THE WOMEN'S ART ASSOCIATION OF CANADA AND ITS DESIGNS ON CANADIAN HANDICRAFT, 1898 - 1939

by

Kathleen Dowsett

A thesis submitted to the Department of Art
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Master of Art

Queen's University
September 1998

copyright © Kathleen Dowsett, 1998

National Library of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services

Acquisitions et services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-37947-7

Canada

Dedicated to the memory of
Patricia Margaret Cuffe Dowsett
Artist and Craftperson

ABSTRACT

Established in 1887 the Women's Art Association of Canada (WAAC was the first national organization to take up patronage of Native and so called "Ethnic" craft production in Canada, an act that was to have a major impact on the nature of handicraft as it is now understood in this country. Yet, surprisingly, the WAAC has been largely ignored in mainstream art historical literature and only recently examined by scholars attempting to evaluate —and often to celebrate— the contribution of Canadian women to Canadian art. This thesis argues that the handicraft patronage the WAAC undertook merits the critical review and analysis I undertake. Here, I investigate the WAAC's patronage activities, examining its affiliations, allegiances, and aims and analyzing the affect the organization had on what has come to be seen as Canada's Folk and Native art.

The Introduction, "Patriarchy, Paternalism and Patronage," presents the ideas to be examined in this thesis in the context of literature relating to the WAAC. In Chapter One, "To Preserve and Encourage the Home Industries," I provide a brief history of the WAAC and its handicraft patronage and argue that the Association's activities, although designed to elevate the work of women from a position of neglect, even disdain, actually reinforced the existing inferior position of, not only the female patrons, but their protégées as well. In Chapter Two, "Primitive and Characteristic National Work," I examine how the WAAC defined, promoted and distributed Canadian handicraft and explore the effects of this patronage on the groups the organization supported. I argue that, while the WAAC earnestly attempted to assist less privileged members of society, it

also sought a power base for itself in order to play a more conspicuous role in the Canadian art scene. Further, I contend that the result of this patronage was a marginalized position for both patrons and producers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Lynda Jessup, for struggling to teach me to balance enthusiasm with discipline. I deeply appreciate the commitment, both to me as her student, and to furthering Canadian art, that led her to toil through a draft, without power, during an ice storm, barely leaving wax from her candles on the pages. She continually displayed patience, energy, and dedication, not to mention being a terrific cheerleader for the project.

Many thanks to Mrs. Lynn Cumine, former President of the Women's Art Association in Toronto, who provided invaluable aid by making the Association's archives and facilities available to me. Thanks also to Mrs. Pamela Miller of the McCord Museum in Montreal, who opened the archives of the Women's Art Society of Montreal, pointed out particular documents, and showed gratifying enthusiasm for the undertaking.

Wholehearted appreciation is due my father, not only for the roof and sustenance that made two years at Queen's possible, but also for unstinting support throughout all my endeavours. Thanks also to Diana and Paddy for making research in Ottawa feasible, as well as providing the welcome relief of an air-conditioned environment in which to lay down the foundations of Chapter Two during a punishingly hot summer. Lorian, and Mathew and Kaitlin, deserve my profound gratitude for constantly reminded me of, and included me in, the joys of a world unrelated to academe.

Without the support of extraordinary people, who redefined friendship for me, this work would not have been completed. Thanks to Cammie McAtee for lending shelter to

complete the research in Montreal. Else and Michael Shoop earned my lasting appreciation for contributing refuge, encouragement and a computer, during a particularly challenging (although highly enjoyable) summer in Victoria, as well as for their continued love and support. I am beholden to Carmen Castrucci who believed in the undertaking enough to donate her own computer for five tense, if productive, months — to give me a kick start. I am deeply indebted to Sharon and Dane Charboneau for providing a hearth and home for the years it took to get the second and third versions of this work out, in addition to their lasting affection and encouragement. To Frances and Ann Tighe sincere thanks for furnishing a welcoming habitat and calm and bolstering atmosphere in which to complete this thesis. I very much appreciate the fellowship and spiritual nourishment supplied by so many; heartfelt thanks to Elaine Cash-Rumball and Dale Rumball, Roberta Doylend, Gloria Graham, Jan Kondoh, Karen McCluskey, Pam Patchell, Cathy Pitman, and Peggy Tilly, who continue to buttress and encourage me. Finally, grateful recognition is due Alan Gordon, the self-appointed "thesis police," who read and "corrected," offered opinion, encouragement and support; and nagged unceasingly, right up until the end.

. . . textiles operate as circuits of exchange between individualized subjects and conflicting historical interpretations, but are always ethnic, class and gender indexed.

Textiles can . . . be represented as unpretentious, simple, honest and limited to a set of technical procedures; pick up a knitting pattern, cross-stitch your Textile Heritage of bygone memories and release your longing for a romanticized and mythical past where flags were waved in the Empire dramas of colonial rule. These leisurely pastimes evoke "feminine" sensibilities within the patriarchal order. They contrive to silence the wounds inflicted by history as faded markings on sheets. But this . . . is also an invented tradition.

Janis Jefferies, "Text and textiles: weaving across the borderlines," *New feminist art criticism*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of illustrations vii

Introduction: Patriarchy, Paternalism, and Patronage 1

Chapter One: To Preserve and Encourage the Home Industries 22

Chapter Two: Primitive and Characteristic National Work 53

Conclusion: On the Margins 86

Illustrations 90

Bibliography 97

Vita 105

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1. "Women's Art Association of Canada Home Industries Exhibition." (caption on photograph, verso). Photo: Women's Art Association Archives, Toronto 90

2. "Women's Art Association of Canada. Exhibition of Home Industries across Canada." (caption on photograph, verso). Photo: Women's Art Association Archives, Toronto 91

3. Illustration from "Studio Talk". Source: *The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine & Applied Art* 26, No 114 (Sep 15, 1902): 309-311 92

4. Weaving homespun cloth Cap à l'Aigle, Québec, 1898. William Notman Studios. Source: McCord Museum, Montreal 93

5. "The Women's Art Association of Canada: Canadian Art, Handicrafts and Home Industries." (caption on photograph, verso). Photo: Women's Art Association Archives, Toronto 94

6. Unidentified weaver. Photo: Women's Art Association Archives, Toronto 95

7. "Women's Art Association of Canada, Province of QuebecWeavings with tufted work, characteristic designs." (caption on photograph, verso). Photo: Women's Art Association Archives, Toronto 96

INTRODUCTION:

PATRIARCHY, PATERNALISM, AND PATRONAGE

Comin' an' going' mos' all de tam,
    Helpin' dem all along,
Jus' lak' de ole sheep watch de lamb
    Till dey are beeg an' strong.
Not'ing lak' dat I be seein' yet,
    An' it's hard to beat for sure,
So dat's de reason dey call Josette
    Leetle Sister of de poor.

William Henry Drummond, "Josette," quoted in Catalogue of *Exhibition of Canadian Handicrafts*, February 1905.

Quoted above is the last stanza of a poem by William Henry Drummond as it was published by the Woman's Art Association of Canada (WAAC) Montreal Branch in its 1905 catalogue, *Exhibition of Canadian Handicraft.*[1] The poem was presented to encourage exhibition patrons to purchase the catalogue. The resulting funds would finance the exhibition and the handicraft shop established by the Montreal Branch in 1902. The minutes of the Handicraft Committee for 26 January 1905 recorded the transaction: "It was moved by Lady Tait [and] seconded by Mrs. Peck that a note of thanks be given to Dr. Drummond for so kindly giving one of his beautiful poems - carried - the proceeds of Dr. Drummond's poem are to be given to the LSC Fund [Lady

[1] Up to 1904 the organization was known as the Woman's Art Association of Canada (WAAC). The next year the *Annual Report for the Year Ending September 30, 1905* gives the name of the organization as the Women's Art Association of Canada.

Strathcona Capital Fund for Our Handicrafts Shop]."[2] The poem itself records intelligence, hard work and charity on the part of the protagonist, Josette, a French-Canadian *habitant,* or rural Québeçois. As a *habitant* she represented those the WAAC patronized, while at the same time, in her role as benefactor, she could also be seen to represent the WAAC itself in its efforts to guide people like her. The organization that presented the poem, the Women's Art Association of Canada, not only supported the exhibition, but also the production and sale of handicrafts produced in Canada. Moreover, the subject of the poem, the organization that used it, and the way it was used are all integral elements of the support for, and promotion of, handicrafts that I explore in this thesis. Here, I investigate the patronage activities of the WAAC —the organization's affiliations, allegiances, and aims— and analyze how these affected what we now call Canadian Folk and Native art. I contend that while the WAAC genuinely strove to help the less privileged members of society, it also sought to build a power base for itself and to construct a more prominent role for itself in the Canadian art scene. The result was the marginalization of both the handicraft patron and producer.

The WAAC was the first national patron of handicrafts in Canada, having been originally established in 1887 as an organization to provide an environment where middle- and upper-class women could exercise their artistic abilities. Early in its history the WAAC membership made a conscious decision to support handicrafts, work historically associated with women. Then in 1898 the WAAC decided to support

---

[2] Minutes of the Handicraft Committee, 26 January 1905, Drawer 3, Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal (hereafter WASM), McCord Museum, Montreal.

handicraft workers from outside the organization —initially Doukhobors, and then, over the next few years, French-Canadians and Native peoples— by locating and displaying handicrafts, by providing a venue for selling products, by supplying materials and, by 1905, by teaching methods and designs to handicraft workers. In the process, the organization's members influenced workers to change the products they produced in colour and design to what WAAC members saw as more appropriate to Canadian homes. Thus, the work the Association undertook had a profound effect on what we now see as Canadian handicraft.

Given the scope and effect of the organization's handicraft efforts, surprisingly little has been written about the WAAC's influence on handicraft production. The Association is either largely ignored in textbooks on Canadian art by such prominent art historians as Dennis Reid and J. Russell Harper, or its artists are celebrated by writers aiming to add women to the Canadian art pantheon.[3] Given its impact on Canadian handicraft, its role in the history of Canadian art, and its stated objectives, I believe the work the organization undertook, and the results it achieved, merit critical review and analysis.

I do this in three chapters. This chapter reviews the WAAC's activities in light of twentieth-century scholarship, and the present circumstances surrounding collection and

---

[3] Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988) 2nd ed.; J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada; A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966).

exhibition of historical and contemporary Native and Ethnic Handicrafts. In Chapter One, I outline the history of the WAAC and its patronage of Native and Ethnic handicraft. There I argue that, while the Association struggled against women's marginal social status in turn-of-the-century Canadian society by promoting women's work, in doing so, it ultimately reinforced the existing inferior position of women and women's work in the public realm. My exploration also includes a brief history of the WAAC, its affiliations in Canada and aspirations abroad, as well as discussion of its leaders and the influences instrumental in establishing its patronage of handicrafts producers outside the organization. In Chapter Two I examine the WAAC's definition, promotion, and distribution of Canadian Native and Folk art. In the process, I also explore some of the effects of the organization's patronage on groups its supported. This leads to a discussion of the methods the WAAC used to locate workers, and to guide and promote the product its workers created. I demonstrate that, while furthering its nationalistic aims, the WAAC reinforced the subordinate positions of craftspeople in the artistic and ethnic hierarchy that continued to marginalize them.

It is important to note in this regard that, despite the WAAC's absence from the dominant art historical narrative, a number of histories of the Association already exist, providing valuable sources of information about, and interpretations of, the WAAC's activities in its early years.[4] The first, Florence Deeks's "Historical Sketch of the Women's Art Association of Canada," was produced in 1912, when the organization was

[4] The WAAC is first noted in 1898. See Robert F. Gagen, "History of Art Societies in Ontario," ed., J. Castell Hopkins, *Canada: An Encyclopedia* (Toronto: Linscott Publishing, 1898) 360-365.

25 years old.[5] Another, titled "The Women's Art Association of Canada," was presented in 1916 on the Association's thirtieth anniversary.[6] As well, at least one Branch, now the Women's Art Society of Montreal (WASM), prepared several histories, kept General Meeting and Committee Meeting Minute Books, Association catalogues and advertising bulletins, and other WAAC publications.[7]

To the WAAC's self-produced histories can be added the first scholarly history of the organization, Allison Thompson's 1989 Master's thesis, *A Worthy Place in the Art of Our Country,* which was prepared to celebrate the organization's centenary.[8] Thompson recounts conditions of exclusion, segregation and dismissal of women's artistic production cited by many art historians —which I too review. However, she does not explore the racial and class dimensions underlying the WAAC's activities, nor does she acknowledge the presence of a hierarchy of artistic production which I believe was the basis of the WAAC's patronage of Native and Ethnic handicraft. In her discussion of handicraft, Thompson emphasizes work produced by the organization's members. While

---

[5] *Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Issue,* Library of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1912.

[6] *Women's Art Association of Canada Annual Report 1916-1917, Thirtieth Anniversary Issue*, 7-12, Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada, Toronto (hereafter WAAC archives).

[7] See M.A. Peck, "A Slight Resume of the Activities of the Women's Art Society in its Early Days," 9 April 1928, Drawer 2, Folder 3, WASM; and Mary M. Phillips, "History," 1902, Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM; Phillips, "The Story of the Montreal Women's Art Society," 2 January 1917, Drawer 2, Folder 3, WASM; Elaine Holowach-Amiot, *The Women's Art Society of Montreal: A Century of Commitment to the Arts* (Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1994).

[8] Allison Thompson, *A Worthy Place in the Art of Our Country: The Women's Art Association of Canada 1887 - 1987,* M.A. thesis (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1989).

she does not ignore the Ethnic and Native handicraft the WAAC supported, her summary of the WAAC's activities in this area reveals more a desire to enumerate the Association's achievements than to examine its methods or the rationale underlying its patronage enterprise. This is clear in her précis of WAAC patronage, which credits the organization with salvaging handicrafts without analyzing how it did so.[9]

In contrast to Thompson's top-down view of WAAC handicraft patronage, Seneca art historian Tom Hill argues in "Indian Art in Canada: An Historical Perspective" that the WAAC, along with its offshoot, the Canadian Handicraft Guild, was a "lobbying organization on behalf of Indian craftsmen . . . ."[10] Crediting the Guild with viewing conservation of Aboriginal culture as imperative, he states that the organization saw arts and crafts as inseparable from Native culture.[11] However, he summarizes the impact of the Guild's (and by inference the WAAC's) effort to preserve Native culture, which he described as an effort to "encourage, retain, revise, and develop . . . ," by pointing out that it completely altered that which is sought to retain. "Little did they [the members] realize," he writes, "that their efforts to create a viable commercial market would also encourage the evolution of a style far removed from any traditional trait of

---

[9] Thompson, *A Worthy Place*, 106.

[10] In Elizabeth McLuhan and Tom Hill, *Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985) 9-27, 16.

[11] Hill, Indian Art, *Norval Morrisseau*, 16. This process of "saving" parts of a culture before it dies out has been dubbed the "salvage paradigm" by James Clifford. See "Of Other Peoples: Beyond the 'Salvage' Paradigm," *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, ed., Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987) 121-130.

Indian societies."[12] In other words, when Hill discusses arts and crafts, he identifies it as a form of acculturation where Native art became commercialized and Westernized. In this context he sees arts and crafts (also called tourist art, curios, souvenirs, and/or handicrafts) as an integral step in the evolution of what is now recognized as Native Art. Hill argues that arts and crafts should not be neglected because they were once deemed merely souvenir or "tourist arts." While not the focus of his discussion, Hill argues persuasively that the WAAC and the Canadian Handicraft Guild were important patrons in the historical development of Native Art.

Further consideration of WAAC handicraft patronage is provided by Cree art historian Gerald McMaster in "Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period."[13] In presenting a history of Native crafts production and the various organizations that promoted and influenced Native handicraft, McMaster makes clear that the "Reservation period" (which he defines as the last 100 years) is an important part of Native art history. The very term he uses, "Reservation Period," is politically charged, underscoring how Native communities were separate and contained, enduring tremendous social, political, religious and cultural change under Euro-American dominance. This drastically altered the lives of Native peoples and the work they produced. In this discussion he, like Hill, details the WAAC's devotion to preserving Native visual culture. In this sense, McMaster's work supports the idea that the WAAC played an important

---

[12] Hill, "Indian Art," *Norval Morrisseau*, 16-17.

[13] Gerald McMaster, "Tenuous Lines of Descent," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 9, (1989): 205-236.

role in the history of Native art in Canada. Like Hill, McMaster argues that what he calls "modern Indian painting and sculpture" evolved from Native arts and crafts, and while that art and craft was altered by Euro-American contact, it is vitally important to a history of Native art. Presumably so too are the structures of support and kinds of patronage — among them the WAAC's— that sustained Native art into the contemporary period.

A full assessment of the importance of this material to Aboriginal art history, however, is hampered as well by the inferior position in which these objects are currently situated in collections and displays. Art historian Ruth Phillips argues in a series of articles that Native art has been relegated to a lower position in an artistic hierarchy, intentionally and unintentionally, through classification and collection techniques. In her 1993 examination of museum collecting, "How Museums Marginalize: Naming Domains of Inclusion and Exclusion," Phillips demonstrates that the museums' methods of classification, inclusion and exclusion, and naming categories preserve a hierarchy based on race, gender and class.[14] She points out that the institutional environment assigns Native objects in museums, not to History —placing the producers on the same level as Western peoples— but to Ethnography, where they are presented in an ahistorical past sometime prior to the Western present.[15] She states that the consequences of this method

[14] Ruth Phillips, "How Museums Marginalise: Naming Domains of Inclusion and Exclusion," *The Cambridge Review* (1993): 6-10.

[15] This location of North American Aboriginal peoples outside historical time is thoroughly examined by anthropologist Johannes Fabian in *Time and the Other, How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). He demonstrates that contemporaneous non-Western peoples were viewed by anthropologists, right up to the 1960s, as standing outside the present in an unchanging, indeterminate past. Because Aboriginal peoples (as Primitive) were not conceived by Euro-Americans as capable of *producing* change, it was

of classification are to reinforce nineteenth-century ideas of "otherness" that intentionally rejected signs of adaptation and change in non-Western cultures and "privileged instead objects to which essentialist meanings of cultural difference could be attached that could be regarded as permanent and unchanging."[16] Phillips states that this approach not only denies shared parts of history but underscores difference —difference that does not reflect respect, but uses an outmoded, Eurocentric view reinforcing cultural domination. Pointing out that scholars have abstracted Native art from Native culture, colonising it and detaching it from its meaning, Phillips develops the argument further in her 1994 examination of the relationship between art history and anthropology, "Fielding Cultural Dialogues Between Art History and Anthropology."[17] Phillips notes that in contrast to the treatment Native art receives, Western art is studied as an integral part of its culture, bringing meaning to both the art and the culture. Her argument attacks the ways institutions have contextualized and interpreted both Western and non-Western art. She states that using Victorian notions of progress and slotting cultures into a progressive historical evolution with Western art as the ultimate achievement, intentionally or not,

---

believed they would eventually be assimilated and succumb to the "modern" world, losing their identity and individuality. See also Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," in *Writing Culture, The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds., James Clifford and George E. Marcus, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986) 98-121.

[16] Phillips, "How Museums Marginalise," 8.

[17] Ruth Phillips, "Fielding Cultural Dialogues Between Art History and Anthropology" *Museum Anthropology* 18 (1994) 39-46.

designates Native art as a less significant form than Western art. She argues that adaptation of outside influence, say Euro-American, into the art of Aboriginal peoples does not make the art less authentic; rather it places it in an historical context "as a valid form of post-colonial expression."[18]

A case in point for Phillips's arguments is provided in her 1995 analysis of the treatment of Native arts and crafts, "Why Not Tourist Art? Significant Silences in Native American Museum Representation." [19] She argues that "tourist art," or Native arts and crafts, has been excluded from the category of fine art not only because it was influenced by Euro-Americans, making it insufficiently primitive, but also, in direct contradiction, because Natives were seen as primitive people outside of Western contemporary time. She goes on to argue that dismissing arts and crafts supported an agenda of those who controlled Native lands and resources so they could retain their economic and social positions, power and authority.[20] Essentially, Phillips argues for a respectful place for

---

[18] Phillips, "Fielding Cultural Dialogues," (42).

