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Art History’s Other Global Moment: Chicago, 1948

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This essay focuses attention on the little-known third edition from 1948 of Helen Gardner’s art history survey text, *Art Through the Ages*, in which Gardner (1878–1946), a University of Chicago-trained art historian and professor of art history at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, mounted what may have been the first attempt to write a rigorously global history of art.¹ I discovered the book in the process of investigating mid-twentieth century strategies for popularizing modernist aesthetics in the United States for a larger research project that will be published as *Diagrammatics: Industrialism and the Modernizing of American Art* by University of Chicago Press.

In that larger project, I explore an unusual visual motif: the pedagogical diagram. Diagrammatic explanations of the underlying structure—the design, or composition—of artwork were pervasive throughout the twentieth century, in both the training of artists to produce objects of beauty and of the American public in their appreciation. Robert Henri (1865–1929) and George Bellows (1882–1925), for example, built their progressive forms of realism on the abstract scaffolding supplied by the compositional formulae of Hardesty Maratta (1864–1924) and Jay Hambidge (1867–1924).² Pioneering abstractionists Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986) and Manierre Dawson (1887–1969) created austere arrangements inspired by the educational theories of Arthur Wesley Dow (1857–1922) and Denman Waldo Ross (1853–1935).³ Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975) passed along his nostalgia for “scientifically-managed” aesthetics in the 1930s to his best-known student, the paradigmatic Abstract Expressionist, Jackson Pollock (1912–1956).⁴ Yet, following the derisive dismissal by Milton W. Brown of the pseudoscientific systems of composition that proliferated in the aftermath of the Armory Show (in Brown’s now classic 1955 study, *American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression*), pedagogical diagrams and their role in the development of modernist art in the United States largely disappeared from the historical literature.

My interest in this topic was piqued initially by the circumstances of an unusual gallery maintained for many years by the education department of the Art Institute of Chicago. Known as the Gallery of Art Interpretation, this small space was, under its first curator, Helen Mackenzie, but especially its second, Katharine Kuh, the site of an extraordinary series of didactic exhibitions mounted between 1939 and 1954.⁵ Kuh, a former art dealer, and later, renowned curator of modern art, used large-scale reproductions of artwork as part of the gallery educational displays; most boasted prominent graphic overlays—linear, diagrammatic marks intended for perplexed visitors to identify the universal elements of design that presumably linked the representational art of the past to the abstract art of the present.

My father-in-law, the artist Michael S. Parfenoff (b. 1926), had earned undergraduate and graduate degrees attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago [SAIC] from 1948 to 1951. When I asked him about the Gallery of Art Interpretation, he

remembered it well. What Kuh was doing, he explained, was identical with the exercises he and his fellow students were asked to do in their art history classes, conducted by the formidable artist and historian Kathleen Blackshear (1897–1988), and reinforced by the numerous such diagrams included in their survey text, *Art Through the Ages*. Authored by Blackshear’s friend and mentor Helen Gardner, *Art Through the Ages* is a precursor to the more familiar *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*—the name by which the book has been known since its first posthumous edition appeared in 1959.



Fig. 1. Figure 543a in Helen Gardner, *Art Through the Ages* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948), 543.

As a relativist in the Germanic tradition that marshaled the insights of human psychology to argue for generally valid laws of artistic creation, Gardner had frequently asked her students to create diagrams based on canonical artworks as a means of demonstrating their understanding of the principles of design (Figure 1).⁶ The purpose of these exercises, she wrote in 1940, was to ensure that the art student,

... interested vitally in the immediate present, [would] find in the observable formal elements a common denominator for present and past. . . The primitive method of dissecting a form of nature and reassembling the parts and several aspects of one part according to aesthetic requirements differs but little from the method of Picasso and Bracque [*sic*]. In fact, it was basic in the work of the ancient Egyptian painter.⁷

The empathetic formalism that Kuh learned from Gardner is an intriguing alternative to the more reductive theory of modernism associated with the postwar American art critic Clement Greenberg.⁸ Gardner’s work also clarified for me the links between American industrialism and the training of artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (the profound impact of industrialized art education on the subsequent development of modernist art in the United States is a major theme of my book project). Two powerful cultural tendencies converged in the United States during the last decades of the nineteenth century: the pragmatic interdependence of art and industry established in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War (as business leaders advocated mass instruction in

art as a way of enhancing the competitiveness of the country in emerging world markets), and the utopian focus on art as an arena of social improvement (as conservatives and progressive reformers alike reacted to the excesses of capitalist competition). For Chicagoan Helen Gardner, there was no contradiction between these positions.

