

OWNER: The Regents of the University of California

LOCATION: 800 Chestnut Street, northeast corner of Jones; the parcel is square with frontages of 275 feet on Chestnut, Jones and Francisco, Being Lot 1 in Assessor's Block 49.

HISTORY: Designed by the architectural firm of Bakewell and Brown, this building was erected for the San Francisco Art Association to house the California School of Fine Arts (now known as the San Francisco Art Institute). It was built in 1926, and dedicated January 15, 1927.

The San Francisco Art Association was organized in March of 1871 for the "promotion of Painting, Sculpture and Fine Arts akin thereto, the diffusion of a cultivated taste for art in the community at large, and the establishment of an Academy or School of Design."

The membership was drawn both from artist and lay groups. The first Board of Directors consisted of Juan B. Wandesforde, Samuel Marsden Brookes, Frederick Whympier, Edward Bosqui, William L. Marple, Benjamin P. Avery, Gideon J. Denny and Noah Brooks. Others that served on the Board during the early years of the Art Association were William Alvord, Andrew S. Halladie, Pietro Mezzara, Darius Odgen Mills, Thomas Hill, Joseph Charles Duncan (the father of Isadora), William C. Ralston, William Hahn, Julian Rix, Norton Bush, Jules Tavernier, Charles F. Crocker, William Keith and James D. Phelan.

During the first year of its existence, the Art Association met in the Museum Room of the Mercantile Library. Later it occupied quarters at 313 Pine Street and in 1876, moved to 430 Pine Street, sharing space with the Bohemian Club. Meanwhile the Art Association opened the California School of Design in 1874, making it the oldest art school west of the Mississippi and the fourth oldest in the nation.

Amelia Ransome Neville remembered the rooms "over the California Market, of all places, where art was pervaded with the aroma of fish and the sound of the butcher's cleaver was heard. Mingled with my memories of Private Views that opened Spring Exhibitions in the old rooms are scents of the Market."

Virgil Williams was hired as the school's first Director. He had previously been in charge of the gallery in Woodward's Gardens. When Williams died in 1886, Thomas Hill took charge of the school until a new Director could be found. In 1887, Emil Carlsen came out from New York to take the position, which he held until 1889. Raymond Yelland ran the school for a year, then Arthur Mathews was placed in charge. It was while teaching at the school that Mathews met Lucia Kleinhans, a student, who later became his wife. Mathews was Director until 1906.

HISTORY:
(Continued)

Other students during the school's early years were Fanny Osborne (later, Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson) and her daughter Isobel. The novelist Frank Norris, Matilda Lotz (who also studied in Paris with Rosa Bonheur), Christian Jorgensen, Ernest Peixotto and Theodore Wores attended the school during this period. When Oscar Wilde visited San Francisco in 1882, Wores painted his portrait.

The San Francisco Art Association was incorporated in 1889. After the death of Mark Hopkins in 1878, his widow married Edward F. Searles from Methuen, Massachusetts and moved east leaving empty the mansion at the top of Nob Hill. When the former Mrs. Hopkins died, Mr. Searles gave the mansion for the use of the Art Association, to be known as the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. This transfer was made in February of 1893, by deed to the Regents of the University of California, "for the exclusive uses and purposes of instruction and illustration of Fine Arts, Music and Literature, or any of them, including the maintenance of galleries and reading rooms, and other suitable means of such instruction and illustration." In March of this same year, the move was made to the mansion.

The Candian painter, Emily Carr, who was a student at this time, describes the move in her autobiography Growing Pains. Also attending at that time were painters James Swinnerton, Joseph Raphael, Xavier Martinez and sculptor Earl Cummings.

From 1895 to about 1897, a class in drawing for apprentice architects who were working in local architectural offices was conducted with Bernard Maybeck in charge. It seems likely that Willis Polk was one of the students of this class since he was the chairman of a committee of apprentices that petitioned for the class.

The fire of 1906 destroyed the mansion, gallery and the school rooms together with nearly all their contents: pictures, statuary, library, and school equipment.

In spite of the lack of funds, the Art Association managed to erect a building on the foundation of the ruined mansion and classes resumed in 1907, while much of the city still lay in ruins. Loring P. Rixford was the architect for this simple, frame building which was intended as a temporary structure. In 1910, Rixford designed a gallery addition built of steel and concrete to house the Emanuel Walter Collection of art work that was left to the Art Association.

With the opening of the School in 1907, Capt. Robert Howe Fletcher was appointed the director of the San Francisco Institute of Art, as it was then called, and Theodore Wores was hired as dean of the faculty, which position he held until 1913.