[19] *After Colonialism: Imperialism and the Colonial Aftermath*, ed., Gyan Prakash, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995) 98-125.

[20] Additional support for this belief is expressed by Native scholar Marcia Crosby in "Construction of the Imaginary Indian" *Vancouver Anthology: the institutional politics of art*, ed. Stan Douglas, (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991) 267-291, where she contends that much support for Native art was predicated on a system of power relations that privileged, not the makers, but those who "preserved" the work for their own purposes. A similar argument is made by American anthropologist Richard Handler in his 1985 article "On Having a Culture: Nationalism and the Preservation of Quebec's Patrimoine," *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed., George W. Stocking, Jr. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) 192-217, where he argues that objects are preserved and discarded to support a specific political agenda that includes interpreting culture in favour of those who appropriate it. He uses the case of the government of Quebec establishing links with early French settlement to establish a separate identity from the rest of Canada.

Native art and handicraft within a context and history that reveals its importance to its producers and relevance to what is now recognized as Native art.

While the WAAC is important to the history of Native art and handicraft, one might ask why such an organization —predominantly composed of middle- and upper-class women— embarked upon the patronage of handicraft in the first place. At its most basic level, this interest in what were seen as traditional handicrafts reflected the organizations members' admiration for earlier times and modes. In this, they were part of a larger, international movement that was largely driven by the belief that the industrial revolution had seriously marred social and artistic life. It advocated a return to the medieval-style guild and apprenticeship system to ensure standards and to provide decent income for workers.[21] This is, in fact, the language the WAAC used to advertise its intentions regarding handicraft production. Canadian historian Veronica Strong-Boag points out that the WAAC's efforts to promote handicraft reflected many women's suspicion of progress and longing to return to "simpler standards of behaviour."[22] A 1904 article supporting the WAAC's endeavours describes the effects of industrialization and the rewards expected by counteracting it:

> The cheap machine-made article has become cheaper and less beautiful; "imitation and cheapness reign supreme," as one up-holder of the arts and crafts movement puts it. A reaction has set in . . . Handwork long

---

[21] Walter Crane, "Of the Revival of Design and Handicraft: with notes on the work of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society," *Arts and Crafts Essays, Preface by William Morris* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977) 1-21, 13.

[22] Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, 1976) 228-229.

> superseded by the soulless machine, which turns out crude imitations by the hundreds and thousands, is at last being treated with respect . . . .[23]

This widely felt and expressed suspicion of the Modern has subsequently been termed antimodernism.

Anti-modern sentiment was strongly felt by WAAC members at the turn of the twentieth century and had a distinct place in its patronage of handicraft. As such, it is essential to examine the logic behind antimodernism's rise and influence. American historian T.J. Jackson Lears provides the reasoning behind antimodernism in *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920*, his 1981 examination of the motivations behind anti-modern feeling in the Northeastern United States at the turn of the century.[24] Lears points out that rapid industrial growth led to changes in the middle- and upper-classes that included increased income and spending ability, more consumer products and a less physical life; in short, a better standard of living. At the same time, the beneficiaries of this progress could see changes in their environments that included pollution, a faster pace, more crowding and a sense of loss of community, family and religion. He argues that while the elite appreciated the benefits of modern life, its members were sufficiently troubled by its drawbacks that they sought avenues to relieve their perceived loss of traditional values in methods that included the advocacy and promotion of what they saw as traditional, pre-modern crafts and systems

---

[23] Emily Roome, "The Revival of Home Arts in Canada," *Canadian Good Housekeeping*, 2 (January 1904): 13.

[24] T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

of production.[25] Lears says this feeling was transatlantic and, as Karen Knudson points out in her investigation of Toronto's Arts and Letters Club, the feeling was widely expressed in Canada as well.[26] Taken together, Lears and Knudson explain why the WAAC's membership —part of Canada's female elite— was attracted to handicraft patronage.

Antimodernism was a wide-spread phenomenon, indeed anti-modern sentiment was also strongly expressed in Britain, as evidenced in the English Arts and Crafts movement. WAAC members often revealed a knowledge of, and admiration for, this movement which was based on the ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris. Indeed, nothing better expresses Morris's anti-modern views than his statement that "apart from my desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life is hatred of modern civilisation."[27] The reasoning behind Morris's emotion was his belief that the Industrial Revolution separated workers from satisfaction in and the value of their work, resulting in badly made goods produced by working-class people with no interest in the merit of their products. As noted above, believers in the Arts and Crafts movement maintained that the guild system —groups of merchants or tradesmen organized to maintain standards and protect members' interests— resulted in better design and production standards, and

---

[25] Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 4-58.

[26] Karen Knudson, "Introduction," *"Absolute Escape from all that otherwise made Toronto:" Antimodernism and the Arts and Letters Club, 1908-1920* (Kingston: Queen's University, 1995).

[27] Quoted by Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan in *The Arts and Craft Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991) 15.

higher standards of living for producers.[28] In the following chapters, I demonstrate that the WAAC adopted these tenets under the umbrella of its own organization, and used the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement to influence external, predominantly female, handicraft workers and paid them to alter the products they produced. Anti-modern feeling, therefore, had widespread influence in Canada, and in fact, shaped both internal WAAC decisions and caused the WAAC's membership to apply their authority to change the nature of work produced in Canada.

Further insight into such examples of antimodernism in Canada as the WAAC's is provided by Ian McKay's 1994 investigation of folklore and its mid-twentieth century study in Nova Scotia, *The Quest for the Folk.*[29] McKay places his work within the greater study of folklore, folklore having its roots in the Enlightenment idea of the noble savage, or the pure noble peasant —the "Folk"— who embodied the essence of their place of origin. He states that this idea of the Folk transformed into a kind of romantic nationalism which identified the work of the Folk (including songs and tales) as representative of the nation; indeed, the Folk by their "existence and culture testified to

---

[28] For more information on the Arts and Crafts Movement see *Arts and Crafts Essays, Preface by William Morris* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977). For more information on its influence in Canada see, Carole Silver, "Setting the Crooked Straight," *This Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and His Circle from Canadian Collections* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario and Key Porter Books Limited, 1993) 1-17 and Rosalind Pepall, "Under the Spell of Morris, " *This Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and His Circle from Canadian Collections* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario and Key Porter Books Limited, 1993) 18-35.

[29] Ian MacKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

the possibility and necessity of the nation."[30] McKay develops this line of thought to point out links between the Folk and the elite that carried them together into nationhood. Identifying Folk with the Nation seemingly contradicted notions of class to the point where the work of the Folk was assimilated by the elite and the Nation. As he phrases it, "[s]uch organic, natural ties as existed between the Folk and the Nation were far more essential than the superficial and transitory divisions of ethnicity, gender, or class."[31] McKay then traces nineteenth- and twentieth-century pursuit of the Folk to fear of, and dissatisfaction with, the modern world, which he too calls antimodernism. He states that, in Nova Scotia, study of the Folk was pursued by "urban cultural producers" who used their romantic notions of the Folk to further specific agendas. Having linked Folk and nationalism, McKay includes nationalism among these agendas. He also points out that ideas about the Folk served a double purpose, helping those who desired a new vision of their communities, and at the same time, supporting ideas about "restoration of a comforting conservative ideal."[32] He places handicrafts among the disciplines involved in folklore and says that its pursuit was often tied to teaching.[33] I will add to this scholarship by demonstrating that, at an even earlier moment than that studied by McKay, these were activities in which the WAAC's members engaged, responding to their new sense of nation and new way of seeing their society. At the same time, however, and in

---

[30] McKay, *Quest for the Folk*, 12.

[31] McKay, *Quest for the Folk*, 13.

[32] McKay, *Quest for the Folk*, 37.

[33] McKay, *Quest for the Folk*, 38.

much the same way as the elites McKay studied, they maintained the status quo, upholding their social position, while using handicraft and its teaching as a way to achieve nationalistic ends.

Additional understanding of the WAAC's position and nationalistic agenda can be provided by folklorist Carole Henderson Carpenter's 1979 study, *Many Voices: A Study of Folklore Activities in Canada and their Role in Canadian Culture.*[34] While initially writing a history of folklore study in Canada and creating a comprehensive bibliography of Canadian folklore, Carpenter discovered that the group she calls Anglo-Canadians dominated the study and perpetuation of folklore. She says this reflects Canadian history, which she describes as ". . . interwoven with the assertions of dominance of one culture over another . . . ."[35] Carpenter establishes that, in folklore study, the dominant group has been what she calls "Anglo-Canadian," specifically "Anglo-Canadians" with a British-based attitude.[36] Despite this "Anglo" assumption of power, however, Carpenter asserts that other cultures have not only been tolerated, but also encouraged by the dominant group to express their ethnicity. Among the reasons she cites for tolerance of minority-group folklore are: a desire to both recognise a French-Canadian existence and place in

---

[34] Carole Henderson Carpenter, *Many Voices: A Study of Folklore Activities in Canada and their Role in Canadian Culture* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Canadian Centre for Folk Studies, 1979).

[35] Carpenter, *Many Voices,* 264.

[36] In support of Carpenter, Janet McNaughton echoes this contention of "British-based" dominance, stating that "Anglo-conformity" was a conscious, official doctrine in Canada into the 1940s although she connects this philosophy to the "assimilation of immigrants in English Canada . . . ." [see McNaughton, "John Murray Gibbon," *Canadian Folklore* 3(1981):67-73, 70].

Canada while also lessening its impact by recognising other cultures; a lack of a recognised innate Canadian national tradition; and a need to be different from the United States. Carpenter points out that, at the same time as the majority culture tolerated other ethnicities, it used so-called "traditional" material as a form of cultural oppression and as a way of maintaining boundaries between groups.

In view of this, it is perhaps ironic that such an Anglo-Canadian group as the WAAC originated to address the exclusion of women from participation in a male-dominated art world. However, theirs was a time in which even Anglo-Canadian women's artistic enterprises were dismissed as unimportant. As English art historians Griselda Pollock and Roszika Parker point out in their 1989 anthology *Old Mistresses, Women, Art and Ideology,* the Victorian world separated men's and women's spheres (extending the divorce to art and art institutions) and then argued that women were excluded on the basis of "lesser talent and no historical significance."[37] Women were not admitted to academies on an equal footing and therefore did not have the same quality of training available. When Parker and Pollock write that "[t]his institutionally constructed segregation was then represented as evidence of an innate inequality of talent," they mean that this isolation resulted in an inferior position for women that had no connection to ability.[38] Without the same training, women pursued different forms of art practice and different genres than men. An effect of this segregation was that certain art forms came

---

[37] Griselda Pollock and Roszika Parker, *Old Mistresses, Women, Art and Ideology*, (London: Pandora Press, 1989) 44-45.

[38] Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses,* 35.

to be associated with women, and therefore were "... relegated to a lesser cultural sphere ...."[39] Parker and Pollock build on these separations to enumerate a hierarchy in art forms with painting and sculpture at the top and other forms, functional art or craft, occupying a lower position on the scale because it is more closely aligned with skill than intelligence. Having outlined women's work as inferior, and craft as occupying a lower position than art, they argue as well that craft became available to women because of its lower position in the hierarchy. This hierarchy, they argue, extended beyond art and could be linked to class stratification. In addition to the position that gender plays in art, they argue as well that the hierarchies that relegated specific work to women also placed men who did those tasks in a lower level of the class system:

> The art and craft division can undoubtedly be read on class lines, with an economic and social system dictating new definitions of the artist as opposed to the artisan. However, there is an important connection between the new hierarchy of the arts and sexual categorization ....[40]

Not only is this hierarchy of art practice connected to gender and class, but Parker and Pollock go so far as to say that it is also implicitly combined with race.[41] My study will demonstrate that the WAAC pursued handicraft patronage within exactly these parameters: excluded from mainstream art production themselves, the WAAC's

---

[39] Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 50.

[40] Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 51.

[41] Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, supports this in "Putting Hierarchy in Its Place," [*Rereading Cultural Anthropology*, ed., George E. Marcus, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992) 34-47, where he establishes exact positions within hierarchies based on naming conventions. He argues that "Native" as a derogatory term is lower on the hierarchical scale than "Folk." We therefore have a hierarchy where craft is lower on the scale than art, and craft can be divided into Folk (or Ethnic) and Native, with Native occupying the lowest position on the scale.

membership sought out handicraft as an avenue that was available to them on the grounds of gender, class and race.

American art historian Kathleen McCarthy builds on Parker and Pollock's ground-breaking scholarship to develop a theory of women's patronage activities during the modern era in the United States. In *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930,* McCarthy lays out a pattern of women's patronage demonstrating that the art forms chosen for patronage, the methods women adopted to support those forms and the very act of patronage by women during this era relegated those forms to inferior positions.[42] Socially and economically inferior, women could not and did not compete with men. She notes that women's organizations confused the agenda when they mixed patronage with philanthropy, making the outcome seem like charity rather than the support of art. McCarthy's work demonstrates that women's art patronage did not elevate women's position in the art world as patrons or producers. She also shows that, in fact, it marginalized those it sought to assist —that female patronage did indeed prove to be a kind of charity.

Philanthropic endeavours undertaken by women have also been outlined within the broader study of Canadian women's cultural and social activities undertaken by historian Veronica Strong-Boag in *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929.* Arguing that upper- and middle-class women were driven by a strong sense of *noblesse oblige,* as well as having extra leisure time and better

[42] Kathleen McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

education, she describes the organization of "[n]ew associations [that] reflected the efforts of middle-class citizens to affirm community leadership, reform social structures and fix class relationships."[43] Strong-Boag relates the personalities and prevailing social conditions that drove Canadian women to create and join the Council.[44] I will build on her work, by not only demonstrating how the activities of one women's organization confirms her contentions, but also expanding the discussion into the sphere of fine arts by examining how the "fixing of relationships" affected the work of those patronized.

Ultimately, my examination of WAAC patronage activities is an analysis of social relationships in Canada at the turn-of-the-century. These relationships revolve around class, race and gender and have relevance beyond the confines of art and patronage. They say something about Canadian society and the political agendas active at the turn of the century. In this sense, American scholar Robin Kelly encapsulates my argument in his appeal for an examination of popular culture that integrates cultural studies with historical studies:

> . . . terms like 'folk,' 'authentic,' and 'traditional' are socially constructed categories that have something to do with the reproduction of race, class, and gender hierarchies and the policing of the boundaries of modernism. 'Folk' and 'modern' are both mutually dependent concepts embedded in unstable historically and socially constituted systems of classification.[45]

---

[43] Strong-Boag, *Parliament of Women,* 2.

[44] For more information on the National Council of Women of Canada see N.E.S. Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women of Canada - 1893-1993* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, Inc., 1993).

[45] Robin Kelly, "Notes on Deconstructing the Folk," *American Historical Review,* 97 (December 1992): 1400-1408.

Taken as a whole, the WAAC participated in the social construction Kelly discusses. In the context of turn-of-the-century Canada, it pursued its agenda, however unknowing, in the midst of the issues recently dealt with by the scholars I have just discussed. It genuinely sought to aid people like Drummond's Josette, while it used them toward its own advancement. If, in keeping with Drummond's poem, the WAAC was "little sister," what does it mean for the Association to be "helpin dem all along"? That is the question I explore in the following chapters.

CHAPTER ONE:

TO PRESERVE AND ENCOURAGE THE HOME INDUSTRIES

The first published indication that the Women's Art Association of Canada (WAAC) was interested in handicrafts is contained in its Annual Report for the year ending September 1899, "President's Memoranda of the Year's Work and Progress." There, WAAC President Mary Ella Dignam stated, "The feeling has grown very strong during the year that this Association should do more than heretofore in the encouragement of Handicrafts."[1] She proceeded to discuss those industries she believed worthy of encouragement —lace-making, artistic embroideries, wood carving, bookbinding, stained glass, metal work and pottery— then exhorted the membership to support these efforts by saying, "even the most ordinary of our home industries should be encouraged and lifted up to a plane worthy of consideration from an artistic standpoint."[2] She then developed her theme by arguing that the hand-work of the Doukhobor —a group she described as "pioneer settlers"— was also worthy of inclusion in this group. "To preserve and encourage the home industries of this people," she declared, "should be our care."[3] This memoranda, which provides the outline of her ambitions for handicrafts, was

---

[1] M.E. Dignam, "President's Memoranda of the Year's Work and Progress," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1899*, 6, Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada, Toronto (hereafter WAAC Archives).

[2] "President's Memoranda," *Annual Report 1899*, 7.

[3] "President's Memoranda," *Annual Report 1899*, 7.

the start of what Allison Thompson calls "the successful revival of handicrafts [in Canada]. . . at the turn-of-the-century."[4] According to Thompson, this "revival" can be credited to the WAAC. [5]

Only a year earlier, in her President's Memoranda to the 1898 *Annual Report*, Dignam stated flatly that the objective of the WAAC was "not a commercial one."[6] The objective was, in her words,

> . . . to kindle and keep alive the artistic impulse of the country, to stimulate worthy artistic production, and by united study and effort, to attain as women a worthy place in the Art of our country, both in a cultivated conception and in aspiring to high ideals in our productions.[7]

This statement of intent does not mention handicrafts, and thus raises the question as to how the WAAC came to include the promotion of handicraft in its objectives the next year.

This is the question I examine in this chapter. I do this through a short review of the WAAC's history, by describing the artistic environment open to women in the early years of the WAAC's existence, by outlining the Association's affiliations both nationally

---

[4] Allison Thompson, *A Worthy Place in the Art of Our Country: The Women's Art Association of Canada 1887-1987*, Masters Thesis (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1989) 87.

[5] Thompson, *A Worthy Place*, 87. While I question Thompson's use of the term revival, which suggests there was a recognisable movement in handicrafts that flagged before the WAAC began its activities, examination of earlier handicraft production is not the aim of this thesis and will not be examined here.

[6] M.E. Dignam, "President's Memoranda of the Year's Work and Progress," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1898*, 6, WAAC Archives.

[7] "President's Memoranda," *Annual Report 1898*, 6.

and internationally, and by analyzing how the WAAC came to include various groups in its domain. I argue that while the Association struggled against its own position in the established order and sought to promote the work of women, its efforts reinforced the existing position of women and women's work. In other words, the WAAC actually upheld the established order and reinforced hierarchical positions in the social order at the same time it engaged in philanthropic efforts to advance its protégeés and their work.

Ironically, the WAAC was formed in response to a social and cultural environment that systematically rejected female participation. Almost fifty years after the WAAC's establishment, Dignam was quoted in a *Christian Science Monitor* article as saying working and exhibition conditions for women artists in Canada were so adverse she had felt compelled to do something for women and the only answer seemed to be the formation of the Women's Art Association.[8] Historian Maria Tippett describes the environment referred to by Dignam as one of exclusion, writing ". . . no matter what they [women] did to establish themselves in these areas [as promoters, educators and producers of art], their efforts were marginalized by the predominantly male art community around them."[9] Dignam had remarked on this isolation earlier, in a 1900 article on the development of art in Canada, when she described the lack of role permitted women in the Canadian Academy: "Women were pronounced eligible for membership,

---

[8] Violet Dickens, "Half-Century of Leadership in Canadian Arts," *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston: 18 March 1936), quoted in Thompson, *A Worthy Place,* 50.

[9] Maria Tippett, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Viking, 1992) 38.

but were not required to attend business meetings, neither could their names be placed upon the list of rotation for the Council, so their position was but a nominal one, and was never really acted upon."[10] She went on to note, with some indignation, that the Academy had prohibited certain types of activity generally performed by women, but not considered art: "It was also thought necessary to supply a clause in the constitution prohibiting the admission of–[sic] 'needlework, artificial flowers, cut paper, shellwork, models in coloured wax or any such performance'–[sic] which explains the status of women in art . . . ."[11] While she seemed to articulate a belief that the Academy thought women naive enough to advance these forms as art alongside painting and sculpture, she also expressed the idea that the established order did not take seriously art created by women.

