

**THE BROCHURE OF THE
MURAL
PAINTERS: A NATIONAL
SOCIETY FOUNDED 1895**

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The Brochure of the Mural Painters: A National Society Founded 1895 by Various

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BROCHVRE
OF THE MVRAL
PAINTERS - A
NATIONAL
SOCIETY *CS*

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1895

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AT THEIR ROOMS, 215 WEST 57TH STREET,
NEW YORK, N. Y. PRICE, 50 CENTS



JOHN W. ALEXANDER, P. N. A.
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE MURAL PAINTERS
Born 1856 — Died 1915

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THE BROCHURE *OF THE* MURAL PAINTERS

A NATIONAL SOCIETY

Founded 1895

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UNITED STATES

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A National Society

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FOREWORD

THE Mural Painters were organized for the purpose of fostering the development of the arts, which, whether executed in pigment, stained glass, mosaic, tapestry or other appropriate mediums, are used in the embellishment of architecture; also to formulate a code for decorative competitions, by-laws to regulate professional practise, to establish an educational propaganda through the agency of lectures, existing schools and in whatever suitable manner opportunity may suggest.

There is no authoritative and complete publication devoted to these arts. For this reason, the Society puts forth this brochure as a beginning towards that end—to provide a record in large part of the work already executed and to do its small share to establish the solidarity of the arts and consciousness in the minds of our people of the useful function of public mural paintings.

It should be remembered that Wm. Hunt's paintings in the Albany Capitol emerged from an atmosphere of artistic torpor so far as mural painting was concerned which was felt even in France.

John La Farge's beautiful decoration in the Church of the Ascension waited for twenty years after its execution for a general recognition beyond the few cognoscenti of its epoch. We have gone far since then, the initial efforts having been struck in the many and beautiful decorations of the Chicago World's Fair in the year 1892 and the Library of Congress a few years later.

It is becoming more and more patent, as indeed it would appear inevitable, that our progress in art is extending its influence beyond its projectors and special patrons to that public which is not directly concerned, but who are becoming more and more impartial, cordial and interested.

A DEFINITION OF DECORATIVE ART

By Edwin H. Blashfield

PART I

1. Decoration or Decorative Art is the art of embellishing the background of life. It is the art of making necessary things beautiful; of using design, form, color, to render more pleasing our buildings, clothing, furniture, utensils, in sum, our general surroundings. Such is decoration in its largest sense. More strictly defined, a decorative treatment is one which is essentially *fitted* to its purpose, to its locality (whether that locality be a house in a garden, a room in a house or a bit of braid on a sleeve) and to its environment. Deriving from a common origin with the words decorum and decorous, it is something *suited* to something else.

2. Let us consider some of its examples. The practise of decoration is almost instinctive. Prehistoric men painted their bodies and their cave walls with earths, stained their garments with juices, braided fiber, fringed the skins taken from animals, carved reliefs of pattern and figure upon hard and soft surfaces, and moulded metal. Building began, and as it progressed decoration grew with it. Man's desire for decorative beauty about him was so great, his invention was so continuously and earnestly employed, that some of the earliest historical examples of decorative art have not been surpassed.

One has only to say Karnak or the Parthenon to call to mind not only scores of temples, but a whole system of carved reliefs, statues in the round, wall paintings, statuettes, vases, personal ornaments, weapons, furniture. In sum it is to realize decorative art as already established and developed. Throughout the following ages it must be said that, though it flourished continuously and periodically produced masterpieces, it varied rather than progressed. At different times certain decorative factors forged to the front, as sculpture with the Greeks, mosaic with the Byzantines, stained glass with the Gothic craftsmen, mural painting from the Fourteenth Century onward through the Renaissance to modern times. This was because these factors for the time particularly suited certain needs and conditions of life. The three major branches of Decorative Art are Architecture (which includes and shelters the others), Sculpture and Painting. There are many minor branches, but they are minor mainly because the demands made upon their designers are upon a minor scale. The principle of fitness involved is the same.