UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

Date: July 23, 2007

I, Nicole Ruth Cardassilaris,

hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Arts

in:

Art History

It is entitled:

Bringing Cultures Together: Elma Pratt, Her International School of Art, and Her Collection of International Folk Art at the Miami University Art Museum

This work and its defense approved by:

Chair: Theresa Leininger-Miller, Ph.D.

Mikiko Hirayama, Ph.D.

Anne Timpano, M.A.

Bringing Cultures Together: Elma Pratt, Her International School of Art, and Her Collection of International Folk Art at the Miami University Art Museum

A thesis submitted to
the Art History Faculty
of the School of Art/College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning
University of Cincinnati
in candidacy for the degree of
Master of Arts in Art History

Nicole Ruth Cardassilaris
B.S., Ball State University
March 2008

Committee Chair: Theresa Leininger-Miller, Ph.D.

Abstract

Cora Elma Pratt (1888-1977) educator, collector, artist, and philanthropist spent much of her life building her innovative International School of Art (ISA) in Europe, Mexico, South America, and the United States. Pratt first established her ISA in 1928 in Zakopane, Poland and later organized locations throughout Europe and Mexico. From her travels with the ISA, she acquired a notable 2,500-piece collection of international folk art, which she gave to the Miami University Art Museum in Oxford, Ohio in 1970. This study includes a mini-biography, recounting incidents and experiences that molded Pratt into a devoted art educator and promoter of international folk art in the United States and abroad. As a promoter of folk art, she aligned herself with the Brooklyn Museum, a premier institution that was setting the pace for folk art and children's art exhibitions, acquiring artwork to sell in their gift shop and organizing folk art exhibitions from the 1930s through the 1960s. During Pratt's years of involvement with the Brooklyn Museums, she and the ISA organized the first exhibition of Polish folk art in the United States, *Polish Exhibition, 1933-34*. This study analyzes Pratt's ISA and looks at a couple of the most prominent artists who taught with her and the workshops they conducted. This thesis also examines some of the popular pedagogical theories promoted by Franz Cizek (1865-1947) and John Dewey (1859-1952) that heavily influenced Pratt's ISA, her educational mission, and eventually, how she believed the collection needed to be interpreted in a traditional art museum environment. While today Pratt's collection remains in storage at the Miami University Art Museum, the implication of this study could allow for Pratt's collection to be interpreted as material culture instead of folk art.

Acknowledgements

First I would like to thank Dr. Theresa Leininger-Miller for her guidance, her unwavering patience, and her consummate professionalism. I have learned so very much from her about what it means to be a scholar and a professor. Her dedication to the disciplines of art history and education has been inspiring to me while writing this thesis and also teaching art history. Also I would like to thank the others on my thesis committee, Dr. Mikiko Hirayama and Ms. Anne Timpano. Professor Hirayama's class on Japanese art of the Edo period and her teaching style will stay with me forever. The class was a fascinating exploration of Eastern and Western cultures coming together and the impact this had on society and art. Mostly, I am grateful that she let the class actually talk about the art. I can never thank Ms. Timpano enough for offering me the opportunity to work for the DAAP Galleries as a curatorial assistant. Assisting in the galleries while I was taking classes for the museum studies certificate program was such a building block for my future work at the Ball State University Museum of Art and my current position working as Gallery Associate for Ball State's Atrium Gallery. The hands-on experiences were invaluable. Ms. Timpano's expertise and experience with museum collections, collections management, and exhibition design inspired my career and provided direction for this thesis. I extend my sincerest gratitude to all three of you once again for being such inspiring professional educators.

I would like to thank the staff at the Miami University Art Museum for opening their doors for my many visits to look at Pratt's collection and rifle through their archives. Thanks to Dr. Robert Wicks, Director of the Miami University Art Museum, for the suggestion to write about Pratt's collection. I hope my thesis is at least a contribution

to the archives at the museum. I would especially like to thank Laura Henderson, registrar at Miami University Art Museum, for working so willingly, patiently, and encouragingly with me on this project. She made me feel so welcome and never doubted that I would get this thesis done. Again, it has been a great privilege to work with such a knowledgeable and professional staff – I learned so much. She also introduced me to Marilyn De Soucy, friend of Pratt, whom I was able to interview before she passed away.

I would also like to thank the archivists at Oberlin College, the Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives, Miami University, and Columbia University for assisting with my inquires about Pratt's life. This was some of the most crucial information I needed.

I would like to thank my family, friends, and co-workers (past and present) who have supported me emotionally over the past few years. Your constant encouragement and pushing to get this thesis completed cannot be repaid but know that your love, support, and expectations helped see me through.

Finally, I would like to thank Elma Pratt, although we could never meet; she has been extremely admirable and enigmatic character. What a brave woman to put such faith in the ability of people to use art and education to change the world! I am forever grateful that I had the opportunity to work with her collection and piece together her life although I feel there is more to her story.

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Introduction

In this thesis I will analyze the life of Cora Elma Pratt (1888-1977) as a collector, educator, artist, and philanthropist with a primary focus on her innovative ISA (ca. 1928-1967). It offered adult non-degree granting programming, in informal settings for Americans throughout Europe, Mexico, South America, and the United States. The ISA invited teachers, interior decorators, freelance artists, and designers from the United States to attend classes conducted by eminent practitioners in the field of folk art. I will also analyze her notable collection of international folk art, which she left to the Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in 1970. A minor but influential figure, Pratt is only briefly mentioned in scholarly discourses on art educators and in passing reference to folk art collectors. This thesis is a contribution dovetailing the research that began in the 1970s examining art collectors, collections, and specifically women collectors and will demonstrate that she was a leading figure in the promotion of folk art in the United States.

Pratt acquired approximately 2,500 pieces of folk art from at least forty-five different countries between the 1920s and the 1970s. The folk art she presented to Miami University, at the time the Miami University Art Museum was not built and was not completed until 1978, became know as the Elma Pratt International Folk Art Collection. The collection consists of toys, carvings, textiles, costumes, masks, jewelry, dolls, and pottery (decorative and utilitarian), as well as travel posters and paper cutouts. To accompany the folk art, Pratt also presented an extensive supplementary collection of books and slides.[1] It is important to make a distinction that while the folk art was in her possession and used by Pratt, she did not refer to the art as a 'collection' because she was

[1] Patricia Elsen, "College Museum Notes," *Art Journal*, vol. 30, no. 3 (Spring 1971): 273.

not in the business of collecting. She was acquiring educational resources. It is only after she presented her collection to Miami University that it became a formal collection.

From the numerous newspaper and periodical articles highlighting Pratt and her collection, it is clear that she never set out to gather a valuable collection for a museum display; it was the experiences of travel and studying with actual artisans that she was after. In fact, Pratt referred to the folk art she acquired as "everyday things."[2] These "everyday things" that comprise her collection are expressions of religion, life, love, and cultural attitudes towards death which can be found universally, in the traditions of all nations and evidenced in their folk art. It was the evidence and traditions of the 'folk' that Pratt wished to convey and promote in her ISA and the folk art provided a catalyst for this educational endeavor. She believed that learning about cultural traditions, experiencing international customs, and different traditional art. Her collection is a by-product of the ISA and her passionate vision to bring about a mutual understanding of people and cultures through education.