Better known today for the apparent divergence of its fine and applied arts traditions, for many years, Chicago was a center for an integrated arts education in which the teaching of design principles dominated the training of artists irrespective of medium or practice. From Jane Addams’ Hull House and the Settlement House movement of the 1890s to the renewal and transformation of the Bauhaus idiom in Chicago architecture and design of the 1940s and 1950s, the fortunes of industry and art long have been linked in Chicago. The major art museum of the city, the Art Institute of Chicago, also grew in tandem with the industrial expansion that transformed Chicago in the 1890s, as did the new University of Chicago. The ideals of progressivism neatly dovetailed with the needs of industry in the early history of even these venerable institutions.⁹

The origins of *Art Through the Ages* may be found in the survey class Gardner began teaching at SAIC in 1920. Hired as part of the attempt of the school to retool itself from a fine arts academic type of school based in figure study and anatomy into a modern school for industrial art and design, Gardner was charged with creating a survey that would serve students of both fine arts and design—“an intensive study for students whose training had become more specialized,” as the course was described in the school catalogue of 1926, the year that the first edition of *Art Through the Ages* appeared in print.¹⁰ To borrow the Machine Age vernacular, Gardner’s survey represented the singular and authoritative position from which the automated assembly line of modernized art education acquired its meaning.

Helen Gardner was ideally suited for this responsibility.

Her two mentors in the 1910s at the University of Chicago were the Austrian-born art historian Richard Offner (1889–1965), a scholar who believed that style was such a significant symptom of artistic personality that his own great work, a critical corpus of Florentine painting, was a multivolume series that contained very few words (as Offner explained in the introduction, published in 1933, advances in photography had made it possible to let artwork speak for themselves), and Walter Sargent (1868–1927), an artist and progressive educator who was dedicated to the proposition that art was an integral part of daily life (Sargent was briefly the chair of the Department of Art at Chicago in the mid-1920s, and he gave the program its name, which combined art and design practice with teacher training and art history, calling it Art, as the overarching category under which all else was subsumed).¹¹

For Gardner, Art was the skilled manipulation of materials for socially useful or decorative purposes. Never for its own sake, art always (at least ought to be) fully integrated into society. In her words:

The statue may be a decoration of a building, an integral part of the structure and determined by it. The painting frequently decorates a great wall surface or the page of a manuscript and much of its composition and color is determined by its use and its technique. The stained-glass plays its part in the whole interior ensemble and is not merely an example of the minor arts.¹²

She lamented, in 1926, that such utility seemed to have eluded the contemporary period. Describing hers as a “transitional age,” Gardner explained, “Art has become

segregated from the affairs of life as something to be treated with indifference, or disregarded, or as a luxury, something to be indulged in, upon occasions, or as a means of ostentation. It is the age of the museum and the exhibition—both unnatural.”¹³

Two exceptions for Gardner in 1926 were contemporary Russian art, by which she meant the ensemble work of the Ballets Russes, and the collective activity associated with the creation of the modern skyscraper (she praised architects in general for their “logical constructive thinking”).¹⁴

Gardner’s 1936 edition continued to explore this theme in a completely new section entitled Modern Art: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, which comprised chapters on France, the United States and The Art of Today.¹⁵ In the revised text, Gardner found the true modernism of American architecture in such unabashedly anonymous, industrial forms as grain elevators, and reserved her highest praise for painters who revived archaic or traditional forms—contemporary indigenous artists of the American Southwest, and those engaged in the Mexican mural movement.

What links these otherwise opposed impulses—industrialized functionalism in architecture with primitivizing or ethnic styles in painting—is Gardner’s celebration of these activities as instances of contemporary artists operating successfully within mainstream social and economic systems. Her book closed in 1936 with an enthusiastic discussion of developments in the industrial arts (textiles, glass, typography, etc.), which, according to Gardner, indicated that art was in the process of being “reintegrated into the cultural fabric.” Gardner’s *Art Through the Ages*, in other words, by 1936, was well on its way to creating a canon of modern art that disrespected abstract painting in favor of the “beauty of a gauge and a seaplane.”¹⁶

