 1984, 1C.

⁹⁴ Leann Carnell, “Local Gallery Offers a Variety of Artists’ Work,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), April 21, 1987, 8-9.

That so many of these initiatives failed is interesting, especially since many people during this period tried to emphasize the value of art appreciation and art's positive economic impact. For the most part, private citizens began these ventures because they saw something in need of improvement. In a way, they forced their projects onto the community, providing what they felt was needed and assuming that was all it would take to gain community support – in other words, an “if you build it, they will come” scenario. For these projects to be successful, they needed to be an outgrowth of the community and not just a few art-oriented citizens.

Clash of Culture

If surveys are to be believed, the arts seemed to find favor with most Americans in the early 1980s, continuing the development revealed in surveys from the previous decade. These surveys offer very promising results and words, but actions did not always live up to them. One survey conducted by the National Research Center of the Arts showed that Americans felt art to be a necessity, an indispensable condition for national health and growth. A majority of respondents wanted more or better arts and cultural facilities and were willing to pay \$5 to \$15 more a year in taxes to support the arts, which indicated that the arts had reached the mainstream. Most also recognized the importance of arts and cultural facilities to the quality of life in a community, as well as to business and the economy. Moreover, they did not view the arts as “peripheral to a child's education,” and they tended to support an increase in federal funding for the arts. At the same time, they did not think the arts had been greatly dependent on the government or

that individuals should receive financial assistance from the government.⁹⁵ A survey of Minnesota community arts organizations conducted in the latter half of the 1980s paralleled these results, showing a belief that arts helped make communities more interesting and diverse, and added to the quality of life and economy. About half of the 372 organizations in the state at that time provided some kind of arts service to schools as well. Many received grants from arts councils, local businesses, and foundations or corporations, and a few even received some federal monies. Still, acquiring enough funds to survive remained the biggest obstacle for arts organizations.⁹⁶

The argument for art in communities proved especially popular at this time and would in fact persist. Beginning in the 1980s cities across the country built or renovated cultural arts facilities as part of their efforts toward economic revitalization.⁹⁷ One writer, discussing the American system of funding the arts, saw leaders that “are fast recognizing the centrality of artistic expression to a healthy society.”⁹⁸ NEA director Livingston Biddle observed that those who benefited from the NEA’s work “discovered that artists not only brought their unique vitality to a community, but they also brought economic advantages.”⁹⁹ Even with this progress for art, the NEA faced its severest challenge yet when the Reagan Administration came to power. Many in the administration looked warily upon a public agency funding the arts, having campaigned

⁹⁵ Harris, *Americans and the Arts*, i, 3-5, 13, 18.

⁹⁶ Jacalyn Plagge, *Making the Arts Accessible: A Survey of Minnesota Community Arts Organizations* (Minneapolis: Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, 1987), vii, 1, 17, 22, 30.

⁹⁷ Ruth Ann Stewart, “The Arts and Artist in Urban Revitalization,” in *Understanding the Arts and Creative Sector in the United States*, eds. Joni Maya Cherbo, Ruth Ann Stewart, and Margaret Jane Wyszomirski (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 121.

⁹⁸ Cowen, *How the United States Funds the Arts*, 23.

⁹⁹ Biddle, *Our Government and the Arts*, 239.

on small government and conservatism. Milder opponents suggested cutting its budget in half, while others looked to eliminate the agency all together. Luckily, since Reagan had once been an actor, and thus could relate to the benefits as well as the struggles of a creative field, he did not come out wholeheartedly for this. In the end, the budget was slashed ten percent from 1981 to 1982. Of course, with hindsight, this turned out to be only the beginning of what would be termed a “culture war” between liberals and conservatives.¹⁰⁰ Strong criticisms erupted whenever something funded by the NEA proved controversial or too edgy for some individuals in Congress and other positions of influence. In 1985, Representatives Tom DeLay, Dick Armey, and Steve Bartlett sponsored (unsuccessfully) an amendment to the NEA’s funding bill for that year that would prohibit awards to artists who produced work that might be considered “patently offensive to the average person.”¹⁰¹

The NEA carried on and fought through these setbacks for most of the 1980s, and put more effort toward its commitment to art education. In 1988, this resulted in a study titled *Toward Civilization*, a title that recalls much earlier arguments for the arts. The study found a marked decline in art instruction in the K-12 curriculum, and suggested that greater emphasis be placed on study and learning in the arts rather than simply exposing kids to art activities. It is worth noting that this period was marked by a push for education reform, and the authors of the study felt art should be “an essential part of a regeneration of elementary and secondary education.”¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 69-71.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 79, 81.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 84-85.

Michael Brenson, one contributor to *The Artist in Society* argued that “When the Endowment was relatively confident and unconstrained, the American artistic culture was essentially confident and unconstrained.” But this changed in 1989.¹⁰³ That is the year in which controversy finally boiled over and the culture wars engaged in earnest. Works by Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe that toured the country as part of traveling exhibitions funded in part by the NEA (which had no say in the art selection) sparked the whole affair. Serrano’s piece, a photograph titled *Piss Christ*, featured a crucifix viewed through a “golden liquid” (urine), while Mapplethorpe’s works included graphic sexual images. These traveled without incident until Reverend Donald E. Wildmon saw the catalogue for the exhibit of Serrano’s work. He quickly condemned the work and started a public campaign against the show and the NEA. Several Congressmen soon joined in, calling the work “trash” and seeking a review of the award procedures for the NEA. Pundit Pat Buchanan entered the fray by writing in the *Washington Times* to criticize what he deemed to be offensive artworks, many that had nothing to do with the NEA. Nevertheless, he urged President George Bush to purge the agency. Mapplethorpe’s work had begun to draw negative attention by the time it reached the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., so much so that people demonstrated against the show outside the Gallery. Funding bills for the NEA were before Congress while these demonstrations and campaigns occurred, adding pressure to punish the agency for its transgressions. Fortunately for the agency, it came away with its budget relatively intact despite attempts

¹⁰³ Michael Brenson, “Where Do We Go from Here? Securing a Place for the Artist in Society,” in *The Artist in Society: Rights, Roles, and Responsibilities*, eds. Carol Becker and Ann Wiens (Chicago: New Art Examiner Press, 1995), 67.