Where the folk art itself was the catalyst for getting Americans interested in other cultures, I believe that in Pratt's estimation, it was the cultural experiences they were immersed in when they traveled abroad with Pratt and as students of her ISA that were the conduit for teaching cultures about one another. I argue that she modeled the development of her ISA after the innovative theories of American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey (1859-1952). Dewey said in *Art as Experience* that "[it] is by way of communication that art becomes the incomparable organ of instruction,

[2] Dorothy Damele, "Her Key to Understanding: Traveler Gives Art to MU," *Middletown Journal* (7 February 1971): page unknown. From the Miami University Art Museum Archives.

but the way is so remote from that usually associated with the idea of education…"[3] Dewey's philosophy was one of pragmatic approach, cause and effect, and centered around the human experience.[4] He recognized that art was something that could bear meaning and teach people something about themselves. With this in mind I believe that Pratt was prepared to embark on a lifetime mission to educate Americans how integral art, especially folk art, was to education and their lives in general. Armed with the arsenal of folk art or rather, examples of the "everyday things" she collected through her travels, she went forth on this campaign to change lives.

Pratt's mission to educate cross-culturally is integral to the interpretation of her collection. To look only at the formal qualities of Pratt's collection of folk art, and to simply interpret the collection as items for display, would be to ignore the true educational value of what she assembled. That kind of study would not reveal Pratt's devotion to education. However, my study of her lifelong pursuits will acknowledge her belief that educating through cultural experience and international folk art could foster a broader understanding of humanity in the United States and around the world. I believe that she developed a passionate and focused interest in folk art, as opposed to fine art, because ultimately it was not just the art she was interested in but also the 'folk.'

Born in Chicago, Pratt grew up in Oberlin, Ohio. She received a bachelor's degree in education from Oberlin College studying in the areas of social science and music (1912), a master's degree at Columbia University's Teacher's College, completing coursework in art and art education (1922), and a degree in art from the Vienna School of

[3] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York, NY: Capricorn Books, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958) 347.
[4] Gustavo Guerra, "Practicing Pragmatism: Richard Shusterman's Unbound Philosophy," *Journal of Aesthetic Education,* vol. 36, no. 4 (Winter, 2002): 72-74.

Art in Austria where she studied painting (1928).[5] Pratt spent her final days in Oxford as the curator of exhibitions for her collection, which she used to educate local teachers and the university community. This was a practice with which she already had much experience when she founded and directed the ISA in fourteen locations in Europe and South America for fifty years.

In 1939 the Polish government awarded Pratt the Golden Cross of Merit for her fifteen years of promoting the folk art of Poland in the United States by closely studying and working with Polish artists (Fig.1).[6] In 1933, Pratt's ISA brought folk art from Poland to the United States. In a traveling exhibition, *Polish Exhibition, 1933-34* began at the Brooklyn Museum[7] and traveled to Buffalo, Rochester, Albany, Oberlin, Toledo, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Dayton, and Kansas City.[8] The exhibition furthered her mission to expose and broaden the scope of the world for Americans. Pratt worked in many other locations abroad, including Egypt (1962-1966) where she taught children, creating art under the sponsorship of the American College for Girls and during her stay collected artifacts and works by local artisans to sell in the Brooklyn Museum's gift shop. As a world traveler, she wrote about her experiences and produced illustrations for portfolios like *Mexico in Color* (1947) and *Guatemala in Color* (1958). The portfolios are comprised of silkscreen prints depicting the markets, festivals, and costumes of Guatemalan and Mexican cultures with accompanying text. Pratt also contributed articles

[5] The Oberlin College Archives and the Miami University Art Museum archives do not indicate what kind of art degree Pratt earned at the Vienna School of Art.
[6] Poland was the first location for her school. Pratt met Marya Werten (dates unknown) of Poland at the Vienna School of Art. Werten escorted her to Poland to sightsee and Pratt became completely enamored by the Polish arts and culture.
[7] "Brooklyn Shows Polish Folk Art," *Art News*, vol. 32, no. 1 (7 October 1933): 14.
[8] Elma Pratt, typed letter to Philip Youtz, Director of the Brooklyn Museum (17 December 1934), 4, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, New York. Records of the Office of the Director (P.N. Youtz, 1933-38). International School of Art (1933-).

to *The Christian Science Monitor*, *School Arts Magazine*, and various museum and school publications.[9]

Locally, Pratt and her collection are mentioned in brief and sometimes feature-length articles, in such newspapers as the *Oxford Press*, *The Cincinnati Post*, *The Miami Student*, and the *Middletown Journal*. Her career is addressed in only one exhibition catalogue essay published by Miami University, *Celebrating Cultural Diversity: Selections from the International Folk Art Collection* (1990) by Edna Carter Southard and Bonnie Nelson Mason, and one periodical, *Art Digest* (1937). Reports of her ISA appear quite extensively in the *New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor* from the 1930s through the 1950s. However none of these examines the broad themes in Pratt's collection or her educational mission, or her life's dedication to the promotion of folk art as a pipeline for learning about other cultures outside the United States. No scholarly material exists about the diverse aspects of Pratt's life to reveal how she attempted, on an international scale, to bring cultures together. With this knowledge and an understanding of the educational philosophy that stood as the foundation of her School of Art her collection can be more accurately interpreted. In a broader sense, it is important for Pratt and her collection to be examined with respect to national collecting and educational trends in the United States during the twentieth century. In the late 1920s, Pratt began acquiring folk art that would later become part of her collection. This is the same period, but shortly before a couple of the most renowned collectors of folk art began their collections, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (1874-1948) and Alexander Girard (1907-1993). There is even evidence that Girard had inquired to the Brooklyn Museum, with which

[9] There is no collection of Pratt's papers. Primary resources were found in the archives at Oberlin College, Miami University Art Museum, and the Brooklyn Museum.

Pratt worked closely, as to her sources for acquiring Mexican folk art.[10] Girard, like Pratt, would amass an international collection of folk art where as Aldrich's interests were focused on American folk art.

There is much literature devoted to the examination of folk art collections, collectors, and collecting trends in the United States for the first half of the twentieth century. However, Pratt is not included in these publications. She admitted that she did not always acquire the very best or what would be considered rare. This reflected Pratt's belief that the modernization of many cultural communities affected the quality and purity of folk art. She chose the kind of art that embodied folk traditions, rather are made for the tourist marketplace. There are other folk art collections that surpass Pratt's in rarity, and worth, but the true value of her collection lies in the fact that it stands for her mission to promote the global qualities of folk art in an effort to teach cultural understanding. This mission, it must be stressed, included learning from objects themselves. Pratt's friend, colleague, and former classmate at Columbia University, Orpha M. Webster (1893-1976), shared this educational mission. Previously an art educator at Miami University, Webster persuaded Miami University to ship the collection from its various locations of Cairo, Egypt, Switzerland, a Brooklyn warehouse, and the homes of Pratt's nieces to the campus. These shipments would arrive in Oxford, Ohio in April 1970[11] where both Webster and Pratt used it as a tool to educate teachers and community members about the folk art of other nations. To actually experience the

[10] "Report on the South American Trip," typed report by Mr. Carl Fox, Gallery Shop Manager (2 April 1959), not paginated, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, New York. Records of the Office of the Director (Edgar C. Schenck, 1955-59). Depts: Gallery Shop (1958-1959).
[11] David Berreth, Gift History, Miami University, Interoffice Memorandum (28 August 1987), Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio.

objects was integral to the educational process. This was Pratt's life work; she never married and had no children.

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter One, "Mini-Biography of Elma Pratt (1888-1977);" Chapter Two, "The International School of Art, 1958-1967;" Chapter Three, "The Folk Art Collection at Miami University." Chapter One is recounts incidents and experiences that I believe molded Pratt into a devoted educator and promoter of international folk art. Chapter Two examines Pratt's ISA and pedagogical theories that would have influenced her educational mission. I also discuss the audiences and in what formats Pratt directed her endeavors. In Chapter Three, I examine the interpretation of such a collection in the museum environment, in light of Pratt's personal and educational goals and collecting trends of the United States during the early to mid–twentieth century.