When Gardner’s faith in the transcendental powers of form met the political realities of World War II, the results were unprecedented: “Because today and only today, the concept of one total world inescapably thrusts itself forward,” Gardner wrote in 1948, “I have been motivated in preparing this third edition of *Art Through the Ages*, both in the incorporation of new material and in the reorganization of the old, by a desire to present a world panorama of art.” The challenge for Gardner was to correct what she called the “Euro-po-centrism” of art history (Euro-centrism apparently not yet a word in common usage). Her ingenious solution was to treat world history as horizontal rather than vertical—a device many find difficult to implement successfully even today.¹⁷

As outlined in her brief preface:

Part One presents a panorama of the arts in ancient times and shows how great cultures arose and evolved on all the continents, largely in isolation yet with some vital contacts that affected the forms of expression. *Part Two* continues the panorama through the Middle Ages when the contacts between Asia, Northern Africa, and Europe became more pronounced and a lively intercourse brought about mutual exchanges of ideas, motifs, and forms. *Part Three* shows the Renaissance as the period when the world began to shrink at an ever accelerating rate. This was the age of discovery, exploration, and colonization. It witnessed the transplanting of European arts to large sections of the world, most important of which was the hitherto unknown western hemisphere, where the conflict or assimilation of European arts with the indigenous American arts transformed them into American-European styles. *Part Four* reveals the world, through unbelievable advances in transportation and communication, as

one world in which the nations are becoming acquainted with each other, are learning from each other, and are to a considerable extent producing works of art which, despite national divergences, come within an international framework.¹⁸

True to her word, she surveyed the world horizontally, taking the historical scheme then in favor—the four great periods of Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and Modern—and using them against their narrative grain as hefty cross-sections of simultaneous activity. In her inclusive vision, Medieval Chinese artifacts commingled with the Renaissance art of Northwest Coast Indians, the whole culminating optimistically in a chapter devoted to the international arts of the machine.

It is no coincidence that the one world of which Gardner spoke in her introduction was the resonant title of corporate lawyer and progressive Republican Wendell L. Willkie's memoir of his 1942 travels to the Middle East, the Soviet Union, and China.¹⁹ Willkie had unsuccessfully challenged Franklin D. Roosevelt for the presidency in 1940, a liberal internationalist running as the candidate of a conservative, isolationist party. His vision of international cooperation became a shibboleth of liberal internationalism in the immediate postwar era, as the nuclear devastation of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan deepened the urgency with which liberals called for global unity.²⁰ Two weeks after the atomic bombing, editor Freda Krichwey was insisting in *The Nation*, an independent journal of politics and culture, that a world government to control nuclear weapons was the only means of saving civilization from annihilation.²¹ Chicago became a center for the world government movement with the formation of the Committee to Frame a World Constitution at the University of Chicago in November 1945.²²

Gardner rehearsed in spectacular fashion Willkie's utopian vision of coming world fusion in the final chapter of her 1948 edition, entitled "The Arts of the Machine." Here she evoked the thrill of "a streamlined railroad car" or airplane, and the delights of "the mechanized kitchen" and "simple, gaily colored gadget from the five-and-ten." Even some painters were applauded for "designing machine-made articles as well as ballet-settings" and "reaching out into the fields of weaving, ceramics, and glass," though the exclusive practices of the majority Gardner continued to dismiss as "devoid of function."²³ Gardner concluded in unequivocal terms that the present age would bear witness to the emergence of a new, unified style based in science and technology.

Sadly, little of Gardner's utopian scheme survived the 1959 revision of her text accomplished by the Yale University art history department under the direction of Sumner McKnight Crosby, past president of the College Art Association (1941–45). The imperialistic universalism of this much better known edition knowingly recapitulated the divisions of the new world order, and represented a return to normalcy in its rejection of globalism, reinstatement of traditional hierarchies, and reinforcement of temporal and spatial boundaries. As Crosby wrote in his preface:

Although Miss Gardner's organization of the Third Edition provided many opportunities for interesting comparisons and made it possible to study in adjacent chapters what was occurring in different parts of the world during more or less the same historic periods, this organization often obscured the intrinsic qualities and especially the development of the different styles. As our table of contents indicates, we have presented the arts of different periods and countries in a more normal order.²⁴

Normal meant the imposition of four major divisions: Ancient, European, Non-European, and Modern. In this way, the presumably distinctive stylistic coherence of European art was preserved, but at considerable expense: not only would the anonymously produced objects so important to Gardner’s discussion no longer appear side by side with works bespeaking individual genius, as traditional, canonical works were reinscribed into the realm of pure art, but the modern, industrial design that had been the goal of Gardner’s insistent teleology disappeared (a new chapter on the artistic history of photography took the place of Gardner’s discussion of the industrial arts).