As though commenting on this situation as well, Florence Deeks's 1912 "Historical Sketch of the Women's Art Association of Canada" portrays the WAAC as a group of individuals willing to shoulder tremendous burdens to provide new and serious opportunities for female artists and to educate the public. The "History" details what Deeks describes as "a group of young women" who banded together in 1887 to give themselves the chance of engaging in basic art practices such as "drawing, painting,

---

[10] M.E. Dignam, "Canadian Women in the Development of Art," *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, National Council of Women of Canada, 1900, 214.

[11] Dignam, "Canadian Women," *Women of Canada*, 214.

modelling, and also sketching from still life, and the living model . . . ."[12] Deeks states that sketching from the living model was new, although she did not specify whether she meant new to women or new to art students in Toronto.

In either case, the radical nature of the group is suggested by the existence of life classes, which generally refer to the study of the nude. Indeed, there was great controversy about women's participation in life drawing classes all through the nineteenth century. It was believed that decent women should not have their sensibilities offended, or inflamed, by low creatures who might be forced by circumstances to offer themselves naked for public view.[13] As feminist writer Germaine Greer notes in *The Obstacle Race*, her review of female artistic creativity, cows and sheep were often substituted for humans in female life classes "as a solution to the problems of modesty."[14] Thompson notes in her discussion of the WAAC that, although the Royal Canadian Academy offered subsidized life classes in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto, these classes were restricted to males. While participation in life classes would have no effect on the WAAC's pursuit of handicraft patronage, the willingness of the organization to withstand Victorian censure in order to pursue artistic goals indicates a commitment to art production not previously seen among Canadian women. Its members were willing to risk criticism because they wanted to know and wanted to belong to the male world of art.

---

[12] "Historical Sketch of the Women's Art Association of Canada, prepared by Miss F. Deeks and read by Mrs. W.D. Gregory, on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Association, Toronto, May 15th, 1912," 1, Library of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

[13] Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990) 165-166.

[14] Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race* (New York: Farrar Staus Giroux, 1979) 320.

Deeks's history also records the evolution of the WAAC from this informal group of young women who took prizes in shows and originated "Exhibitions, Lectures, Courses in Art, At Homes, Musicales and Sketching Clubs" to the formation of the Women's Art Club, a Toronto-based organization boasting a Statement of Intent, active artistic members, official patronesses and associate members. In keeping with the development of the group, the Club also chose a motto, "Labore et Constatia" (By Labour and Constancy), which reflected awareness not only of the enormity of the Club's perceived task, but because the motto originated with the Plantin Printers of Antwerp, also of established art societies. The organization continued to grow, drawing exhibition entries from Montreal, Portage la Prairie, Winnipeg and "different cities in the United States," until in 1892 its national aspirations were realized in the formation of The Woman's Art Association of Canada.[15] In December 1893 the WAAC changed its constitution to provide for Branch Societies.[16] This led to the immediate formation of branches in Winnipeg and London. Additional branches were formed in other cities until at various times there were associations in Ontario in Hamilton, Brockville, St. Thomas, Kingston, Ottawa, Peterborough, Owen Sound, Sudbury, Welland and Oshawa, and in Quebec in Montreal. The Maritime provinces had branches in St. Johns, Charlottetown, Moncton, and Fredericton, while the Prairie provinces were represented by branches in Portage La Prairie, Edmonton, Brandon, and Regina. British Columbia boasted one in

---

[15] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 3.

[16] Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929*, (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, 1976) 28.

Fernie, in the province's interior.[17] Deeks notes that there were also representatives in Vancouver, Victoria, London (England), Edinburgh, the Hague and Holland.[18] There are still functioning arms of the Association in Toronto, Hamilton, St. Thomas, Owen Sound and Oshawa.

Examination of the WAAC's membership and patronage lists reveals the class basis of the organization. The membership consisted of middle- and upper-class women, with the wife of the Governor General acting as Honourary President and chief patroness. (This latter practice was started when noted reformer and supporter of the National Council of Women of Canada [NCWC] Lady Ishbel Aberdeen became the WAAC's first Honourary President.)[19] A brief review of the Association's early catalogues and *Annual Reports* also reveals the patronage of Lords and Ladies, Knights, judges, doctors and members of parliament and senate. The membership lists show active members who were interested in art-making (including such prominent artists as Laura Muntz) and associate members who might have joined for the social connections the Association provided. At a time when the average female factory worker earned $3.00 a week, we can assume working-class women would have been excluded, because they would have neither the funds for handicraft or art supplies nor the $10.00 annual membership fees

[17] This list is a compilation of information supplied by Thompson, *A Worthy Place,* 202 and Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 4.

[18] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 4.

[19] See Strong-Boag, *Parliament of Women,* for Lady Aberdeen"s influence on the first wave of the Canadian women's movement.

that affiliation with the WAAC required.[20] In her 1900 article for the book, *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, which the NCWC prepared for the Paris World's Fair of that year, Dignam alluded to this class orientation, writing, ". . . to-day [sic] it is in the oldest centres of population, where accumulated wealth has formed a class possessing both leisure and cultivation, that works of art are collected in public and private galleries, that artists are encouraged and Schools founded."[21]

This dimension of the Association was reinforced in 1893 when the WAAC joined the NCWC, a voluntary organization dedicated to involving Canadian women for the social betterment of women and families in their communities and working lives. This affiliation entrenched the Association firmly in the "women's club movement," a movement described by Veronica Strong-Boag as including activities for change in most aspects of women's lives and "encompassing feminine collectivities dealing with education, culture, philanthropy, reform, politics, professions and religion."[22] Strong-Boag firmly establishes the profile of the clubs as middle-class. In presenting the Association's decision to join the NCWC, Correspondence Secretary Margaret J. Hempsted noted that the WAAC was the first organization to join the NCWC

---

[20] Lady Aberdeen, NCWC Yearbook 1894, 61, quoted in N.E.S. Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1993* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993) 35; "The Women's Art Association of Canada," *Women's Art Association of Canada Annual Report 1916-1917, Thirtieth Anniversary Issue*, 8, Library of the National Gallery of Canada.

[21] Dignam, "Canadian Women," *Women of Canada,* 210.

[22] Strong-Boag, *Parliament of Women*, 2.

on a national level and, in Toronto, the second local group.[23] This affiliation further underscores the middle- and upper-class nature of the WAAC, as these associations were formed not simply for community leadership and reform purposes but also, as Strong-Boag points out, to "fix class relationships."[24] While change was explicit in the WAAC's original mandate, the idea was not to subvert social structures, but to strengthen the place of women in society. Strong-Boag delineates this dual purpose in her discussion of the women's club movement when she says,

> Citizens were to be encouraged and at times coerced into adopting attitudes which would augment and serve the existing social order. Female managers supported by the National Council would humanize, repair and stabilize a world which most inevitably offered its special prizes to those of the middle class.[25]

The involvement with the NCWC led to increased commitments for WAAC members. Not only was there a need to send representatives to NCWC meetings, but WAAC personnel became office-holders as well. As the Association's President, Dignam was appointed a member of the NCWC Executive. In this capacity she presented a paper, "Women in Art, in Canada," to the Council at the 1894 meeting.[26] According to Fannie McMaster, a WAAC Delegate to the NCWC National Council, the next year Dignam advocated the promotion of art matters, not simply art consumption, by "making

---

[23] *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and Its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1894*, 2, WAAC Archives.

[24] Strong-Boag, Parliament of Women, 2.

[25] Strong-Boag, *Parliament of Women*, 6.

[26] Hemsted, *Annual Report 1894*, 3.

the 'True' and the 'Beautiful' part of our daily lives."[27] The "True" and the "Beautiful" refer to the work and ideas of English art critic and aesthetic John Ruskin, a strong supporter of the English Arts and Crafts movement.[28] This practice of presenting papers continued, as Deeks noted in her 1912 "History," stating, "at each of the nineteen annual meetings since papers have been read and art congresses have been arranged, thus giving the Association a wider propaganda."[29]

This "wider propaganda" led to wider commitments. The 1896 *Annual Report* recorded communication with the manager of the Toronto Industrial Exhibition (TIE) requesting that two members of the WAAC be appointed to work with the Board in arranging a September exhibition.[30] While the Recording Secretary did not explain the intentions of the TIE organizers or the arrangements involved, Dignam described the display in her 1899 "President's Memoranda" as the Association's first real effort to promote handicrafts to the general public. The same kind of letter as that mentioned in 1896 was noted in the *Annual Report* for 1897,[31] but correspondence was not mentioned

---

[27] Fannie A. McMaster, "Report of Delegates to National Council of Women of Canada," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and Its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1895*, 24, WAAC Archives.

[28] John Ruskin, *The True and the Beautiful* (New York: H.M. Caldwell Company, nd).

[29] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 3.

[30] Emily F. Denison, "Secretary's Report 1895-96," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and Its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1896*, 4, WAAC Archives.

[31] Emily F. Denison, "Annual Report of the Woman's Art Association of Canada," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and Its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1897*, 7, WAAC Archives.

after 1899. This probably indicates that the involvement in the TIE had become a matter of such routine that it was not worthy of additional written notice. In the *1899 Annual Report*, the Industrial Fair is remarked upon in terms of a desire to improve the work displayed in the Amateur Art Department and the Department of Home Industries.[32] At this time the WAAC was probably showing ceramics and may have exhibited some other types of members' work. For example, as part of an 1895 celebration of the anniversary of John Cabot's landing in Canada, the WAAC membership sponsored female ceramic artists in the preparation of a "Historical Dinner Set" which was later presented to Lady Aberdeen.[33] The artists painted and fired white-ware imported from Doulton's in England and the set toured various Canadian cities before it was presented and eventually paid for through private subscription by Senators and Members of the House of Commons.[34]

The WAAC did not confine itself to local or even national exhibitions, entering the international scene in 1898. In her "President's Memoranda" that year Dignam reported that, in connection with her work at the NCWC, she had been appointed to a committee to request exhibition space for "women's work" at the 1900 Paris International Exposition.[35] That request, which was denied by the Canadian government due to space

---

[32] M.J. Hemsted, "Annual Report of the Woman's Art Association of Canada," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and Its Branches for the Year Ending September Annual Report 1899*, 11, WAAC Archives.

[33] Denison, "Secretary's Report, 1895-96," *Annual Report 1896*, 3.

[34] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 3-4.

[35] Dignam, "President's Memoranda," *Annual Report 1898*, 7.

problems, resulted instead in the publication of *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, which was prepared by the NCWC for distribution at the Fair. Writing in its "Introduction," the Convener of the Committee of Arrangements, G. Julia Drummond, argued in turn that exhibition space was not only denied the WAAC and NCWC because of space problems, but also because exhibition commissioners believed segregating the women's work was more insulting than complimentary.[36] Believing it necessary to present the voice of Canadian women at the Exhibition, then NCWC President Lady Aberdeen stated in the "Prefatory Note" to *Women of Canada* that the book provided a summary of the history, achievements, and position of Canadian women.[37] As part of the Association's program to encourage and promote art, handicrafts and home industries, moreover, Dignam had been given the task of organizing information on arts and handicrafts as well as preparation of a short essay describing the artistic development of Canadian women.

At the same time, the responsibilities and affiliations of the WAAC had also begun to increase. In the same 1898 "President's Memoranda," for instance, Dignam noted the Association's recent efforts to internationalize when she announced its affiliation with the Women's Institute in London. Such a connection meant that reports and data about the WAAC would be on file in London and the WAAC members would

---

[36] G. Julia Drummond, "Introductory," *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, National Council of Women of Canada, 1900, 1.

[37] Ishbel Aberdeen, "Prefatory Note," *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, National Council of Women of Canada, 1900, iii.

be welcome at the Institute in London, providing a wider audience for work produced by WAAC members.[38] (Dignam eventually became convenor of Arts and Letters for the Institute.)[39] The Memorandum also outlined the Association's other alliances, which included regional, provincial, national and international organizations:

> Reports have been exchanged with the National Academy of Design, New York, the Ontario Society of Artists, the Royal Canadian Academy, and the Montreal Art Association. Prominent foreign members and artists have been corresponded with and have been kept in touch with our work, which has also been kept in constant review by a generous and kindly press.[40]

In her "History," Deeks noted that the WAAC also assisted in art instruction and held exhibitions in public schools, advanced better display of work at industrial fairs and offered prizes for designs that could be used in manufacturing.[41] Eventually, the WAAC extended both its patronage of handicraft and its overseas affiliations to the point where it communicated with the Arts and Crafts Association of London, England, and sent exhibits to expositions at St. Louis, Edinburgh, London, and Melbourne, Australia, as well as to several European cities.[42] It also established a permanent depot with the Society of Artists, Bond Street, London and with the Women's Institute in London.[43] By

---

[38] Dignam, "President's Memoranda," *Annual Report 1898*, 7.

[39] "Mrs. Dignam, Toronto Art Leader, Dies," unidentified [Toronto newspaper] clipping, 6 September 1938, Women's Art Association of Canada Scrapbooks [herafter Scrapbooks], WAAC Archives [hereafter, Scapbooks].

[40] Dignam, "President's Memoranda," *Annual Report 1898*, 7.

[41] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 4.

[42] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 6-7.

[43] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 6-7.

1916, a thirtieth anniversary history also recorded affiliation with the Toronto Society of the Archaeological Institute of America, the Toronto Guild of Civic Art, the National Society of Craftsmen in New York, the International Art Club in London, the Women's Art Club of New York and L'Industrie Feminile Italiane of Rome.[44]

The WAAC seemed to be stretching its personnel and intentions to include itself in all forms of artistic activity. It is important to note, however, that it confined itself to a position where it did not compete with work associated with or dominated by men. In the inaugural address of the Montreal Branch, Mrs. Ashley Carus-Wilson, who chaired the first meeting, deliberately pointed this out when she said, "Let it be clearly understood then, that there is no thought of superseding or entering into rivalry with existing unions for the encouragement of art. The aim rather is to supplement these . . . ."[45] Deeks repeated this idea later, albeit in another form, when she stated that the Association had no desire to provide instruction already available "at home or abroad," but rather sought to help women develop themselves.[46] The membership of the WAAC was not interested in revolution, simply in becoming a more potent part of the established order.

---

[44] "Thirtieth Anniversary Issue," 1916, 23.

[45] "Address by Mrs. Ashley Carus-Wilson, B.A. On taking the Chair at the Inaugural Meeting on June 6th, in the Y.M.C.A. Hall." Drawer 2, Folder 7, Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal (hereafter WASM), McCord Museum, Montreal.

[46] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 3.

Deeks reported that the WAAC's interest in handicraft was influenced by movements in other countries of which the Association was aware through its President,[47] and certainly, then president Dignam is regarded as the WAAC's prime motivator in the early years.[48] Where did she acquire an interest in handicraft? It is clear from an examination of her early life that she was a serious and accomplished artist. She studied at the Art Students' League in New York and in the *ateliers* of the accomplished, though minor artists Luc-Olivier Merson and Luise-Joseph-Raphael Collins in Paris.[49] While she is not mentioned in textbooks on Canadian painting, one obituary credited her with an international reputation.[50] As well, the group of women who formed the nucleus of officers of the WAAC's predecessor, the Women's Art Club, were predominantly affiliated with the Associated Artists' School of Art and Design (AASAD) in Toronto.[51] Established by a Miss E.K. Westmacott to teach women handicrafts, the school had two departments —painting and design.[52] The first president, which was Dignam, as well as the first vice-president, first secretary and first treasurer of the Women's Art Club, were all either former teachers or students of the AASAD. Indeed, the Club shared lodgings

---

[47] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 6.

[48] Thompson, *A Worthy Place*, 50.

[49] Thompson, *A Worthy Place,* 53-54.

[50] "Mrs. Dignam, Toronto Art Leader, Dies," unidentified [Toronto newspaper] clipping, 6 September 1938,. Scapbooks.

[51] Thompson, *A Worthy Place,* 63.

[52] Thompson, *A Worthy Place*, 63.

with the School for the first four years of its existence, moving quarters only in 1890. According to Dignam, the curriculum was

> . . . planned to give thorough and practical instruction in designs for carpets, oilcloths, stained glass, wall paper, prints and textile fabrics for manufacture; also in details of interior decoration and embroidery, and in carving, modelling, metal-beating, ceramics, etc.[53]

While Dignam added that she organized drawing, painting, sketching and modelling classes, a newspaper clipping in one of the WAAC's scrapbooks also describes the school as "virtually" a ladies' school.[54] It is clear from the description in *Women of Canada* that AASAD was basically segregated, its purpose to provide women (who had enough money for tuition) with sufficient education to earn a living in industries of applied crafts.

Dignam and her fellow officers in Toronto were not the only WAAC members with teaching experience. Montreal Association leader Mary M. Phillips also had a strong interest in handicrafts. In the chapter section titled "Distinguished Professional Women Artists" in the 1900 publication, *Women of Canada*, Phillips is listed not only as President of the Montreal Branch of the WAAC, but also as the Principal and Founder of the School of Art and Design in Montreal (SADM).[55] (Noted as a water colour exhibitor, Phillips, like Dignam, studied at the Arts Students' League in New York.)[56] Phillips's

---

[53] M.E. Dignam, "Schools of Art and Design Founded and Conducted by Women," *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, National Council of Women of Canada, 1900, 218.

[54] Dignam, "Schools of Art," *Women of Canada,* 218; *Toronto Globe*, 16 December 1887, WAAC Archives, WAAC Scrapbook 1, cited in Thompson, *A Worthy Place,* 55.

[55] M.E. Dignam, "Distinguished Professional Women Artists," *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, National Council of Women of Canada, 1900, 224.

[56] Dignam, "Professional Women," *Women of Canada,* 224.

school is also listed and described in the book under the heading "Schools of Art and Design Founded and Conducted by Women." According to Dignam, it was intended to "afford means of Studying Art with a view to its application in the Art Industries and Crafts, and to promote a knowledge of the Applied Arts."[57] After noting her affiliations, Phillips's citation describes her interest in art practice and teaching as "the practical application of Art in the Handicrafts and Industries, and also in the universal education of eye and hand."[58] With these kinds of shared backgrounds it is not surprising that the WAAC membership would interest itself in handicrafts.

As important perhaps are the indications that both the AASSD and SADM were also established to educate women. Educational facilities such as these were set up in England and the United States as much as 40 years before to create skills in women struggling to survive on their own.[59] However, as Kathleen McCarthy points out in *Women's Culture, American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930*, her study of middle-class American women involved with cultural institutions, these schools were also a part of middle- and upper-class women's involvement in charity. There, she states, women's work in culture did not challenge male supremacy, citing the example of Sarah Peters' school in Philadelphia. "Rather than directly challenging the cultural prerogatives of men," McCarthy writes, "[this] school of design for women was presented as a benign

---

57 Dignam, "Schools of Art," *Women of Canada,* 218-219.

58 Dignam, "Professional Women," *Women of Canada,* 224.

59 Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991) 27-29.

mutation of traditional, feminine charity work."[60] This idea of "traditional, feminine charity work" is often repeated by WAAC members, although the emphasis on philanthropy is subtle. In a 1903 leaflet promoting a WAAC handicraft depot in Montreal, for instance, the reader is told that among the many good reasons for promoting handicrafts production is that it keeps women at home in conventional roles: "the encouragement of industries within the home, [sic] solves in great measure the problem of keeping our young women at home."[61] The leaflet goes on to point out the scarcity of money on farms, which, in turn, forced farm women into the city to work. It reported that the Association paid cash for handwork in order to encourage workers and gain influence, as well as to gain leverage to "improve" the work.[62]

Dignam argued for such craft support in her 1899 "President's Memoranda," and activities in the WAAC seemed to consolidate the next year. In her 1900 "Memoranda" she opened with a discussion of what she described as a "most successful exhibition" of handicrafts in Canada, which had been held in Toronto at the same time as the Association's regular "Picture Exhibition."[63] The event also included a loan exhibition, which had been organized to demonstrate the historical development of handicrafts and

---

[60] McCarthy, *Women's Culture*, 29

[61] "Our Handicraft Shop," Women' Art Association of Canada, Montreal Branch, 1903, overleaf, WASM.

[62] "Our Handicrafts Shop," WASM.