Pratt believed that art could change the way people viewed the world and one another. She thought that if Americans could see and understand the folk art of other nations they would open their minds to the lives of people outside their own culture. For Pratt, folk art was evidence of community and tradition and she tried through international travel excursions, exhibitions, and art classes to bring communities together and provide opportunities for learning about each other.

Chapter One

Mini-Biography of C. Elma Pratt (1888-1977)

In this chapter, I will present a mini-biography of C. Elma Pratt that will highlight major milestones in her life as an educator, collector, artist, and philanthropist. Pratt led a very full life with frequent travel and many residences. She also made a great many acquaintances, and an attempt to chronicle her life completely would be a larger project. The intent of this chapter is to set the groundwork for her ISA and her collection of international folk art at Miami University Art Museum.

Cora Elma Pratt was born May 5, 1888 in Chicago to Herbert Welling[ton] Pratt and Violet T. Ewing Pratt.[12] Pratt did not use her first given name; all articles and letters from friends referred to her or addressed her as Elma. From childhood to death, Pratt was a person with diversified interests, a philanthropic spirit, and a consummate and active participant in the arts and art education. Pratt was only five years old when she became involved with the arts and philanthropy. An early performance in 1893 was a piano solo that she gave at the age of five in a Christmas Eve benefit at the corner of Third Avenue and Fourteenth Street at Tony Pastor's Theatre in New York City.[13] At least twenty-three children performed musical arrangements, songs, and dances in front of a crowd of adults and children.[14] Underprivileged children from the community had been invited to the festival to receive donated toys.[15] Pratt spent some years growing up in Streator, Illinois,

[12] "Third Notice, 1935 Quinquennial Report Blank," Oberlin College Alumni Records, filled out by Elma Pratt, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio. In some of Pratt's alumnae records she wrote Welling as her father's middle name and in other instances she wrote Wellington. She also wrote on one record Dr. before his name. I was unable to locate any information about him through U.S. Census reports. I do not know where he lived or if he resided with Pratt and her mother and brother, nor do I know if he was a medical doctor or if he held a doctorate.
[13] "Stage Tots Have Their Christmas," *New York Times* (25 December 1893): 5.
[14] Ibid.
[15] "Stage Tots Have Their Christmas," 5.

a city just outside of Chicago.[16] Although, it is not known at this time exactly when Pratt's family moved to Ohio, she graduated from Oberlin High School (Oberlin, Ohio) in 1906.[17] She traveled frequently from early childhood through adolescence with both her parents and, after her school days were over, she and her mother took many trips to Europe.[18] While Pratt led a very affluent life the source of her family's wealth is unknown at this time.

In fact it was after Pratt received a bachelor's degree in education from Oberlin College in 1912, majoring in music and social science, she and her mother set sail in 1914 to Europe for one year.[19] But not before she attended the Chautauqua Summer School in upstate New York, organized by the Chautauqua Institution.[20] At the age of twenty-five, Pratt was participating in an educational setting that she would later emulate in her own school. Originally called the Chautauqua Lake Sunday School Assembly, the Institution was founded in 1874 as an education experiment in out-of-school, vacation learning.[21] The institution was a success and success and later broadened its courses beyond subjects for Sunday school teachers to include academic subjects, music, art, and physical education.[22]

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[16] Margot D. Rappaport, "Woman of the Week: Elma Pratt," Oberlin College Alumni Records, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.
[17] Oberlin High School homepage with an Alumni hyperlink, www.oberlin-high.org/1906/, downloaded (11 December 2003). The 1906 alumni webpage reports that this graduating class list was "published in The Oberlin Tribune, Oberlin, Ohio, Friday, June 15, 1906, p. 1."
[18] Damele, 1971.
[19] Rappaport, not paginated.
[20] "Oberlin College War Record," Oberlin College Alumni Records, filled out by Elma Pratt, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio (9 September 1919).
[21] Chautauqua Institution, www.ciweb.org, downloaded (9 July 2006).
[22] Ibid.

Before Pratt would embark on her lifelong career as an educator, she would have several jobs, including working with the YMCA during the war.[23] The first position she held was in the state of Washington as a physical director where it's reported in Margot D. Rappaport's article highlighting Pratt as "Woman of the Week" that she "roughed it in a picturesque cabin in very wild surrounding. But misfortune soon changed her life …she slipped and fell, injuring her back.[24] Pratt's next position was in industrial efficiency for the welfare department of the Filene Cooperative Association in Boston, Massachusetts from September 5, 1912 to January 15, 1914.[25] In this occupation she served as a counselor and instructed as many as 2500 employees in the art of efficient service.[26] The *Christian Science Monitor* reported that Pratt delivered a lecture in Washington, D.C. before the combined sociology classes at the National Park Seminary and, while in New York, she met with the educational director of the Wanamaker store. The article also told of her promotion in Filene's:

> In New York she spent some time with the educational director of the Wanamaker store studying the methods used for increasing the efficiency of the employees. She also visited Dr. and Mrs. Luther Gulick, who are the head of the National Campfire Association, of which there is an active camp in the Filene store. Miss Pratt has recently been appointed junior director of the educational and employment departments of the store with which she is connected, and is busy working out a scheme of promotions by increasing and estimating the standard of efficiency among 500 or 600 girls. Her training will aim not only to better fit them for their present position, but enable them to occupy the next higher position.[27]

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[23] "Oberlin College 1915 Quinquennial Catalogue," Oberlin College Alumni Records, filled out by Elma Pratt (21 March 1915), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.
[24] Rappaport, not paginated. Article does not disclose what organization she was working for, her specific locale in Washington, or the dates of her employment.
[25] "Oberlin College 1915 Quinquennial Catalogue," Oberlin College Alumni Records, filled out by Elma Pratt (21 March 1915), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.
[26] Rappaport.
[27] "Store News," *Christian Science Monitor* (16 December 1913): 4. Article does not indicate the subject of the lecture Pratt delivered in Washington, D.C.

While in Boston, Pratt also filled the public service position as Secretary of the Organization Committee for the Boston Women's City Club.[28] Training and public service of this kind no doubt led to her next position as the National Field Secretary for the Campfire Girls in New York City from January 15, 1914 to July, 1914.[29]

After advancing swiftly through several positions, [30] Pratt and her mother set off for the previously mentioned year of travel through Europe, visiting cultural institutions along the way. Pratt described their travels in 1914-15 as "very happy days abroad, all the museums in Western Europe knew this pair,"[31] but she did not list the exact locations where she and her mother went. In 1915 Pratt returned to Boston and attended the New School of Design.

Pratt's early work history exists in the form of surveys and alumni reports sent out by Oberlin College. Some are dated and some are not. For example, Pratt lists on one survey her occupations, colleges attended, degrees held, and her war record.[32] She must have filled out this alumni survey after 1922 because she refers to her highest degree held as a Masters in Fine Arts. Actually the Master's degree she was awarded on May 5, 1922 was Master of Arts from Columbia University's Teacher's College[33]. Her coursework was done in the departments of art and art education.[34] It is a puzzle as to why Pratt claimed on this form and others that she had earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from

[28] "Oberlin College 1915 Quinquennial Catalogue," Oberlin College Alumni Records, filled out by Elma Pratt (21 March 1915), Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.
[29] Ibid. Pratt reported that this club had 3,000 members. She also declared a change in religious affiliation from Congregational to Christian Science Practitioner.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Rappaport.
[32] "Oberlin College," Oberlin College Alumni Records, filled out by Elma Pratt (date unknown) Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio. A message at the top of this generic form from the President of Oberlin College, Henry Churchill King (1838-1954) reads, "We are making a special effort at Oberlin this fall to complete the record of our graduates and former students in order to discover the extent of Oberlin's influence and service." King was President of Oberlin College from 1902 to 1927.
[33] Sandra Cooper, Alumni Relations Associate, Teachers' College Columbia University (16 October 2007).
[34] Ibid.