Passionate though it may be, Gardner’s is simply not the model on which postwar art history built its narratives.²⁵

A major 1970 revision of *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages* produced the core of the text celebrated today for its objectivity and breadth, however, those authors made no pretense of disrupting the traditional art historical story of stylistic development as Gardner did in 1948, or of extending their evenhandedness to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (the discussion of which was dominated by individual artists presented within the narrative as visionaries and innovators).

New survey texts introduced in the 1970s reflected methodological changes in the discipline, particularly those associated with Marxist or social history, yet their interference with the traditional canon was minimal. It would take the end of the Cold War to produce as inclusive a canon as Helen Gardner’s again, when the multicultural approach of Marilyn Stokstad, in her 1995 *Art History*, seriously, though respectfully, challenged the canon.

Of course, the contrast between Gardner’s atomic-age liberal internationalism and Stokstad’s multiculturalism could not be greater. Helen Gardner was not interested in preserving difference for its own sake—particularly not if that difference was an effect of privatized or individualized expression. Gardner’s final chapter, “The Arts of the Machine,” represents above all a collectivist apotheosis. For Gardner, contemporary art would be global art, without geographic borders and universal in its social utility and accessibility. In this she appears remarkably prescient. Yet, in its near invisibility, the 1948 edition of *Art Through the Ages* is a cautionary tale—reminding us that the unequal power relations that produced the deeply Eurocentric concept of art also produced such significant divisions as those between so-called high art and low, between architecture or design history and the history of art, and even between the history of art in Chicago (Gardner’s hometown) and a history of modernism based in New York.²⁶

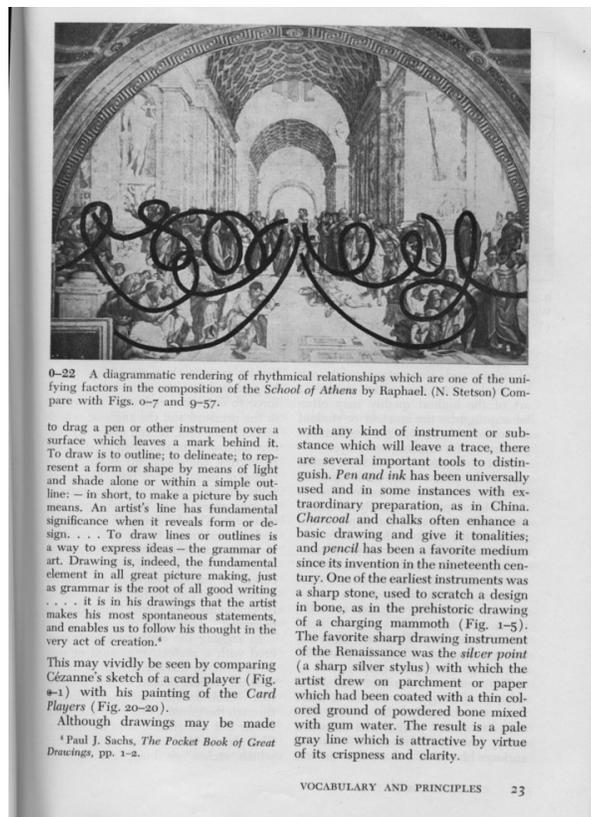


Fig. 2. Figure 0-22 in Sumner McK. Crosby, et al, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages* (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1959), 23.

The post-World War II edition reworked Gardner's diagrammatic impulse as well, replacing her empathetic tactility (in which students carefully traced and schematized the major design elements of historical works) with a spectacularly detached visuality. The introduction to the fourth edition features the paradigmatic example: in a passage that begins with reference to Raphael's *School of Athens*, 1509–11, and concludes by directing the reader to an image of Pollock's *Number 29* of 1950, Crosby and his Yale colleagues opined, "It is [a] function of the artist to guide our eyes as we look at a painting, to bring order into what otherwise might be chaos . . . Sometimes this order is immediately apparent and we 'read' the picture easily; in other instances we may have to search out the order if we are to understand the artist's message."²⁷ Identifying a connection between mural and painting that does not otherwise exist (in the illustration, a heavy, black line is shown to loop and swell in Pollock-esque fashion across the horizontal axis of the *School of Athens*), the editors in 1959 encouraged readers to see Pollock as part of an autonomous, ahistorical continuum (Figure 2).

