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THE BAKER/PISANO AMERICAN ART HISTORY RESEARCH COLLECTION OF RARE AMERICAN ART CATALOGS, BOOKS, AND RELATED ART MATERIALS

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Many years ago part of the great adventure of collecting American art of the 19th and early 20th centuries was hunting for documents, catalogues and assorted ancillary material. They could be found in second-hand stores, flea markets, and garage/lawn sales. There were even a few booksellers who offered such material. Today, however, such items are difficult to come by and likely of no interest to contemporary collectors. But these sundry bits and pieces of earlier American art history help flesh-out, define and add historical weight to the greater history of Art in America.

The Society of American Fakir Catalogues: This mad-cap, screw-ball organization was started by students of The Art Students’ League of New York in 1891. As they shared their West 57th St. Studio Building with the august Society of American Artists, the urge to parody works in the annual SAA exhibition in the exhibition gallery of the building was too tempting. And the fun began! Prominent members who had their work parodied, included William Merritt Chase, Childe Hassam, John Singer Sargent, John La Farge and John White Alexander. When the SAA merged with the National Academy of Design, the fun continued until the last exhibition in 1914. The major benefactor was Samuel T. Shaw, who also assembled a large personal collection of American Art of the period. Catalogues of the Fakir exhibitions are among the rarest artifacts in American art history, held by only a few libraries.

1. *Firelog of the Eleventh Annual Exhibition*, New York, 1902


3. *16th Annual Exhibition: Grumpwillie Fakirs Annual Lemon Fest*, New York, 1907

4. *The Fakir’s Twenty-First Revolt!*, New York, 1912

The Society of American Artists: The Society of American Artists was founded in 1877 in protest to the hegemony of The National Academy of Design – primarily due to the restrictive policies regarding the NAD’s annual exhibitions. Works by younger, non-member artists were either rejected or their submissions “skied” – hung high on the exhibition gallery walls. And election to the NAD was also a difficult feat. But in 1906, the decision was made to merge the two organizations.


Art Manuals/Instructions; School of Applied Art, Battle Creek, MI: American instructional booklets on principles of creating art date to the early 19th century, notably *Elements of the Graphic Arts* (1802) by Archibald Robertson who, along with his brother Alexander, opened an art school, “The Columbian Academy of Art,” in New York around the same time. Such instructional books continued to be published throughout the centuries, reflecting, in some cases, basic principles that appear never to have changed, as well as evolved ideas related to “making art.” Nearly one hundred years later, the School of Applied Art, Battle Creek, MI, was founded, as a correspondence school. Its letter head stated, “We do NOT claim the LARGEST NUMBER of students of an Art School. Teaching by wholesale does not appeal to us. The BEST
POSSIBLE instruction and attention to a limited number is our aim, and such service cannot be
given at cheap-school rates.” The letter head also stated it had “The only building in the world
devoted to Correspondence Art Instruction and Owned by the School.” Now going on over 200 years later, this mission is carried on by on-line internet programs.

6. Instruction Paper on Direct Perspective, the School of Applied Art, Battle Creek, MI, 1900

7. Tuttle, Edwin V., Description and Use of Drawing Instruments, the School, of Applied Art,
Battle Creek, MI, 1907

8. Tuttle, Edwin V., Geometrical Drawing, the School of Applied Art, Battle Creek, MI 1907

9. Instruction Paper on the Elements of Pen and Ink Drawing, the xes and of Applied Art, Battle
Creek, MI, 1908

10. Pilsworth, Edward S. Instruction Paper on Light and Shade, the School of Applied Art,
Battle Creek, MI, 1909

11. Instruction Paper on Elements of Wash Drawing, the School of Applied Art, Battle Creek,
MI, 1910

12. Instruction Paper on Textures, the School of Applied Art, Battle Creek, MI, 1911

13. Instruction Paper on Angular Perspective, the School of Applied Art, Battle Creek, MI 1914

14. Tuttle, Edwin V., Instruction Paper on Gouache Drawing, the School of Applied Art, Battle
Creek, MI, 1915

15. Pilsworth, Edward S., Instruction Paper on Freehand Drawing, the School of Applied Art,
Battle Creek, MI, 1916

16. Commercial Line Drawing. the School of Applied Art, Battle Creek, MI, 1916

17. Instruction Paper on Figure Proportions and Figure Sketching, the School of Applied Art,
Battle Creek, MI, 1920

18. Instruction Paper on Landscape and Animal Sketching, the School of Applied Art, Battle
Creek, MI, 1920

International Exhibition Catalogues: During the mid-nineteenth century, countries began to
hold international exhibitions, featuring agricultural products, industrial machines, and, art.
Among the earliest: The London Crystal Palace Exposition of 1851, recreated in New York two
years later; the Paris Exposition Universalle starting in 1855, and most notably, the International
United States Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia, in 1876.