Columbia. There are many inconsistencies on her alumnae forms and I speculate that she was simply not attentive to this kind of detail.

On this same form for the years between 1916 and 1922, Pratt lists her occupations as an efficiency manager in a department store (although she does not disclose the store name or location), a hotel manager in Dorset, Vermont, a graduate student studying abroad in art, and a lecturer and teacher of art. She also states that she engaged in practical work in interior decoration, as well as war work in Italy and France, and held the position of First Reader in the Christian Science Church in Florence, Italy as a Christian Science Practitioner.[35]

In this same survey, on the War Record page, was the question "What has been the influence of Oberlin on your life?"[36] Pratt responded, "[Oberlin has] engendered a deep desire to know God and to use that knowledge to destroy all that is unlike Him – and so serve my fellow man."[37] Pratt served in the World War I effort with the YMCA for two years overseas.[38] Pratt specified on another Oberlin College War Record that she entered into service December 3, 1918 with the rank of Secretary. She listed her branch of service as the YMCA and her places of service at a forwarding camp in the La Mans area, France from January 6 to June 28, 1918 and headquarters in Paris, France from June 30 to August 25, 1918.[39] The record, according to Pratt, shows that she was demobilized

[35] "Oberlin College," Oberlin College Alumni Records. On different Oberlin College Alumni forms generated from the Office of the Secretary, George M. Jones, Pratt indicates two addresses – one in Cleveland, Ohio and one in Dorset, Vermont on February 16, 1917.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] "Oberlin College War Record"

in France on August 25, 1918 and after this she left for Florence, Italy where she worked with the Christian Science War Relief Committee at least through September 5, 1919.[40]

In the mid-1920s Pratt lived in Cleveland, Ohio where she taught adult education art classes (name of location unknown) and began to accumulate materials for art studio classrooms.[41] She explained in a newspaper interview that she had been teaching and one of her good friends had an art studio that was not prospering.[42] Then Pratt decided to travel to Europe to purchase "things" for her friend's art studio. She said of her journeys, "I and another friend went from England to Scandinavia to Eastern Europe – 19 countries – gathering art. We went to little shops, to 'louse markets' and to the artists and artisans themselves."[43] She found in the Scandinavian countries, specifically Denmark and Sweden, items made by children and folk art that especially piqued her interest. This trip began Pratt's passion for folk art and one that led to the establishment of Pratt's ISA.[44] It was, however, in Eastern Europe, specifically Poland, where she was most captivated by the people and enchanted by the folk art.

After this extensive year-long trip and a sparked excitement about folk art, she returned to Europe for six months to study painting in Vienna, Austria at the Vienna School of Art. This is when she met Marya Werten (dates unknown) a Polish woman who opened Pratt's eyes to the people and folk art of Poland and would have continued involvement in her ISA. Pratt and Werten visited many Polish sights together, she declared about her introduction to Poland in Burke's article, "In Warsaw we saw

[40] "Oberlin College War Record"
[41] "Third Notice, 1935 Quinquennial Report Blank."
[42] Kathleen Burke, "'Living Art' Oxfordian's Secret of Staying Active," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (1 February 1975): 16.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

wonderful cut-out plaques of kings and peasants, in bright reds, blues and whites. Oh, they were startling."[45] In Rappaport's article, the setting for one of her first stays in Poland was further described:

> Elma's next door neighbor during her visit was a pig and three cows. Her diet consisted of berries and cream of wheat; chairs didn't exist only low stools. Before retiring evenings to her hay mattress bed, she serenaded her host and his family with her violin. The Inn of the Seven Cats (in reality there were at least twenty on the stoves) was the sight of her first International Art School. Here she brought people interested in the Polish movement of art to live and study these peasant people and their picturesque land to create an understanding of their point of view.[46]

Pratt became smitten with Polish folkways after she and Werten traveled to the little village of Zakopane in the foothills of the Tatras Mountains, which are the tallest peaks of the Carpathian range and the largest mountains in Central Europe.[47] The Tatras form a natural boarder between Poland and Czechoslovakia and the chain of mountains arcs up from the Balkans, runs along this boarder, and then descends toward Vienna.[48]

Incidentally, Pratt's infatuation with Zakopane and the Tatras was actually not uncommon in the early twentieth century in Europe. The popularity of this region, which began to rise in the late nineteenth century and carried into the early twentieth century, is largely credited to one man, a physician named Tytus Chałubiński (1820-1889).[49] Timothy J. Cooley examined the music and folkways of the people who inhabit the foothills of the Tatras in *Making Music in the Polish Tatras: Tourists, Ethnographers, and Mountain Musicians.* He explained that the fascination with Zakopane and Tatras

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[45] Burke, 16.
[46] Rappaport.
[47] Timothy J. Cooley, *Making Music in the Polish Tatras: Tourist, Ethnographers, and Mountain Musicians* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 18-19.
[48] Zakopane – Travel Guide, www.ezakopane.pl/poland/ , downloaded (13 February 2008). The website states in regard to the population of Zakopane, "In 1929 Zakopane had 15,000 residents, in 1939 more than 20,000."
[49] Cooley, 1.

began when Chałubiński "set up a sanatorium in Zakopane and actively promoted tourism to the Tatras."[50] Cooley said of Chałubiński:

> His promotion involved not only touting the clean mountain air and healing hot springs but also championing the folkways of the villagers called 'Górale' (mountaineers or highlanders). He was famous for arranging excursions into the high Tatras for which he employed local Górale who acted as guides and porters, and who provided music and dance around the evening campfires[…]

The same kind of excursions Pratt would later arrange for her ISA students who would come to Poland looking for evidence of preserved folk traditions. Cooley described the social climate of the Tatras, from its time of settlement in the seventeenth century, as "isolated, untouched, pure."[51] Chałubiński created a tourist destination in the Tatras where unspoiled, isolated, and authentic folkways were the allure for tourists, including Pratt. Cooley wrote about this viewpoint of the tourist, he stated:

> Polish nationalism was in full flower during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Poland was still partition, an era when nationalism throughout Europe tended to imagine that the essence of a nation resided in the folkways of presumably isolated peasants.

