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FINE WORKS OF ART AT THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

Unveiling Reception.

On last Friday evening the auditorium of the Elm Place Grammar School was thrown open to the general public for a first view of the mural paintings and a reception to the artists and to members of the staff of the Art Institute of Chicago. The reception was given under the joint auspices of the Board of Education and the Public School Art League. The faculty of the Art Institute was well represented at the reception by Mr. Ralph Holmes, Registrar, and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Wood Stevens, Mr. and Mrs. Albert H. Krehbiel, Miss Styles, Mr. Allen Philbrick and Miss Lillian Cushman represented the School of Education. Mr. Ernest Peixotto of New York, who is at present exhibiting a gallery of paintings at the Art Institute, represented the artists visiting in Chicago during the current exhibition of American paintings. Among the Evanston visitors were Miss Ferguson, at the head of the Art Department in the schools there, Mr. F. W. Nichols, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. H. L. Knapp, President of the Board of Education.

It is safe to say that the paintings and the other decorations of the room, which are in perfect harmony with the work of the artists, have transformed the school auditorium in a way that few had realized could be done. There is scarcely another school building in Illinois which has mural work that can compare in importance with that on the walls of this auditorium. It is practically a new departure to set up original mural paintings in a public school building, and, in the judgment of artists generally, the movement is of great importance in influencing public interest in matters of art and art education. That pioneer work of such importance has been done in our own midst reflects credit of the highest kind upon the officers of the Art League and the generous people who have given the movement financial backing.

The mural paintings, it should be again explained, were executed under the auspices of the Art Institute. The Public School Art League of Highland Park entered into a contract with the Art Institute directly, and the paintings were executed there under the immediate supervision of Mr. Thomas Wood Stevens and Mr. Charles Francis Browne of the faculty. As the result of a competitive exhibition of designs among the senior students, Frederic Grant was awarded the task of executing the central panel for the walls and Homer Conant and Mattie Akeley were selected to carry out kindred themes for the flanking panels. The paintings were practically completed by the first of last July, and mounted on stretchers. They were on exhibition during July and August in one of the large galleries at the Art Institute, and attracted the attention of art critics and of students of art from various parts of the country. Recently the paintings were brought out to Highland Park and mounted in permanent position on the south walls

of the auditorium. This consisted in pasting the canvases firmly upon the wall and building a solid frame about them so that they appear to have been executed in place and to be a part of the original furnishing of the room.

The paintings have for their theme the beginnings of the English drama. The long central panel depicts a street scene on a gala day in London in the fifteenth century where a presentation of some old morality play, like "Every man," is in progress in the open air. The actors and the paraphernalia of the drama are in full view in the central foreground, while the king and queen are seated as spectators under a canopy close by. Knights and ladies, guardsmen and retainers, and the varied populace of a medieval city in the picturesque costume of the time give interesting character and animation to the crowded street.

The left hand panel, designed and painted by Miss Mattie Akeley, represents groups of citizens of various degrees filing past the Tower of London on their way to the fete. The right hand panel, which is the work of Mr. Homer Conant of Omaha, continuing the sylvan suggestion on the corresponding margin of the central panel, represents the gathering of huntsmen on the edge of the forest for the games which are to follow the conclusion of the drama.

To Mr. Frederic Grant, who designed the long thirty-five foot panel which is the center of interest, and who painted this panel with the valued assistance of William E. Scott, very high praise is due. The execution of so important a piece of work by an artist yet in his minority surely justifies the prediction of a brilliant future for him. Mr. Grant had personal charge of the mounting of the paintings, and of the selection and cutting of the designs for the stencils, and was of invaluable assistance in passing upon various details of the decorations.

The beautiful frieze stenciled around the entire room consists of two shield units connected by a thorn design. These units were the original designs of two of the fifth grade pupils of last year's class, John Brady and Harold Oleson. Their designs were selected by the artists in charge. The contract for mounting the paintings and decorating the room was given to H. Friebele, who executed every detail with the same fidelity and care that the artists had bestowed upon their work.

The members of the Public School Art League have certainly a notable achievement to their credit. Its president, Mrs. Henry M. Bason, and her associates on the Picture Committee are to be congratulated upon the splendid outcome of persistent and intelligent effort.

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