The wide distribution and corresponding impact of Gardner's early editions of *Art Through the Ages* should not be underestimated. Future Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein (1923–1997), to cite just one high profile example, read Gardner as an undergraduate student at Ohio State University in the 1940s, an experience that sparked his interest in broader, more inclusive canons of art.²⁸ Decades before today's art historical global turn, Helen Gardner provided a model for what an expansive yet coherent art history might look like. But as Cold War politics intervened, Gardner's book faded from prominence. The recovery of Gardner now provides more than a glimpse into the machinations of canon formation; it is an

opportunity to consider just how heterodox at its origins modernist historiography actually was.

Notes

¹ Published in 1926 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, Helen Gardner’s *Art Through the Ages* was, if not the first single-volume history of art in the United States, then the first to achieve widespread popularity. According to Gardner’s devoted student, photographer Harold Allen (1912–1998), who penned her entry in Edward T. James, Janet W. James, Paul S. Boyer, eds., *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary, Volume 2* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974), 13-15, the book went through three editions and thirty-nine printings between 1926 and 1948 for a total of 446,479 copies, of which 97,196 were sold in bookstores and the rest, 349,283 as textbooks. Following the author’s death in 1946, the book title became the more familiar *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages* for the fourth edition, revised by Sumner McK. Crosby and the Yale Department of Art History and published in 1959. Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey collaborated on the next five editions of the book (1970–90), with contributions to the ninth edition made by Diane Kirkpatrick. A tenth edition appeared in 1995, revised by Tansey and Fred S. Kleiner; Kleiner has been author or coauthor of the five editions published since 2000.

² Maratta, an obscure landscape and panorama painter, inventor, and paint manufacturer originally from Chicago, mixed and sold a line of brilliantly colored paints using transparent dyes rather than earth pigments, and developed a system of color application based on the theory of the simultaneous contrast of colors. He also claimed to have discovered a system of geometrical proportion based, like his color system, on the equilateral triangle. His patented Maratta’s Web, 1915, a printed card covered with finely woven horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines, was intended for use as an aid for composition by artists hoping to meld an overall harmony out of a diversity of pictorial elements. Illustrator Hambidge’s ostensibly more technical system, dynamic symmetry, was based on the mathematical theory of proportion known variously as the logarithmic spiral, the golden section, or the Fibonacci series. According to Hambidge, in dynamic symmetry, there were laws governing infinitely flexible sequence of diagonals or so-called whirling triangles, which had been extracted by the ancient Egyptians and Greeks from their observations of the organic growth of shells and the sequence of leaf distribution in plants, and were the basis of all design in Greek and Egyptian art and architecture. See Jay Hambidge, *Dynamic Symmetry in Composition as Used by Artists* (New York: Brentano’s, 1923).

³ Dow of Pratt Institute (and later Columbia University) and Ross of Harvard’s Graduate School of Architecture devised elaborate (and competing) systems for teaching composition. Dow’s practical suggestions were based on analyses of Japanese design and his insistence that the study of design would level traditional hierarchies: “Composition,” he wrote in his 1899 textbook, *Composition, A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use of Students and Teachers* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1918), 5, “is made the basis of all work in drawing, painting, designing, and modeling—of house decoration and industrial arts—of normal courses and of art training for children.” Emphasizing originality and personal choice, Dow’s pedagogy received wide public circulation. Under Ross’ system, elaborated in his 1907 treatise, *A Theory of Pure Design: Harmony, Balance, Rhythm* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1907), it was not intuition but nature’s geometric essence, distilled through scrupulously objective observation, which was to be the true source of all knowledge of design. In representation, Ross advised, the artist must begin with an idea, the substance of which is science (inspired by observation and modified or verified from nature), the form of which is art. Ross, whose lectures on the theory of design at Harvard captured the attention of a generation of future architects, museum administrators, and art historians in the opening decades of the twentieth century, emphasized studying the past and applying principles derived from such study to present art.