to cut or eliminate its funding and amendments to prohibit its funds being used for anything “obscene or indecent.” The Senate, however, provided money for an independent commission to investigate the agency’s grant-making practices, and conservatives, along with many Republicans in Congress, remained suspicious of the agency.¹⁰⁴ As a result of these events, the NEA added an obscenity clause to its terms and conditions for grants, which subsequently outraged artists and arts administrators and led some of them to refuse grants and positions on grant-making panels.¹⁰⁵

This proved to be one of the more trying times for the NEA, but not necessarily for the arts as a whole, as the *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts: 1982-1992*, published by the NEA, pointed out. While it showed an increase in museum and gallery attendance and audience size, it also showed that younger people did not participate in the fine arts at the same rate their parents did as youth. Another report that looked at the status and condition of the arts in America found that since the agency’s beginning, significant growth occurred in arts organizations, artists, and public and private support.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the commission set up by the Senate to investigate the agency’s practices determined that the NEA had “helped transform the cultural landscape of the United States. ...a relatively small investment of federal funds had yielded a substantial financial return and made a significant contribution to the quality of American life.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 89-94.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

Despite this, the controversies had tarnished the NEA so much that it became a campaign issue in the 1992 election season.¹⁰⁸ The agency survived the election and met a new president, Bill Clinton, who said “our dedication to the arts today will shape our civilization tomorrow.” The agency had the administration’s support, but its budget once again suffered cutbacks largely due to the “Contract with America” that many Republicans, led by Newt Gingrich, adopted, a contract that called for the agency’s elimination. Legislators introduced bills that would steadily reduce the agency’s budget until it could be completely wiped out in 1998. Fortunately for the NEA, even with a majority in both Houses, the Republicans failed to pass these bills. They managed, however, to slash the budget by thirty-nine percent in 1996, bringing it down to \$99 million, something it had not seen since the late 1970s. Not surprisingly, this required massive reorganization of the agency.¹⁰⁹ While all of this occurred, St. Cloud experienced its own controversies and obstacles.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 108.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 116-118.



Figure 7

Moonwalker. Created by Nasser Pirasteh, 1998.

Currently located outside the East Entrance to Atwood Memorial Center.

Image reproduced with permission from the Atwood Permanent Art Collection

Committee.



Figure 8

Hands in Harmony. Created by Nasser Pirasteh, 1993.

Currently located in the Administrative Services Building.

Image reproduced with permission from St. Cloud State University.

Chapter V

STRIVING FOR MATURITY

*“I would like to see people step out a little bit from their own world and begin to understand other people’s worlds....There’s a huge world out there to open up.”*¹

Nasser Pirasteh, an alumnus and one time assistant professor at the university, said this when asked if he would like to change anything about the community. He spent twenty-five years living and creating art in the St. Cloud area, yet in 2001 he moved to San Diego, to “a community that promotes beauty simply for beauty’s sake, to a land where some form of art accents nearly every yard or building. And, most importantly, to a land where he won’t be asked the question: ‘What do you really do?’ after he tells them he’s a professional artist.” As his wife explained, “It’s not as conservative.”² The Pirastehs’ sentiments reflect the experience of a period in which artists faced severe criticism and antipathy, and rarely with just cause, even in St. Cloud and on campus. This did not keep artists down. In Pirasteh’s case, art nearly outranked sleep and food in

¹ Elaine Hanson, “People to Meet: Nasser Pirasteh,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), July 20, 1999, 7A.

² Lukas Johnson, “San Diego Lures Local Artist Away,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), July 14, 2001, C1.

importance. Feeling it to be an artist's responsibility, he wanted his works to inspire, influence change, and raise awareness about issues in society.³ He wished for greater acceptance of diversity, believing that "art breaks down barriers between human beings and promotes understanding of the universe itself."⁴ Several of his works that reflect these beliefs may be found on campus, including *Moonwalker*, one sculpture in a series he created in 1998 exploring humankind's place in the universe, and *Hands in Harmony*, created in 1993, which "[d]epicts multicultural hands joining together to hold up the four corners of the universe."⁵ (Figures 7 and 8)

Culture Clash at Home

Around the time the culture wars heated up in Washington, D.C., the university faced these issues in its own sort of culture war. In 1990, *INNASSITANCE*, a sculpture created and donated by an art student named Jacob Paul, had been given a home in the Engineering and Computer Center. Its form and the way in which some faculty members interpreted it quickly made it controversial, for they believed it conveyed "grotesque images of anti-technology, stupidity and sexuality." Paul tried to clear up the misinterpretation, but the strong opposition to it and the fear of potential vandalism gave cause to move it to Atwood. Laurie Halberg, one of Paul's instructors, argued that the university should have reached out to the art faculty to learn more about the sculpture before putting it on display and those faculty members who rejected it "should have tried

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Nasser's Sculpture Garden and Studio Gallery," brochure, 2000, Atwood Permanent Art Collection Committee, St. Cloud State University.

⁵ Caleb Friday, "New sculpture Graces the Entrance of Atwood," *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), June 24, 1999, 3.

to understand what the work represented before making assumptions and dismissing it.”⁶ A debate over the sculpture played out in the *Chronicle* where one editorialist rather cynically argued that the sculpture should not be moved to Atwood because people would not likely enjoy it there either. The writer then suggested putting the piece in storage for a while, reasoning that it might be “worth a fortune” by the time it was put on display again.⁷ Mary Soroko, an assistant to the administrative affairs vice president, retorted that “given our setting – a university – I thought the campus community – a group of people who hold the First Amendment dear – would be somewhat more supportive and accepting of another’s right to self-expression.” Moreover, “Due to a lack of funding, it is thanks to our many generous art students that our university *has* an art collection.”⁸ A change of names and locations and one might think this happened in Washington, D.C.

About a year later, another debate surfaced regarding art. Members of the Student Government had made comments about the purchase of art for Atwood with regard to budget restraints. In defense of Atwood, its director at the time, Joe Opatz, explained that the permanent art collection committee (made up of faculty, students, and alumni) selected pieces “primarily for their relevance to the campus. Artists have, for the most part, been students, former students, faculty and local artists.” He also expressed his optimism that students would choose to continue using funds toward “providing art for

⁶ Tom Larson, “SCSU Artist Defends Sculpture,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), October 27, 1990, 3A-4A.

⁷ “Moving Sculpture Won’t End Debate,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), October 30, 1990, 4.

