Archives of American Art Transferred to Smithsonian

by Benjamin Ruhe

The Archives of American Art, the major center of historical material on American artists and their work, this spring became established at the Smithsonian. The announcement was made early this month by Secretary Ripley and Russell Lyne, President of the Archives.

Organized in Detroit in 1954 and currently maintaining offices there and in New York, the Archives is devoted to research in the visual arts in America. Its large collection of original source material is supplemented by a microfilm library containing five million photographic frames.

At the Smithsonian, the Archives is located in the Fine Arts and Portrait Galleries (the Old Patent Office Building) at 8th and F Streets N.W., in downtown Washington. It shares space there with the National Collection of Fine Arts and the National Portrait Gallery. Administrative headquarters of the Archives as well as a regional branch office are being maintained in New York, as is a regional branch in Detroit. Duplicate microfilm libraries are kept in New York, Detroit, and Washington. Original source materials—documents, sketchbooks, tape recordings, photographs—were brought to Washington from Detroit during the several months the Archives used in establishing its new facility.

Secretary Ripley said of the agreement: "When the possibility arose that the Archives of American Art might become a member of the Smithsonian family, we enthusiastically promoted this goal. It fits so beautifully into our aim to make Washington and the Smithsonian a great center of scholarship in the field of American art and art history. Details of the transfer were worked out after meetings stretching over a period of more than two years."

Mr. Lyne, the noted critic and author, said: "We are delighted to join the Smithsonian, an institution whose goals in serving scholarship are in complete accord with our own. An affiliation with the Smithsonian and the assurance of support this involves promises the continuance and expansion of our programs of collecting the documentary history of America's art on a national basis and the broadest possible use of our holdings."

Under the terms of the agreement, which was approved by the Smithsonian Board of Regents, all assets of the Archives became the property of the Smithsonian. The Archives' papers and other source material, a large moving van load, have been placed in the Fine Arts and Portrait Galleries.

William E. Woffenden, Director of the Archives, is in charge of the national activities of the Archives. He is based in New York and will divide his time among the three centers: Emmanuel McCoy, Deputy Director of the Archives, serves as Archivist and oversees archival procedures at the three centers. He is based in Washington. In addition to Mr. McCoy, the stuff at the Archives in

The past few months there has been a small spate of derogatory-sounding stories in the local Washington press about the Smithsonian. The impression is given, it seems to me deliberately given, that somehow or other the Institution is in trouble or in for trouble.

Much of this publicity appeared just prior to the mid-winter meeting of the Regents of the Smithsonian. More of it may be expected before the spring meeting on May 20. I regret this publicity, which is the first such that we have had in my years of tenure as Secretary, and which is inevitably damaging to our own morale as workers and believers in our great Institution.

Like all similar institutions of an academic character, we have been suffering from the drying up of grants and gifts. On the one hand, government agencies are constantly cutting back research support, and we have suffered along with universities. On the other hand, private sources of funds have been thrown into consternation and confusion by last year's mammoth tax reform bill and have been in a state of numbness and some shock ever since. Consequently, private funding has been restricted. The result, along with the failure of Federal support to keep up with steadily rising costs all along the line, has been to threaten the Smithsonian with deficits in its overall budgets.

We cannot, obviously, countenance deficit spending and we will not do so. Consequently, we are seeking the necessary means to curtail activities and decrease expenses. This is the atmosphere of austerity in which press reports inevitably encourage our own internal feelings of "crisis," or at least of uneasiness.

Since last summer, as is normal for all organizations receiving direct Federal appropriations, the General Accounting Office has been auditing our use of such funds for construction and other purposes. Much of this study has gone back to the construction of the wings of the Natural History Museum building in the late Fifties and early Sixties.

These discussions between G.A.O. and our Fiscal Office were in a provisional draft form and still under consideration by both sides when they were leaked to the press in two articles in January, which implied poor management and faulty procedures on our part. These same articles also implied that somehow, in spite of appropriate procedures and continual audit, the responsible officers of this Institution had, or intended to, reallocate restricted private funds and misuse them by assigning them to other purposes. Such allegations are slanderous and wholly unfair to officers operating under accounting procedures, as well as to the character of the officers themselves. There is no truth in these stories.