As it is stated in Rappaport's article, in 1928, it was Pratt's interest in these peasants, their traditions and artisans that led her to establish her most prominent achievement the ISA in Zakopane. She said of the art there, "I enjoyed this art so much I wanted to share it with others. And so I created the school." [52] In addition to studying painting, Pratt also conducted business in Vienna related to education.[53] While in that city she spent some time with the Austrian art educator, Franz Cizek (1865-1947) exchanging art pedagogies. *The Vienna Herald* declared: "That she [Pratt] was also able

[50] Cooley, 1.
[51] Ibid., 5.
[52] Ibid., 1.
[53] "It All Began in Vienna," *The Vienna Herald* (8 December 1933): page unknown. Article clipping in the Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio. The article does not tell specifics about what transpired between Pratt and Cizek. This article, cited here, from *The Vienna Herald* was printed in English.

to secure the invaluable cooperation and active participation of Prof. Franz Czisek [*sic*], known through the world for his work with children, is proof of the excellence of her work and the spirit in which she is doing it."[54]

During the 1930s, Pratt's ISA was in full operation and she was conducting workshops in Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Austria, Sweden, Tunis, and even Sandusky, Ohio. One of her largest endeavors in this decade was organizing the exhibition of Polish folk art at the Brooklyn Museum in 1933, the first of its kind in the U.S. In 1939, Pratt received some deserved recognition for her work as an educator and as an emissary to Poland when she was awarded the Golden Cross of Merit by the Polish government for her fifteen years of promoting that country's folk art (Fig. 2). In the U.S., she was recognized in a short *Art Digest* article in 1939 that recounts the exhibition of 1933 when Pratt's ISA brought with its display of oils, watercolors, graphic and commercial art, ceramics, folk art, and children's art, the first exhibition of Polish art in this country.[55] It made a successful tour of the nation after an initial showing at the Brooklyn Museum.[56] *Polish Art Exhibition, 1933-34* ran from October 20 through November 23, 1933.[57] The exhibition was also divided into smaller groupings and circulated through other organizations,[58] supplemented by programs of music, dancing, and lectures.[59] It traveled to Buffalo, Rochester, Albany, Oberlin, Toledo, Cincinnati,

[54] "It All Began in Vienna"
[55] "Elma Pratt Honored," *Art Digest* 13 (1 May 1939): 26.
[56] Ibid.
[57] "Brooklyn Shows Polish Folk Art," *The Art News* 32 (7 October 1933): 14.
[58] "Sandusky Woman to Get Merit Cross From Poland for Work," *Sandusky Daily News* (February 1939): page unknown. From the Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.
[59] "Brooklyn Shows Polish Folk Art," 14.

Indianapolis, Dayton, and Kansas City.[60] Pratt stated, "Not only were Americans introduced to Polish art for the first time, but for the first time Polish-American citizens were given some tangible evidence of the culture of their country."[61] They were given the opportunity to learn something of themselves through the art and supporting material culture. The exhibition did not merely display the creations of the artisans but also presented them in contextual environments such as in the rooms of a house. The exhibition attempted to provide cultural experience through which visitors could relate to the people and culture of Poland and recognize their artistic achievements, which up to this exhibition had not been recognized by Americans. The exhibition was aligned with Pratt's educational mission in that it was not just a display of "everyday things," but also an attempt at cultural exposure.

When the Golden Cross of Merit was presented to Pratt by Consul General Waclaw Gawronski of Chicago, he expressed the same sentiment in the ceremony about sharing the spirit of cultural traditions through art. Gawronski said:

> The spiritual value of each nation, of each vital group of people, is measured by the wealth of its cultural achievements. To share the study of individual ethnic groups allows one to penetrate into the souls of nations and through this knowledge new approaches are made and are bound with threads of sincere sympathy and friendship.[62]

Internationally known folklorist Henry Glassie states the same attitude recognizing the ability of objects to transcend different cultures in his book, *The Potter's Art* he says: "In the ethnographic study of art…it is wisest to attend to the full range of media, noting how values obey and ignore the limitation of craft discipline while people express

[60] Elma Pratt, typed letter to Philip Youtz, Director of the Brooklyn Museum (17 December 1934), 4. Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, New York. Records of the Office of the Director (P.N.Youtz, 1933-38). International School of Art (1933-).
[61] "Sandusky Woman to Get Merit Cross From Poland for Work," not paginated.
[62] Ibid.

themselves and shape their culture…people who are biologically alike use the same materials and similar techniques to realize cultural difference and human unity."[63]

In 1928 Pratt saw the opportunity to unite humans through folk art when she developed her ISA. She was aptly participating and responding to the post-World War I urban industrial American society of cultural modernization that was being embraced by some and rejected by others. Eugene Metcalf describes the American cultural setting during this time in his essay "Black Art, Folk Art, and Social Control." He says:

> In the cultural turmoil following World War I many white middle-class Americans, especially intellectuals and the young, were cast adrift from the institutional and ideological moorings of the American society. Feeling betrayed by the war and the false hopes it had raised and enmeshed in a society undergoing technological and demographic change, they revolted against traditional values and behavior.[64]

It was her interest in cultures that were not undergoing modernization as quickly as the U.S. and her sympathetic understanding of these nations that allowed Pratt to value and admire objects of the simplest forms. Folk art like the tin horse cutouts from Mexico (Fig. 3), Swedish wooden toy horse pulls (Fig. 4), and tooled and hand-painted dolls from Sweden and Hungary (Figs. 5 and 6), and Mexican handcrafted whistles (Figs. 7, 8, 9) were examples in Pratt's eyes of objects that embodied cultural traditions, traditions that she feared would disappear with the progression of modern society. Pratt said that "it has been my object from the first to go back to native sources and the pure and unspoilt spirit of the peasant arts and crafts in all countries…[i]f there is ever to a renaissance of the sprit of the machine age, it can only come about through going back to sources."[65]

Metcalf, again, in a different article, offers even more description of the social

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[63] Henry Glassie, *The Potter's Art* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 18.
[64] Eugene W Metcalf, "Black Art, Folk Art, and Social Control," *Winterhur Portfolio,* vol. 18, no. 4 (Winter 1983): 275.
[65] "It All Began in Vienna."

climate in which Pratt developed her ideals which I argue helps to explain why she was so passionate about folk art. He asserts in "From Domination to Desire" that in modern society there was "the emerging belief that the progress of modernity had come at a terrible cost. Modern society was thought to overcivilized, repressive, and inauthentic. Modern people came to believe that naturalness and authenticity existed only in other places, periods, or cultures, and the discovery (and preservation) of these places and people became a desperate, modern preoccupation."[66] Susan Pearce echoes Glassie, Metcalf, and Pratt in her book, *Museums, Objects, and Collections*: "Objects. . . have lives which, though finite, can be very much longer than our own. They alone have the power, in some sense to carry the past into the present by virtue of their 'real' relationship to past events . . ."[67]

Pratt took advantage of the power folk art has to bring information to viewers. She used the folk art she acquired during her travels and the art of children in her workshops as tools to teach people, especially Americans, about people of other nations. She would literally take the folk art of other nations and examples of artwork made by children and share them or use them as examples in other cultures of technique and tradition. Every workshop given in the U.S. was structured like this and generally included examples of music and local costume as well as slide to describe the highlighted local. She did this in Egypt too; for example, she had Egyptian children examine Guatemalan textiles, tell them about the culture from which they came, and then the students created their own weavings in the spirit of traditional Guatemalan textile design.

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[66] Eugene W. Metcalf, Jr., "From Domination to Desire," in *The Artist Outsider: Creativity and the Boundaries of Culture,* edited by Michael D. Hall and Eugene W. Metcalf, Jr. (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 216.

[67] Susan M. Pearce, *Museum, Objects, and Collections* (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 24.

Pratt understood the ability of an object to transmit the stories of others. She related a situation that took place in a large New York Museum:

> …[A] small boy had just bought a five-inch balsa boat made around Lake Titicaca, the highest lake in the world and when asked by someone what he knew about this boat, the boy responded: 'Nothing.' So the questioner began to tell him about it, the kind of gay cap the boatman wore, his costume, his customs, his dances and music, and the lake where [some believed] the world was born. The boat began to communicate to him.[68]

While this incident may seem somewhat romanticized, and Pratt's aspirations for all nations to become neighbors and friends may seem a bit idealistic, Pratt also understood the reality of the world and the limitations of her ISA. She stated, "I neither overrate nor do I belittle our power as an organization. We cannot ourselves cause a war-torn world to suddenly blossom as a rose. But neither should we think of it as someone else's job, or as belonging to something as vague or, shall I say, as changing, as government."[69]

In the mid 1940s changes in government and political strife drove Pratt out of Eastern Europe and her beloved Poland. She explained in an interview that she centered her interests on Central European countries but then there was World War II and after that, the Iron Curtain closed her out. Described by the interviewer as sadly reflective for a moment, Pratt said, "But then there was South America, so rich in this art."[70] Thus, her work in education continued, as well as the acquisition of folk art from South and Central America, and predominantly Mexico and Guatemala.

