

May 7, 1935

A meeting of the Art Division was held Tuesday, May 7, 1935, at 8:30 p.m. in the living-room of Bingham House. Present: Mr. Hirsch, Mr. Moselsio, Mrs. Moselsio, Mr. Park, Miss Ulrich. Absent: Mrs. Brockway.

I. RUTH BAILEY

Interview with Ruth Bailey

Mr. Park. How is your plan of work for the Senior Division working out?

R.B. I never made a written statement of a plan but my idea has been to do something in design after I graduate. As I have not had much training in the fundamentals, this year I have been doing that more than anything else. I had had a little experience in sculpture, painting and water color, weaving and history of art in the Junior Division. This term I have been doing drawing, weaving, design and color, and more history of art.

Mr. Park. What about the first term?

R.B. I had history of art, and design with Mr. Lauterer. I took forms and composed them in the round and from that made designs, first in black and white and then in color. Then I made some designs for specific purposes. I made plans for a large map which I have not finished yet. I plan to finish it this term. I took sculpture the first term but I am not taking it now. I have had weaving both terms. I am taking religion and chorus and elements of music this year. I am teaching school this term too. I am getting what I had wanted in design.

Mr. Park. What has been your plan in design?

R.B. I needed the technical training in it. I had tried to put design into sculpture and weaving, etc., but I wasn't at all sure of my tools. This term I think I am getting that.

Mr. Hirsch. Have you definite plans for what you will do after graduation?

R.B. I would like to do a craft, perhaps weaving. I would like to design things and make them myself.

Mr. Hirsch. Have you studied history of art with that in view?

R.B. Recently I have taken more of an interest in the things I have read, but I haven't done much reading. I am beginning to read about rugs, etc.

Miss Ulrich. Mrs. Lauterer has a class in that.

R.B. I began for Miss Ulrich this term copying bits of design beginning with the primitive. I have not gone on with it because of the school teaching.

Mr. Park. Is that valuable experience for you, do you think?

R.B. Yes, it is. I have found out many things that I don't know and

I expect to learn a great deal from it in time. The children range from six to fifteen. I am teaching crayon drawing and later will teach painting. The school is in Shaftsbury.

Mr. Moselsio. Do you enjoy teaching?

R.B. Very much, although it is rather hard at first.

Mr. Hirsch. Do the students have preconceived ideas that you have to break down?

R.B. Yes, they do.

Mr. Park. Do you feel that your exploration during the first two years has contributed to your study now or was it too diverse?

R.B. It has been very helpful because otherwise I would not be sure that I knew what I really wanted to do. I had done practically no work in art before I came here.

Mr. Park. Could you describe what you got from the first two years? What important books did you read? What did you do that seemed particularly important?

R.B. I got an understanding of modern art and its place in relation to the purpose of art in general. I found out what I would like to do in it and how design comes into many different things.

Mr. Park. Did you come to any personal conclusion as to your relation in art?

R.B. I think I decided that I did not want to be, and could not be, a great artist but that I did feel that I liked seeing all the details around me in the world in as good taste as possible and that I could contribute to that.

Mr. Park. How do you find yourself placed in relation to the art thought of this day? Did you discover any personal philosophy or any solution of art for you today?

R.B. I don't know just what you mean.

Mr. Park. Had you made up your mind about how you felt about art today? What are you most interested in and what do you believe in?

R.B. I believe in the breaking down process, in the scrapping of old ideas.

Mr. Moselsio. In which world would you like to live?

R.B. In the present time, I am sure. I would like to begin at the fundamentals and discover my own attitude about art.



Mr. Park. Can you define some of the fundamentals that are your starting place?

R.B. I think one of the first things that interests me is what art can be in its purest form divorced from literature and all sorts of romantic ideas.

Mr. Hirsch. A portrait could be divorced from both and yet not be pure art.

R.B. Then I think we have all got the idea of the possibilities of a great many different varieties of materials. There are loads of things that have not been used and as you begin to use them they bring in an entirely new point of view towards art.

Mr. Park. Why?

R.B. Because they have to be used in such different ways from the orthodox ones, in painting for instance.

Mr. Park. Do you think the experience of using materials today will be different from the experience of using them at any time in the history of art? Did the Greeks at their zenith use any new philosophy in their use of materials?

R.B. I don't know much about it, but didn't they use them more or less as coatings on an idea whereas we use them for themselves?

Mr. Park. I mean in a really good period.

R.B. I don't know when they did use any materials.

Mr. Hirsch. What kind of materials are you thinking of?

R.B. I was thinking of all the different things that manufacturers have produced such as steel, metal, glass, textiles, paper, etc.