⁸ Mary Soroko, “Artwork Form of Expression; Disapproval Not Widespread,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), November 6, 1990, 5.

the campus community” after considering the costs and benefits.⁹ Bill Ellingson, Merle Sykora, and other art faculty wrote to the *Chronicle* defending Atwood and its collection, pointing out that the money used to purchase artworks amounted to one-tenth of one percent of Atwood’s budget. They also highlighted the school’s position as “a leader in the area of visual stimulation,” and reminded readers that the visual arts had an important place in our everyday environment and that most everything one encounters and interacts with on a daily basis must first be designed by an artist.¹⁰ Arlene Helgeson, who had such an important role in the establishment of Atwood’s collection, stepped in to say that the art helped in “[c]reating a congenial and inspiring atmosphere,” and that the collection had “become significant and represents the historical catalog of artists involved with SCS over the past twenty years.”¹¹

Art on campus faced its most direct challenge during this period, while ironically at the same time a relatively new state law forced art onto the school. In 1983, the state legislature passed a law that created the Percent for Art in Public Places program. This law stipulated that for any renovation to or construction of a state building with a budget that exceeds \$500,000, one percent of the budget, not to exceed \$100,000, must go toward the acquisition of art for that building or its immediate surroundings.¹² The university, as a state institution, fell under this legislation, and the remodeling of Stewart

⁹ Joe Opatz, “Artwork Integral Part of Atwood,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), December 13, 1991, 5.

¹⁰ Bill Ellingson, Merle Sykora, et al., “Importance of Art Greatly Exceeds Its Minimal Cost,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), January 7, 1992, 5.

¹¹ Arlene Helgeson, “Artwork in Atwood Center is Positive Investment of Funds,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), January 7, 1992, 5.

¹² “Minnesota Colleges and Universities Percent for Art Guidelines,” *Minnesota State Colleges and Universities*, July 1, 2009, accessed November 20, 2011, [http://www.finance.mnscu.edu/facilities/design-construction/pm_emanual/doc/FormsA-D\(1-36\)/07_Art_Guidelines.docx](http://www.finance.mnscu.edu/facilities/design-construction/pm_emanual/doc/FormsA-D(1-36)/07_Art_Guidelines.docx).

Hall in 1988 created the first opportunity to participate in the program. This resulted in an open competition for a sculpture commission, which narrowed down to four artists who “proposed projects that would be unique to the university and the St. Cloud area.” In the end, the university chose Charles Huntington and his proposal for a large stainless steel sculpture he called *Perspectives* because, as Mary Soroko explained, “We felt his piece would be most easily assimilated into the campus community – that the campus would derive the most ownership from this piece.” With the commission, he also received a two-quarter professorship in which he would teach and involve students while completing the project.¹³ Huntington asserted that he wanted to “create a centerpiece for the campus,” something that could be enjoyed by the thousands of people who would walk by it daily. Furthermore, he wanted his piece to be seen from different locations, which would generate different perspectives of the piece and campus – thus the name. At a philosophical level, he hoped “a university has the same impact,” that is, helping to alter or open perspectives for students.¹⁴ With the sculpture’s completion, the university held an unveiling, sending out a press packet to media people, particularly trying to interest arts writers for news outlets in the Twin Cities. They expected “favorable publicity because this is the first time SCSU has commissioned artwork that will be accessible to the public.”¹⁵ Still, even before the unveiling the school received complaints about university money being used to fund the piece. It tried to assuage these

¹³ John Hughes, “Four Artists Vie to Create SCSU Outdoor Sculpture,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), November 16, 1988, 1C; John Hughes, “St. Cloud State Picks Artists for Steel Sculpture,” *St. Cloud Times*, November 24, 1988, 1C.

¹⁴ Artist profile attached to “Sculptor Charles Huntington Chosen for SCSU’s Stewart Hall Project,” News release, November 23, 1988, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹⁵ Deborah Hudson, “St. Cloud State University ‘Percent For Art’ Media Plan,” October 17, 1988, St. Cloud State University Archives.

dissenters by making it clear in promotional materials that the money came from the state-mandated Percent for Art funds.¹⁶

During this period, the face of the art department began to change as well. Those instructors who joined the faculty in the 1960s, who helped transform the department, began to retire. Their replacements had résumés with national exhibits, and according to Ted Sherarts, acted as artists first and teachers second.¹⁷ On the one hand, since these newer faculty tended to be more well-known, some believed they would be especially good for the students; the students could benefit from their experience and professional connections. Yet, however well-known they might be elsewhere, they had little to no recognition locally and did not connect themselves to the community as their predecessors had done.¹⁸ Unlike the earlier generation, who generally lived in or came from the area, the new faculty more often commuted from the Twin Cities because they wanted to be part of the bigger arts scene there.¹⁹ In Merle Sykora's opinion, "They couldn't be bothered by such small potatoes [the St. Cloud community]. ...St. Cloud State became just a meal ticket."²⁰ TyRuben Ellingson reiterated this by saying he felt the attitude had been more or less: "I'll take your money, but my real interest is in the cities."²¹

While St. Cloud dealt with its own culture clash, the nation's culture war did not go unnoticed in the community, and can be seen playing out in the editorial section of the

¹⁶ Deborah Hudson, "Sculpture dedication update" memo to Dorothy Simpson, June 12, 1990, St. Cloud State University Archives.

¹⁷ Ted Sherarts in discussion with the author, February 23, 2012.

¹⁸ Mark Springer in discussion with the author, February 15, 2012.

¹⁹ Sherarts in discussion.

²⁰ Merle Sykora, e-mail message to author, January 28, 2012.

²¹ TyRuben Ellingson in discussion with the author, February 27, 2012.

St. Cloud Times. A 1989 editorial responded to the Serrano/Mapplethorpe controversy by arguing that the government did indeed have a role or responsibility in spending tax money on art because “Society is only enhanced by the effects of creativity.” The writer disagreed with attempts to “legislate what sort of creativity” the NEA supported, in other words, censorship, and further noted that “Tax money can be and is spent on a lot more ridiculous things.”²² Nevertheless, a year later the controversy continued to raise ire and two local residents wrote to the editor to express their outrage at the government’s support through the NEA of the offensive, even sacrilegious, art.²³ Amidst this debate, the executive director of the Central Minnesota Arts Board came to the NEA’s defense, calling it “the friend of rural Minnesota.” She considered the agency Minnesota’s friend because the state was the third-largest recipient of NEA funds, and provided the St. Cloud region in particular with matching grants for arts councils, art festivals, theaters, and music associations.²⁴ Another resident suggested we “[l]et the free enterprise system work its wonders. Let the artists have the deep satisfaction of knowing their hard work and creativity is accepted or rejected monetarily or esthetically [sic] by the response of the public.” He called the government taking tax money from one person to support the free enterprise endeavor of another “legally plunder[ing],” and equated it with fascism, socialism, and communism.²⁵ One observant reader responded to this by pointing out

²² “Don’t Arbitrate Good Taste in Art,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), August 5, 1989, 11A.