In addition to working with creations by other artists Pratt also produced images of the Mexican and Guatemalan towns she visited. Her illustrations of the markets, festivals, and costumes of these cultures are reproduced in the portfolios *Mexico in Color*

[68] Pratt Report.
[69] Pratt, "Discovering Other Cultures Through Their Arts," 56.
[70] Damele.

(1947) (Figs. 10, 12, 13) and *Guatemala in Color* (1958) (Fig. 11). The publications feature silkscreen prints with accompanying text, authored by Pratt herself. For example, in her short story, titled *An Old Patamba Jug*, (Fig. 13) Pratt recounted:

> Early the next week we took horses from [the town]. Even as sure-footed as our beasts were, they had difficulty in picking their way over the stony stream beds and pathways which was the only approach to the distant mountain village. Whether I was more comforted when I, by chance, discovered that Juan, our guide, had two revolvers in his bag, I cannot say. Comforted I guess, when I learned that any half intelligent bandit could figure out that when the caravans of potters returned from market there would be money in their pockets in lieu of crates on their backs. But as a warning to others of his profession, one bandit, just a couple of weeks before, was left dangling from a tree.[71]

This experience seemed "incongruous with the golden sunlight of the autumn day, with fields carpeted with wild cosmos – *mirasoles* to the Indians – or tiny orange-yellow daisies."[72] These texts and illustrations are a vital contribution to the interpretation of Pratt's collection with consideration to possible future exhibitions and educational initiatives. Her illustrations and short stories provide a link in the story of her life, career, and the collection which is otherwise loosely documented. In addition to some of the storytelling, Pratt revealed specific details about the motifs that appear in the borders and as the cover designs of her prints, as well as how she acquired some of her pieces of folk art. Again from *An Old Patamba Jug*:

> Seeking a few minutes respite from the color and movement of the Juancito market, I found a quiet corner in the open kitchen of the family which had welcomed me with the gracious words, "Esta es su casa."
> As I was enjoying the juicy beefsteak which the mother of the family insisted went with the hospitality of "mi casa," my eye caught sight of her own private water jug. That was the one I preferred to any I had seen in the market. That was the one I carried away.[73]

[71] Elma Pratt, "An Old Patamba Jug," from the portfolio *Mexico in Color*, 1947.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

Thoughts like this illustrate that Pratt wanted interactions and experiences with foreign cultures to be culturally immersive for her and those students traveling with her.

While these stories are whimsical and nostalgic, I believe that they also demonstrate that no matter how genuine Pratt's intentions were at the time about educating cross-culturally, the ways in which she may have led some of the excursions with the students enrolled in the ISA were possibly reflections of how Americans were conducting themselves abroad in modern society and how they exhibited some new-found power they had after WWI. Dean MacCannell explains in *The Tourist* that his central thesis "holds the empirical and ideological expansion of modern society to be intimately linked in diverse ways to modern mass leisure, especially to international tourism and sightseeing."[74] He states: "The shift from industrial to modern society is evidenced in changing family structure, new approaches to education, and modern social movements, as well as in the devaluation of work and in the rise of tourism and leisure."[75] Pratt and her school fit into this description of the early twentieth century. But I think MacCannell would argue that Pratt's travels, even under the auspices of education and real cultural experience through immersion, were in many ways transforming these foreign cultures, then considered primitive, into tourist attractions.[76] Turing culture into a commodity was not a goal that Pratt professed to be pursuing but it cannot be denied that some of her actions could be described in this way.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Pratt continued to work in many other locations abroad with her school. She also worked under the sponsorship of the American College for Girls which was providing educational opportunities for young women through a

[74] Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist* (New York, NY: Schocken Books Inc.), 3.
[75] Ibid., 58.
[76] Ibid., 83.

grant from the Ford Foundation in Cairo. Pratt lived in Egypt for four years (1962-1966) where she worked with children (Figs. 14-19), creating art in a houseboat on the Nile (Fig. 20) and "teaching and lecturing the students and teachers of the American College for Girls who were sent out, into the villages all over Egypt, to teach by the Department of Social Affairs and small industries."[77] While in that country she collected artifacts for an extensive exhibition of *fellahin* or Egyptian peasant art from the Nile River Valley for the Brooklyn Museum and carried out a survey of crafts from Aswan, Egypt for the museum gallery shop.[78] Pratt brought the crafts back to New York to be marketed and sold in the Brooklyn Museum Gallery Shop. Pratt and Carl Fox, then Gallery Manager at the Brooklyn Museum, had been doing this since the 1930s, with crafts from Europe and later Mexico and Central and South America. During these eras, Pratt also contributed articles on folk art to *The Christian Science Monitor*, *School Arts* magazine, and various museum and school publications.[79]

Pratt shared her experiences in Egypt as a speaker at the Pen and Brush Craftsman's dinner meeting on January 24, 1967 in New York City with a talk titled "Children of the Nile." She had been a member of the group in New York City since as early as 1935.[80] Founded in 1894, The Pen and Brush, Inc. is an international, not-for-profit membership organization for women who are professionally active in the literary,

[77] Pratt Report.
[78] Ibid. The Brooklyn Museum Exhibition Index does not indicate any that any exhibition was installed with type of art described in the text.
[79] "Memorial Saturday for Miss Elma Pratt," Obituary clipping from the Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio. The obituary states that Pratt contributed to *School Arts* magazine, however, I was unable to establish in what way; I found no articles authored by her and none with Pratt or her school as the subject. The articles Pratt contributed to the *Christian Science Monitor* were both in the mid 1950s and the subjects were about traveling abroad and folk art. Please see the bibliography.
[80] Janice Sands, Executive Director, Pen and Brush Archives, email to author (20 June 2006).

visual, and performing arts.[81] Pratt was a registered member in the Brush (or painters) section and was listed in the 1965-1966 Roster and also in the 1969-1970 Roster.[82] Alice Gray, a Craft Member of Pen and Brush, described Pratt's lecture:

> Pratt gave the most interesting and informative talk about the four years she spent in Egypt teaching both children and adults in many different sections of the country to work in various art and craft media. Many of these were completely untutored and many were learning to adapt old techniques to modern needs. But whether tutored or untutored, old or young, they reacted to the lessons with enthusiasm and creativity, turning out many beautiful and usable items. There was no problem with "span of attention" as time was limitless.
>
> Pratt pictured vividly the problems confronting both adults and children in the emerging nations when "progress" of one kind or another disrupts their customs and way of life. Art and crafts do help them in their adjustment to new situations and new environments. The great problem now is to help these people find marketable channels for their talents.
>
> The program was a most challenging one, and the exhibition of work by the "Children of the Nile" was colorful, beautiful and skillfully executed.[83]

After so many years of traveling, teaching, and acquiring folk art, Pratt attempted to give her collection to her alma mater, Oberlin College, but because of the lack of money and space, the college was unable to accept.[84]

In April 1970, Pratt and her collection arrived in Oxford.[85] Instrumental to this move was Miami University professor of art Orpha Webster (1892-1976). Pratt and Webster became acquainted while they were both studying at Columbia University and she encouraged Pratt that the university would be interested in her collection. U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg (1981-1985) John Dolibois (b. 1918), then Vice-President for Development and Alumni Affairs at Miami University, "agreed to have the collection shipped to Oxford, and to bring Pratt to the university to coordinate a folk art program

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[81] Pen and Brush, www.penandbrush.org, downloaded (28 October 2006).
[82] Ibid.
[83] Pen and Brush newsletter (March 1967), Miami Art Museum Archives. Oxford, Ohio.
[84] Marilyn De Soucy, interview by author, Oxford, Ohio (7 March 2002). Tape recording in collection of the author.
[85] Gift History, Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio.

sponsored by the Alumni Association."[86] Although the university had not officially accepted the gift, the Alumni Association took on the responsibility of creating a folk art program that involved Pratt in its cataloging, and named her as the official consultant and advisor to the collection.[87] With Pratt at the helm, the collection would have yet another venue in which to continue educating the public.