22. *The International Exhibition of Modern Art* (aka the Armory Show of 1913), Supplement to the Catalogue: Containing Additions, Errata and Exhibits Catalogued by Not Received. The Association, New York, 1913


24. *A Selected Collection of Objects from the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Art of Paris, 1925* (Exposicion Artes Decorativas), catalogue of the reconfigured Paris exhibition in New York, organized by the American Association of Museums, 1925 – Note: this is the exhibition from which the term Art Deco was coined

**Auction Catalogues of Noted American Collectors:** The growing mercantile and industrial production company fortunes during the last decades of the 19th century gave rise to conspicuous consumption, which included art collections. Alas, many of the newly minted millionaires purchased the work of European masters (many of dubious attribution). But a few believed in, and also purchased works by, American artists of the period, and in the early 20th century, if these collections weren’t destined for museums, they reentered the art market via auctions. Together they represent a very good survey of art collecting during the latter years of the 19th century,

25. *Catalogue of the Collection of the American Art Association: To Be Absolutely Sold by Auction to Settle the Estate of the Late R. Austin Robertson,* New York, American Art Association Gallery, April, 1892.


**Early American artist and One-Person Gallery Exhibitions**: For most of the 19th century there was little interest on the part of art galleries or dealers to handle the work of American artists. But slowly this began to change, and American artists became the subject of group as well as one person exhibitions in galleries.


36. *Loan Exhibition of Paintings by Winslow Homer*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1911 – this was a memorial exhibition of 51 oils and watercolors, Homer died the previous year, thus the first posthumous exhibition of his work.

37. *First Annual Exhibition Given at and for the Benefit of the Lighthouse for the Blind*, New York, 1913


40. *Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture: Held under the Auspices of the National Sculpture Society*, Buffalo, 1916


42. *Important Works in Painting and Sculpture by Leading American Artists*, Milch Galleries, New York, 1920
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**Early Exhibition Catalogues from the Guggenheim Museum**

The New York Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum grew out of Mr. Guggenheim’s collection which originally hung in his apartment in the Plaza Hotel, New York. Eventually, the collection became the nucleus of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, founded in 1939 and exhibited as the Museum of Non-Objective Painting located in a former automobile showroom on East 54th St. in Manhattan. In 1943, Mr. Guggenheim and the director of the museum Hilla von Rebay wrote a letter to the 76 year old architect Frank Lloyd Wright asking him to design the now famous Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum at 1071 Fifth Avenue in New York City. Mr. Guggenheim, however, saw only the plans for the building as he died, aged 88, in 1949.

47. *Loan Exhibition: Museum of Non-Objective Art*, Opening Dec. 5th, 1945
Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 24 East 54th St. New York


49. *Selections from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection III*, 1954

50. *Selections from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection VI*, 1956

51. *Some Recent Gifts*, April 1-26, 1959 (This is the last exhibition before the museum move to the Wright building).

52. *The Solomon R. Guggenheim Inaugural Selection*, opening Oct. 21, 1959 in the newly built Frank Lloyd Wright building. Mr. Wright, alas, died seven months before the opening of his controversial building which has grown into one of the iconic buildings of New York City.

**Assorted Early Exhibition Catalogues**: Including general surveys of American art and artists.

53. *Oil and Sculpture*, Boston Art Club, Boston, MA, 1870. This organization was organized in 1854, and held exhibitions in a rented building, though they suspended exhibitions during the
Civil War years, after which they held exhibitions in various artist member’s studios. In 1871 the organization was formally organized and again rented space until they built their own building.

54. *Catalogue of the Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition*, National Academy of Design, New York, 1883. This exhibition was held to raise money to fund the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. While the French government provided the, now iconic, statue, it was up to the United States to provide a pedestal, which was designed by Richard Morris Hunt.

55. *The 65th Annual Exhibition of The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*, Philadelphia, PA, 1893. Founded in 1805, the academy became the first and oldest art museum and art school in the United States.

56. *Catalogue of the Exhibition of the National Sculpture Society Under the Auspices of the Municipal Art Society of Baltimore*, Fifth Regiment Armory, Baltimore, MD, April, 1908.


58. *Catalogue of the Annual Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists*, 1917, The Society, Grand Central Palace, New York. This is the inaugural exhibition of this organization whose aim was to accept art work independent of a jury selection process. However, a urinal signed “R. Mutt” by Marcel Duchamp was rejected – causing some what of an uproar, publicity likely benefiting both the society and Duchamp. The last exhibition of the society was in 1944.


62. *American Painting and Drawing: The Basic Years 1925-1945*, Larcada Gallery, 1976, New York, NY. Larcada Gallery founded by Richard Larcada was one of several small New York art galleries on or just off Madison Avenue, specializing in American art of the late 19th and early 20th century. The gallery represented the estates of both Rockwell Kent and J. Alden Weir.

**Signed Art Catalogues:** Publishing art books and exhibition catalogues, though somewhat cost prohibitive, remains an important means by which galleries showcase art work to their clients and, hopefully, prospective clients. Museums, too, continue to produce a prodigious number of art books, mainly related to exhibitions. But while this is still an important source of revenue to some museums, some museums now “publish” exhibition catalogues on-line.
63. Pisano, Ronald G., *A Leading Spirit in American Art: William Merritt Chase 1849-1916*, Henry Art Gallery, 1983, signed on front fly leaf “Gerald R. Ford” (38th President of the United States). Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name held at the Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, the exhibition also traveled to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Several years later, Ron Pisano was attending a reception held at Central Art Galleries, West 57th St. New York, when it was announced that former President Ford was about to enter the gallery. More of a whim than anything else, Ron grabbed a copy of his book on display in the gallery, and asked President Ford to sign it - a serendipitous moment of no consequential meaning, other than a fun thing to do. Of greater importance, this was the first exhibition since the Chase memorial exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1917 that included only authentic paintings by the artist – the museum exhibitions between 1917 and 1983 all included fakes and forgeries.