²³ Mrs. Herman Schmidt, “Stop Spending Federal Money to Fund Dirty Art,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), May 31, 1990, 10A; Rev. Paul Zylla, “Government Shouldn’t Fund Sacrilegious Art,” *St. Cloud Times*, June 12, 1990, 4A.

²⁴ Janet Cleland, “NEA Works to Enrich Central Minnesota Arts,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), July 12, 1990, 8A.

²⁵ Gary Sauer, “Let Artists Thrive or Fail Through Free Enterprise,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), August 2, 1990, 8A.

that “Few demand farm subsidies be removed,” and that great art had always had outside help, notably in the past from church and court. Moreover, she urged readers to recognize art in their daily environment and the effect it had on their lives, saying that to cut the arts off is to “condemn us to a drab, silent, colorless world.”²⁶

Other, similar debates entered the editorial pages as well. Even though the *St. Cloud Times* editor supported the NEA in 1989, a year later he or she criticized a Percent for Art project for the university’s new hockey arena, calling the 1983 law “arbitrary.” The money spent on the project amounted to \$71,000, and the writer felt this could have been spent better elsewhere, like the university’s classrooms, considering “strained education budgets.”²⁷ One reader raised an excellent point by remarking that “The *Times* found nothing wrong with the 99 percent [over \$7 million] spent on hockey.”²⁸ In response to the idea that the city should support the arts but not fund them, Lee Gutteter, a concerned and active arts citizen stated, “The greatness of a city is judged [among other things] by its atmosphere or its attitude toward the arts. In this regard I have long felt that the citizens of St. Cloud have demonstrated what I call ‘impoverished thinking.’” He made note of smaller towns than St. Cloud that managed to have arts centers and argued that with its growth and vitality, St. Cloud had no justification for its lack of monetary support for the arts.²⁹ Gutteter’s wish would soon partly come true with the City Council voting to establish a city Arts Commission in the summer of 1990, an organization that

²⁶ Claire van Breemen Downes, “Importance of Art Lost on Pop-Culture World,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), August 8, 1990, 8A.

²⁷ “State Overspends on Building Art,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), August 19, 1990, 8A.

²⁸ Ren Holland, “Why Spend Money on Hockey but Not Art?” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), August 24, 1990, 6A.

²⁹ Lee Gutteter, “Arts: How Far Should City Support Go? St. Cloud Must Commit Funds Along with Support,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), August 26, 1990, 11A.

would be responsible for “developing a city arts plan detailing objectives and criteria for selecting artists and art works, locations for display and priorities for funding.” Given the other debates, it is worth noting that funding would not come from a tax levy.³⁰

Seeds of Progress and Doubt

One project that came out of this Commission is the Paramount Arts District. Though still in the early planning stages in 1993, a mission statement had been created that read: “The Paramount Arts District, a downtown area including the historic Paramount Theater, exists to make the arts accessible to everyone by providing an affordable home for area arts organizations and artists in order to fulfill missions of art production, creative exploration and art education.”³¹ St. Cloud faculty and local art enthusiasts spent years struggling to create and maintain galleries and art centers and an arts council that would fulfill this mission. The Paramount project finally offered something big, substantial, and most importantly, supported by the City Council, which gave it the best of fighting chances for enduring success. Despite this, St. Cloud, along with several other cities in the state, still struggled to fund the arts. For instance, in 1994 city funds spent toward the fine arts amounted to only \$30,700 (less than half of what the university had spent on art for the hockey arena project not long before).³²

As evidenced in part by the Arts Commission, a push to support the arts and make them a bigger part of the city began during the mid to late 1990s, perhaps to a certain

³⁰ Tom Larson, “Council OKs St. Cloud Arts Commission,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), August 28, 1990, 8A.

³¹ Kris Bergquist, “Paramount Art District Project Moves Forward, Committee Says,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), February 5, 1993, 3A-4A.

³² Kris Bergquist, “Cities Struggle to Provide for Arts,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), March 27, 1994, 2H.

extent as a response to activities at the federal level that tried to limit or mar them. For instance, Beverly Acuff Momoi, the executive director of the Central Minnesota Arts Board, wrote to the *St. Cloud Times* in 1995 to draw attention to all that Minnesotans, let alone St. Cloudites, had access to because of arts funding. At the time, each Minnesotan paid \$2.03 in combined state and federal taxes a year in support of the arts. She considered this a smart investment, “an investment in our community,” for though the arts might survive without government support, they may not be available or affordable in Minnesota’s communities without it.³³ Later in the year, the director of St. Cloud’s New Tradition Theatre wrote in to say that he saw great potential in St. Cloud as an art town. In his work, he had seen that places that embraced and worked with the arts benefited directly in the usual economic ways, but also indirectly in a community’s self-image and confidence, and it created a sense of being progressive, of “going somewhere.” He also made an interesting note of the struggles the Paramount project encountered, saying that those in Minneapolis found it too expensive, his colleagues questioned its ability to serve the people, and academicians at the local colleges predicted it would be “yet another St. Cloud plan that will have no impact on their populations.”³⁴ Years of disappointment had clearly bred some bitter sentiments.

A *St. Cloud Times* editorial a couple of years later praised the actions of Governor Arne Carlson in getting the legislature to double the annual funding for arts.³⁵ It insisted

³³ Beverly Acuff Momoi, “Art Makes Smart Investment,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), February 13, 1995, 11A.

³⁴ Tom Dunn, “St. Cloud Could Be Boom Town for Art,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), October 8, 1995, 9A.