[63] Mary E. Dignam, "President's Memoranda of the Year's Work and Progress," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and Its Branches for the Year Ending Sept., 1900*, 7, WAAC Archives.

the products of handicraft revivals in other countries.[64] Deeks's described the event in her 1912 "History" as "a notable exhibition" and provided a listing of "handicrafts and art industries at which women work" that included "laces, embroideries, metal work, basketry, bookbinding, wood-carving, pottery, leather work, weaving, rug making, etc."[65] Like Dignam, she said this was the first handicraft show held in Toronto and gave it credit for arousing interest in competitions to promote practical designs by the Association and its Branches.[66] Although there do not appear to be any extant catalogues, the exhibition is recorded in an entry in "Studio Talk," a column in the well-known English arts publication, *The Studio*. After discussing the work of such well-known artist members as Dignam, Florence Carlyle and Laura Muntz, the article stated the exhibition's main purpose was to establish handicraft production as a milieu for women and to exhibit handicraft from abroad.[67] International recognition by a leading arts magazine placed a significant seal of approval on the work undertaken by the Association.

The same year the Montreal Branch also held a major show, "The Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts," which covered exactly the same ground as the Toronto exhibition. It even included a loan exhibition. A leaflet to encourage participation stated that its aim

---

[64] Dignam, "President's Memoranda," *Annual Report 1900*, 7.

[65] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 6.

[66] Deeks, "Historical Sketch," 6.

[67] "Studio Talk," *The Studio*, 20 (15 August 1900): 192-195.

was to develop the interest in handicrafts that had diminished rapidly in the face of industrialization:

> The Association hopes that by means of these Exhibitions throughout the country, [sic] (one having been held in Toronto last winter) that [sic] interest may be aroused in retaining, reviving and developing the Art Industries and Crafts, which in the Old World has met with such markedly good results; the Exhibitions of Village Industries alone showing both the moral as well as the educational benefit. With the use of machine made goods, there is a danger of many Arts being forgotten, more especially such as formerly were chiefly exercised in the making of useful articles.[68]

The leaflet went on to underscore the Association's nationalistic aims in a discussion of Aboriginal and French-Canadian work, which it apparently intended to promote:

> Among the Indians and French Canadians, where we must look for primitive and characteristic national work, weaving, basket work, dyeing, porcupine quill embroidery, the manipulation of leather, are fast passing into the realm of tradition: indeed some recipes are already lost, as the mysterious stitch of the *Ceinture flèchée* [French-Canadian sashes] and the means used for dyeing skins with a permanent dye.

The Montreal exhibition was tremendously successful, drawing an attendance of 8,000 and realizing a profit of $777.34.[69] The Branch took heart from this support, and in 1902, held an "Exhibition of Home Arts" concentrating on Canadian handicraft, its area of specialization thereafter.[70] Although the 1900 Montreal exhibition did not receive the same notice in *Studio* that the Toronto exhibition had, the 1902 exhibition did receive

---

[68] Montreal Branch of the Women's Art Association of Canada, *Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts*, 1900, WASM.

[69] M.M. Phillips, "The Story of the Montreal Women's Art Society," 2 January 1917, 4, Drawer 2, Folder 3, WASM.

[70] M.A. P Peck, "A Slight Resume of the Activities of the Women's Art Society in the Early Days," 9 April 1928, 4, Drawer 2, Folder 3, WASM.

Studio notice, which included photographs illustrating the success of the Branch's endeavour.[71] As the second instance of international recognition of WAAC efforts, it also demonstrated both the organization's success at exhibitions and its deepening position as an arts patron.

It is significant to note the differences, however, between the type of people Dignam's Toronto group normally encouraged and those the Montreal Branch endorsed. Dignam's 1899 plea for craft support, for example, specifically requested assistance for occupations normally practised by middle-class Anglo-Canadian women as hobbies — lace-making, embroideries, carving, bookbinding, stained glass, and pottery— and, in keeping with this, she proceeded to push for home industries. She included Doukhobors, readily admitting that their inclusion was based on influence from the NCWC which had staunchly supported the Doukhobors since 1899.[72] The Montreal Branch, in contrast, endorsed work produced by French-Canadians and indigenous peoples beginning in 1900.[73] Dignam only did so in her report of the 1900 Toronto exhibition, which included work done by Aboriginal peoples and French-Canadians in a discussion of basket-weaving and rug-making. Because she originally expressed support only of middle-class hobbies, the question then arises as to why WAAC members in Toronto

---

[71] "Studio Talk," *Studio* 26 (15 July 1902): 147; 26 (15 September 1902): 310-11.

[72] Dignam, "President's Memoranda," *Annual Report 1899*, 7; Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision*, 99.

[73] "Exhibitions of Arts and Handicrafts," Women's Art Association of Canada, Montreal Branch, 1900, overleaf, WASM.

suddenly decided to encourage work by those perceived as lower than themselves in the social hierarchy.

There seems to have been agreement in support for the Doukhobors. In her 1899 address, Dignam paints an enticing image of them as a people worthy of assistance:

> There have recently come among us pioneer settlers in our great Northwest a people who have claimed our sympathy and help. Through the National Council of Women of Canada, a loan fund is being raised to provide the women of the Doukhoborsti with materials for the production of their home industries. They are skilled in spinning and weaving. They make beautiful linen and woollen laces, and are skilled in linen-drawn work and embroidery after the Russian manner.[74]

References in the 1900 *Annual Report* reveal support for her endeavour to the point that invitations were offered to members to contribute funds to encourage "Home Industries among the Doukhobor."[75] Both the Toronto and Montreal Branches presented talks about Doukhobor women, displayed their wares in regular Association meetings and requested that work be provided to Doukhobor women during the winter.[76] As Strong-Boag points out, however, the support of such clubs seemed to be tied to the members' class affiliation. She notes that while praising Doukhobors for their farming background and ability to populate the North-West, the NCWC's Convenor on Immigration, Miss Fitzgibbon, stated that Doukhobors made "excellent servants" because

---

[74] Dignam, "President's Memoranda," *Annual Report 1899*, 7.

[75] F.L. Lindsay, "Annual Report of the Woman's Art Association of Canada," 9, and Adelynne B. Crawford, "Sixth Annual Report of Montreal Branch of W.A.A. of Canada," 26, *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and Its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1900*, WAAC Archives.

[76] Lindsay, "Annual Report," 10, and Crawford, "Montreal Branch," 26, *Annual Report 1900*.

of the kind of people they were: "very clean and hard-working; they wash well; they scrub well, and they are most splendid tailoresses and needle-women, and would be the greatest help to the women of the west . . . ."[77] There is also evidence that support for the Doukhobor was promoted by University of Toronto Professor James Mavor, a frequent speaker at WAAC events.[78] Mavor, a Scot, was briefly a member of Morris's Socialist League in England, carried on a correspondence with Morris and was a keen supporter of the Arts and Crafts movement.[79] With two such divergent promoters, the WAAC assumption of the Doukhobor as clients was understandable.

Elaine Holowach-Amiot's recent history of the Women's Art Society of Montreal (WASM), an organization that evolved from the Montreal Branch of the WAAC, attributes interest in the work of Aboriginal peoples to Mrs. Verina Molson, the second wife of a member of the Montreal brewing family.[80] The 1900 Montreal handicraft exhibition included a display of 200 Native-made West Coast baskets from her collection and the catalogue included an essay she wrote outlining the evolution of

---

[77] Miss Fitzgibbon, NCWC *Report 1899*, 265, cited in Strong-Boag, *Parliament of Women*, 193.

[78] E.L. Panayotidis, personal discussion following presentation of "'The Aesthetic Woman': Race, Gender, and the English Arts and Crafts Movement in Ontario, 1890-1915," Paper presented to "Race, Gender and the Construction of Canada" University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 21 October 1995.

[79] Rosalind Pepall, "Under the Spell of Morris, " *This Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and His Circle from Canadian Collections* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario and Key Porter Books Limited, 1993) 27.

[80] Elaine Holowach-Amiot, *The Women's Art Society of Montreal: A Century of Commitment to the Arts* (Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1994) 6.

basket-weaving.[81] The essay also contains her idea of the conditions under which contemporary Native women worked to produce baskets.[82]

Interest in Native handicrafts was not confined to Mrs. Molson. The Montreal submission to the 1901 *Annual Report*, as well as listing a paper presented by Molson entitled "Basket-weaving by Indians of the Pacific Coast," listed a paper presented by a Mrs. Armstrong, who spoke on "Arts and Handicrafts among our Indians."[83] This is evidence of wider interest by Branch members and explains references in the Branch's promotional leaflet for the 1900 exhibition to porcupine quill embroidery, the manipulation of leather, the *ceinture flèchée* and dyeing skins.[84]

Some WAAC members may not, however, have shared the interest in Aboriginal handicrafts expressed by the Montreal Branch. In a 1904 letter to Mrs. J.A. Peck, a Montreal member who had assembled a display for the St. Louis exhibition of that year, Dignam stated that, while some Native work should be included with the work of the Association, it should not be the focus. "It is the Home Industries, the weaves that are of

---

[81] Holowach-Amiot, Women's Art Society, 6.

[82] Mrs. W. Markland Molson, "Basket Weaving," *Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts*, Montreal Branch of the WAAC, 22 October - 3 November, 1900, 146-150, Mic F CC-4 No 92318, National Archives of Canada.

[83] "Annual Report of Montreal Branch, W.A.A.," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and Its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1901*, 35, WAAC Archives.

[84] "Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts," 1900.

the greatest [interest], . . ." she maintained, "The Indian Exhibit at [the regular 1904 exhibition of] 'Arts & Crafts' held no interest whatever."[85]

Even though some members may not have shared an interest in Aboriginal handicraft, there does appear to have been widespread interest in such work on the part of the general public. In an essay explaining the purpose of the 1902 exhibition of Canadian handicrafts, the author argued that to establish Canadian handicraft, the work of Native peoples was the first priority: "If Canada is ever to have a true national art it needs reckon first of all with that native to the soil—with the uncontaminated art of the North American Indian."[86] While I deal with the idea of "uncontaminated art of the Native American Indian" in the next chapter, the statement does underscore the idea that Native work was seen as representative of Canada, supporting the WAAC's nationalistic aims and reflecting its interest in Aboriginal work. A more general interest in Native crafts is demonstrated in various articles of the period. In a *Canadian Good Housekeeping* article, for example, Emily Roome presented a romantic view of Native women producing attractive decorations when she described the "lonely Northwest Indian . . . working over pretty baskets,"[87] and Frances Roberts wrote an article for *The Ladies Home Journal* that not only indicated how to create various pieces, but included tips on how to wear them.

---

[85] Dignam, to Mrs. J.A. [M.A.] Peck, 14 May 1904, Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM.

[86] Montreal Branch of the Women's Art Association of Canada, *Exhibition of Home Arts*, March 1902, 29, WASM.

[87] Emily Roome, "The Revival of Home Arts in Canada," *Canadian Good Housekeeping* 2 (January 1904): 12-16.

"Nothing could be prettier for a white gown," she maintained, "than a white bead belt showing a delicate design in cool light green . . . ."[88] Business publications expressed a more pragmatic view of interesting results that were good for commerce, such as that in a 1907 article in *Industrial Canada* titled "Canadian Industries in the Home."[89] These kinds of articles undoubtedly created an atmosphere of greater acceptance of Native work within the Association.

While the Toronto organization was championing Doukhobors, French-Canadian hand-work was of vital importance to the Montreal Branch of the WAAC. It was exhibited by the Association as early as the 1900 handicraft exhibition in Montreal. In a 1917 history of the Montreal group, Mary Phillips stated the exhibition of French-Canadian work at the 1902 exhibition "aroused a good deal of interest."[90] These handicrafts were so important to the Montreal Branch that its members deliberately sought them out. Then Branch President Mary Peck later recalled how crafts were acquired for sale:

> During the summer of 1901 our members undertook to look out craftsmen and women in whatever part of the country they happened to spend the holidays. The result was rather surprizing for in this simple way five districts were opened up that year. These were in Quebec down the Lower St. Lawrence, in Gaspé and in Muskoka, Ontario.[91]

---

[88] Frances Roberts, "How to Make the Indian Bead Work: Designs Which May Easily Be Reproduced," *The Ladies Homes Journal*, August 1903, 24.

[89] "Canadian Industries in the Home," *Industrial Canada*, 7 (8 March 1907): 645-647.

[90] M.M. Phillips, "The Story of the Montreal Women's Art Society," 2 January 1917, WASM, 5.

[91] M.A. Peck, "Resume of Women's Art Society of Montreal," 9 April 1928, 3, WASM.

If the WAAC was willing to support handicrafts made by Doukhobors because they believed the Doukhobors were becoming good Canadians, support of handicrafts produced by working class people who had been in Canada for centuries could only underscore the nationalistic and patriotic nature of the Association's undertaking.

However, the WAAC did not confine itself to French-Canadian, Aboriginal and Doukhobor work. Its members extended the logic that led them to support Doukhobor work to that of other immigrant groups. A 1904 article in *Canadian Good Housekeeping* paid tribute to the WAAC's handicraft activities and romantically identified the national, and nationalistic undertaking reflected in the people the WAAC supported:

> Away off in the lonely Northwest Indian women are working over pretty baskets; three thousand and more miles away to the extreme east in Labrador, to most of us a name and a spot on the map, other women are busily stitching in colored silks on leather and embroidering with beads; out in the west, where miles and miles of prairie stretch between neighbor and neighbor, and loneliness is the lot of the settler's wife, women of Irish, Scotch and English descent are making lace; in another part of the great land Doukhobour [sic] women and Galicians, already becoming good Canadians, are sending their nimble fingers rapidly over drawn work and quaint Russian embroidery; and down the St. Lawrence, all through the land of the French Canadians, the habitant woman works at her loom or her spinning wheel and produces artistic hangings and rugs, or stout homespuns, which defy rain and cold and storm. Baskets are woven and chairs made in these little cabins, and cheerful evenings are spent "when young and old in circle around the firebrands close; when the girls are weaving baskets, and the lads are shaping" not "bows" but more baskets, while "the goodwife's shuttle merrily goes flashing through the loom."[92]

[92] Roome, "The Revival of Home Arts," *Canadian Good Housekeeping*, 12.

This sentimental list, together with statements about Native, Doukhobor and French-Canadian hand-work, defines the people, and types of crafts, the WAAC deemed worthy of inclusion.

In other words, the WAAC had identified hand-work created by women as within its bailiwick. The Association had no desire to compete with male institutions as Mrs. Carus-Wilson made clear at the Montreal Branch's opening, and since handicraft was not promoted by male organizations in Canada, it was therefore available for patronage. It is important to remember, as well, that the WAAC also took itself very seriously in its support of fine art production, education and exhibition. Thus, while the Association sought to promote women's work in general, it also saw an opportunity to establish a sphere of influence in the area of handicrafts. McCarthy points out that women deliberately undertook the support of "subordinate" fields of art so as not to threaten the social order and

> . . . in order to feminize new areas of artistic endeavour in nonthreatening ways. Whatever the inherent aesthetic value of the embroideries and ceramics they created, the fact that they themselves accepted these activities as "minor" fields is essential to understanding the nature of the gains they sought to achieve.[93]

What was the WAAC's aim? In a 1916 history, an Association member stated that it sought power in the home as an avenue to the national arena: "The direct influence of the Association, by its effort for the cultivation of taste, and the elimination of the superfluous, is upon the Canadian home, and its consequent influence upon the nation is

---

[93] McCarthy, *Women's Culture,* xiv-xv.

easily perceivable."[94] That the WAAC leadership clearly identified handicraft as a lesser art is plain from its statements. A prime example of this identification is provided by Phillips in her 1906 "History of the Handicraft Movement in Montreal," where she states that her Branch always gave attention to "the Minor Arts, though this was not the chief or most important aim."[95] When, in 1899, Dignam said that home industries should be encouraged, she did not state that these industries were arts, merely that they should be encouraged to a point where they could be considered of artistic merit.[96] In saying this, she echoed the thinking in American institutions. As McCarthy points out, American women's organizations did not seek to compete with their male counterparts, but to consolidate their power base:

> Rather than emulating men's cultural pursuits, the decorative arts movement raised traditional household crafts to a loftier, but still subordinate status among the fine arts. Rather than fostering exclusively aesthetic aims, it also highlighted more familiar charitable goals. Rather than addressing the needs of the community as a whole, it steeped its appeal in the interest of women and the imperatives of the domestic sphere in an ingenious reiteration of women's traditional roles.[97]

Repeatedly in their promotional material the WAAC emphasized such charitable goals as educating women to support themselves and paying women for their traditional work in order to keep them on the farm or in their own milieu.[98]

---

[94] "Thirtieth Anniversary Issue," 1916, 23.

[95] M.M. Phillips, "History of the Handicraft Movement in Montreal, etc.," 23 January 1906, Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM.

[96] Dignam, "President's Memoranda" *Annual Report 1899*, 6.

[97] McCarthy, *Women's Culture*, 46.

[98] "Our Handicraft Shop," 1903, overleaf, WASM.

The WAAC strove to maintain its place within patriarchal culture, not to challenge male dominance. It did this not only by promoting art by women but also by advancing handicrafts by ethnic minorities, and by individuals and groups lower in the social and cultural hierarchy than WAAC members. There was a cost, however. While women's magazines praised the WAAC's initiatives and business magazines recorded its commercial success, the identification of the WAAC with "lesser" arts folded back on itself. McCarthy has identified the repercussions:

> By associating female creativity with the decorative arts and crafts, would-be reformers strengthened the negative associations that automatically linked female artistry with amateurism and domestic artisanry. By segregating women's paintings in separate galleries and mingling their canvases with knitted novelties and homemade goods, they heightened these associations. . . . In effect, these well-intentioned initiatives helped to fuel the very stereotypes that women artists so earnestly sought to dispel.[99]

Dignam presented much the same idea herself when she addressed the position of women in the Royal Canadian Academy. She complained that women were instructed not to present "needlework, artificial flowers, cut paper, shellwork, models in coloured wax or any such performance, . . ."[100] as these were not worthy of inclusion in the male dominated art world. The Association then presented the work of its protégées as "Minor Arts" in segregated exhibitions. It was not a reach for the established order to move from the kinds of articles described for exclusion by the Academy to laces, embroideries, basketry, dyeing, weaving, porcupine quill embroidery, hooked rugs, beadwork, or any of

---

[99] McCarthy, *Women's Culture*, 109.

[100] Dignam, "Canadian Women," *Women of Canada*, 214.

the other handicrafts patronized by the WAAC. McCarthy goes on to state the consequence of such patronage: "Rather than directly shaping the nation's artistic canon, women's munificence reinforced the cultural authority of cadres of male professionals and elites."[101] Although writing of activities in the United States during the same period, her point applies as well to Canada; as a result of such patronage women were excluded and segregated in Canadian arts organizations, their work deemed worthy but not viewed as seriously as the work of those at the top of the established order. While handicrafts were important for all the reasons the WAAC promoted, they remained firmly in an inferior position in the artistic hierarchy.

---

101 McCarthy, *Women's Culture*, 116.

CHAPTER TWO:

PRIMITIVE AND CHARACTERISTIC NATIONAL WORK

> In various parts of the country there is still a good knowledge of the handicrafts and not a little skill. It is true that these are dying fast, and we, in young Canada, already have our "lost arts." Can we not save what is left us of our own, and cultivate what comes to us through our citizens of foreign birth?
>
> If Canada is ever to have a true national art it needs reckon first of all with that native to the soil—with the uncontaminated art of the North American Indian. It is in the nature of things that Canadian art be composite; but let us keep our healthy natural strain, thus making our art typical of our land.
>
> . . . they must be taught to do good work, and a market must be assured them. For these two needs, it is the aim of the Woman's Art Association to provide.

Exhibition of Home Arts, March 1902[1]

These thoughts were set out in the 1902 exhibition catalogue accompanying an exhibition of handicraft by the Montreal Branch of the Woman's Art Association of Canada (WAAC). Called an "Exhibition of Home Industries," it was believed to be the first display of this magnitude of "all Canadian crafts."[2] Although the essay mentioned

---

[1] Montreal Branch of the Woman's Art Association of Canada, *Catalogue of Exhibition of Home Arts*, March 1902, 29, Folder 2, Drawer 5, Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal (hereafter WASM), McCord Museum, Montreal. To easily and quickly distinguish between this catalogue and other handicrafts or home industries catalogues the years of publication will be included in citations.