Pratt wrote to the university while some deliberation was taking place over what to do with her collection: "The exhibit material is – as I have tried to make clear – not made up of outstanding pieces. Some – yes. Rather it is a valuable education[al] asset. I thought of it being put away in drawers and cupboards [and] according to the lesson or lecture of the day or week, it could be taken out and arranged."[88] Pratt felt that her collection would be of more value at a university where it would have wider use than a museum.[89] Pratt feared that the collection, under the stewardship of a museum, might end up in permanent storage or just displayed and interpreted with a formal eye. She had the support of Miami University faculty, like Webster and Edward B. Kurjack (b. 1938), of the department Sociology and Anthropology, who saw the value of her collection and even helped catalogue it. They recognized its potential as an educational tool with which a community of students and local citizens could explore and discover the values and traditions of other nations through objects. Pratt saw the potential in a university setting for local community around Oxford, Ohio to gain knowledge and again, to echo the words of Glassie, learn to "value the unfamiliar."[90]

[86] Gift History, Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Glassie, 18.

In addition to accepting Pratt's collection, Miami University recognized Pratt's lifelong devotion to art education by awarding her an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters in 1977, the last recognition of her educational endeavors before her death. Pratt's mission to promote the global qualities of folk art in an effort to teach cultural unification can contribute to the discussion of folk art collecting and collections in the realm of museums. The examination of Pratt's life reveals activities that molded her into a passionate educator. Pulling the avenues of her life together opens new doors for the interpretation of her collection. These are works that she often referred to as "social art" and "art in action," images and objects that she believed should have presence in the lives of others.

Chapter Two

The International School of Art, 1928-1967

In this chapter, I will analyze Pratt's ISA and look at a couple of the most prominent artists who taught with her and the workshops they conducted. I will also examine some of the pedagogical theories and educators who influenced her educational mission. The ISA was Pratt's greatest achievement, its importance and her contributions as the director surpass that of her collection of folk art. Pratt's ISA was recognized by audiences nationwide, internationally, and featured many times in the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *New York Times,* as well as other national newspapers.

As described in chapter one, Pratt established her ISA in 1928 after traveling to Zakopane, Poland. The ISA was actually a series of year-round workshops held in various European cities and rural areas, later expanding to include sessions in Tunisia, Mexico, and Central and South America (see Figs. 21-28 for photographs in Poland, Hungary, Guatemala, and Mexico).[91] The students of the ISA were American teachers and freelance artists and designers, who would work with local master artisans to learn the traditions of the native crafts.[92] By 1950 the amount of students who enrolled in the ISA was in the thousands.[93] Pratt claimed that she wanted only "serious minded students" and therefore very young students did not enroll.[94] The premise of these workshops was that there would be no traditional walls or barriers to prevent students from a learning experience, cultural immersion was the goal. They learned the crafts and

[91]Burke, 16.
[92] Ibid.
[93] F. Meredith Dietz, typed letter to Miss Frances Bemis. The letter was to provide information about Pratt as an artist, educator, and lecturer; Pratt was to serve as on the Scholastic Art Professional jury, February 21, 1950 in Brooklyn, New York, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.
[94] Rappaport. 4

traditions of other nations from the "everyday things" and the artisans who created them. Pratt explained in 1935:

> The International School of Art has grown up organically and spontaneously, I should almost say homogeneously, and is now so vast, with so many fruitful ramifications, that it can stand upon its own feet and not fall. It is not a private enterprise, but a world-wide undertaking.[95]

In the years from 1928 to 1936, Pratt conducted most of her ISA courses in Zakopane, Vienna, and the United States. It was in Poland and Austria that Pratt became acquainted with two of her most outstanding and dedicated guest artists/teachers, Marya Werten (dates unknown) of Poland and Emmy Zweybrück-Prochaska (1890-1965) of Austria. These women taught in their native countries for the ISA, as well as in the United States where they conducted workshops in cities such as New York, Chicago, Louisville, Wilkes-Barre, Minneapolis, Des Moines, and Seattle.[96] An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* (1932) described the ISA as art taught on a world basis, acknowledging, "Miss Pratt has found concrete ways of promoting better international understanding through its courses in creative art under native teachers in many countries…[97]

In 1932, Zweybrück-Prochaska spoke about the folk art of Austria for the Western Arts Association, which had changed its name in 1919 from the Western Drawing and Manual Training Association.[98] It was an association that represented the interests of art, home economics, and related arts and manual-arts teachers.[99] Zweybrück-

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[95] "It All Began in Vienna"
[96] "Art Taught on World Basis," *Christian Science Monitor* (1 October 1932): 5.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Frederick M. Logan, *Growth of Art in American Schools* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers: 1955), 144 and "Art Taught on World Basis," *Christian Science Monitor* (1 October 1932): 5. The newspaper article does not disclose the location of Zweybrück-Prochaska lecture to the Western Arts Association.
[99] Ibid.

Prochaska was a professor of art in Vienna at Franz Cizek's school[100] and authored many books on stencils, decorative design projects, and festive motifs. One of her books was *Hands at Work: A Book of Simple Decorative Design Projects and Applications for Housewives, Students, Occupational Therapists, Schools, Recreational Groups and Amateur and Professional Artists and Craftsmen* (1942).

Contemporary to the activities of Zweybrück-Prochaska, Werten spoke in cities from Seattle to New York, about the art of Poland.[101] On both occasions she lectured about the exhibited prints, woodcuts, carvings, textiles, weaving, toys, ceramics and a variety of the characteristic decorations that were used in connection with national Polish festivities."[102] In New York she spoke with a Polish-American group called the "Polish Circle." In Chicago it was the Polish Arts Club, and in Minneapolis it was the Polanie. When Werten spoke to these people, she "showed the artistic progress of Poland since the regaining of its independence at the end of the World War."[103] An excellent description was given in the article "Art Taught on World Basis" of what it would have been like to be at one of these presentations and how they exemplified the mission of the ISA, which was to inspire Americans to seek out other cultures and learn about their customs. The article states:

> The exhibit and the slides which she flashed on the screen in illustration showed how the simplicity and directness, the wealth of color and purity of hue, of peasant art had become a national feature of Polish art, and yet how original the modern designs are, how suited to the tools used, and to the shape and after–use of the medium employed. There is no doubt that these contacts with her countrymen have served to awaken a new interest among the Poles in America

[100] Franz Cizek, as mentioned in chapter one, was the famous Austrian art educator and advocate of children's art, with whom Pratt worked in Vienna. His pedagogies were becoming widely known internationally in the early twentieth century, especially in the 1920s (Logan, 144).
[101] "Art Taught on World Basis," *Christian Science Monitor* (1 October 1932): 5.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.