³⁵ After showing support for the NEA, then opposition to the Percent for Art program, here the *Times* once again turned in favor of arts funding. Given the gap in time between its old opposition and its

that Central Minnesotans take advantage of this commitment to the arts and make sure St. Cloud joined the “arts boom.” Without calling for art education, it stressed the importance of exposing children to art, and even threw in one of the big concepts of decades past, namely art’s role in creating a “lasting cultural civilization.”³⁶ St. Cloud indeed saw an influx of money. The executive director of the Minnesota Arts Board said that all of the money had to be spent, so he expected there “to be a lot more art going on” and that in the next few years it would be “really artsy around here.”³⁷ His prediction proved accurate, for a *St. Cloud Times* article in early 1999 announced that “1998 Was a Year of Rebirth for the Arts in St. Cloud.” This rebirth entailed the opening of the Paramount Arts District, despite those earlier concerns, as well as several theater or performance spaces, studios, and galleries. Moreover, the Paramount offered art classes and workshops that welcomed all interested persons in the community. The community was urged to show up and patronize these art initiatives in order for the area to thrive and survive. If Paramount succeeded in that, the city had greater potential of pulling in tourists as well.³⁸ Those behind the Paramount envisioned a sustainable future, but it all depended on a participatory community.

For its part, the university continued to participate by way of its students. Every year, the Paramount takes on interns and work-study students from the university, something it views as stepping stones to a permanent position within the organization.

new support, perhaps the paper had a new editor. Whatever the cause of the fluctuating opinion, it reflects the continual struggle the arts had in gaining and maintaining support.

³⁶ “St. Cloud Must Join Arts Boom,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), June 9, 1997, 8A.

³⁷ Kris Bergquist, “Initiative Brings More Art to Area,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), January 3, 1998, 7A.

³⁸ Dana Drazenovich, “1998 Was a Year of Rebirth for the Arts in St. Cloud,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), January 7, 1999, 10C.

The two entities work together in other ways too. On one side, the Paramount plays a large role in the annual Lemonade Art Fair on campus. On the other, Paramount's Visual Arts Advisory Committee usually includes at least one university faculty member. The Paramount also sees its involvement with teens as a benefit to the university because if they maintain their interest in art, they very well may choose to attend the university. Overall, the community at large has taken advantage of Paramount's existence, as evidenced in recent years by more than 80,000 people a year making use of the building and its offerings. It has especially been valued by artists for the space and opportunities they have found available in a community where it is difficult for them to make a living on sales alone.³⁹

While all of this unfolded in the city, art continued to make a place for itself on campus. In 1992, the Minnesota State University System recommended that students applying for admittance into any of its state universities have fine arts knowledge.⁴⁰ Finally, art at the high school level had a strong reason to be made a requisite. Perhaps this recommendation is one reason why the catalogue for 1995-1997 had as one of the school's goals the "[s]upport [of] creative and artistic activities as a means of personal and professional development as well as a contribution to the cultural life of the community."⁴¹

Despite the new fine arts recommendation, Minnesota, and St. Cloud, suffered from a problem described by Judith Burton, a professor of art and art education from

³⁹ Melissa Gohman in discussion with the author, April 30, 2012.

⁴⁰ Judith M. Burton, "Art Education and the Plight of Culture: A Status Report," *Art Education* 45, no. 4 (July 1992): 9.

⁴¹ *St. Cloud State University Undergraduate Bulletin, 1995-97*, 8.

Columbia University's Teachers College. Writing in *Art Education*, she noted that while polls might show the public embraced "the arts as a central necessity of the culture," they did little to make sure it had a place in schools. Burton explained that "few states, or school districts, have the resources to translate their high sounding commitments into instruction provision for all children."⁴² St. Cloud's experience of this issue is made evident by a 1998 *St. Cloud Times* letter to the editor, from the same executive director who said it would be "really artsy around here," that lamented the cuts to art education in the St. Cloud School District 742.⁴³ Burton further believed that the nation faced an emphasis on a "technico-scientific view of the world," much as it had after the launch of Sputnik.⁴⁴ By the 1990s, the university had accepted the validity of this view and taken full advantage of computers and technology. This does not have to be seen as a detrimental event for art, for as one art faculty member has observed, when the art program began using computers for art purposes, the machines opened up new opportunities and expanded creative possibilities.⁴⁵

The Culture Clash Ends

St. Cloud may have had a great year for art in 1998, but it proved to be very trying for the NEA. Many in Congress continued to try to eliminate the agency by proposing bills that included no funding for it or suggesting the privatization of both the NEA and the National Endowment for the Humanities, reasoning they had become "out of touch

⁴² Burton, "Art Education and the Plight of Culture," 8-9.

⁴³ Charles Gilliam, "Don't Cut Essential Arts Education," *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), May 21, 1998, 8A.

⁴⁴ Burton, "Art Education and the Plight of Culture," 8-9.

⁴⁵ Lynn Metcalf in discussion with the author, April 13, 2012.

with the public.” President Clinton, however, threatened to veto any bill that did not allow for a budget of at least \$99.5 million. Eventually they agreed on a compromise, but not without a caveat from Congress that resulted in the alteration of the agency’s mission and operations.⁴⁶ Part of this meant putting greater effort into reaching underserved or underrepresented areas and giving greater attention to diversity. The new mission statement read:

The National Endowment for the Arts, an investment in America’s living cultural heritage, serves the public good by *nurturing* the expression of human creativity, *supporting* the cultivation of community spirit, and fostering the recognition and appreciation of the **excellence** and **diversity** of our nation’s artistic accomplishments.⁴⁷ [emphasis original]

Again, the Congressional landscape began to warm, albeit slowly, to the NEA with these changes and the introduction of new programs such changes stimulated. The agency’s budget even increased for the first time in nearly a decade. White House support would continue into yet another administration, particularly with the support of First Lady Laura Bush, who expressed her support for culture and the arts from the beginning of her husband’s presidency.⁴⁸ The administration showed support for the arts in another significant way as well. In 2002, George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act, a piece of legislation that stipulated, among other things, that the arts be a “core academic subject.” The NEA, with part of its focus on arts education, of course supported this stipulation, believing that learning about and doing art “builds appreciation for the skill,

⁴⁶ Mark Bauerlein and Ellen Grantham, eds., *National Endowment for the Arts: A History, 1965-2008* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, 2009), 121, 123, <http://permanent.access.gpo.gov/LPS113863/LPS113863/www.arts.gov/pub/nea-history-1965-2008.pdf>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 134-135.

discipline, and sacrifice necessary for achievement. It helps children develop admiration for the skills and hard work of others.”⁴⁹

Another survey taken in the same year showed that the public’s participation in the arts had decreased noticeably, particularly among young adults.⁵⁰ This pushed the agency even more to reach people and reverse the trend. By 2004, the agency received praise, even from those that had once been its strongest critics. In 2006, Representative Jerrold Nadler of New York stated that “Funding for the arts is one of the best investments our government makes. In purely economic terms, it generates a return that would make any Wall Street investor jealous.”⁵¹ The pendulum that is the support of the arts had once again swung into positive territory.