⁴ Benton’s “preliminary effort to develop a system of teaching composition and comparative analysis of structure” was published in 1926–27 as “Mechanics of Form Organization in Painting,” a series of essays on the theory of pictorial composition complete with diagrammatic illustrations. Parts one through five were published in *The Arts* 10 (November 1926): 285–89; and (December 1926): 340–42; and 11 (January 1927): 43–44; (February 1927): 95–6; and (March 1927): 145–48. For the impact of Benton’s pedagogy on Pollock, see my article, “Jackson Pollock’s Industrial Expressionism,” *Art Journal* 63, no.4 (Winter 2004): 68–79.

⁵ See Susan F. Rossen and Charlotte Moser, “Primer for Seeing: The Gallery of Art Interpretation and Katharine Kuh’s Crusade for Modernism in Chicago,” *Museum Studies* 16, no. 1 (1990): 6–25, 88–90.

⁶ According to Ulrich Pfisterer, there were at least three scholarly traditions represented within early nineteenth century Germanic art history: evolutionists (Hegelians opposed to functionalist materialism, who formulated histories of ornamentation that demonstrated the degeneration of art from the naturalistic to the abstract); nationalists (closely related to the evolutionists, their concept of ever more perfect stages of human development reinforced nationalist and racist ideologies); and relativists, who promoted research into the art of all cultures without any comparative evaluation. See Pfisterer, “Origins and Principles of World Art History:1900 (and 2000), in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, eds., Kitty Zijlmans, Willfried Van Damme (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008), 69–89.

⁷ Helen Gardner, “The Analytic Method,” *Art Education Today* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1940), 26–38.

⁸ The efforts of the relativists were prompted by the philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder’s theory of expression, introduced around 1800, which posited a subjective and animate relationship between humans and all forms of sensuous appearance. Empathy, as Herder’s elaborated theory came subsequently to be known, is an aesthetics of content, but one that relies on effects that are primarily formal and psychological. See H. F. Mallgrave and E. Ikonou, *Empathy, Form and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893* (Santa Monica, CA: The Getty Center for the History of the Arts and the Humanities, 1994), 17–29.

⁹ See Barbara Jaffee, “Before the New Bauhaus: From Industrial Drawing to Art and Design Education in Chicago,” *DesignIssues* 21, no. 1 (Winter, 2005): 41–62.

¹⁰ SAIC’s spectacular failure to become an industrial arts school in the 1920s to the 1930s and the deep disappointment of the Alliance of Art and Industry, a working group formed by progressive educator George Eggers (1883–1958), director of the Institute from 1916 to 1921, led to the formation of the better known Association of Arts and Industries, the group that brought László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946) and the New Bauhaus to Chicago in 1937.

¹¹ For more on Sargent, see Jaffee, “Before the New Bauhaus.” On Offner, see Andrew Ladis, “The Unmaking of a Connoisseur,” Hayden B. J. Maginnis, “Richard Offner and the Ineffable: A Problem in Connoisseurship,” and Craig Hugh Smyth, “Glimpses of Richard Offner,” in Richard Offner, *A Discerning Eye: Essays on Early Italian Painting* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 3–46.

¹² Helen Gardner, *Art Through the Ages* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1926), iii–iv.

¹³ Gardner 1926, 467.

¹⁴ The young Alfred H. Barr, Jr. (1902–1981), who would make the collection of architecture and design, along with painting and sculpture, central to his program for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, shared Gardner’s fascination with industrial forms of architecture. According to Richard Meyer, one of Barr’s first published pieces of architectural criticism was his May 1928 commentary in *The Arts* on the

recently completed Necco (New England Confectionary Company) factory in Cambridge, MA (subsequent to a field trip Barr organized for students in the course on contemporary art he offered at Wellesley College during the 1926–27 academic year). See Richard Meyer, *What Was Contemporary Art?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 86–93.

¹⁵ Gardner's almost complete change of heart between 1926 and 1936 over the fate of contemporary art probably owed a great deal to the close friendship and working partnership she had forged in the interim with her former student, Kathleen Blackshear. Blackshear arrived at SAIC in 1924, having earned a BA degree from Baylor University in 1917, finished a year of study at the Art Students League in New York, and traveled and worked as an artist for some six years. Blackshear was vitally interested in the expressive and imaginative distortions pioneered by the so-called Post-Impressionists (the term coined in 1910 by the British art historian Roger Fry to describe a generation of artists working after or against Impressionism), artists whose works were amply represented in the Art Institute collection. Blackshear also felt a strong affinity with non-Western art, a deeply personal interest formed during her youth in Navasota, Texas, which had brought her into close and sympathetic proximity with the African American workers who picked cotton on farms owned by her relatives. The suite of drawings and paintings Blackshear produced between 1924 and 1940 of black life as she had observed it during summers in Navasota, earned her one of the first Masters of Fine Arts degrees from SAIC in 1940. For more on Blackshear see Carole Tormollan, *A Tribute to Kathleen Blackshear*, exh. cat. (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1991).