HISTORY:
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Among the board members were John I. Walter, John Galen Howard and Charles Templeton Crocker. Some of the instructors during this time were Eugen Neuhaus, Earl Cummings, Pedro Lemos, Frank Van Sloun and Agatha Van Erp. It is said that Maurice Logan was the first student to enroll in the school after the fire.

The school's exhibition in the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 was awarded a gold and a silver medal for its excellence. Members of the faculty, ex-faculty and ex-students were well represented in the Exposition's art exhibit, many of them winning awards.

Faculty and students alone contributed some thirty works: thirteen murals and seventeen sculptures. Included were the murals of Antonio Sotomayer, Dorothy Wagner Puccinelli, Squire Knowles, Armin Hansen, Helen Forbes, Maynard Dixon, While Jacque Schnier, Michael Von Meyer, Clara Huntington, Adeline Kent, Frederick Olmsted, Helen Phillips and Haig Patigian exhibited sculptures.

After the Exposition, the Art Association maintained the Palace of Fine Arts building as a museum, opening May 1, 1916. J. Nilsen Laurvik, director of the museum, felt that "almost from its inception the Museum in the Palace of Fine Arts has taken its place as one of the most active cultural influences that San Francisco has ever had. It has become in a very real sense the center of the cultural activities of our city, a rallying-place for all the arts, a sort of forum where the exponents of the Seven Arts may meet and have their say on a basis of their common interest in Art...." The upkeep on the building forced the Art Association to abandon the structure in 1924. In 1925, the Forty-eighth Annual Exhibition of the Art Association was held in the newly opened California Palace of the Legion of Honor.

In 1920, the Art Association obtained the permission of Edward Searles to sell the property on Nob Hill. After several offers, it was finally agreed to accept \$350,000 for the lot. This sale was consummated in 1923. A search was then begun for a new site for the Art Association and the Chestnut Street property was purchased in 1924, for \$50,000, along with the gore at Francisco, Jones and Columbus, which was later sold. During this time, classes were held at 15 California Street in the Glenwood Building.

The firm of Bakewell and Brown was chosen to design the new building. Arthur Brown, Jr. was a member of the Board of Directors of the Art Association from at least 1919 through 1950, during which time he served as first vice-president in 1919, 1922 and 1927, and president of the Board in 1920-21, 1928-29 and 1937-39. The following resolution was adopted by the Board, March 14, 1935. "Resolved unanimously by the President and Board of Directors of the San Francisco Art Association that Arthur Brown, Jr. is eminently entitled to our gratitude and praise for his invaluable services in preparing for permanent exhibitions the galleries of the San Francisco Museum of Art.

HISTORY:
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"They desire also, at this time, to express their high sense of appreciation for his inestimable contributions to the development and beauty of our City and to wish him long life and health to continue to shed lustre on the profession of architecture and to enjoy the honorable rewards of his genius, industry, and artistry."

It is possible that Willis Polk would have been the architect rather than Brown. On January 15, 1923, Polk submitted "a suggested scheme to provide a new and adequate building for the Art School. The Plan provides for the disposal of the present property and purchasing of the Tobin Lot on the southeast corner of California and Taylor Streets. To erect thereon a new fire-proof construction building meeting the present needs of the School with provision made for future growth. In connection therewith to build an apartment house containing ten apartments deluxe, the income from which, in excess of interest, sinking funds and other expenses will leave a fund of \$18,500 yearly which can be devoted to School purposes." The scheme contains a plot plan and a financial statement. Whatever possibilities the scheme held were terminated when the Tobin property was sold, and the following year, Willis Polk died.

The new building was erected in 1926 at a cost of about \$250,000, and formal dedication was held January 15, 1927.

James D. Phelan left a bequest of \$100,000 to the Art Association for the establishment of a museum at the California School of Fine Arts. However, this additional wing on the new building was not added, instead the money was used as a scholarship fund, following the dictates of the will. He also left his estate in Saratoga, Montalvo Villa, in trust to the Art Association. Phelan was a member of the Art Association from 1884 until his death in 1930. In 1885, at the age of 24, he was elected to the Board.

Conceived by the Art Association as a unit of the cultural group in the Civic Center, the San Francisco Museum of Art was opened in 1935, as a continuation of the Association's operation of the galleries in the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art and in the Palace of Fine Arts Museum. In later years, the Museum became an independent organization but retains a relationship of friendly cooperation.