A City Looking to the Future

The St. Cloud arts scene underwent reevaluation during this period. First, the St. Cloud Community Arts Council found itself somewhat redundant with the success of the Paramount Arts District and other organizations it had helped form. The Council decided to limit its focus to the visual arts and then changed its name to Visual Arts Minnesota. With its new focus, it developed a number of exhibitions and competitions, as well as a Satellite Gallery Program. The latter worked with area businesses and organizations to allow artists to exhibit and sell their works in these places, thereby expanding the reach of artists while fostering an artistic atmosphere where there might not previously have been

⁴⁹ Don Ball, ed., *Learning Through the Arts: A Guide to the National Endowment for the Arts and Arts Education* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts Office of Communications, 2002), 3, <http://www.arts.gov/pub/ArtsLearning.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Bauerlein, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 155.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 160, 162.

one.⁵² Unfortunately, a few years later in 2003 the city placed a freeze on spending as it faced a cut in its local government aid from the state the following year. This meant the Arts Commission could not provide any funding, and an \$11,500 grant intended to be dispersed to applicants of the Arts Fund Project Grant, which supported “arts programming focused on exploring, communicating, understanding or promoting diversity,” had to be canceled.⁵³ By early 2005, the state legislature cut funding to the arts by thirty-three percent. This moved artists and arts enthusiasts to demonstrate at the State Capitol for Arts Advocacy Day. This also caused the executive director of the Central Minnesota Arts Board to comment, much like an earlier concerned citizen, that art proved to be a good investment, reaping a return of around \$200 per person for every \$1.74 spent in taxes per person in Minnesota.⁵⁴

Perhaps because of setbacks like this, along with art growth slower than desired, some in St. Cloud became more vocal about advocating for the arts, much like they had in the mid 1990s. One such supporter, and a university faculty member, Kenton Frohrip, wrote to the *St. Cloud Times* to say that the city needed a vision for the arts. He compared the city’s facilities to those in Sioux Falls, Rochester, Duluth-Superior, and Fargo-Moorhead, and found them lacking. To him, “A good, new auditorium, an art museum, more fine restaurants downtown and upscale shops are all that keep us from becoming a city with major artistic, entertainment and social amenities.” He knew

⁵² Noemi Herrera, “Community Arts Council Gets an Overhaul,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), November 9, 2000, 1B.

⁵³ Lawrence Schumacher, “St. Cloud Cancels Arts Grant Program,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), March 1, 2003, 1B.

⁵⁴ Leslie Schumacher, “Fine Arts are Worth State’s Funding,” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), February 6, 2005, 6B.

change would not happen immediately, but he wanted people to start planning for it so that St. Cloud could fulfill the potential he saw in it.⁵⁵ Nearly two years later, another article argued that a successful arts community with a strong arts scene could bring more people downtown and make it a livelier, more vital place to be. Those in the art community insisted that culture is important for the city's identity and can help bring the community together.⁵⁶ Not a new argument, but certainly a persistent one. Finally, in 2006, Minnesota Citizens for the Arts and the Humphrey Institute each released a study that looked at the way in which the arts impact local economies in Minnesota. Based on their positive conclusions, arts groups hoped the results would influence policy-makers in an equally positive way.⁵⁷ If nothing else, all of this shows that for the arts to survive and have a future, its advocates must remain hopeful and adapt.

A New Era of Appreciation and Challenges

As the university moved into another new century, yet another Percent for Art project grabbed attention on St. Cloud's campus in late 1999. A new library, the Miller Resources Learning Center, had a budget of around \$175,000 for art. Because of the nature of the building's large glass atrium, including its accessibility to the public, the selection committee members, who included Ted Sherarts and Merle Sykora, decided that the work they chose should go there and should "exploit light and glass," as well as be

⁵⁵ Kenton Frohrip, "St. Cloud Needs Vision for the Arts," *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), June 6, 2004, 9B.

⁵⁶ Kari Petrie, "Strong Arts Scene Could Wake Up Area," *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), February 22, 2006, 1A.

⁵⁷ Liz Kohman, "State Weighs Arts' Economic Impact," *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), March 9, 2006, 1B.

designed for that specific space. In addition, the intention of the Percent for Art program “is to acquire artwork that is memorable, thought-provoking and enduring, while fitting environmental and fiscal restrictions.” In an interview with the *Chronicle*, one committee member explained that after the committee had narrowed down the choice of artists, it would hold an open forum with the artists so that they could “gather input from staff, faculty, and students,” and give the campus community an opportunity to speak with the artists. She noted that some students had concerns with the practical use of glass, while others took issue with the current art found on campus. One student, for instance, remarked, “I hope they choose something decent and not ridiculous.” In reference to Charles Huntington’s sculpture, one staff member said, “It’s not that I don’t like the big metal sculpture, I just don’t understand why it’s there.”⁵⁸ Clearly, there was still cause to build greater appreciation and understanding of the art on campus.

In the end, the committee chose a work proposed by Kenneth vonRoenn, Jr., titled *Opening Change* that consisted of a wavy grid of colored dichroic glass that would “float” over the windows of the atrium. According to the artist, he intended his piece to respond to the architecture and the movement of people that would go through the space. Moreover, “the technically advanced curved and fused dichroic glass design that he proposed did not exist anywhere,” making this work a truly unique addition to the university as well as the state’s art collection, something the committee wanted to ensure.⁵⁹ A memo sent from Sykora to the members of the selection committee in

⁵⁸ Jamie Johnson, Rhonda Mareck, and Chris Langowski, “Lighting for the Future,” *University Chronicle* (St. Cloud State University, MN), December 13, 1999, 3.

⁵⁹ Mason Riddle, Minnesota Percent for Art in Public Places Fourth Site Selection Committee Meeting Minutes, April 10, 2000, St. Cloud State University Archives.

