

Art for Scholarships

By R. R. Thomasson

The Irion Art Gallery at 211 Westwood in Columbia serves a dual purpose. In addition to bringing to the University community a greatly appreciated form of art not otherwise readily available, it finances a \$500 scholarship in the School of Education. The scholarship is a memorial to the late Dr. T. W. H. Irion, former Professor of Education and Dean of the School of Education.

When Mrs. Irion started the Art Gallery in 1953 she decided to use the profits to establish a student award as a memorial to Dr. Irion. The income has been used in that manner ever since except that the award has been changed to a scholarship. An addition of \$1,500 in 1964 brought the fund to slightly more than \$15,000. In all probability another \$1,500 will be added in 1965. This will make possible a \$500 scholarship for the 1965-66 school year. Any income over and above this amount will be added to the principal sum until such time as a second \$500 scholarship is possible.

The recipient is chosen during either the junior or senior year to provide a year of study for a senior undergraduate or as a first year graduate student on the campus at Columbia. The selection is made on the basis of scholastic excellence, financial need, and promise of professional success in the field of teaching.

The Art Gallery is unusual in that it is a part of Mrs. Irion's home and brings a wealth of art objects to the area. In fact, she has some things from Europe that can hardly be found elsewhere in this country. One might expect such an enterprise to detract from the atmosphere of the home. It does not. When Mrs. Irion has friends in for tea on Sunday afternoon, as frequently she does, the wealth of art adds to rather than detracts from the occasion. Paintings, prints, figurines, crystal and bric-a-brac of many kinds serve as conversation pieces and are a source of no little pleasure to the guests. And well they may be. They have been garnered from a number of European countries and outstanding sources in the United States.

Mrs. Irion knew her way around in Europe before the Art Gallery was started. She has made an annual expedition ever since. These trips are made in July and August when the demand for her offerings are at low ebb. At that time the house is closed except for the watchful eye and devoted attention of Eliza Scott who has been Mrs. Irion's cook and housekeeper for some 33 years. Tea guests frequently find occasion to visit the kitchen and exchange greetings with Eliza.

The European trips are not all business. Mrs. Irion takes time out for pleasure and sight-seeing. In fact she is doing just that most of the time when she is looking for items to bring back to Columbia. She derives her greatest pleasure and satisfaction in searching out and offering to her friends and patrons paintings with special appeal. In fact it was Albert Genter,

American artist, who encouraged her to open the Gallery. She has sold a number of his water colors.

Many of her paintings are by French artists though more often than not she gets them in Holland or possibly New York. She has several paintings of French scenes by Gisson. Last summer she was attracted to a painting on an iron fence at Green Park in London where beginning artists and those of no great ability are wont to display their wares. After purchasing it she learned that it had been painted by the famous artist Peter Fuller, who had left it there as a lark.

She is especially pleased to have on display a number of Elysa Ash Lord's rice paper etchings. Miss Lord is an American woman who has spent much of her life in the Orient but who now lives in London. Her etchings are becoming quite scarce. Another American, Olis Cook, is represented with paintings of New England scenes.

Some of her choice figurines are from Hutschenreuther of Bavaria. She is one of a very few Americans who visit the factories and purchase direct from there. Only one other person in this country handles the exquisite figurines from Dahl-Jensen of Copenhagen. It is here also that she purchases the famous Dahl-Jensen crackle ware.

She also has figurines from two other Copenhagen firms, Royal Copenhagen and Bing & Grøndahl. Along with the porcelain there is both colored glass and crystal from Sweden and Germany.

Mrs. Irion also has American porcelains and finds that they compare favorably with those of Europe. Her birds from Boehm of Trenton, New Jersey are so lifelike that one almost expects to hear a warble from a blue bird or to see a flick of the tail by a Carolina wren. Boleslaw Cybis, also of Trenton, from whom she has a variety of figurines, is recognized as a leader in the field of porcelain art.

The Art Gallery is never advertised except by pleased customers. However, persons really interested in art are welcome. The hours are 10:00 to 12:00 in the morning and 2:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon, six days a week. Other hours may be arranged by special appointment. Objects from the Gallery have found their way to many homes throughout Missouri and to other states far and near.

Dr. and Mrs. Irion had planned to establish an art gallery after his retirement. Since that opportunity did not present itself Mrs. Irion found it quite natural to start one with the object of establishing a scholarship in memory of her husband. Dr. Irion was Dean of the School of Education from 1930 to 1945. As Dean and teacher he served the University for nearly a quarter of a century. Before joining the University faculty he had served as acting president of Stephens College. Former students throughout the country remember the inspiration they received in his class room.