[2] M.A. Peck, "A Slight Résumé of the Activities of the Women's Art Society in its Early Days, Prepared by Mrs. James Peck, April 9th, 1928, for Studio Day Meeting," 4, Drawer 2, Folder 3, WASM.

the "good knowledge of handicrafts and not a little skill" in various parts of the country, it also mentioned "lost arts" and asked, rhetorically, if what was left could not be saved. Further, by invoking "the uncontaminated art of the North American Indian," the WAAC suggested, not only that these were arts that were "dying fast," but also that, even as they were disappearing, they provided the "natural strain" from which a national art could be cultivated. At the same time as it declared a desire to build a composite using Canada's "healthy natural strain," however, it also proclaimed an intention to change the characteristics it claimed to value by teaching those who were able to practise these arts "to do good work."[3] While this may have been the first showing of "strictly Canadian work,"[4] it was not the first time the WAAC expressed these ideas. They were enumerated in a leaflet the Association circulated to encourage participation in its 1900 exhibition. There, it declared a role for itself in "retaining, reviving and developing the Art Industries and Crafts . . . among Indians and French Canadians" so that "primitive and characteristic national work" would not be lost.[5] The essay for the 1902 exhibition became the first public demonstration of this mission.

If it seems contrary to wish to save something while at the same time expressing an interest in changing it, this contradiction was inherent in the WAAC's patronage. It is

---

[3] *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, 29.

[4] *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, 29.

[5] Montreal Branch of the Women's Art Association of Canada, *Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts*, Montreal October 22—November 3,1900, MIC F CC-4 No 92315, National Library of Canada.

this dilemma that I examine in this chapter. Here, I investigate the WAAC's definition, promotion and distribution of Canadian Native and Folk Art. To do this, I review the crafts the WAAC sought to promote; examine the methods the Association used to locate workers, including its network of contacts; outline the philosophy the WAAC expressed to support its aims of preserving, educating and improving crafts and craft workers; explore the WAAC's idea of saleability —the methods it used to ensure that articles were saleable and the way it offered items for sale; discuss the results the WAAC believed it achieved in terms of affecting production, and reveal the effect of the organization's patronage on the work of the groups it sponsored. I demonstrate that the WAAC furthered its nationalistic aims at the same time it assigned its craftspeople to subordinate positions in an artistic and ethnic hierarchy that continued to marginalize them.

There is no question that the WAAC saw handicrafts as "minor" and "lesser" than fine art. This view was offered as early as 1902 when Montreal President M.M. Phillips presented a history of the Montreal Branch that explained the mandate the WAAC adopted and noted that "the Minor Arts and Handicrafts had always been encouraged by this Branch . . . ."[6] Just what did she mean by "minor arts"? In a 1906 history, Phillips answered part of the question when she said that, although they were not the most important arts, wood carving, leather reposee, brass and ceramics created by members were displayed in early exhibitions.[7] She then went on to describe lectures on stained

[6] M.M. Phillips, "History," ms., 1902, Drawer 2, Folder 5, WASM.

[7] M.M. Phillips, "History of the Handicraft Movement in Montreal, etc." 23 January 1906, 4, Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM. Although this history was written after the 1900 exhibition and

glass and mosaics and said these crafts were included in the Association's "Studio Day" exhibitions.[8] The 1900 exhibition catalogue listed lace, needlework, wood and metal work, ceramics and pottery, bookbinding and leather work, fans and miniatures, designs and illustrations, and basket work.[9] While more inclusive than the previous list, it also contained many pursuits deemed hobbies of the upper classes. By 1902, however, the Association decided to promote other work, as indicated in an essay in the *Exhibition of Home Arts* catalogue called a "Scheme for Promotion of Home Arts and Handicrafts." There, Montreal WAAC leader M.A. Peck stated that one aim of the WAAC was to encourage people outside the Association to participate in handicrafts: "It is the earnest desire of the Association to encourage such Industries as Spinning, Weaving, Dyeing, Carving on Metal, Bone and Wood; the making of fine Needle-work, Pillow Lace, Handwrought Furniture, Pottery; the various Indian Industries, etc."[10] The next year the President's Message contained a more precise description of who and what the Association desired to encourage when it declared, in a solicitation for funds, that it sought to aid certain minorities to produce specific items. This list included

> skilled handicraft of the French Canadian in home-spun woolens and linens, *couvertures* with quaint historic patterns woven in a distinctive tufted style . . . the characteristic designs in bead-work, porcupine quill

---

Phillips's 1902 History (Drawer 2, Folder 5, WASM), I believe that Phillips was discussing events that preceded 1900.

[8] Phillips, "History of the Handicraft Movement," 4 (Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM).

[9] *Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts*, 1900, 2-3.

[10] M.A. Peck, "Scheme for Promotion of Home Arts and Handicrafts," *Exhibition of Home Arts*, March 1902, 25, Folder 2, Drawer 5, WASM.

> embroidery, basketry and mats of the North American Indians, fine Honiton and point laces from English and Irish settlers, and embroideries and drawn linen from Doukhobors and Galacians.[11]

The WAAC Head Office, however, was not prepared to limit itself to merely promoting the work of non-members; it eventually arranged instructors and classes in which members could also practice the industries listed by Peck. While in 1903 the *Annual Report* records that the only functional crafts committee was one dedicated to Ceramics,[12] by 1911 there were Committees and Clubs within the WAAC for Home Industries, bookbinding, ceramics, pottery, woodcarving, jewellery and leather, in addition to the various art, entertainment and functional committees.[13] As convenor of Home Industries in 1916, Dignam reported that a Miss Chant was teaching a class in bobbin and filet laces.[14] The final move toward recognition of handicraft was completed in 1916 when the various clubs of the Association were united under the heading "Guild of Arts and Crafts."[15] This marked the WAAC's knowledge of and interest in the ideas of John Ruskin, William Morris and the English Arts and Crafts movement. The WAAC

---

[11] "Committee of Arts and Handicrafts," Montreal, 1903, Portfolio, WASM.

[12] "Convenors of Committees," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1903*, 6, Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada, Toronto (hereafter WAAC Archives).

[13] "Convenors of Committees," *The Women's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches, Year Ending September 30th, 1911*, 4-5, WAAC Archives.

[14] "W.A.A.C. Clubs and Committees," *The Women's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches, Year Ending September 30th, 1916*, 25, WAAC Archives.

[15] The first mention of the Guild of Arts and Crafts appears in the WAAC's *Annual Report of the Association and Its Branches Year ending September 30th, 1917*, 19 where the Guild reports on its activities for the year then ending.

expanded these ideas until, in 1948, a newspaper article recorded that the craft school was overcrowded, packed with "workers in weaving, spinning, leather craft, metal work and pottery."[16]

If "not a little skill" was available, why then did the WAAC believe that this skill was dying fast? One reason, perhaps, was that the membership saw evidence of this decline around them. An entry in the Minute Books of General Meetings of the Montreal Branch, for instance, records an event at the 1900 "Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts" in which

> a party of Indian women from Caughnawaga paid a visit to the Ex [sic] and surprised the Pres [sic] by their keen appreciation of some good needlework, but said regretfully that "all of their people who did good work were dead." This feeling on their part led the Pres to hope that something might be done to encourage the Indian women in their neighbouring settlement to revive the old industries or learn new.[17]

At the same time, there was feeling that public attitude had also contributed to the demise of abilities. A 1938 newspaper article about WAAC founder M.E. Dignam, for example, stated that she was responsible for a return of prestige to handicrafts when it said she had

---

[16] Mary E. James, "Women's Art Association Recalls Historic Career," *Toronto Globe and Mail,* n.d., Women's Art Association of Canada Scrapbooks, WAAC Archives.

[17] Minutes of General Meetings, Montreal Branch of the WAAC, 13 November 1900, Drawer 3, WASM. The feeling said to be expressed by the Native women at the exhibition, of defeat and loss of ability, contrasts strongly with that related by Ruth Phillips in "Fielding Dialogues Between Art History and Anthropology," Museum Anthropology 18 (1994) 39-46, where she describes Kahnawake women who enjoyed visiting fairs and exhibitions and saw themselves as "creative artists who approached their work with pride and relish."(42) Caughnawaga is an earlier (perhaps Anglicized) name for Kahnawake and these may well be relatives of the women who visited the WAAC's exhibition. If so, Phillips's reference sheds light on the WAAC's activities and interpretations: perhaps the Native women learned from the WAAC and took joy in the improvement in their work or perhaps it had not suffered such decline as the WAAC believed.

"restored homespun to its rightful place in people's regard."[18] When Dignam became active, handicrafts produced at home were not evaluated on the basis of artistic merit, but rather according to their functionality. As the writer puts it,

> the interest that Canadian women took in art, or in artistic crafts, was nil. The basic arts of spinning and weaving had been discarded as something beneath a lady's dignity. Good enough for poor old Grandmother, possibly, but then, Grandmother couldn't help herself.[19]

The idea that crafts were good enough for Grandmother, who was excused as helpless, exposes the attitude towards those who still created crafts. The reason that Grandmother was a weaver or spinner was because machine-made goods were not easily available; either she, or her daughter, stopped the practice of these crafts when industrialization made cheaper, machine-made products accessible. Those who still performed crafts did so because finances did not enable them to purchase what was necessary. The appreciation of these goods, however, had never abated, as Phillips suggested in a simplistic reference to her audience's and the crafter's status in an essay in the 1902 catalogue: "We have many who appreciate simple, suitable, beautiful things, and buy them in their travels from the peasants of other lands."[20] In an attitude similar to that conveyed in the newspaper article on Dignam, Phillips conjured an image of a remote past when she said that everyone produced the products they used: "households of

---

[18] "She Had Infinite Courage," newspaper clipping, WAAC Scrapbooks, September 1938, WAAC Archives.

[19] "Infinite Courage," WAAC Archives.

[20] Phillips, *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, 35.

all classes were largely, and in many cases quite, [sic] dependent for their necessities and comforts upon the ingenuity, skill and industry of their own members."[21] She proceeded to relate the role of each participant in the domestic routine:

> The wealthy bought, perchance, articles of luxury made still by hand, but the articles of every day use were made at home, the mistress supervising the dying, spinning and weaving, candle making, soap making, butter making, as well as the cooking and dressing of meats, etc., while she and her daughters did much of the knitting, fine sewing, potting and preserving, to say nothing of the embroideries, tapestry, netting, etc., representing no small amount of taste, skill and knowledge.[22]

The article on Dignam revealed the belief that this knowledge and work had gone out of fashion, and then credited Dignam with its return because she proved that social position did not preclude handicraft ability: "a woman could make pottery and still keep her position in the social order."[23]

Thus, while some knowledge and ability were seemingly available in the early years of the century, it was the perceived insufficiency of this knowledge that formed the basis of the WAAC's agenda, which Peck described in a 1928 history. There she stated the "minor arts" were being lost due to lack of protection and encouragement, and that the WAAC had decided to concentrate on preservation when it became aware of this problem.[24] The Head Office would later divulge its desire to do so as part of a larger movement by telling prospective purchasers that "the work of the Women's Art

---

[21] Phillips, *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, 31.

[22] Phillips, *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, 31.

[23] "Infinite Courage," WAAC Archives.

[24] Peck, "Résumé of Activities of the WAS," 2, (Drawer 2, Folder 3, WASM).

Association in exploiting the Art Industries and Handicrafts of Canadian Women is of Economic and Educational value to Canada and of international interest to the Arts and Handicraft movement."[25] The philosophy underlying the Association's motives is best summarized, however, in the closing paragraph of the Montreal Branch's report on the 1900 exhibition. There, Correspondence Secretary Adelynne Crawford wrote,

> From the expressions of interest in all Branches of Arts and Handicrafts, by the many thousands who visited this Exhibition, the Committee see [sic] great value in such Exhibitions from a purely educational standpoint; they feel that by the opening of opportunities for improving the Arts and Handicrafts of our Indians and the residents of country districts, at present far from suitable markets, a good work has been inaugurated, which it behooves our Association in all its Branches to carry forward.[26]

The Branch explained the rationale behind this kind of plea to its subscribers when it emphasized the benefit of keeping women in the country where they would not only be good producers, but also good wives. The 1902 catalogue is explicit:

> The practical benefit to be derived from the providing of remunerative employment for all these differing classes of our population, each working after its own kind, and on its highest possible plane, is beyond question. It will serve to keep the girls at home. It will widen their sympathies by bringing them into contact with the outer world, and so sensibly diminish the monotony of their lives. It will, by keeping them at home on the farms, fit them to become useful and judicious wives.[27]

---

[25] "Canadian Art, Handicrafts and Home Industries," after 1916, WAAC Archives.

[26] "Report of Special Committee of Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts," "Annual Report of the Montreal Branch, W.A.A.," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1901*, 38, WAAC Archives..

[27] *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, 29.

That some of these craft workers had sufficient skill and others had not was learned by WAAC members in various ways. Peck related that those who were on the WAAC's Montreal Handicraft Committee were sworn to seek out and make workers known by whatever means available, including vacation time. They also sought out workers at home, according to a 1902 leaflet issued by the Montreal Branch in both French and English titled, in English, "Scheme for the Promotion of Home Arts and Handicrafts."[28] Phillips's writing adds to this details of how workers were located, as well as her evaluation of the prevailing attitude among both workers and patrons:

> Prize competitions were held. County Fairs visited where the work was judged and commented upon, a small special Exhibition being frequently sent to show what might be done by those in their own homes to make really beautiful (and saleable) things instead of the atrocities perpetrated with much waste of time. I have judged the work myself at many of these Fairs and regret to say that almost invariably anything of real merit was made by some of the older people, - the mental attitude of the younger ones being expressed to her friend in an audible whisper by one young woman who had been following me round the room very closely - On seeing me turning an embroidered blouse inside out to examine the sewing she exclaimed: For the land's sake, she's looking at the inside. I need hardly say <u>that</u> blouse did not get a prize.[29]

The mention of prize competitions is significant because it indicates the extent of effort, time, and even money the WAAC was willing to invest to locate crafters. The Association, whose members were almost exclusively English speaking, created notices in both French and English that listed categories and monetary rewards for a wide variety

---

[28] The same essay was included in the 1902 *Exhibition of Home Arts* catalogue.

[29] Phillips, "Mrs. Hebdens'," 3-4, (Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM).

of articles.[30] The circular included the categories homespun, home-made linen, coverlet, catalogne, floor mat, Indian bark box with porcupine quills, Indian basket, home-made chair, and specimens of vegetable dye, the latter including as subcategories, dye in a bottle, samples of dyed fabric, written recipes and as a curious subcategory unto itself, red vegetable dye. While sending this handbill out to any fairs the members could think of, Branch members also elected to create small fairs and exhibitions of their own. These were detailed in the 1903 *Annual Report* as including the Gaspé Peninsula, Gananoque, Tadoussac and Metis in Quebec, and Sault Ste. Marie in Ontario.[31]

The WAAC was even more active than this in pursuit of workers. One entry in the Minutes of the Handicrafts Committee records that workers were solicited after word of mouth reached the WAAC: "Miss Holmes-Orr was instructed to write to Josep LeDuc, St. Dominique, Soulonge Co. send a price list & ask for samples as Miss Phillips had heard that the entire LeDuc family were earning their living by making cloth, etc."[32]

---

[30] "Women's Art Association" and "Société Artistique des Femmes," Flyers, 1904, Portfolio, WASM. While English, Irish and Scottish names appear on the membership roles in abundance there are very few names of any other ethnic origin. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff points out the implications of this in her history of Quebec when she says "English and Scottish names predominated among the factory owners . . . the majority of French Canadian names predominated and remained . . . among the factory workers . . . ." *The Dream of a Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982) 141.

[31] Annette S. Deacon, "Report of the Handicrafts Committee," "Annual Report of Montreal Branch, W.A.A.," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1903*, 32, WAAC Archives; M.A. Peck, "Sketch of the Activities of the Canadian Handicraft Guild and of the Dawn of the Handicraft Movement in the Dominion," 1929, 2-3, Drawer, Folder 2, WASM. While I am aware of Gananoque in Ontario, the report cites a Gananoque in Quebec.

[32] Minutes of Handicrafts Committee, November 10, 1904, Drawer 3, WASM.

Speakers with experience and influence among Aboriginal peoples were also sought out, to the extent that the Superintendent for Indian Affairs at Ottawa was requested to canvas his agents for assistance.[33] Eventually, even well-known Canadian artists were seeking out crafters and their work for the Association, as letters from A.Y. Jackson to WAAC Secretary Jane Bertram divulge.[34] Jackson opened a 1929 letter with the phrase, "Your agent is on the job." After outlining his own artistic activities, Jackson proceeded to recommend certain workers, goods, and prices. He even suggested how specific articles be marketed: "Blanche has made a rug of blueberry pickers which should go to the CNE and the Abbe has a fine little painting which should go in one of your exhibitions[.] I would like the boys to see it."[35] He then proceeded to chide Bertram about her bookkeeping, revealing a relationship of long standing with both the WAAC and the area he visited. If WAAC members were not able to visit likely locations personally, they were willing to reach out to crafters in any way available to them.

Not only did the WAAC send envoys out to locate crafters, workers and their sponsors presented themselves to the WAAC. The Minutes of General Meetings contain several references to such occurrences, among them a letter from a Mrs. McBeath of Riverside, Manitoba, who wrote for advice on how to assist local Native women in handicraft production so they could learn new skills and improve their existing

---

[33] See Minutes of General Meetings for 4 December 1900, 8 January 1901, 7 January 1902, 7 November 1903, Drawer 3, WASM.

[34] A.Y. Jackson to Jane Bertram, 23 March and 13 April 1929, WAAC Archives.

[35] A.Y. Jackson to Jane Bertram, 13 April 1929, WAAC Archives.

methods.[36] The financial benefits to crafts workers were readily apparent after the 1900 exhibitions, as a review of correspondence dealing with handicrafts indicates. The Montreal Branch was besieged with requests for information as to what was deemed desirable. Typical of these queries are notations in the Handicrafts Committee Minutes: "Letters were read from two women living near Murray Bay [Quebec] asking to be told what things they could make that would have a ready sale at the shop," and an application from a Mlle Laviolette "asking for information as to the making of a catalogne."[37]

In her discussion of judging, Phillips was not interested only in skill, but in beauty and saleability as well. Thus, her 1917 history makes evident that wares offered to the WAAC were not always what it thought appropriate. She contrasted "beautiful" and "saleable" items with "atrocities." When she referred to saleable articles, Phillips in fact invoked the Association's target market: people who came from the same class and with the same expectations as the WAAC's membership. The Association often repeated that "the ideal is to cultivate the taste of the women of Canada."[38]

By 1903 the Montreal Branch was able to report improvement in craft production was noticeable and that plans had proved effective. The handicraft marketing brochure recorded success: "Already the improvement in spinning and weaving is most noticeable,

---

[36] Minutes of General Meetings, 3 December 1900, Drawer 3, WASM.

[37] Handicrafts Committee Minutes, 18 November 1904 and 21 September 1903, Drawer 3, WASM.

[38] Margaret I. Mercer, "President's Address," *The Women's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches, Year Ending September 30th, 1916*, 22, WAAC Archives.

and the designs in portiers, covers, etc., are better chosen than formerly . . . . The Association has been successful in dealing with the Doukhobors . . . ."[39] Surprisingly, considering the reaction of the Native women from Caughnawaga, the WAAC expressed difficulty in converting Native women to different methods, stating: "Indian work has been the most difficult to influence, it will take some time to teach the Nomadic tribes that their own old dyes and patterns are truly beautiful."[40] While it took time to alter the aesthetic judgement of their workers, the WAAC membership was unrelenting in its advance of what it saw as appropriate crafts. In 1925, a Saskatchewan member wrote that rugs she was offered in a Doukhobor home were simply not acceptable, but that the maker was flexible in order to achieve sales: "There was one . . . for which Mrs. Kabatoff wanted $9.00, but in hopeless colours! We admired them of course, but said you people in Saskatoon often wanted fewer colours, and they were quite willing to make one to order, using pattern and colour asked for."[41] The combination of the workers' desire for funds, a willingness to please, and the Association's readiness to dictate led to the creation of products deemed suitable for middle-class homes.