October of 2000, at which point the building should have been opened, makes it clear that the project had encountered some obstacles, in his words “physical problems and personality conflicts,” that threatened to derail its completion. He urged them to see the project through, saying “It will be an exquisite piece when it is completed,” and that “We must trust the artist. ...He must be allowed to finish the piece...without premature criticism.” Indeed, “Any progressive art work of prominence had critics at the time. We must stay the course and get ALL of the art glass installed.”⁶⁰ Whether or not Sykora’s words did the trick, vonRoenn managed to finish his work.

During this period, the art department along with Atwood continued to bring in artists from across the country, in some cases the world, and put on exhibits for the university and the wider community, much as it had done for years.⁶¹ Students did their part to bring greater attention to art both on and off campus as well. For instance, as part of a class project in 2005, a number of art students created a public art project meant to highlight the importance of public artworks in the community. They did this by choosing a few existing works on campus and marking them off with caution tape. Knowing that caution tape would elicit notice, they hoped to make the works a focal point and make

⁶⁰ Merle Sykora, “Completion of installation and cupola” letter to Members of the Percent for Art Committee for Miller Learning Resources Center, October 25, 2000, St. Cloud State University Archives.

⁶¹ “Exhibit by Artist in Residence Continues,” *SCSU Now* (St. Cloud State University, MN), February 26, 2003, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/news/scsunow/default.asp?pubID=1&issueID=1732&storyID=3913>; Marge Proell, “Is Something Wrong: Barnes Art Exhibit,” *SCSU Now*, October 28, 2003, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/news/scsunow/default.asp?pubID=1&issueID=7185&storyID=10828>; Marge Proell, “Is It a Cathedral or is It a Spaceship? Havlik Art Exhibit,” *SCSU Now*, February 18, 2004, <http://stcloudstate.edu/news/scsunow/default.asp?pubID=1&issueID=7932&storyID=11501>; Marge Proell, “Turning Up the Volume: Labor Muralist Exhibit,” *SCSU Now*, September 30, 2004, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/news/scsunow/default.asp?storyID=12645>; Marge Proell, “Juried Art Exhibit Hung for Summer Viewing,” *SCSU Now*, June 12, 2007, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/news/scsunow/default.asp?pubID=1&issueID=18126&storyID=22772>.

people see something that they might often overlook.⁶² In 2008, several students from the Art Student Union took over the Pioneer Place theater and transformed it into a temporary gallery for a free one-time event. One member of the union explained, “We want to bring our artwork out into the community and get some feedback.” The artistic producer of the theater said the whole idea had been to allow students the opportunity to exhibit their work outside the university.⁶³ In recent years, art students have had the chance to do that again by opening a space downtown called the Gallery Vault, an idea that had floated around for some time. Supported in part by a grant from the Central Minnesota State Arts Board, the students felt that with a gallery off campus, community members would be more likely to visit their exhibits. Plus, operating their own gallery would give them real-world experience and opportunities.⁶⁴ As of this writing, the Gallery Vault is still in operation, though it has had to move to a new location.

Clearly, the state of art appreciation and community involvement that had concerned those on campus most interested in art in decades past had not lifted. But a new element, diversity, took its place among these concerns at this time. Diversity had been a point of interest for the school since the 1990s, but as with the NEA, it seemed to gain a degree of momentum in more recent years. For example, the school had two scholarly publications geared toward diversity. The first, *Kaleidoscope*, began in 1990, and seemed to find greater success than its similar predecessor, *Parallels*. Organized and

⁶² Marge Proell, “Students Causing a Scene: Campus Artwork,” *SCSU Now* (St. Cloud State University, MN), December 12, 2005, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/news/scsunow/default.asp?storyID=17130>.

⁶³ Adam Hammer, “It’s Art and ‘Stuff,’” *St. Cloud Times* (St. Cloud, MN), April 11, 2008, 1C.

⁶⁴ Mike Nistler, “The Gallery Vault is a Dream Come True,” *Outlook* (St. Cloud State University, MN), November 19, 2010, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/news/outlook/story.asp?storyID=33577&issueID=28540>.

managed by students, the publication began with the mission “to promote the creative work of culturally diverse people and open everyone’s eyes to the wealth of talent on campus.” In 2009, its editor said that “People really like it,” noting that new issues disappear quickly. Moreover, it had a “reputation among art students as a place to get one’s art published.”⁶⁵

The other publication is *INSIGHTS*, an electronic newsletter which started in 2004 with the goal of providing “diversity information throughout our campus community so that issues are illuminated in a necessary fashion.”⁶⁶ Its second volume featured an article about a program called The Multicultural Children’s Art Connection, started by fourteen university-related individuals with the intent “to bring self-worth and self-esteem to children of color through participation in the arts.”⁶⁷ Other issues mentioned art on campus more directly. For instance, in 2005 the campus held a new event called Voicings. A faculty member named Mark Eden organized it as a mix between a fine arts festival and a scholarly symposium that looked at the “social ramifications of language.” According to the article, Eden had been “pleased to discover an effective arts community on our campus,” and called the university a “tremendous resource.”⁶⁸ Along similar lines

⁶⁵ Marge Proell, “Kaleidoscope ‘Printed,’” *SCSU Now* (St. Cloud State University, MN), January 6, 2006, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/news/scsunow/default.asp?storyID=17070>; Jeff Wood, “Magazine Delivers Multicultural Ideas,” *SCSU Now*, May 5, 2009, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/news/scsunow/default.asp?pubID=1&issueID=23812&storyID=28798>; “About Kaleidoscope,” *St. Cloud State University’s Kaleidoscope*, accessed August 5, 2012, <http://web.stcloudstate.edu/kaleidoscope/about.html>.

⁶⁶ Joseph Edeleit, “Welcome to INSIGHTS,” *INSIGHTS* 1, no. 1 (spring 2004): 1, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/affirmativeaction/resources/insights/pdf/Insights-Vol1-Issue1.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Marsha Shoemaker, “Multicultural Children’s Art Connection Encourages Diversity of Activities Through Interaction,” *INSIGHTS* 2, no. 3 (winter 2005): 3, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/affirmativeaction/resources/insights/pdf/Insights-Vol2-Issue3.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Marsha Shoemaker, “Voicings: Built with Creative Collaboration,” *INSIGHTS* 2, no. 4 (spring 2005): 6, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/affirmativeaction/resources/insights/pdf/Insights-Vol2-Issue4.pdf>.

of language and diversity, another Percent for Art project went up in 2006. Created by Janet Lofquist, the two-part sculpture entitled *Infinite Voices* sits in front of Lawrence Hall and consists of granite bases topped with stainless steel panels bent like an unfolded map. Across one is written the word “echoes,” across the other “reflections,” each in fifty-one different languages, all of them spoken on campus at the time.⁶⁹ This emphasis on diversity reflected just how broadly the school had grown from its original limited focus, and the need to be open to the possibilities diversity could offer. Despite the level of art on campus and the continued success of the art program during this period, the department experienced a contraction in 2008 with the elimination of the graduate art program.⁷⁰ Though not a welcome development, this must be viewed with a historical perspective, for given the growth art has experienced at the school in spite of all the setbacks it has faced, there is no doubt that art is not finished at St. Cloud State University.