Recently there have been a number of letters and a newspaper column denigrating and down-grading the magnificent gift of Mr. Hirshhorn to the nation and the Smithsonian. These are the tactics of the smear. They are unworthy.

In this connection, it is interesting to scan the Congressional Record and the newspapers of the time when Congress was wrestling with the acceptance of the bequest of Mr. James Smithson in 1835-46 and at the time of the munificent gift of Mr. Andrew Mellon in 1935-37. The motives of both benefactors were similarly impugned and the question of the gift down-graded in the process. Years later, no one knows or cares. All are merely glad that it happened. Yet the pattern reappears. It is apparently very difficult and indeed suspect to give anything to our Government!

Time alone will rate the performance of all of us as members of this special and unique Institution. Meanwhile, we can count many solid accomplishments. We can also remember the shrill voices of yesterday's news as a running accompaniment to the current state of unhappiness and turbulence and doubt of our world.

(See background report on page 3.)

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY—

Ripley: "The Tactics of the Smear"

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Although programs have been known, on occasion, to boomerang, the Smithsonian Associates have scheduled one that is planned to.

The event is a boomerang making and throwing workshop. Benjamin Ruhe, the Smithsonian art information officer and sometime Australian cowboy, will lead the adult-child program.

As a jacksaroo on a sheep and cattle station near Bogabilla, New South Wales—where he used to chasse kangaroos on my cow pony—Ruhe had ample opportunity to perfect his boomeranging skills. But surprisingly, the returning missiles were always returned to us, not there as they are here.

Ruhe had to inquire to find a group of aborigines who used the returning boomerangs, and had his first demonstrations at famous Botany Bay. He recalls that when he himself was throwing boomerangs in a public park in Sydney he drew a crowd of about 1,000 people, some of whom told him that they had never seen one thrown before.

The appeal of boomerangs is evident from the response to the workshop. The first session, on May 16, was filled almost immediately, and sessions set for two subsequent Saturdays have also been filled. In fact, so many adults without children wanted to attend that there may be an adult-only workshop later this summer.

The workshops will include anthropological films on the making and use of boomerangs, a lecture by Mr. Ruhe on the aerodynamics, throwing techniques, safety precautions, etc., and a display of various boomerangs. The display will include a collection that belonged to Secretary Langley and is now in the Air and Space Museum.

Following the formal part of the workshop, each participant will be given a boomerang blank to finish off for flying with pocket knife and sandpaper. In addition, each beginner will be given an authentic boomerang, now being made to order in Australia.

An area of the Washington Monument grounds will be roped off, with National Park Service approval, for throwing the small, lightweight boomerangs all in one area are completed. QANTAS, the Australian airline, has contributed a $50 trophy for the adult-child team that throws with most accuracy.

It will be the first time that boomerangs have been thrown on the Mall. NASSM's Paul Garber, who is assisting with the workshop, remembers seeing Henry Wallace toting them in front of the Agriculture Department when he was Secretary.

Vision '70
Leonard B. Poulit, Director of S.I.'s Office of Personnel and Management Resources, has announced a new developmental program for employees, called VISION '70. It will utilize lectures, films, seminars, and workshops to explore such diverse subject areas as life-style, occupational problems and life issues, modern sources, etc. The films in the series are being shown at 11:30 on each Tuesday of the month, in the Smithonian Natural History Auditorium. The theme for May is 'Drugs in American Life.'

E-Day
Smithsonian scientists were in the thick of last month's environmental activities: Stan Shetler of NMNH's Department of Botany was one of the ones who took part in community programs, speaking at an Earth Day teach-in at an area high school; Dale Jenkins, the new director of SI's Office of Ecology, was quoted extensively in a national newspaper story; Dr. Sidney Gellert, SI's Assistant Secretary for Science, provided commentary for four hours on E-Day events for a local radio station. The previous week Gellert had chaired the seventh session of the Smithsonian's 'Encounters of the Century,' a series of public programs on the problems and possibilities of the world in which we live. The sessions, one each week, are being held at the American Museum of Natural History.