In the 1920s, the revival of interest in mural painting quickly spread across the nation. As early as 1918, the California School of Fine Arts' catalogue stated: "Mural painting is fast coming to the front as the leading mode of expression of the painter's art and practice work in this important subject will be given advanced students." Instruction was offered until World War II, covering such techniques as fresco, lime-casein; egg, glue tempera; and wax emulsion.

Ray Boynton, who is said to have introduced mosaic in the 1920s "in a manner which met contemporary aesthetic criteria," (Jean Goodwin, "California Mosaics," Art for the Millions, edited by

HISTORY:

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Francis V. O'Connor, 1973) was instructor in mural painting at the school for many years. Other members of the faculty during this period were Victor Arnautoff, Jose Moya del Pino, Gottardo Piazzoni, Lee Randolph (director), Gertrude Partington Albright, Marian Hartwell, Ruth Cravath, Rudolph Schaeffer, Spencer Macky, Otis Oldfield, Lucien Labaudt, Ray Bertrand, Nelson Poole, Edgar Walter and Ralph Stackpole.

Many murals, as well as sculptures, plaques, and the like were done in both public and private buildings in the Bay Area by faculty and students of the school. With aid furnished by the WPA, many more were added to the Bay Area's collection. Of the 25 works in Coit Tower listed in the Art Commission's A Survey of Art Work in the City and County of San Francisco (1975), 20 were done by faculty and students, a project of the WPA. These include, as well as many of those already listed, Edith Hamlin, George Harris, Clifford Wight, Mallette Dean, Ben Cunningham and Jame Berlandina (Howard).

Diego Rivera painted his first murals in the United States in San Francisco. In 1930, he executed a fresco in the Stock Exchange Lunch Club followed by one in the California School of Fine Arts. He was again invited to do a work for the city, this time for the Golden Gate International Exposition, which was held on Treasure Island in 1939. He worked on this mural, which was part of the Art in Action project, during the fair and for three months after it closed, creating a portable work some 22 X 73 feet, divided into ten sections. At this time, he accepted an invitation to teach at the school but other commitments took him elsewhere.

After World War II, under the able direction of Douglas MacAgy, the school became the West Coast birthplace of Abstract Expressionism at about the same time of its development in New York. "It can be said," wrote Terry St. John, Associate Curator of Art, Oakland Museum, "that during the years 1947-1953, the high point of Abstract Expressionism in the Bay Area produced an intensity of activity combined with an interchange of dialogues that at times anticipated developments in the East." Probably the most influential teacher was Clyfford Still. Other faculty members were Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff, Jean Varda and Hassel Smith, and among their many students who have since become noted artists were Frank Lobdell, John Hultberg, Deborah Remington, Jeremy Anderson and James Weeks, all of whom later taught at the school.

In 1946, Ansel Adams started a photography program as the first course in photography as a fine art to be offered in an American college. This department was taken over and run by Minor White until the early 1950s. Visiting instructors included Imogen Cunningham, Edward Weston and Dorothea Lange.

Timothy Pflueger died in 1946. He had been a member of the Art Association since 1929, President of the Board from 1932 to 1937, and a member of the Board from 1930 until his death. "By his constant active interest in the Association and its School he contributed greatly to their development and progress."

HISTORY:
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In the 1950s, with Diebenkorn, Weeks, Bishoff, Nathan Oliveira and David Park on the faculty, the school became known as the center of the new style of San Francisco figurative painting.

In the fall of 1953, a BFA degree program was established in all departments with the first class graduating in 1955; thirteen students received the BFA degree. The MFA degree program was added in the Fall of 1958.

On the 15th of February, 1961, the San Francisco Art Association and the California School of Fine Arts became known as the San Francisco Art Institute. It was felt "that the name California was too vague, but that San Francisco had, in addition to specificity, a strong emotional appeal throughout the country; that School is a word completely without meaning now and that 'college' had little more, but that 'institute' carries a high prestige factor now and for the foreseeable future; and, finally, the Fine Arts made it difficult to understand how photography, teacher training, advertising design, etc., could be taught."

By 1959, the need was felt for expansion of the school. John Bolles, who was president of the Board, presented plans for the addition of a studio wing and a gallery, to be done in a style similar to that of the original building. A lack of funds delayed this project and when the time finally arrived when the project could be done, a new architect and a new plan were chosen. In 1965, Paffard Keatinge Clay was selected as architect, and plans were soon under way. By 1969, the new building wing was completed, at a cost of \$1.8 million. Writing in the January - February 1970 issue of Architectural Forum, Roger Montgomery stated: "The building section Clay invented responds directly to the site to produce a sequence of architectural experiences unmatched elsewhere in this city of stunning sites and spaces."