The WAAC did not merely control what was to be produced, its participation in the production process was also active. The Minute Books of the Montreal Branch

[39] "Our Handicrafts Shop," Portfolio, WASM.

[40] "Our Handicrafts Shop," Portfolio, WASM.

[41] Grunchy to Morton, 27 November 1925, Saskatoon Arts and Crafts Society Papers (hereafter SACS Papers), quoted in Cheryl Meszaros, "The Local Council of Women and its Affiliates," *Visibility and Representation: Saskatchwan Art Organizations Prior to 1945*, M.A. Thesis, (Kingston: Queen's University, 1990), 49.

disclose great activity by members in pursuit of able workers and the proper products. When Mrs. McBeath wrote to the Branch in 1900, she requested not only information but supplies, because ". . . the difficulty of procuring proper materials was a serious drawback to the native industries."[42] The eventual outcome was that the Branch set aside funds to respond to these kinds of requests. Minutes in 1903 record that money was spent on appropriate goods to send to workers: "it was decided that ten dollars be invested in wool to be sent to the women to fill pressing orders and as an example of the colours to be used."[43] And the Association not only sent out material to be remanufactured, it also ensured the success of its venture by sending teachers to train workers in design and quality. The Association's "Scheme for the Promotion of Home Arts and Handicrafts" set out the WAAC's intentions:

> . . . [the WAAC] intends sending out Supervisors or Directors, under whose guidance workers may be trained, and whose care it shall be that good design, good material, and good workmanship, shall combine to keep up the standard of these home products.[44]

A Saskatchewan letter reveals how complete this process was. The author wrote to a worker that a particular pattern was desired: "I am sending you linen for twelve handkerchiefs. Work more like those you have just sent in and some more like this."[45] The influence did not stop with supplying wool and advising on colours, but also

---

[42] General Meeting Minutes, 4 December 1900, Drawer 3, WASM.

[43] Minutes of Handicrafts Committee, 24 October 1903, Drawer 3, WASM.

[44] "Scheme for the Promotion of Home Arts and Handicrafts," Portfolio, WASM.

[45] Morton to Mahonin, 6 April 1926, SACS Papers, quoted in Meszaros, *Visibility and Representation*, 50.

extended to design and patterns.[46] As a result, although the crafts were not "uncontaminated," they were made by ethnic minorities currently fashionable among middle- and upper-class Anglo-Canadian women, in patterns sufficiently similar to the original as to be thought "characteristic."

Curiously, however, the Association was at times adamant about a return to earlier methods. At the same time it prescribed changes in colours and design, the WAAC went so far as to mandate the use of certain kinds of dyes. The literature of the day repeatedly credits the WAAC with reintroducing vegetable dyes to replace commercially produced aniline dyes.[47] Believing the older methods were softer in colour and more permanent, the WAAC was insistent that the older methods be used.[48] Its own pamphlets continually assert its success in preserving vegetable dyes. In the Association's promotional leaflet for the Handicraft Shop, the WAAC bragged, "In the effort to conserve the vegetable dyes the Association is meeting with signal [sic] success. The women themselves are eager to recover the arts of their grandmothers."[49] This enthusiasm was realized early with the publication of dye recipes in the catalogue for the 1902 "Exhibition of Home Arts."[50] The Association was so anxious to promote this work that an announcement was

---

[46] Meszaros, *Visibility and Representation*, 50.

[47] Emily Roome, "The Revival of Home Arts in Canada," *Canadian Good Housekeeping*, 2 (January 1904): 14.

[48] *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, 49.

[49] "Our Handicrafts Shop," Portfolio, WASM.

[50] *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, 49-55.

placed in a periodical stating that dye recipes were available if the request was accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.[51] WAAC members obviously viewed this activity as a form of preservation of older work for purposes of authenticity, while not considering that dictating changes in colour and design was completely antithetical to this form of legitimacy.

Once the WAAC secured workers and identified a ready clientele for their goods, it proceeded to seek out a market in a variety of ways. The WAAC exhibited handicrafts at the Toronto Industrial Exhibition as early as 1899.[52] Phillips described locating and judging crafts in country fairs.[53] This was undoubtedly the venue most accessible to the workers, but it did not get the crafts into the hands of the middle- and upper-class purchasers with whom the WAAC was affiliated. Dignam expressed the view that exhibitions were the best method of presenting goods for sale, and this was certainly the method that was initially put into use in both highly successful exhibitions in 1900.[54] This technique continued to be used until, in 1905, the WAAC sent out travelling exhibitions. As the *Annual Report* for that year recounts, "Exhibitions of the Home Industries have been sent out from Toronto to New Westminster, in the far West, and to

---

[51] Minutes of Handicrafts Committee, 24 October 1903, Drawer 3, WASM.

[52] M.E. Dignam, "President's Memoranda of the Year's Work and Progress," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1899*, 7, WAAC Archives.

[53] Phillips, "Mrs. Hebdens'," 3-4, (Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM).

[54] Minutes from Special Meeting of Handicraft and Executive Committees, 29 November 1904, Drawer 3, WASM.

Charlottetown, P.E.I.; Halifax, N.S., and St. John, N.B. in the far East . . . ."[55] The Montreal Branch, however, was dedicated to the idea of a depot. A "long cherished dream,"[56] the shop was realized in 1902. That Branch believed a warehouse committed to handicrafts would guarantee that a quantity of work of appropriate quality would be available. The idea was explained in a leaflet canvassing for funds to support the depot, which became *Our Handicrafts Shop*:

> To meet these demands, and to fulfil the conditions upon which the success of the work depends, capital is necessary—to buy for cash, to buy at the right season, to place orders large enough to make it worth while for the workers to follow directions, and to take extra trouble in using vegetable, instead of crude and fugitive aniline dyes,— [sic] capital to enable this Branch to carry sufficient stock to supply other Branches of the Association, as the selling season in different cities is not always a good time to buy from the workers.[57]

This leaflet not only described the reasons for having a depot, but reiterated the WAAC's intention to influence both workers and product.

Energies were also directed toward exposing people to the WAAC's goods. In Montreal, the Branch publicized its work in flyers it distributed. The *Annual Report* described circulars placed in hotels and shops.[58] It was hoped through these promotions to attract the tourist class to the depot to purchase crafts as mementos. The desired

---

[55] M.E. Dignam, "President's Memoranda as Printed in the Annual Report for the Year Ending September 30, 1905," WAAC Archives.

[56] Phillips, "Mrs. Hebdens'," 2, (Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM).

[57] "Committee of Arts and Handicrafts," 1903, inside, Portfolio, WASM.

[58] "Report of the Handicrafts Committee," "Annual Report of the Montreal Branch, W.A.A.," *Annual Report 1903*, 31-32.

audience was not always travellers, however, and so the WAAC became inventive in presenting wares to its target markets. The 1914 *Annual Report* relates an episode of ingenuity in having an exhibition held in a patron's home on a fashionable London street. That report recorded it as an "Exhibition and Sale of Canadian Habitant Homespuns . . . arranged by Miss Symons and held at the residence of Mrs. Scott Griffin, 37 Curzon St., Mayfair, London, England" which "was to have been opened by Her Royal Highness the Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyle, and by Lady Beatrice Poll Carew."[59] While Princess Louise was unable to carry out this duty, this did not detract from the coup the WAAC struck in making these arrangements. The WAAC's resourcefulness in pursuit of purchasers was remarkable. When those with influence were not in urban areas the Association took displays to them, as noted in 1923 when the organization sent an exhibition to a Muskoka holiday resort: "The Executive . . . gave its sanction and approval to an exhibition of Arts and Crafts, Home Industries and small pictures to be sent for the summer months to the Bigwin Inn."[60] In order to ensure a market for their merchandise the Association not only informed the appropriate people where these goods could be found, but also took the inventory directly to prospective purchasers.

These endeavours, and the establishment of a depot, however, did not mean the end of handicrafts exhibitions. As well as noting shows created by individual branches

---

[59] Florence Deeks, "Secretary's Annual Report, 1913-1914" *The Women's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches, Year Ending September 30th, 1914*, 22, WAAC Archives.

[60] "Recording Secretary's Report," *Annual Report 1923*, 20.

for display in their own cities, the *Annual Report* records exhibitions travelling from Branch to Branch.[61] The WAAC and NCWC had requested exhibition space in the Paris International Exposition of 1900. While this was denied, the Association did not stop requesting this kind of attention, with the result that, in 1904, the WAAC was given funds by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture for the creation, transportation and maintenance of an exhibition and demonstration at the international fair at St. Louis.[62] The WAAC could later boast of having had large exhibitions of goods at "New York, San Francisco, St. Louis, U.S.A.; Melbourne, Australia; London, Eng.; Edinburgh, Scotland; and in chief cities and towns in Canada and the United States."[63] Equally relevant is mention of a talk in the *Annual Report* called a shopping tour. This presentation involved a display of foreign items presumably obtained on holiday. The *Annual Report* described it as "A Shopping Tour around the Mediterranean illustrated with many beautiful specimens of the Arts and Handicrafts of the different countries visited." Even though Dignam had stated that the objective the WAAC in pursuit of handicraft was "not a commercial one,"[64] these kinds of exhibitions promoted the work as merchandise rather than art.

---

[61] Eleanor Creighton, "Annual Report of the Ottawa Branch of the W.A.A. of Canada, 1903—1904," 39, and "Report for 1904 of the Winnipeg Branch of the W.A.A. of Canada," 43, *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1904*, WAAC Archives.

[62] M.E. Dignam to Mrs. J.A. [M.A.] Peck, 14 May 1904, Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM.

[63] "Canadian Art, Handicrafts and Home Industries," after 1916, WAAC Archives.

[64] M.E. Dignam, "President's Memoranda of the Year's Work and Progress," *The Woman's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1898*, 6, WAAC Archives.

This concept of merchandise is supported by an examination of the WAAC's displays. A photograph of one of the rooms where the Association exhibited its arts and handicrafts [fig. 1] presents the stock decoratively surrounding small tables set for the consumption of tea.[65] Weavings that adorn tables and stools add to the ornamentation of the room, while a spinning wheel provides rustic flavour. In another image of the same room [fig. 2] rugs are ornamentally scattered across the floor, perhaps suggesting how the same effect might be accomplished in members' homes. The impression this presentation of the WAAC's products creates is one of window dressing; just as a consumer might be impressed and drawn into a store by the presentation of goods in shop windows, so might prospective purchasers be more inclined to purchase goods they have seen displayed in a manner they might be able to emulate.

The WAAC had several agendas, however, not simply the sale of merchandise. The Association argued that handicrafts had artistic merit. This is evident in the images presented to illustrate the 1902 *Studio* article [fig. 3]. The articles in the publication are grouped so that similar forms are presented together, perhaps by functional category or creative technique. This style is highly reminiscent of museum arrangements, evincing an attitude of respect not foremost in the former displays. At the same time, the notation appended to Figure 2 reveals that the WAAC was not simply merchandising or presenting

---

[65] An "Information" note in the *1914 Annual Reports* points out that the Home Industries Department Gallery is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. This notice, or something similar, continued to be carried in the *Annual Reports* until at least 1941, but in 1918 the same "Information" note also states that tea was available in the Tea Room every afternoon. It is not clear if that room is separate from the display areas.

museum pieces. It underscores a national perspective that underlay the displays. The citation identifies the origin of the articles bedecking the walls according to the region of origin and ethnic source:

> Indian Beadwork, Blackfeet Tribe of Province of Alberta
> Province of Quebec - catalogne, afghans
> British Columbia Indian Baskets
> Province of Alberta - Doukhobor embroideries, English laces, Russian rug
> British Columbia - Fraser River Indian baskets
> Queen Charlotte Indians - hat made by Haida Indians (rare)[66]

Nationalism is also evident in images the WAAC used to characterize its publications. A Notman photograph of a woman weaving homespun at Cap a l'Aigle, Quebec [fig. 4] was used to illustrate the 1907 article "Canadian Industries in the Home"[67] establishing an identification of quaint characters and nationalism with handicrafts and the WAAC. That the Association returned to this theme repeatedly is obvious in the image used on their leaflet "Canadian Art, Handicrafts and Home Industries" [fig. 5]. This photograph portrays a French-Canadian spinner in long skirts and wide bonnet surrounded by fleece and sitting in front of a spinning wheel, with no photographic credit given. The same image was used by Mary Graham Bonner in 1943 to illustrate "New World Handicrafts," the second chapter of her book *Made in Canada*, although she credits the Canadian Steamship Lines with its origin.[68] The WAAC simply followed the tenor of the times in displaying picturesque images of Canadians both to

---

[66] WAAC Archives.

[67] "Canadian Industries in the Home," *Industrial Canada*, 7 (8 March 1907) 645.

[68] Mary Graham Bonner, *Made in Canada*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943) fig 87.

draw tourist dollars and to heighten a sense of nationalism. The success of this formula is evident in its continued use. In 1933 the Association sponsored a demonstration of weaving prowess by Mrs. Anderson Dale, whom they picturesquely photographed in Norwegian national costume [fig. 6].[69] Canada was imagined as a multi-cultural country and, in order to strengthen both the Association's nationalistic aims and its identification as a force in Canadian art and handicrafts, it presented "representatives" of the various cultural segments of Canadian society as WAAC affiliates. These kinds of images appealed to the nationalism of a young country at the same time they supported the WAAC's merchandising endeavours. A newspaper article reported that the work the Association sponsored was the product of the hands of Canadians.[70] It went on to state that what was produced was representative of work still done in Canada and lauded the WAAC for its success. In fact, it went so far as to use the Association's own terminology when it applauded the "standard attained in taste and workmanship."[71] The article not only encouraged nationalism, but also catered to the expectations of the WAAC's audience, thus ensuring a market for the work of the organization's craftspeople.

These characterizations and associations, however, also underscore the nature of the WAAC's undertaking. Dignam described the organization's mission in 1905 as being one of nation building, presenting the multi-cultural flavour of a young country and

---

[69] Bride Brodie, "Mittens from Norway," not identified, Dec 1933, WAAC Scrapbooks.

[70] "Canadian Home Industries," newspaper clipping, 1902, Portfolio, WASM.

[71] "Canadian Home Industries," newspaper clipping, 1902, Portfolio, WASM.

creating something new. She noted, "the national blending of work has added to the usefulness and desirability of the whole, and made another element in the permanency of the Home Arts, and may we not hope also in the home building of the nation."[72] What she and the Association failed to realize was the ambiguity of the message it conveyed. The images it created, if nationalistic, were quaint and touristy. They did not suggest art. The organization's intention was good —to promote the work of its craftspeople— but what it actually presented would be described as handicraft and tourist art, a product that was then seen as less than art.[73]

While handicrafts production was extremely important to the WAAC, as its annual reports continually reflect, the way it supported handicrafts separated craft from the area of fine art. Crafts, shown in fairs and special exhibitions, were described as "artistic,"[74] while members sought legitimacy by exhibiting fine art in museums and galleries. Dignam herself continually sought recognition in exhibitions of both the Royal Canadian Academy and the Ontario Art Society as well as in art institutions in the

[72] Dignam, "President's Message," *Annual Report 1905*.

[73] Art historian Ruth Phillips points out in "Why Not Tourist Art?"[*After Colonialism: Imperialism and the Colonial Aftermath*, Gyan Prakash, ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995) 98-125] that "tourist art" was intentionally excluded from a fine art canon to support the idea of primitive people outside an industrialized modern period and so that those who gained economic benefits from its sale could retain control over Native lands and Native resources. She also points out that it was poorly regarded because "it looked too white"(114). This logic of exclusion extended to non-Native communities as evidenced by the photographs the WAAC used depicting quaintly costumed, pre-industrial, peasants.

[74] Dignam, "President's Message," *Annual Report 1899*, 7.

United States, Britain and Europe.[75] This distinction is made explicit when, in outlining a new venture in training weavers, a WAAC member is described as an artist while those she taught are referred to only as "skilled workers."[76] Moreover, the teacher is described as "exceptionally trained in weaving," someone who "had the satisfaction of infusing into [the workers'] narrow lives, devoid of all art expression, the joy of creating useful and beautiful things."[77] While the workers may indeed have had difficult lives, the description creates an image of passive acceptance of something instilled in the workers —something they would not have thought to produce without this stimulus from the WAAC.

There was, however, an even stronger hierarchy within the ranks of craftspeople the Association patronized. This is apparent in a discussion Phillips presented on craft workers. She described those of Prince Edward Island in glowing terms as reflective, educated women —people "who have devoted thought and time in studying, testing, recording natural dyes for their characteristic rugs . . . ."[78] She referred to the Aboriginal worker, in contrast, as "the untutored savage."[79] She then lauded Native women's

---

[75] See M.E. Dignam, "Distinguished Professional Women Artists," *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work,* National Council of Women of Canada, 1900, 223; "Mrs. Dignam, Toronto Art Leader, Dies," newspaper clipping, WAAC Scrapbooks, WAAC Archives, and Anne Page, *Canada's First Professional Women Painters, 1890-1914: Their Reception in Canadian Writing on the Visual Arts*, (Montreal: Concordia University, 1991), 20.

[76] "Recording Secretary's Report," The Women's Art Association of Canada Annual Report of the Association and its Branches, Year Ending August 31st, 1924, 20, WAAC Archives.

[77] "Recording Secretary's Report," *Annual Report 1924*, 20.

[78] Phillips, "Mrs. Hebdens'," 4, (Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM).

[79] Phillips, "Mrs. Hebdens'," 4, (Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM).

understanding of handicrafts, which she saw as deeper than that of modern European women. They are people, she stated, whose "knowledge of Nature's secrets we may well envy, and, whose skill being the heritage of many generations, we cannot hope to emulate."[80] It seems inconsistent that she could note abilities handed down from one generation to the next, but not deem the process a form a education. Phillips presented a belief that if the worker was Native, proficiency was innate, "natural" in a manner in keeping with the contemporary Euro-Canadian view of the Aboriginal as Primitive. Native craftspeople were "Other" and viewed as outside Phillips's environment, socially and artistically.

Yet, in its efforts to arrive at "a true national art" the WAAC expressed a desire to build on "the uncontaminated art of the North American Indian."[81] How, then, did it deal with the "the uncontaminated art of the North American Indian," when, at the same time, it also sought to teach them to "do good work"? Of course, as many scholars have pointed out, the art was not uncontaminated in the first place. Art historian Frederick Docksteader notes that the Aboriginal populations of North America had always been traders, creating with their market in mind. When that clientele expanded to include Europeans, Indigenous peoples simply altered their production to appeal to these new customers.[82] He also points out that education in European institutions could only

---

[80] Phillips, "Mrs. Hebdens'," 4, (Drawer 2, Folder 2, WASM).

[81] *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, 29.

[82] "The Fibers of Native American Weaving: A Historical Background," *Weaving Arts of the North American Indian*, Revised ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1993), 13-52.

change the view of those educated there: "Huron and Iroquois weavers were subjected to strong influence by the French colonists, who brought the young Indian girls into the convents, where they were exposed to European designs and motifs." [83] A perusal of work displayed by the WAAC substantiates this assertion. The weavings shown in the "Exhibition of Home Arts" of 1902 and called "Indian Work" [fig. 3 - upper image] are markedly similar to that pictured in a photograph from WAAC headquarters labelled "Province of Quebec - weavings with tufted work, characteristic designs - fleur de lis, Little Mary, pine tree and geometric patterns" [fig. 7]. All of these patterns are visible in the image from "Studio Talk." Art historian Ruth Phillips argues that the Native crafters viewed these new works as legitimate and authentic, as they argued to those who sold imitations made by non-Natives.[84] These are images of work created by Native peoples aware of those to whom they desired to sell products. Phillips tells us that purchase and display of these objects was one way dominant society established both control of and association with Aboriginal cultures,

> Their purchases were displayed as trophies of imperial possession in the gentleman's den and as signs of a sentimental brush with an exotic and noble past in the "cosy corner" of a lady's parlour. Viewed within the domestic spaces of the home, these trophies represented, in microcosm, the same drama of the displacement of the primitive by the modern as the more schematic and comprehensive public displays of the museum. Both public and private exhibits constituted ritual acts of consumption and display that naturalized immigrants and the descendants of immigrants as native North Americans.[85]

[83] Docksteader, *Weaving Arts*, 105.