As a followup to Earth Day, Jon Galber, who is assisting with the workshop, remembers seeing Henry Wallace toting them in front of the Agriculture Department when he was Secretary.

The MHT TV Studio Gallery, opened May 12, provides a permanent showcase for the display of employe art in a wide range of media and expression. Currently on view there is a showing of portraits and figure studies, through June 12. The group exhibition opened May 12, and is the third gallery show. Earlier, Leonard Ludes and Ken Young combined in a two-man display of paintings, followed by a group graphics display.

The group shows are juried by a selection committee that chooses for each exhibition critical reviews of major shows will be sought from key SI museum personnel and from outside art critics, for publication in The Torch.

The exhibitions thus far have shown SI artists to possess a talent and degree of professionalism which has surprised some. Robert Tyler Davis, Assistant Director of the NCFA, commented of the graphics exhibition: 'It is the best group show I've seen in Washington this year.' Many SI staffers, in fact, are professional artists in their spare time, and several run galleries.

Contributors thus far have ranged from secretaries to high-ranked personnel. Ludes, a driving force in the program, believes that upwards of 100 serious artists will have been enabled to show up by the end of this year, in addition to the many weekend artists of skill and dedication.

The committee in charge seeks to make the operation broad-scaled, and emphasizes that the gallery is for staff members and their families. It is open working hours to employees and guests only. Suggestions are welcomed on what shows might be held in the future.

SI Staff Members Can Showcase Artistic Talent

Smithsonian staff members and their families are now getting a chance to show off their very considerable artistic talents. The MHT TV Studio Gallery, opened May 12, provides a permanent showcase for the display of employe art in a wide range of media and expression. Currently on view there is a showing of portraits and figure studies, through June 12. The group exhibition opened May 12, and is the third gallery show. Earlier, Leonard Ludes and Ken Young combined in a two-man display of paintings, followed by a group graphics display.

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RBL Report:

Pall Over Mall

The Smithsonian's Radiation Biology Laboratory scientists have produced evidence that it isn't as sunny as it used to be on the Mall.

Air pollution has increased to the point that there has been about a 16 per cent loss in the amount of light in the direct sunlight on the Mall, RBL scientists report. On a clear day, the Mall may receive only 86 per cent of the light it used to.

On a smoggy day the loss might easily be 90 percent. There is no way to tell what the loss is on cloudy days.

They came up with this data by comparing their current readings against ones made between 1905 and 1907 by Dr. Charles G. Abbot, fifth Secretary of the Smithsonian.

Their explanation is that there is a considerable amount of the sun's energy being reflected and scattered by dust particles in the earth's upper atmosphere. Scientists estimate that total smoke and dust emission to the atmosphere from automobiles and industries in the U.S. is 130 million tons per year. Other combustion including smoke from jet planes and trash burning contribute an additional 30 million tons or more a year.)

RBL Director William H. Klein says if the trend continues, it could cause serious interference at some future date with plant photosynthesis—which provides the energy for animal and human growth and reproduction.

Meanwhile the RBL has vacated its old office and laboratory in and abandoned the old Smithsonian Institution Building, where it had been housed since the late 1800's and moved into new quarters at 12441 Parklawn Drive, Rockville. Its scientists soon will be collecting data that will indicate if the dust in the air is as thick in the suburbs as it is in the city.
Spanish Man Gets a Plastic Soaking

By Tom Harney

In a humidity controlled room in the west court of the National Museum of Natural History, a coffin-shaped carton full of clay and sand in which a burial was found became a 30,000-year-old palaeolithic man.

The relic is unusual for a number of reasons, beginning with the fact that it sheds on prehistoric burial customs in the Spanish caves, an extremely delicate and difficult operation; and the international cooperation in transporting it to the Smithsonian.

Now that it is here, the job of preparing the body of this 30,000-year-old man is the most difficult of the three, but I hope it will also be the most interesting. The historian who is known for his readability, Dr. Boorstin considers his new position especially fortunate for his current writings. "This museum not only has an abundance of objects but also is a meeting place for the community of first-rate scholars," he points out. "If I want to know about the history of bamboo, for example, I would look at the important historic object here, then, I would start at hand at hand with the bamboo garden, which was said to be a crop. He stayed in China for 24 years, most of that time as professor of economic botany at Lingnan University."