Mr. Moselsio. Speaking of weaving (it seems to be your main interest now), in the Renaissance the tapestries which they used were very expensive and overloaded, while today we are trying to use the more simple materials. Are we using simple materials today only because we cannot afford to use gold, or is there another reason?

R.B. Interesting, novel, and good looking materials are being used more by everybody at every price. In those days they were used only by rich people for their best things.

Mr. Moselsio. Do you think today we have a harder time to make interesting things in good taste than at the time of the Renaissance?

R.B. I think it is easier. We have much more to work with so that it is easier to be different, but I don't know that our taste is necessarily better.

Mr. Park. What synthetic materials were used during the Renaissance in the pursuits of art?

*for purposes*

R.B. I don't know. I remember the story about dipping cloth in plaster and using it for drapery and sculpture.

Mr. Moselsio. That has nothing to do with material.

R.B. I didn't know they did use synthetic materials. I didn't know they had them at that time. Glass, of course, is synthetic and they used pewter too, I think.

Mr. Park. They used some mixed metals. What areas of reading in history of art and art criticism have you become best acquainted with? You mention the modern in connection with the first two years.

R.B. My reading has been rather spotty. I have read some on the Renaissance and the romantic periods, and I have read a little about Greek, Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Indian and Chinese art, but I don't feel particularly well read on any of them.

Mr. Park. What has interested you most?

R.B. I am most interested in the Oriental but I don't feel I know much about it. It is so much harder than the others. The reading matter is much more difficult. The books are usually written by Occidentals and they don't seem to be quite sure of what they think. The names are very hard to remember and it is all tied up with a philosophy and religion which is outside of my training and experience.

Mr. Hirsch. Do you feel that by the study of other periods you have acquired anything outside of an abstract appreciation? Does any period have a particular influence on your work?

R.B. Yes, I feel that the Oriental has a particular influence. The design is easy to find and I like the color. I am not so interested in Flemish or French painting. I like the early Italian things better for that reason too.

Mr. Hirsch. Do you think that some principles that they have can be used in your art?

R.B. Yes. I think I would be very strongly influenced by that type of line. I like the simplicity of it.

Mr. Hirsch. Do you think we are more like those early Italians and Chinese and less like the Flemish, and what is the difference?

R.B. No, I don't think we are more like them.

Mr. Hirsch. Is there any similarity in their philosophy, particularly in the use of materials?



R.B. I think maybe we are trying to get more of a simple view of life and perhaps they had it then.

Mr. Hirsch. What difference would there be between that shell vase and one that you would do?

R.B. I would certainly do it differently.

Mr. Park. What primary consideration would make you come out with a different result?

R.B. It would certainly be very much simpler if I did it. I would cut out part of the base and I would cut out the shell because it is a romantic idea.

Mr. Park. What about the use of material in connection with this very problem?

R.B. That isn't perfectly functional and it has extras that don't add to it.

Mr. Hirsch. What about it is unnecessary for the function?

R.B. The shell isn't functional. If I were doing it, I would decide what it was intended for and do it to suit that particular function.

Mr. Park. What do the Orientals put flowers in?

R.B. The Orientals would want to show off the flowers, I think.

Mr. Park. What sort of flowers would you put in that vase?

R.B. A small, bunchy, solid flower.

Mr. Moselsie. Can you trace any difference in the way the Orientals worked? Do you think that the man who made this vase considered how the flowers would look? The Orientals would add flowers which would add to the simplicity of it. If flowers were put in this vase, it would only distract attention.

Mr. Hirsch. Is there any reason for making a shell out of this?

R.B. I think you could have a nice shell vase.

Mr. Hirsch. What would you make it of?

R.B. You might make it of glass very easily, but I think a shell just because it is a shell isn't very important.

Mr. Park. How would it get to be that shape?

R.B. It probably came from the idea that you have to have handles on a vase.

Mr. Park. What was the original metal made from? Could the original material be bent easily?

R.B. If it was made of clay.

Ruth Bailey exhibited the drawings and other art work which she has done at Bennington. She showed one drawing done the first year which she did again in an attempt to make it more distinct. The second attempt came much closer to the idea she had in mind.

Mr. Moselsio. The second has better values.

R.B. When I did this one I had no idea of what effect light would have on colors. The second year I did some Egyptian forms studied from an ornament book and made this sketch of a room filled with samples of Egyptian art. This year I made a sketch of a map to be done in shaded colors. I did some color studies with Mr. Lauterer. I did some studies of elementary forms of design--Egyptian, Greek, etc. I did these sketches to show line, direction, design, etc. I made these experiments in different ways of putting on paint. This was done with a tooth brush; this with pin pricks, etc.

She showed one example of sculpture and one piece of weaving.