¹⁶ Helen Gardner, *Art Through the Ages* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1936), 742. Gardner is quoting Herbert Read, *Art and Industry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935), 108. Read, a former curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum of decorative arts and design in London, argued that the purpose of the pure art of non-representational painting was to serve as research into form for the applied work of industrial designers. Read's book seems to have been a key source for Gardner's rethinking of the relationship between painting and design in 1936. It also likely introduced Gardner to exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, including to Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, in 1932, and Johnson's *Machine Art*, in 1934 (examples of work featured in both exhibitions appear in Gardner's second edition).

¹⁷ Most so-called global art history survey texts tend nevertheless to have an inner core of chapters dedicated to the chronological unfolding of European art, from classical antiquity or its European renaissance through to the twentieth century. Appended to these are stand-alone chapters on discrete moments in world art. More successful in the attempt to flatten the world are Mark Jarzombek, Francis D.K. Ching, and Vikramaditya Prakash, *A Global History of Architecture*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2010) and John Onians, *Atlas of World Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁸ Helen Gardner, *Art Through the Ages* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948), ix.

¹⁹ Wendell L. Willkie, *One World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943).

²⁰ The most enduring expression of this impulse has been the United Nations, a term first used in 1942 to describe the allied forces of World War II, and after 1945, the intergovernmental organization devoted to human rights, economic development, and international cooperation.

²¹ Freda Krichwey, "One World or None," *The Nation* 161 (August 18, 1945): 150.

²² After first providing a haven at Chicago for the Manhattan Project, which resulted in the first self-sustaining nuclear reaction in December 1942, University of Chicago president Robert Hutchins found in the utopianism of the Italian poet Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, who had joined the University faculty in 1936 and was a passionate advocate of the idea of world government, a match for his own idealism. The

two were instrumental in the formation of the Committee to Frame a World Constitution. See James Sloan Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

²³ Gardner 1948, 782.

²⁴ *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*, Sumner McKnight Crosby and the Department of the History of Art, Yale University, eds. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), xi.

²⁵ Any explanation must acknowledge the political reality that the severing of high and low (the so-called Great Divide of twentieth century culture) was the product of arguments in the 1940s and 1950s that painting and sculpture were privileged forms, ideally suited to furthering the progress of human spirit—and thus the focus of the American project of saving Western civilization from itself. This process begins with the rejection of the “degraded” products of mass culture in Clement Greenberg’s 1939 “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” and culminates with Alfred H. Barr, Jr. 1952 text, “Is Modern Art Communist?,” a defense of avant-garde painting and its “democratic” values, and Meyer Schapiro’s suggestion in his 1957 “The Liberating Quality of Avant-Garde Art” that the significance of avant-garde (especially Abstract Expressionist) painting lay in its positing of an alternative to the technological extremes of corporate capitalism. See Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” *Partisan Review* 6, no. 5 (Fall 1939): 34–49; Barr, “Is Modern Art Communist?” *New York Times Magazine*, 14 December 1952, 22–23, 28–30; and Schapiro, “The Liberating Quality of Avant-Garde Art,” *Art News* 56, no. 4 (Summer 1957): 36–42.

²⁶ The story of the development of modern art in New York is largely the story of European stylistic precedents culminating in the transcendent synthesis of Abstract Expressionism. Chicago, measured by the same set of expectations, turns out to be a paradox—a city of irreconcilable differences in which abstract architecture and expressionist painting uneasily commingle (although these were the very forms, technological invention and archaic revival, praised by Gardner for their social utility starting in 1936). See Franz Schulze, “Art in Chicago: The Two Traditions,” and my own alternative account, “Pride of Place,” which analyzes the post World War II Chicago art world as a network or ecosystem, in Lynne Warren, ed., *Art in Chicago, 1945–1995* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 13–34, 53–68.

²⁷ *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*, 1959, 23.

²⁸ Per an unidentified c. 1963 interview with the artist, described in Grace Glueck, “A Pop Artist’s Fascination with the First Americans,” *New York Times*, December 23, 2005, E42.