Dr. Boorstin has been busy learning his new position. In addition, the University of Chicago historian has kept up his writing, speaking, and contributions to planning the national celebrations of the U.S. Bicentennial.

Two books have been published since his arrival, a third will be out in September, and yet another is in the works. Already in the stores are The Decline of Radiocarbon (Random House) and The Sociology of the Absurd, and yet another is in the works. "We are already in the stores are the Moon, and yet another is in the works."

Dr. Boorstin was appointed to the Smithsonian by a Professor X, introduction by Boorstin. Radicalism, National celebrations of the Bicentennial, he saw the museum, and examine from the underside the impression and embedding in the pieces. His purpose is to strengthen the block to be turned over without a damming joint. If the block had been crumbled into pieces, he notes, "the Spanish remains were still intact on March 27 at NMNH when John Widener cut away the top of the cartoon frescoes and Fathers around the impression then fixed. The remaining are finished with their studies, Widener and Father Echegaray to get in the way of the operation."

"Dr. Boorstin has gotten his new position, some other historians may have material for yet another book, The Smithsonian: The Boorstin Experience."

Floyd McClure, Bamboo Expert

Dr. Floyd McClure, a longtime honor­ary research associate in NMNH's De­partment of Botany and one of the world's leading authorities on bamboo, turned up with a heart attack at his home in Bethesda on April 15.

He was stricken while working in his bamboo garden, which was said to be unique in this country in the variety and number of bamboo species. Supplier of electricity, for example, I have not been able to establish Archives centers in other parts of the country. Offices in New England and on the West Coast are being considered.

Since the Archives is located in the building which houses the famous Na­tional Collection of Fine Arts and the National Portrait Gallery, these three units, working in close collaboration, are expected to make the building one of the major centers of scholarship in American art in the nation.

The Archives will maintain its distinct identity within the Smithsonian. The continuation of its own Advisory Board, a group drawn from around the country, will ensure this result.

The Archives was founded in 1954 as a nonprofit, independent national re­search institution when E. P. Richardson, then Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, and collector Lawrence A. Fleisch­man found themselves at a loss for bio­graphical material on many artists who interested them. Dr. Richardson was con­ducting research for his book, Painting America—The Story of 450 Years, while Mr. Fleischman sought documenta­tion for paintings which he had pur­chased. Faced with similar problems, they conceived the idea of establishing a research center with the fundamental goal of encouraging research and publication on art in the United States. With gen­erous support in the Detroit and New York communities and broad coopera­tion throughout the country, they brought the concept to fruition. The Archives has steadily expanded since its inception.
Background Report

A Chronology of Facts

What is the substance behind some recent unfavorable stories relating to the Smithsonian? Here are the facts. July 1970

The first of these stories occurred last January, shortly before a regular meeting of the House Appropriations Committee, when Congressman Thompson proposed a mandatory audit of the Smithsonian's financial records. The Chair of the Smithsonian's Committee on Libraries and Monuments, Mr. Sprague, Chairman of the Smithsonian's Executive Board, flatly reported that the Smithsonian was not requesting any additional funds for its fiscal offices. The substance of these statements were the matters discussed at the January meeting. No action was taken by the Regents with respect to the GAO report in view of its preliminary nature, which could have been reconciled with the Institution's plans for improvement of various procedures and of the internal auditing of the financial affairs of the Institution.

On private investment policies, the Regents accepted Secretary Ripley's "recommendation" for the establishment of a unified investment program for the Institution's private endowments designed to meet higher investment rates and lower administrative costs without affecting the integrity of the individuals' investments. "As a result of these discussions, Mr. Thompson hastened to add, 'The Smithsonian is not seeking to be one of the first in the nation to develop with seriousness and at long last develop with seriousness and in an ordered and meaningful way a nation's fund raising campaign because the Institution is in effect an agency that is now used by nearly all institutions in the United States.'" Thompson's constructive interest in the Smithsonian as everyone knows is a fine organization with a long record of notable achievements as a museum and in advancing knowledge in the arts and sciences. The purpose of a hearing is to get to the bottom of recent allegations, and not to make headlines."

