

PHILADELPHIA WOMEN ARTISTS HOLD DIFFERENT VIEWS ON REVIVAL OF THE OLD-TIME ART PATRON

Lack of Public Appreciation Not So Potent a Reason as Cost of Study and Work, Is One View, While Another Affirms Genius Will Manifest Itself

IS THE day of the old art patron coming back? Is appreciation of art and artists so lacking in the city of Philadelphia, which is considered the shrine of culture and learning and the Mecca of women artists, that a revival of the old patrons of art is necessary to enable these artists to pursue their work?

Yes—and no—say the artists themselves. It isn't that the public is so unappreciative, explains Miss Beatrice Fenton, widely known as a sculptress, who has so firmly established herself with her own capable hands that she needs no patron. But "artists must live," she declares. "Study and work are so expensive and take so much time and effort that I think it would be a good idea if there were art patrons today just as there were in olden times."

"Of course," she continued, "in a way, we do have art patrons today, but it is not the same thing. I think that idea of the Association of Painters, Sculptors and Laymen who have turned the roof of the Grand Central Station in New York into a gallery and salesroom is splendid."

"The idea isn't entirely commercial, you see, because artists must measure up to certain standards before they can exhibit. But there are many artists whose work is recognized as good, and who, nevertheless, have no great number of sales, and this plan will be an immense help to them."

Mentality, Not Sex, Is What Counts in Art

Miss Fenton sat in her studio at 1523 Chestnut street, where she works from early morning until late at night. The sun streaming down from a high, small window lit up her smooth dark hair, melted into the pale brown gold of her smock, and sent a slanting ray across her slim smooth hands which were clasped in her lap.

Miss Fenton's dark eyes were very serious as she talked, for her work is a serious thing to her, and nothing which concerns it is a matter to be taken lightly.

"Art should be sexless. It is mentality that counts and not whether the artist is a man or woman," she said.

To her right, against the wall, was a plaster cast of "The Seaweed Fountain," which stands in bronze at the foot of Lemon Hill in Fairmount Park and which has probably met with the greatest popular approval of any of Miss Fenton's work.

"No, I don't think being a woman is a handicap to being an artist," said Miss Fenton. "If you have brains, what does it matter if you are a man or a woman? When I was a student at the Academy there was a good fellowship—a camaraderie, I suppose you might call it—that was absolutely impersonal. It did not matter who did the work, just so good work was produced. And the men were as willing to give credit to us as they were to a man in the class."

"Sometimes, though, I suppose women gain fame just because they are women, but again I think recognition of their merits is withheld for the same reason."

"Artistic training undoubtedly gives a broad viewpoint," continued Miss Fenton. "Of a necessity we get down to the fundamentals when we study art. More than any other kind of training, artistic training means self-development, I think."

"And I don't believe in artistic training only for those who intend to be artists—I think it is a good thing for every one to have."

Must Choose Between Work and Home Life

"But if you choose the life of an artist, I think you must generally choose between that and a home life. Of course, much depends on the individual. Some women seem to be capable of being successful wives and artists at the same time. But both occupations make such a demand on time and energy that I think one must generally become subordinated to the other, and usually it is the art which does."

"You see," explained Miss Fenton, "it isn't just the actual time you spend working that you must consider—even when you aren't actually working you are thinking and planning and wondering how you can improve your work."

"I have known artists who refused to let any one know their studio address, because to them it was a work-shed and even visits from their friends disturbed them. They kept the location secret so they could work in absolute peace and quiet."

"Even the presence of a model disturbs me," Miss Fenton continued. "That is why I prefer to work from memory. Of course, that is not always possible, as it is customary to have your model pose for you when you are making a head."

"When I made the 'Seaweed Fountain' I used live models, of course—a child and a real turtle."

Miss Fenton does all her work in clay; from that it is cast in plaster and then the bronze or marble statue is made.

As a child, Miss Fenton wanted to

Miss Washington paints from nature and she has put down many of the scenes near Darby Creek and Abington. She has done work in pastel and water colors which are dear to all lovers of nature who are familiar with the beautiful haunts to be found around the city. And in a small satin-embossed box reposed about a dozen miniatures of such exquisiteness and delicacy that the eyes seemed almost to twinkle with life-likeness and the lips ready to speak.

"I liked to paint eyes," said Miss Washington. "They mean so much; don't you think?"