[84] Ruth Phillips, "Tourist Art," *After Colonialism,* 103.

[85] Ruth Phillips, "Tourist Art," *After Colonialism,* 111.

European culture had been assimilated into Native handicrafts, just as the WAAC was appropriating Native handicraft as the uniquely Canadian basis of contemporary "composite" and "true national art."

From today's viewpoint, the WAAC seemed to present an ambivalent attitude toward its Aboriginal workers. Comments above by Montreal Branch President M.M. Phillips recognize ability handed down through succeeding generations, and the Handicraft Shop leaflet commented on the beauty of old Native patterns, yet these people were not acknowledged as individuals in the Association's literature. In the "Exhibition of Home Arts and Handicrafts," for example, a distinction is made between the owners of items and those who made them. For example, in the loan section of the catalogue, owners are identified, but the name of the worker is not, whereas in the sale section some listings contain some makers' names, but not others. Most notably missing are the names of indigenous creators. For example, in Section A —"Lace, Needlework, Weaving, etc."— the workers are variously identified as "Mlle Rinfret, Quebec," "Mrs. John P. Morin, St. Hyacinthe," "Blanche Poulette" and "Native Women of Parish of Tadoussac, P.Q."[86] At the same time, the work of Native peoples is often identified as excelling that of non-Natives, as an entry in the catalogue makes clear:

> Beadwork bag and necklace. Very fine workmanship. It is interesting to compare this work with that in the beaded gartens, No. 456, in the Indian section. The former are the product of the skill of whites. The art of weaving the beads into the translucent fabric, is, it is claimed, a lost art. The superiority of the Indian design is obvious.[87]

[86] *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, items 1-2; 3-12; 57-62, 69-74; respectively.

[87] *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, page 12, item 152.

This seeming contradiction —ignoring the identity of Native workers, whose work was deemed superior, while naming those of European descent, whose work seemingly diminished in comparison— is actually a result of slotting the work and the workers into an established social hierarchy.

It would also appear that the Association did not place the same value on Native belongings and heritage as it did on those of European derivation. This is revealed in a comparison of the Association's catalogues. The 1900 catalogue, *Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts,* presents a piece of net which may have been made in the sixteenth century. The listing states that is was "said to have been made in the time of Queen Mary of Scotland, as her maids of honor from Flanders were known to be experts in lacemaking. Owner knows it to have been an heirloom in a Scottish family and descended to her direct."[88] Thus identified as a family heirloom, a value of $150.00 was attached to the article with no further comment. Articles of Native provenance, however, did not inspire the same attitude nor were they given the same respect. A comment appended to articles called "Six Nations Relics" in the 1905 "Exhibition of Canadian Handicrafts" declaimed inflated prices due to foreign tourists. It stated:

> A descendant of "White Bear" in the fifth generation is the owner and exhibitor of this collection of relics of the Six Nations. That these Bradford Indians preserve and prize all mementos of their past the above list will prove; possibly they over-rate their commercial value, but this may be due to the fact that visitors from the United States have

[88] "Lace, Needlework, Weaving, Etc., Sales Exhibits," *Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts,* 1900, item 88.

> accustomed them to large prices in return for bona fide family or tribal relics.[89]

The items included a "Silver Decoration with a Royal Coat of Arms . . .[that] was given by the King of England (probably George III)," which was listed at $500; a Head Dress which was listed at $200; a pair of Moccasins at $10; "Buckskin Trousers belonging to White Bear's grandfather in the time of Queen Anne" at $100; Leggings at $50. All belonged to a specific, known individual or members of his family.[90] The writers apparently valued a piece of lace made by an unidentifiable Briton at an indefinite time above any items of Aboriginal ownership, including those bestowed by British royalty and having a specific historical relevance to Canada. This suggests that WAAC members believed history to be the exclusive possession of European nations; Natives, as outside of time and progress, were not part of it.[91] Hence, even evidence of history applicable to Canada and its nationhood were discounted in connection with Aboriginal work.

In this context, it is important to remember the WAAC's public. The Association's members sought to present their exhibitions and products nationally and internationally to people from what they saw as their own class and culture. Handouts the Association used for promotional purposes identified those titled and prominent women

---

[89] Montreal Branch of the Woman's Art Association of Canada, *Exhibition of Canadian Handicrafts*, 1905, 13, (Stauffer Library, Kingston).

[90] *Exhibition of Canadian Handicrafts*, 1905, 13.

[91] See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, and Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

who owned products sold by the WAAC. A flyer from the period 1900-1907 pointed out purchasers of WAAC goods:

> Her Majesty Queen Alexandra, H.R.H. The Princess of Wales, H.R.H. The Duchess of Argyle, Princess Louise, Her Excellency Countess Grey, The Countess of Aberdeen, The Countess of Minto, Lady Laurier, Mrs. Mortimer Clark, and many other prominent personages have purchased and worn these materials.[92]

These kinds of associations could only be designed to target upper- and middle-class women who identified with the elite. Exhortations to purchase were aimed at specific classes that did not include craftspeople and were intended to reinforce the existing social hierarchy.

The characterizations the WAAC presented sold the constituent parts of a contented home-life and picturesque activity that could be combined to portray the colourful components of a national identity. Cheryl Meszaros lays out the consequences of this kind of activity in her examination of the Saskatoon Arts and Crafts Society. While encouraging ethnic minorities to continue production, these characterizations reinforced an inferior position for the works. As Meszaros says, "it also contributed to the marginalization of these products by linking them to something akin to the tourist trade."[93] She goes on to explain that this sponsorship blurred the lines between public and private domains. The WAAC itself blurred these lines by stating that an aim of the Association was to teach women handicrafts to produce income and keep them at home to

---

[92] Woman's Art Association of Canada, "For the Promotion of Art Handicrafts and Home Industries," "Exhibition of Home Spuns," nd (1900-1907) Drawer 2, Folder 7, WASM.

[93] Meszaros, *Visibility and Representation*, 50.

be good wives.[94] The intentional support of employment conventionally associated with women and the home, and the way those modes were encouraged and marketed, segregated that work from both the home and the fine arts the WAAC advocated.[95] On the other hand, as is often pointed out, the Association's appeal to Canada's multi-cultural aspects and its extensive exhibition activities gave it national exposure.[96] Dignam summarized the WAAC's aims and expectations concerning handicrafts patronage in 1905 by laying claim to the idea of progress as it was manifest in what the Association saw as the improvement of the craftspeople it patronized:

> A distinct advance has been made by the workers in their designs and color. The Homespuns of Quebec have taken on a new beauty and decorative quality. The individual workers are showing pride and progress in their product. Never in the 300 years of these Homespuns made in Quebec has there been such an advance. A new era is dawning for these industries.[97]

What Dignam in fact heralded was a shift in the production of the workers from creating products for their homes and families to creating fashionable tourist goods for

---

[94] *Exhibition of Home Arts*, 1902, 29.

[95] Meszaros, *Visibility and Representation*, 51.

[96] Meszaros, *Visibility and Representation*, 51-52.

[97] "Home Industries Standing Committee," *The Women's Art Association of Canada, Annual Report of the Association and its Branches, Year Ending August 31st, 1925*, 23, WAAC Archive.

consumption by their social betters. As the patron of handicrafts by ethnic minorities, the WAAC reinforced the established marginality of those it patronized.

CONCLUSION:

ON THE MARGINS

> Her remembered Quest of the Folk began on the margins: at the edge of the ocean, at the edge of the day, when boundaries become indistinct and the familiar becomes strange. . . .

Ian McKay, *The Quest for the Folk*, 1994, 4.[1]

While the WAAC, in the period under discussion, was strongly tied to mainstream institutions and values, it was equally on the margins of art and power. In many ways, until the organization is seriously studied, it is still on the margins. This is why I questioned the lack of critical analysis of the undertakings of the Women's Art Association of Canada in the Introduction to this thesis. The work of Canadian women artists and female patrons not only needs to be explored, as it is in such studies as Allison Thompson's *A Worthy Place*, Maria Tippett's *By a Lady*, and Anne Page's *Professional Women Painters*, it also requires more than celebration.[2] Thus, in writing about the patronage activities of the WAAC, I have attempted to present a more balanced picture of earnest and enthusiastic patrons whose efforts had far-reaching, if sometimes unintended, effects.

---

[1] Ian MacKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994) 4.

[2] Allison Thompson, *A Worthy Place in the Art of Our Country: The Women's Art Association of Canada 1887-1987* M.A. thesis (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1989); Maria Tippett, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Viking, 1992); Anne Page, *Canada's First Professional Women 'Painters, 1890-1914: Their Reception in Canadian Writing on the Visual Arts* M.A. thesis (Montreal: Concordia University, 1991).

Determining the identity of the WAAC's membership was an important first step in delineating the issues surrounding the organization's patronage of what it saw as traditional handicrafts. Having done that, it became clear that what drove these middle- and upper-class Anglo-Canadian women to help others had as much to do with establishing and maintaining their own place as it did with assisting others. This understanding does not belittle their intentions or achievements, but more clearly defines the conditions under which they operated. In other words, the WAAC's members — coming from part of Canada's female, British-oriented, elite— may have desired to effect changes, but in the end, they only did so from within the bounds defined by their own race and class.

Yet, as I have argued, the WAAC made an important contribution to the history of Canadian art. In this thesis I have provided an overview of the organization's activities and attitudes towards handicrafts and its producers. I have examined the structures that both supported and hindered the Association in its activities and I have suggested some of the implications of these activities. I believe I have established that this work was profound to both the organization and those it patronized, and in the long run, changed the course of art in this country.

My work, however, examines the WAAC's activities from only one viewpoint, that of the organization's members. I believe there are many other points of view, that, if explored, would further demonstrate the importance of the WAAC on the individual, local and national level.

On the individual level, while the WAAC seemed to express the view that its protégées communicated eagerness for much of its patronage, that was the Association's view. What I did not have the opportunity to investigate here were the attitudes and feelings of those it patronized. Close investigation could be made of the organization's attitudes and undertakings in the belief that an examination of the WAAC's work from the viewpoint of external handicraft workers would broaden our understanding of the Association's activities.

Locally, the Branches have a great deal to tell us as well. Just as the WAAC drew its external workers from across Canada, so its Branches were also across the country. While the majority of the Branches have closed, some are still operational; demonstrating not only the commitment to survive on the part of the organization's membership, but the importance of the Association to the communities where it formed branches. An investigation of the history of the individual Branches, their membership, the activities they undertook and what they hoped to achieve would present a fuller understanding of the climate wherein Canadian art grew.

Nationally, as I have demonstrated, the WAAC affiliated with an intriguing range of individuals integral to Canadian art. In this thesis I have only had the opportunity to mention such figures as James Mavor and A.Y. Jackson, who had close, intense relationships with the WAAC. These men were, however, only some of the people who were connected with the WAAC. I found evidence of others in the Association's *Annual Reports*. National Museum of Canada ethnographer Marius Barbeau, and artists Emily Carr and George Reid were also speakers at WAAC events and influenced WAAC

members and their activities. An examination of the relationship between the Association and such people would further demonstrate exactly how central the organization was in the development of Canadian art.

While the title of my thesis, *The Women's Art Association of Canada and Its Designs on Canadian Handicraft*, plays with the idea of intent and motifs, I admit in closing that more work needs to be done in identifying exactly how the WAAC changed the crafts themselves to make them appear "Canadian". Given the Association's formative influence on the production and marketing of Canadian handicraft, the exact nature of the role the WAAC played should be fully explored and individuals who were affected by the organization and went on themselves to change how others worked need to be more closely studied. This thesis, I hope, is a contribution toward that end; a step in taking the WAAC beyond the margins.

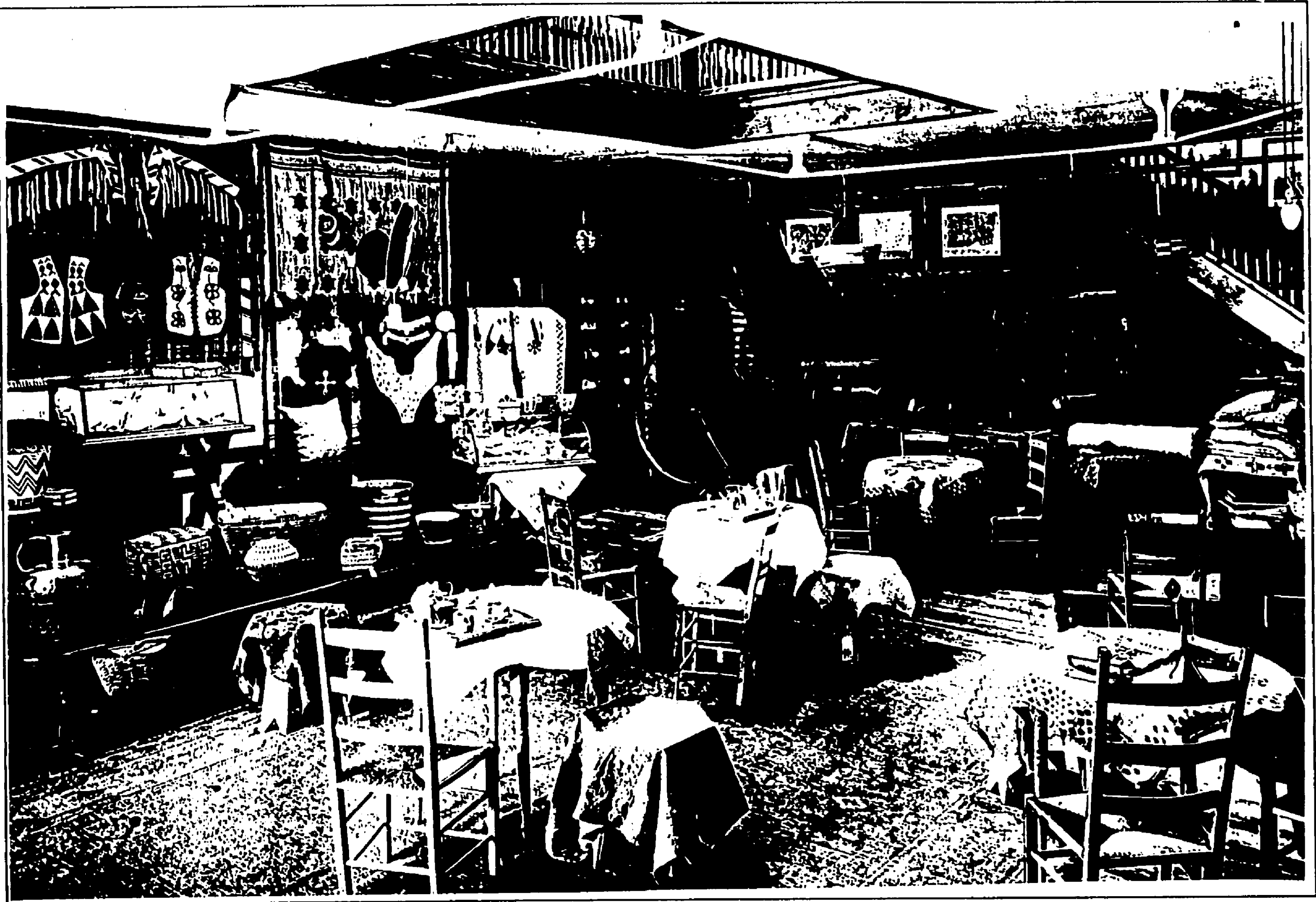
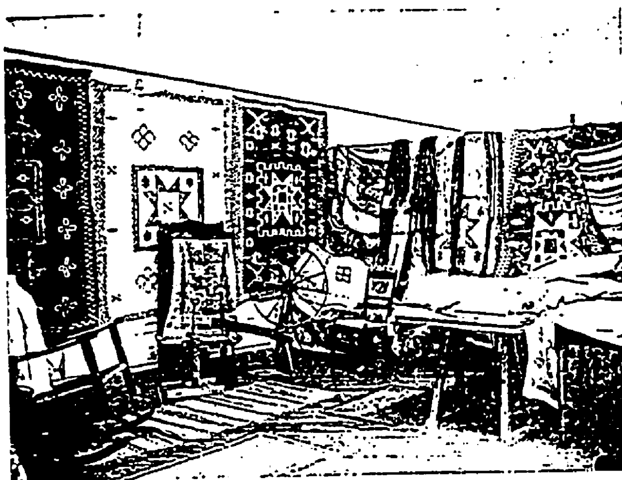


Figure 1. Women's Art Association of Canada Home Industries Exhibition.

Figure 2. Women's Art Association of Canada. Exhibition of Home Industries across Canada.

Studio-Talk



INDIAN WORK AT THE WOMEN'S ART ASSOCIATION EXHIBITION IN MONTREAL

least decorative, but is evidently the reproduction of what the artist has felt and seen.

Ferro's contribution is a masterly study from the nude : a woman kneeling under the shade of some trees, with her head thrown back, and her hands clasped behind it. A mere study, but the man who can model and paint like this, without any forcing of the values, yet with perfection of form and relief, should, if he can also compose, become a great artist. I. M. A.

MONTREAL.—In the July number of THE STUDIO there was published a note on the exhibition of the Montreal Branch of the Women's Art Association of Canada, and reference was made in it to the interesting exhibit of work carried out by Indian squaws in remote parts of the Dominion. We have pleasure in giving here two illustrations

INDIAN WORK AT THE WOMEN'S ART ASSOCIATION EXHIBITION IN MONTREAL

310

Figure 3. Illustration from "Studio Talk".

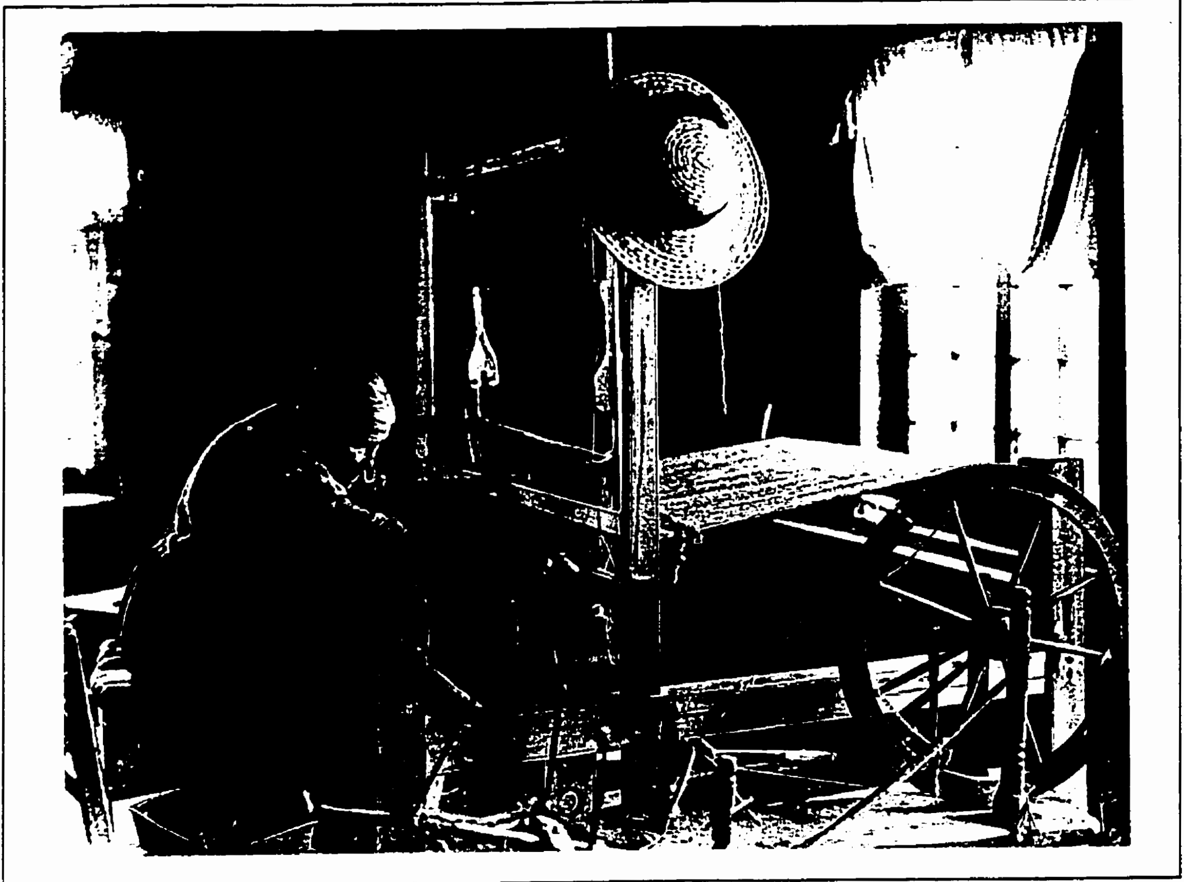


Figure 4. Weaving homespun cloth Cap à l'Aigle, Québec, 1898.