The enrollment for Fall 1974 and Spring 1975 was about 900 for each semester, which includes part time students. In May of 1975, 168 BFA degrees were awarded and 43 MFA degrees. This is in contrast to the 60 students who enrolled in 1874.

To attempt listing all the major students and faculty members who have been associated with the school would be impossible but a few that have not elsewhere been mentioned are Maynard Dixon, John Gutzon Borglum (of Mount Rushmore fame), Edgar Walter, Beniamino Bufano, Adeline Kent, Robert Motherwell, Ronald Bladen, Roy De Forrest, Robert Morris, Chryssa, Joan Brown, William Wiley, and Bruce Nauman.

INTERIOR
MURALS:

Ralph Stackpole returned from Mexico in 1926 with two pictures by Diego Rivera. William Gerstle, president of the Art Association, was very excited about the work and commissioned Rivera to do a small wall, 120 feet square, in the school. Rivera arrived in San Francisco in 1930. When he saw the original wall he said it was too small and selected the largest wall in the school without asking for more than the \$1,500 Gerstle had donated for the mural. The was completed in 1931.

INTERIOR
MURALS:
(Continued)

A fresco panel 40' x 30', it depicts a cross-section of the modern American city. Dominating the painting is a heroic figure of a workman, a painted scaffolding and a rear view of the artist seated on the scaffolding. Within this framework are various figures typifying different aspects of construction, labor and planning.

The lower central panel of the mural shows the figures of Timothy Pflueger, Arthur Brown, Jr. and William Gerstle. Ralph Stackpole can be seen in the left central panel. According to Bertram Wolfe, Rivera's biographer, the following assistants are also represented: Viscount John Hastings, Clifford Wight, Matthew Barnes, Michael Baltekal-Goodman, Mrs. Marion Simpson and Albert Barrows.

In 1936, eleven lunettes were painted in the Reading Room of the Anne Bremer Memorial Library. These murals were commissioned by Albert Bender. The artists are Victor Arnautoff, Ray Boynton, William Hesthal, Gordon Langdon, Frederick Olmsted, and Ralph Stackpole. A dedicatory plaque was executed by Jacques Schnier. Of the many murals that were done around the school by students only two remain. One shows Spencer Macky and his class at work, and the other, Gottardo Piazzoni, with a group of students out of doors. The patio mural done by Ray Boynton depicts the Board of Trustees at the time the school was built.

ARCHITECTURE:

On the 15th of January, 1927, "...the beautiful new building of the California School of Fine Arts officially opened its high, green doors leading to the stone-framed pool in the wide, arch-framed patio." About 3500 people attended the opening ceremonies. Among the speakers on this occasion was E. Spencer Macky, secretary of the San Francisco Art Association. "The appropriate simplicity and commanding beauty of the architecture of this building will emphasize the importance and dignity of living art in our midst today."

The building (really a series of buildings or spaces) is done in a modified version of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style. The walls are stripped concrete dyed a soft adobe-ochre under red tile roofs that are many-leveled with skylights rising above to give northlight to the various studios. A bell tower rises above the patio in the style of the Spanish missions. The building covers the entire Chestnut Street side of the property, and about one third of the Jones Street side. It consists of three floors with a ground floor and basement below, and three more floors rising above in the tower, all built on many levels. Originally, a six-foot wall with concrete capping enclosed the remainder of the property, but sections of this wall were removed when the new building wing was added in the late 1960s.

ARCHITECTURE:

The entrance archway on Chestnut Street is done in a modified Churrigueresque manner with additional ornamentation above the doorway on Jones Street. Other ornamentation was originally planned for both the exterior and interior of the building but was omitted, apparently because of a lack of funds. A museum/sculpture wing was omitted as well. The sculpture wing was finally completed by December of 1929 and a ceramics room added to this wing in 1934. An arched porch opening on the Francisco Street side of the building was removed when the new building wing was added.

The cloistered court, or patio, is the central area of the School surrounded on three sides by studio, office and gallery space, and on the fourth by a high wall that effectively screens the area from street noises. In the center of the patio is a tiled fountain in the Moorish style raised to seat level. Bricks are laid across the patio in a pattern often used in Spain.

The tower rises 99' 6" from the northwest corner of the patio (195' 6" above sea level).

ZONING AND
SURROUNDING
LAND USE:

The property is zoned R-3 (Low-Medium Density Multiple Residential) with a height and bulk limit of 40-X. The surrounding land uses are largely residential ranging from single-family dwellings to low-rise apartment structures except for commercial establishments on Columbus Avenue.