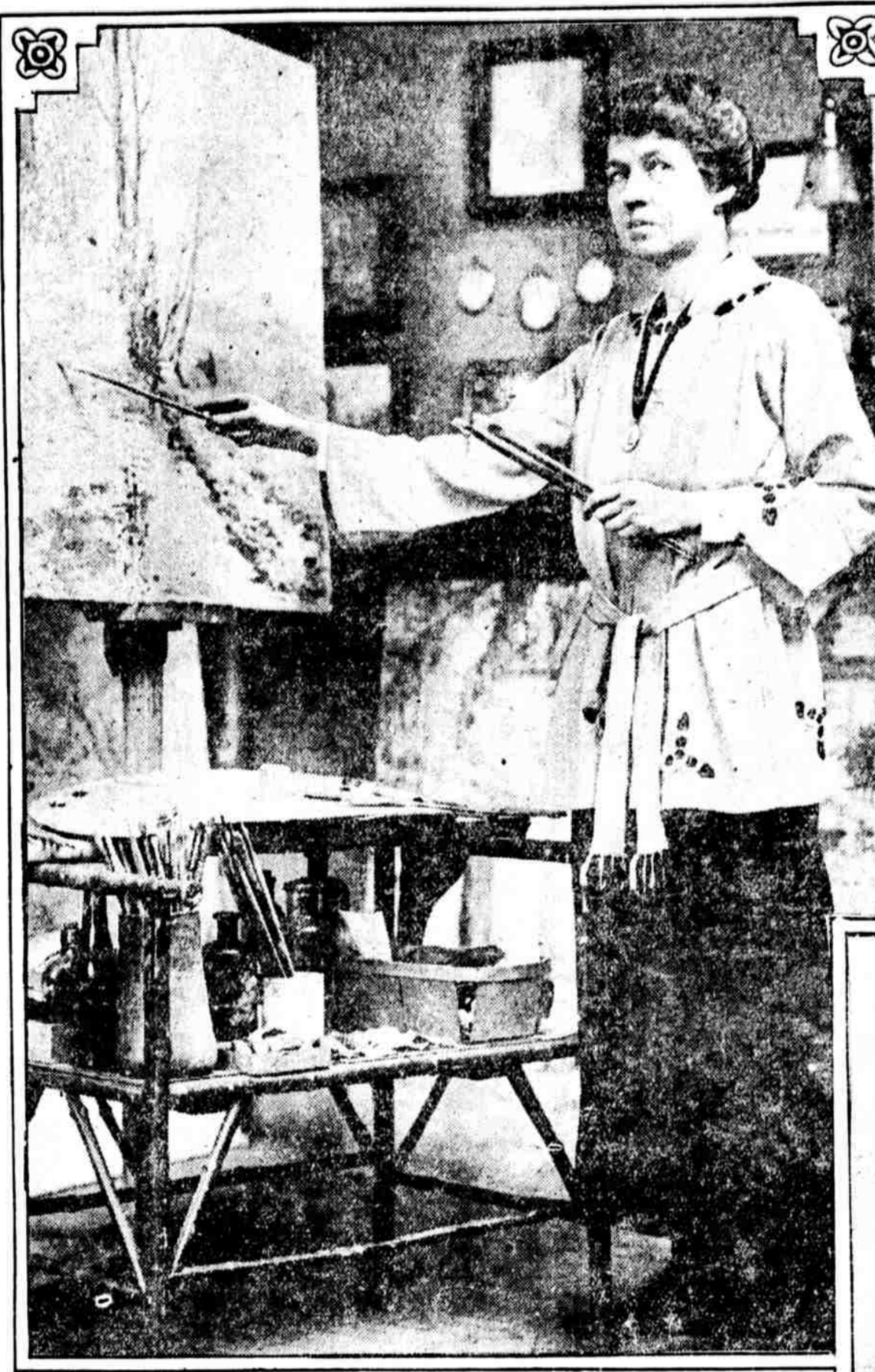
Patrons Wouldn't Do Today, Artist Believes

"Patrons would hardly do in this day and age," she continued. "I think if there is any art in a person it will come out, for in my opinion not nearly all the persons who study art are artists. Still, many persons seem to be at a standstill just because of lack of means, and it does seem that there should be some way of helping them."

In a long, narrow room at 208 Washington square, is the studio of Leah Ramsay Alexander, who has a personality as colorful as the brocades which decorate her room.

"Philadelphia women artists—why, I know several whom you should go and see," she says graciously as she ushers you into her workshop, modestly and sincerely excluding herself from that group.