⁶⁹ Marsha Shoemaker, “Lawrence Lawn Art Offers International Welcome,” *INSIGHTS* 3, no. 4 (winter 2006): 9, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/affirmativeaction/resources/insights/pdf/Insights-Vol3-Issue4.pdf>.

⁷⁰ The MA program does not appear in the *St. Cloud State University 2008-2010 Undergraduate Catalog*.



Figure 9

An Awkwardness. Photograph created by Aremy McCann, 2010.

Currently located in the Wildflower Hallway in Atwood Memorial Center.

Image reproduced with permission from the Atwood Permanent Art Collection
Committee.

CONCLUSION

“I came to St. Cloud State University looking for a larger arts community. ...I’m grateful to the community of arts-driven professors and students that I’ve had the privilege to work with over the last few years.”

Aremy McCann wrote this in 2010 as part of her Artist Statement that accompanied *An Awkwardness*, a piece the Atwood Center purchased from the annual art department juried exhibit of graduating students’ work. (Figure 9) In her experience, the school offered an environment amenable to art students and welcoming of art. It offered a community where she could learn and grow. Moreover, as a student she developed an art philosophy in which she “believe[s] in work that unveils just enough information, yet expects the viewer to bring his or her own understanding and experience to the piece.”¹ Traces of the school’s missions and philosophies spanning the years may be seen in this, as it highlights the one dominating theme: developing a thoughtful, intelligent, and responsible citizen.

McCann’s experience also acknowledges that the university showed support for the arts. This is not surprising, given that art had a place at the school from the very beginning. Though its role may have been limited at first, art did not find itself in an inhospitable place; the art program and the presence of art on campus would not have grown the way it did without the school’s early recognition of art and its use in teaching.

¹ Aremy McCann, “Artist Statement” for *An Awkwardness*, 2010, Atwood Permanent Art Collection Committee, St. Cloud State University.

Yet, over the years, the level of support and positive attention art received wavered. More than a few times, art advocates had to fight to build, maintain, and grow an art collection on campus and an appreciation for art in general; for whatever support art had, it encountered an equal measure of disdain and indifference. Neither was this limited to St. Cloud. To be sure, art has continually faced this tension more broadly in American society. All of the varied arguments made in favor of art by educators and all of the challenges art met in Congress are evidence of this. More often than not, art in America has been made to prove its worth, to explain or justify its existence. Efforts to understand the context and intent of art are often weak; thus, art has struggled to be seen as inherently valuable to the experience of everyday life and pertinent to education.

Though the school has remained reasonably open to art, the tension continues on campus today. Despite McCann's approbation, in recent years the university has been taken to task for the negligence it has shown toward its art collection. As has been noted, no sustained effort had been made to properly organize and document the collection.

Merle Sykora explained that as recently as two or three years ago:

When works were no longer wanted by a department, faculty member, administrative office, etc. they often were sent to 'Inventory.' Inventory is a no-mans-land of equipment, furniture, etc. no longer needed or used by the area that previously had it. ...The storage facility was not tidy (an understatement), there were only a few slotted bins for art, a layer of dust covered everything, and the Art was woefully abused (frames scratched and damaged, glass broken, mats and prints water stained, pieces with foxing from dampness), few pieces were archivally mounted.

I went in search of 4 pieces of art I knew were owned by the University. I found 1³/₄ of them. [Because of this] I started...a conversation with President Potter about doing something to identify and inventory holdings, document the collection, find a place for storage when not on display, and care for the Fine Art

works of the University. I told him if the impetus did not come from the top[,] it would not happen.²

Sykora has worked hard to correct this state of affairs and make the art collection a bigger priority. Thanks to his relentlessness, progress has been made. There is now “a decent storage facility” in the sub-basement of the Miller Center, but he has asserted that “None of the work was given, or prepared to sit in storage. That dozens of pieces were in storage...and not hanging is inexcusable when we have so many bare walls all over the campus.”³ In addition to the storage area, in the fall of 2012 a project to inventory and catalogue the university’s collection finally went into action, which included as part of its goals the creation of a policy for the care and continued growth of the collection, not unlike that of the Atwood Center. Besides taking stock of the current collection and making it accessible, the idea is that if the university takes better care of the art it already has, it might be easier to attract artists in the future since they can be sure their work will be looked after properly.⁴

Art at the university certainly has challenges ahead of it, but that it is spoken of in terms of the future is encouraging for its place at the university. Nonetheless, Sykora pointed out that “Someone must constantly advocate for the Arts. They must harangue and harp or nothing will be done.” (Clearly, this is exactly what has been done time and time again, both at St. Cloud and elsewhere.) With Sykora’s words in mind, it must be noted that he did not struggle to change the state of art on campus for the artworks alone, but for what they do for a university like St. Cloud State. To him:

² Merle Sykora, e-mail message to author, January 26, 2012.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mark Springer in discussion with the author, February 15, 2012.

An aesthetically pleasant, artistically challenging, intellectually expanding atmosphere should be the aim of any academic institution. Thinking humankind has always attempted to aesthetically enrich his surroundings. Art objects are such an important part of that social, cultural, intellectual enrichment it goes without saying that they are positively invaluable in developing enlightenment. Exposure to the Fine Arts is an integral element of acculturation. It is an indispensable aspect of any education, but most assuredly higher education. For a University education it is positively essential. No person can truly consider him/herself educated without an understanding of the Arts!⁵

Without this understanding of art's significance, we fail to recognize part of what forms our society and more importantly our humanity. By examining art's history at St. Cloud State University, we can see the importance it had in shaping students and campus, and begin to comprehend why it cannot be dismissed.

⁵ Sykora e-mail, January 26, 2012.

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