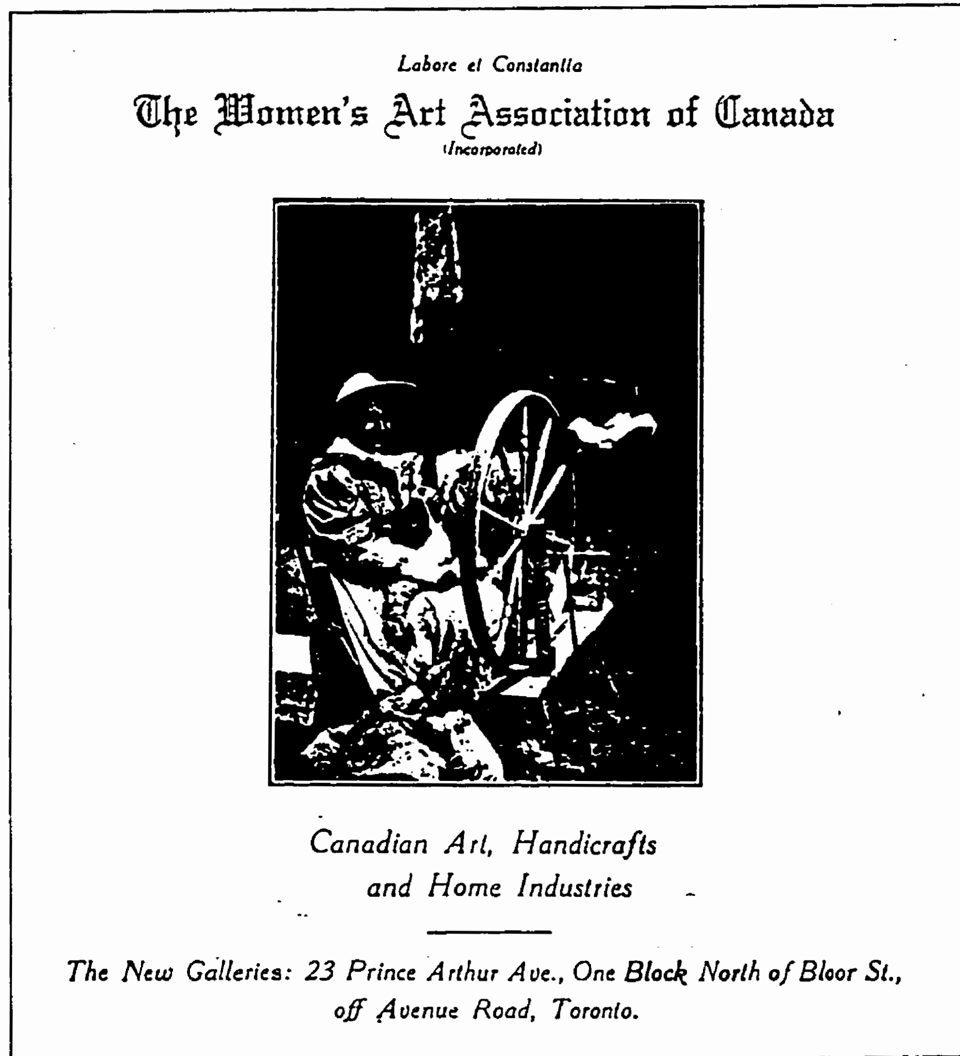


Figure 5. The Women's Art Association of Canada: Canadian Art, Handicrafts and Home Industries.

Figure 6. Unidentified Weaver

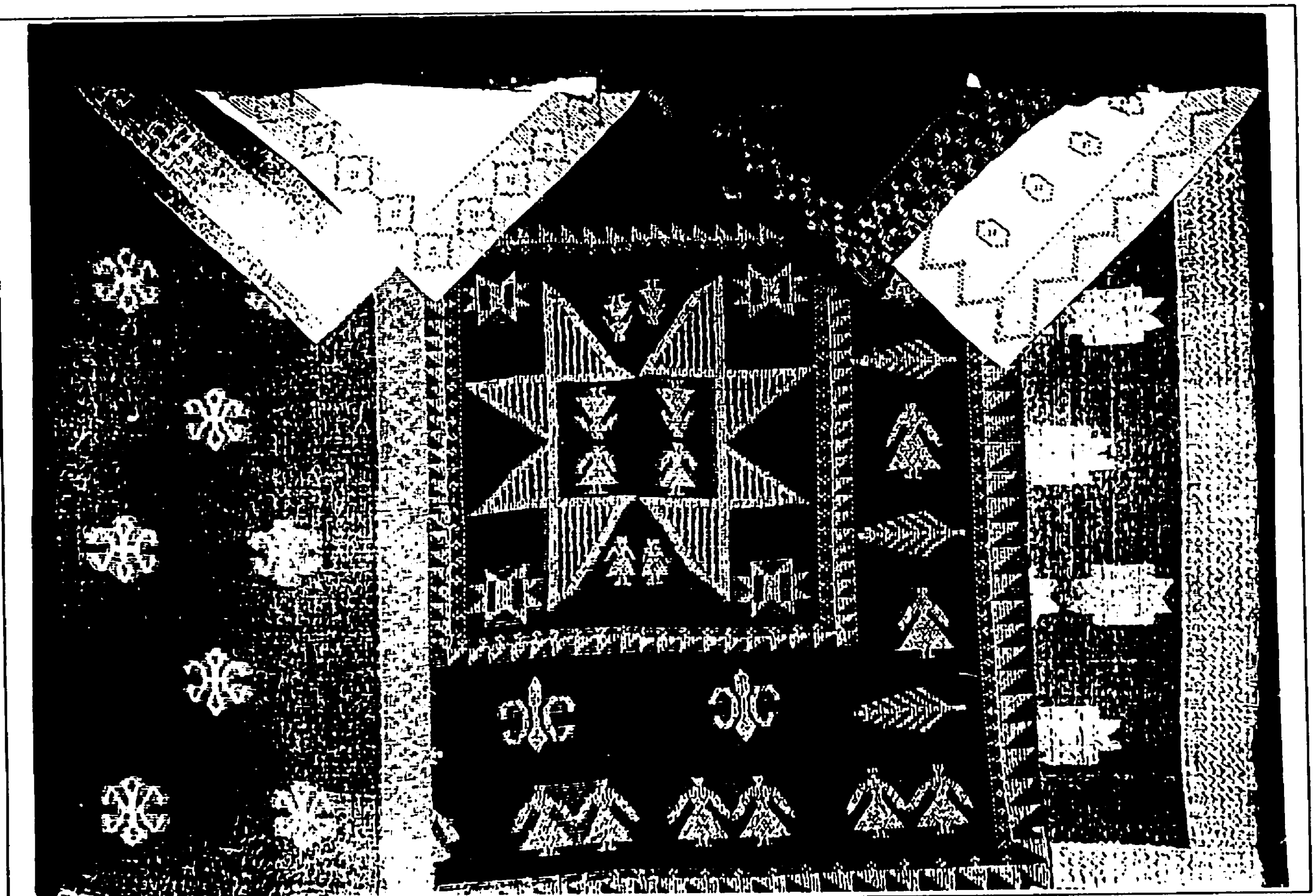


Figure 7. Women's Art Association of Canada, Province of Quebec Weavings with tufted work, characteristic designs.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Brodie, Bride. "Mittens from Norway." not identified. 21 December 1933. Scapbooks of Women's Art Association, Archives of Women's Art Association of Canada, Toronto.

"Canadian Industries in the Home." *Industrial Canada.* 7 (Mar 1907): 645-47.

Canadian Handicrafts Guild Exhibition Catalogue. 1907. Drawer 2, Folder 5. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

"Canadian Home Industries." 1902. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

Carus-Wilson, Mrs. Ashley. "Address on taking the Chair at the Inaugural Meeting." 6 June 1894. Drawer 2, Folder 7. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

Deeks, F. "Historical Sketch of the Women's Art Association of Canada." *Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Issue.* 1912. Library of National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Dignam, M.E. "Canadian Women in the Development of Art," "Schools of Art and Design Founded and Conducted by Women" and "Distinguished Professional Women Artists." *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work.* National Council of Women of Canada. 1900. 209-215, 218-219 and 222-224.

——. letter to Mary M. Phillips, 8 April 1904. Drawer 2, Folder 2. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. letter to M.A. Peck, 14 May 1904. Drawer 2, Folder 2. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

"Handicrafts Patron is Dead, Jane Bertram Pioneer in Preservation of Skills." not identified. 16 September 1940. Scapbooks of Women's Art Association, Archives of Women's Art Association of Canada, Toronto.

Jackson, A.Y. letters to Jane Bertram. 23 March 1929 and 13 April. Textiles and weaving correspondence, accounts, 1927 to 29. Archives of Women's Art Association of Canada, Toronto.

"Mrs. Dignam, Toronto Art Leader Dies." not identified. 6 September 1938. Scapbooks of Women's Art Association, Archives of Women's Art Association of Canada, Toronto.

"Mrs. J.H. Peck, She Revived Home Industry in Dominion." not identified. 9 November 1943. Scapbooks of Women's Art Association, Archives of Women's Art Association of Canada, Toronto.

"Noted Social Worker Dies, Mrs. James H. Peck Was Founder of Canadian Handicrafts Guild." not identified. 9 November 1943. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

Peck, M.A. "A Slight Resume of the Activities of the Women's Art Society in its Early Days." 9 April 1928. Drawer 2, Folder 3. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Sketch of the Activities of the Canadian Handicraft Guild and of the Dawn of the Handicraft Movement in the Dominion." 1929. Drawer 2, Folder 2. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

Phillips, Mary M. "History." 1902. Drawer 2, Folder 2, Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "History of the Handicraft Movement in Montreal, etc." 23 January 1906. Drawer 2, Folder 2. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Paper given at Mrs. Hebdens'." Address, incomplete. 13 Mar 1917. Drawer 2, Folder 2. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "The Story of the Montreal Women's Art Society." 2 January 1917. Drawer 2, Folder 3, Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

Roberts, Emily. "How to Make The Indian Bead Work: Designs Which May Easily be Reproduced." *The Ladies Home Journal.* August 1903. 16.

Roome, Emily. "The Revival of Home Arts in Canada." *Canadian Good Housekeeping.* Vol 3 January 1904. 12-16.

"She Had Infinite Courage." not identified. September. Scapbooks of Women's Art Association, Archives of Women's Art Association of Canada, Toronto.

"Studio Talk." *The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine & Applied Art.* 2 (15 August 1900): 192-195; 26 (15 July 1902): 147; 26 (15 September 1902) 309-311.

Women's Art Association of Canada, Montreal Branch. *Catalogue of Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts.* Montreal, 22 October - 3 November 1900. Mic F CC-4 No 92315, National Library of Canada.

——. *Catalogue of Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts*. Montreal, February 1905. Special Collections, Stauffer Library, Queen's University, Kingston.

——. *Catalogue of Exhibition of Home Arts*. Montreal, March 1902. Drawer 2, Folder 5. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——."Committee of Arts and Handicrafts." Request for donations to Fund for the Promotion of Canadian Handicrafts. Montreal, 1903. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Competition open to all Members of the Association." Prize List. Montreal, 1901. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Competition open to all Members of the Association." Prize List. Montreal, 1902. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. Executive Meetings Minute Books. 1900-1905. Drawer 3. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts." Request for Submissions. Montreal, 1900. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Exhibition of Home Arts . . . Notice to Contributors." Montreal, 1902. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. General Meetings Minute Books. 1900-1905. Drawer 3. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. Handicraft Committee Minute Books. 1903-1905. Drawer 3. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Home Arts and Handicrafts Committee." Request for donations to the fund for the Promotion of Canadian Handicrafts. Montreal, 1903. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Our Handicrafts Shop." Montreal, 1903 to 1904. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. Prize List for Exhibition and Sale of Handicrafts. Montreal, 1904. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Report from Committee of Arts & Handicraft to Lady Minto." 1903. Drawer 2, Folder 2. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Scheme for the Promotion of Home Arts and Handicrafts." Montreal, 1902. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——."Unique Exhibition of Habitant Homespuns and Catalognes, Doukhobor and Galician Embroidery and of Rare Indian Work in Baskets, Beads and Bark." Montreal, nd. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal

——."Workers are requested to send priced samples. . ." Montreal, 1903. Portfolio. Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

Women's Art Association of Canada, Headquarters. *Annual Report of the Association and Its Branches for the Year Ending September, 1894* and subsequent *Annual Reports* to 1901, 1903 to 1907, 1911 to 1937 and 1940-41. Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada. Toronto.

——. "Canadian Art, Handicrafts and Home Industries." Permanent Exhibition and Sale. Toronto, nd. Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada. Toronto.

——. *Catalogue of Craft Exhibition*. Toronto, 1939. Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada. Toronto.

——. "Exhibition of Home Spuns." Toronto, nd. Portfolio, Papers of the Women's Art Society of Montreal. McCord Museum, Montreal.

——. "Guild of Art and Handicrafts." Notice of address and invitation to join. nd. Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada. Toronto.

——. "Guild of Art and Handicrafts." Aims and objectives. Toronto, nd. Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada. Toronto.

——. "Permanent Exhibition and Sale of Canadian Industries." Toronto, nd. Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada. Toronto.

——. "Special Autumn Exhibition of Home Industries and Handicrafts." Toronto, nd. Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada. Toronto.

——. "Special Christmas Sale." Toronto, nd. Archives of the Women's Art Association of Canada. Toronto.

Secondary Sources

Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. "Prefatory Note." *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work.* National Council of Women of Canada. 1900. iii-iv.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Putting Hierarchy in Its Place." *Rereading Cultural Anthropology.* George E. Marcus, ed. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992. 34-47.

Arts and Crafts Essays, Preface by William Morris. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977.

Bonner, Mary Graham. "Revival of Indian Art" and "New World Handicrafts." Chapters 2 and 3 of *Made in Canada.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943. 22-43.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "Introduction," "A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste," and "Conclusion: Classes and Classifications." *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* Richard Nice, trans. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984. 1-96 and 466-484.

——. *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public.* Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman, trans. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

Carpenter, Carole Henderson. *Many Voices: A Study of Folklore Activities in Canada and their Role in Canadian Culture.* Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Canadian Centre for Folk Studies, 1979. No. 26.

Chadwick, Whitney. *Women, Art and Society.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1990.

Clifford, James. "Of Other Peoples: Beyond the 'Salvage Paradigm.'" *Discussions in Contemporary Culture.* No 1 Hal Foster, ed. Seattle: Bay Press, 1987. 121-130.

"On Ethnography Allegory." *Writing Culture, The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography.* James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. Berkley: University of California Press, 1986.

Crosby, Marcia. "Construction of the Imaginary Indian." *Vancouver Anthology: the institutional politics of art.* Stan Douglas, ed. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991. 266-291.

Cumming, Elizabeth and Wendy Kaplan. *The Arts and Craft Movement.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1991.

Dockstader, Frederick J. *Weaving Arts of the North American Indian.* Revised ed. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1993

Drummond, G. Julia. "Introductory." *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work.* National Council of Women of Canada. 1900. 1-4.

Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

Francis, Daniel. *The Imaginary Indian, The Image of the Indian In Canadian Culture.* Vancouver: Arsenel Pulp Press, 1992.

Gagen, Robert F. "History of Art Societies in Ontario." *Canada: An Encyclopedia.* J. Castell Hopkins, ed. Toronto: Linscott Publishing, 1898. 360-365.

Greer, Germaine. *The Obstacle Race.* New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979.

Griffiths, N.E.S. *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1993.* Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993.

Handler, Richard. "On Having a Culture: Nationalism and the Preservation of Quebec's Patrimoine." *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture.* George W. Stocking, Jr. ed. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. 192-217.

Harper, J. Russell. *Painting in Canada; A History.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966.

Hill, Tom. "Indian Arts in Canada: An Historical Perspective." Elizbeth McLuhan and Tom Hill. *Norval Morisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers.* Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1984. 9-27, 115-117.

Hill, Tom and Karen Duffek. *Beyond History.* Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1989.

Holowach-Amiot, Elaine. *The Women's Art Society of Montreal.* Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1994.

Jefferies, Janis. "Text and textiles: weaving across the borderlines." *New feminist art criticism.* Katy Deepwell, ed. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. 164-173.

Kelley, Robin D.G. "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Folk.'" *The American Historical Review.* 97 (December 1992): 1400-1408.

Knutson, Karen. *"Absolute escape from all that otherwise made Toronto:" Antimodernism at the Arts and Letters Club, 1908-1920.* Kingston: Queen's University, 1995.

McCarthy, Kathleen D. *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

McGrane, Bernard. *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

McKay, Ian. *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia.* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.

McMaster, Gerald R. "Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies.* 9 (1989): 205-36

McNaughton, Janet. "John Murray Gibbon and the Inter-War Folk Festivals." *Canadian Folklore.* 3 (1981): 67-73

Meszaros, Cheryl. "The Local Council of Women and its Affiliates." *Visibility and Representation: Saskatchewan Art Organizations Prior to 1945.* M.A. Thesis. Kingston: Queen's University, 1990. 40-64.

Panayotidis, Euthalia Lisa. "The Aesthetic Woman: Race, Gender, and the English Arts and Crafts Movement in Ontario, 1890-1915." Paper presented to *Race, Gender and the Construction of Canada* Conference at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. 21 October 1995.

——. Personal interview. 21 October 1995.

Page, Anne. *Canada's First Professional Women Painters, 1890-1914: Their Reception in Canadian Writing on the Visual Arts.* M.A. Thesis. Montreal: Concordia University, 1991.

Parker, Rozsika and Griselda Pollock. *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology.* London: Pandora Press, 1989.

Phillips, Ruth. "Field Dialogues Between Art History and Anthropology." *Museum Anthropology* 18 (1994): 39-46.

——."How Museums Marginalize: Naming Domains of Inclusion and Exclusion." *Cambridge Review.* February 1993. 6-10.

——. "Why Not Tourist Art?: Significant Silences in Native American Museum Representations." *After Colonialism: Imperialism and the Colonial Aftermath.* ed. Gyan Prakash, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. 1995.

Pollock, Griselda. *Vision & Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art.* London: Routledge, 1991.

Reid, Dennis. *A Concise History of Canadian Painting.* 2nd ed. Toronto: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1988.

Silver, Carole. "Setting the Crooked Straight." *This Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and His Circle from Canadian Collections.* Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario and Key Porter Books Limited, 1993. 1-17.

Strong-Boag, Veronica. *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929.* Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, 1976.

Thompson, Allison. *A Worthy Place in the Art of Our Country: The Women's Art Association of Canada 1887-1987.* M.A. Thesis. Ottawa: Carleton University, 1989.

Tippett, Maria. *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women.* Toronto: Viking, 1992.

Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann. *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec.* Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982.