"Just a minute, please, the light is almost gone and there is something I must do to this batik. Batiks are what I do to earn my living," she smiled, "and these are what I do because I love to." She went over to where a group of pictures were placed face to the wall and turned up a number of decorative pen-and-inks and water



Elizabeth F. Washington, who thinks art patrons couldn't do at all these days



Mrs. Leah Ramsay Alexander, who believes women artists are "emotionally handicapped"

Mentality, Not Sex, Is What Counts and Choice Must Be Made Between the Life of Painter or Sculptor and Home, They Maintain

Tendency in Art Is Wholly Modern

"The tendency in art is wholly modern," she said. "But much of the modern art I do not understand and therefore do not attempt to criticize. The artists—yes, I think they are sincere—but, as I said, I have not kept up with many of the modern movements—not even in art. It wasn't till recently that I knew that women could vote," she smiled.

As she sat talking calmly, unresponsive and yet so sure of the thing she faces best in the world—her art—she had a feeling that no amount of suffering or difficulty could prevent this slender, pale, dark-haired woman from making a great success.

Miss Harriet Sartain, dean of the School of Design for Women, believes firmly in the teaching of tradition in art. For the last several years she has had no time for individual work of her own, but has devoted all her time to teaching art to others and to mak-

ing that teaching a fine and perfect thing.

Born in a family in which art was a necessity and not a luxury, Miss Sartain early became imbued with the ideals of her father, a famous engraver. After studying at the Academy and in Germany and Venice, Miss Sartain traveled the Continent with her grandfather, studying individually under his guidance and direction and expanding in every way. She has exhibited in all the principal galleries in this country and in England.

"Artists are just human beings," she said with her charming smile. "We aren't on a pedestal at all and haven't the virtues nor the virtues which are often attributed to us."

"I think this movement which has been started to prevent so-called artists who are really bogus from rearing studios which they use as a mask for anything is fine. You know, often when artists try to rent studios they find that the really desirable ones have been taken by those artists who do nothing but wear smocks and drink tea and try to create an atmosphere."

"The difference between a real artist



Miss Beatrice Fenton, sculptor, hopes for the return of the old-time art patron



Miss Harriet Sartain, dean of School of Design for Women, who believes that the home environment is much improved through marriage, when the wife happens to be interested in art, and who insists that artists haven't the virtues nor the virtues so often attributed to them

head, won honorable mention at the Panama-Pacific Exposition, where it was sent on exhibition by the Art Club.

Miss Elizabeth F. Washington, who won the Mary Smith prize at the Academy of the Fine Arts in 1917 with her picture "Winter," thinks that Philadelphians as a whole are unappreciative of art.

"In many cases it is ignorance," she said, "and only time and education will remedy that."

"There are jealousies in art just as there are in music, but any artist who yields to such a petty feeling endangers his art and destroys something beautiful which is in him. At exhibitions you hear excuses and reasons for some person's winning prizes, and others being neglected. But that is not always the case, as there are many generous artists who do not allow jealousy to enter into their minds."

"I always liked to paint, even when I was a little girl," she said. "You know how a child will take a box of paints and make and color pictures. But it is only in the last ten years that I have really been able to study as I wished."

and I think she should. But you can't reconcile art and marriage—I don't attempt it—and whichever you choose you have to give up the other."

"But I think every woman should know how to make her living in some way, whether she intends to do it or not."

"Personally, I think the idea of art patrons is narrowing," she said. "If a thing is worth gaining it is worth suffering for; and whatever you have to do to earn your living—point the typewriter or scrub floors—I think you will find time and opportunity to do what you want to if only you feel the urge strongly enough."

Dom, Miss Washington's cat, interrupted the conversation, and as she reached down to stroke his long, silky fur, she laughingly remarked that she would like to have five cats, at least ten dogs, six horses and many goats—if she only had room for them.

"I love animals," she confided, making an attempt to keep the conversation impersonal and then yielding in despair. "Why, yes, I will show you my babies if you really want to see them," and she brought out gorgeously colored

and one who can have be that is creative ability. "Too many persons live in both eye and in mind," she said. "I think that is a mistake. They should not be called artists. No, all painters are artists; they should conform to a high level and great standards of ability. Art is not a mere hobby; it is a serious thing which should be taken seriously before the years waste away."

"A feeling for the beautiful, who think only of the material side of life," she said. "I think that is a mistake. Art is not a mere hobby; it is a serious thing which should be taken seriously before the years waste away."

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"I don't think it impossible to have a career and a home life. In fact, if a woman lives to her art after she is married, I think her husband will find that she is a different person from the one he married, for her art is a part of her being which attracted him. But, of course, it depends on the individual and how much executive ability he or she has."

"If only art could be brought into the lives of all the people," she exclaimed. "Even if they could not become great artists themselves and did not intend to follow the work, it would bring so much beauty into their lives, for artists can see beauty in little things in which another's eyes are blinded."

"And, after all, isn't it the finer things in life that make it worth while? If the world could only look at things through the eyes of an artist, how much more wonderful would everything appear?"