As a result of these discussions, Mr. Thompson has introduced a House resolution that asks that the Committee on House Administration, acting as a whole or by subcommittee, be granted the authority to conduct investigations and studies of the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress. This bill was taken by the Regents with respect to the GAO report in view of its preliminary nature, which could have been reconciled with the Institution's plans for improvement of various procedures and of the internal auditing of the financial affairs of the Institution.

Mr. Thompson characterized his interest in an article that appeared in the Washington Star: "The Smithsonian is everyone knows is a fine organization with a long record of notable achievements as a museum and in advancing knowledge in the arts and sciences. The purpose of a hearing is to get to the bottom of recent allegations, and not to make headlines."

"This is true that on the Federal fund giving side, the Smithsonian finds itself in a particularly tight situation for a few reasons. First of all, the Institution has been forced to absorb a substantial part of mandatory salary increases. More important, inflation has more than offset the annual increases in Congressional appropriations for operating, materials, and supplies. Funds also, due to changes in the modal, in the Federal accounting, there is a greater stability of employment and fewer "loans" in which for the Smithsonian has had the result of higher-than-anticipated annual payroll costs. It is for these reasons that the Smithsonian must closely examine activities for the remainder of the fiscal year in order to live within its Congressional appropriation. It must also lay a solid base for next year, through adequate advance planning and analysis of base resources so that the Institution can continue to develop in an ordered and meaningful manner.

On the private fund giving side, in spite of the uncertain reactions facing the foundations and other sources of private giving, the Smithsonian still has much work to do in its favor. There is first of all the Smithsonian magazine. It has had the most successful start in the recent history of magazine publishing, and there is every reason to believe that in the foreseeable future it will become a major source of support for the research and public enlightenment objectives of the Institution. There is also an across-the-board improving condition for other privately funded activities. Notable among these are the Smithsonian Libraries, the Belmont Conference Center, Performing Arts programs, and the Smithsonian Press.

Finally, the Smithsonian is also embarking on a national fund raising campaign for general purposes, that is, a campaign over and above its continuing approaches to previous donors and to special purpose proposals. There is belief that the Smithsonian can at long last develop with seriousness and confidence a national fund raising campaign because the Institution is in effect going national, or taking a giant step towards an audience that is more than ever national through the magazine and its associated National Associates membership program. To this end, the Development Office is organizing the campaign around a national lay committee which is headed by one of America's foremost business leaders. Dr. Henderson says that he relies on other people to give him leads about the location of meteorites and that he has "prayed the gospel" on what to do when you find one (notify the Smithsonian) all over the United States.

Most of the time, he explains, the Smithsonian receives about 25 to 50 letters a month telling of meteorite discoveries. But during the time of a spectacular meteorite display, it is flooded with hundreds of phone calls and letters. Although almost all of these are followed up, Mr. Thompson says that only one in a hundred actually leads to a meteorite. Finding these rocks requires a lot of walking and a sharp eye, according to the scientist. He says, "You recognize it after a while almost by instinct—it's like having a built-in scanning computer. Your eye is critical, for meteorites are heavier, have a different structure than earth rocks, and appear quite unusual."

Dr. Henderson's research involves the metallurgy of iron meteorites. He has helped to discover some new minerals, and he has also evaluated many metallic constituents in stony meteorites as well.

During World War II, he worked with another kind of rock—diamonds. He was assigned to help evaluate diamonds and other gems turned over in Japan to the Allied Command in 1946. When these gems were eventually returned, Dr. Henderson again served on a commission established by the Japanese government to evaluate the gems. He was the only foreign member of the commission.

Dr. Henderson joined the Smithsonian in 1929 and retired in 1966. He still maintains an office in the Division of Meteorites and is actively continuing his research.

Oehler Book

Paul Oehser, former editor-in-chief of the Smithsonian Press, has written a book on the Institution to be released on May 14. The book, The Smithsonian Institution, is published by Praeger and will sell for $8.95 a copy. Mr. Oehler, who was associated with the National Geographic Society.