> which will inspire them to share with us the tradition and creation of artistic excellence which is so abundantly theirs. Their sense of color, their decorative sense, has meaning in every department of American life.[104]

In Minneapolis Werten presented her first course to fifty teachers of art in the city schools; Bess Eleanor Foster, supervisor of art for the city schools, organized the class.[105] It took place over Memorial Day weekend, so Werten had only four days to "exemplify her theory of decorative design and to help her teacher-students to find their way in their own expression through several mediums…"[106] Also while she was in Minneapolis Werten gave a three-hour lecture and demonstration on her theory of design at the University of Minnesota, showing examples and illustrating blackboard sketches of how to go about creating an original and effective design for a specific space using specific tools.[107]

In the time between her Minneapolis and Seattle engagements, Werten spent a week in Des Moines at the invitation of Florence Weaver, an interior decorator who had studied with the ISA.[108] Next she left for Seattle to meet with twenty-four teachers at the request of Clara P. Reynolds, a former ISA student and then director of art for schools in Seattle. Following this Werten whisked back east for a two-week "vacation course" in the Adirondacks at the Irondequit Club on Piseco Lake. "Eighteen teachers assembled there and pens, pencils, and brushes flew fast in an attempt to complete every "problem" devised by Miss Werten to give the discipline in decorative design which they would later communicate to their thousands of pupils."[109] After this American tour, Werten

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[104] "Art Taught on World Basis," *Christian Science Monitor* (1 October 1932): 5.
[105] Ibid., 5.
[106] Ibid., 5.
[107] Ibid., 5.
[108] Ibid., 5.
[109] Ibid., 5.

returned to the Zakopane section of the ISA in the foothills of the Tatras Mountains and left with a sense of much accomplished. The ISA had once more proved that art is not a national but universal way to connect people from different nations and inform about its individual expression.[110] "[A]rt education in America had been made richer by this opportunity through the ISA to learn from the experience of far-off Poland." [111]

In addition to being an instructor for the ISA Werten, like Zweybrück-Prochaska, was also an accomplished author and illustrator. She wrote a few books on the history of Polish art and a children's book, *Marta the Doll* (1946), which she also illustrated. She also illustrated Polish recipe books, Polish folk tales, and musical scores. Werten and Pratt were business partners and friends. They met in Poland in a tile factory near Warsaw where Werten was working while also managing a side project of making toys for Polish soldiers wounded in World War I.[112] Werten's service in the ISA and her promotion of Polish folk art across the United States no doubt contributed to the successful assembly and execution of the "Polish Art Exhibition, 1933-1934," organized and presented by the ISA at the Brooklyn Museum. Werten was charged with the selection of objects for the exhibition.

The Art News magazine previewed the exhibition and the *New York Times* reviewed it. *The Art News* preview prepared visitors to see a relationship between the traditionally designed folk art of Poland and modern designs of Poland by contemporary artists like those in the Modern Society of Young Polish Artists.[113] It explained how Polish life would be illuminated through a variety of costumes from the peasant centers

[110] "Art Taught on World Basis," *Christian Science Monitor* (1 October 1932): 5.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Grace Goulder, "'Poland-in-Ohio' Lady," *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (5 May 1940): 6.
[113] "Brooklyn Shows Polish Folk Art," *Art News*, vol. 32, no. 1 (7 October 1933): 14.

of Lowicz, Krakow, Zakopane, Hucuil, and Silesia.[114] "Groups of handicraft will give the characteristic Polish interiors and show art used in embroidery, ceramics, carving of utensils, and in home decoration." It was as if Poland had been transported to New York for the first venue of the exhibition.

The exhibition took place at the Brooklyn Museum from October 20 to November 23, 1933 and the ISA published a catalogue.[115] The display consisted of oil paintings, watercolors, graphic art, caricatures, commercial art, posters, applied folk art, and school art (children's art).[116] The foreword of the catalogue informed readers about the intent of the displays:

> [The] exhibition includes the works of students of the Warsaw Academy of Art, and several art schools in Poland. It is intended to give an idea of the tendencies and methods in teaching of art in Poland.
>
> The exhibition also includes a small collection of peasant art which will serve not only to give some idea of the varied and fascinating forms of this traditional art, but will also demonstrate its influence on certain Polish artists.
>
> We again wish to stress the fact that this rather diversified exhibition does not pretend to represent Polish art as a whole. Its purpose is to awaken people's interest in the character of Polish art, and in the people whose culture it characterizes. [117]

The catalogue listed all the thirty-six graphic artists who had work in the exhibition. The commercial art came in a variety of forms: wrapping paper, candy boxes, small advertisements, magazine covers, Christmas cards, cigarette boxes, envelopes, calendars, playing cards, and posters.[118] The section for children's art included children's books and magazines, toys by students from the Warsaw Normal School and the Krakow

[114] "Brooklyn Shows Polish Folk Art," *Art News*, vol. 32, no. 1 (7 October 1933): 14.
[115] *Polish Exhibition, 1933-1934.* Brooklyn Museum, October 20 to November 23, 1933 (New York, NY: International School of Art, 1933), not paginated.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.

workshop (in the Krakow workshop artists made the forms and children painted them).[119] There were also Christmas tree ornaments by students from the Warsaw Normal Schools and some designed by Werten.[120]

For applied art, the exhibition included *kilims*, woven materials, and ceramics, produced by Polish artist organizations like Buczacz and "Lad," which was founded by former students of the Warsaw Academy of Art and had obtained the highest distinctions at the International Exhibit of Decorative Art in Paris in 1925.[121] Under the section of Art Schools, the catalogue listed the Zakopane Woodcarving School, the Warsaw Graphic School, and the Graphic Department of the Boys School of the Silesian Brotherhood.[122] "The Warsaw Academy of Art was founded in 1904 as a private art school and reorganized after the regaining of Poland's independence with all the vigor and enthusiasm characteristic of the country's new spirit." [123] The Warsaw Graphic School was established in 1926 and admitted boys from fourteen to sixteen years of age who had completed elementary school and wanted to work in all lines of practical graphic work.[124]

The peasant art section of the catalogue is far too extensive to list in full but a few of the objects were men and women's costumes, a bed, woven materials, marriage chest, stained glass, batik eggs, burnt wood decorations, ceramics (decorative and functional), toys, and peasant woodcuts. The final section listed paintings from the Brotherhood of St. Luke, the Warsaw School, and the Group of Four. The paintings by the Brotherhood of

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[119] *Polish Exhibition, 1933-1934.* Brooklyn Museum, October 20 to November 23, 1933 (New York, NY: International School of Art, 1933), not paginated.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.

St. Luke were works that represented the first generation of post-war artists from the Warsaw Academy of Art.[125]

This Brotherhood group, also called the Fellowship of Saint Luke, modeled itself after medieval guilds in that it was composed of members of a fellowship whose program was essentially held together through ties of friendship.[126] The 'Master' would ceremoniously emancipate his pupils with special diplomas.[127] The Fellowship had fourteen members, all pupils of the same Polish artist Tadeusz Pruszkowski (1888-1942). Nine exhibited in Brooklyn, most notably Boleslaw Cybis (1895-1957), whose painting *Meeting,* c. 1932 (Fig.29) was illustrated in the catalogue, Jan Gotard (1898-1943), Antoni Michalak (1902-1975), and Jan Zamoyski (1901-1985), whose painting *Nurse,* c. 1930s (Fig. 30) was also illustrated in the catalogue.[128] The artists of this group were not only heavily influenced by their 'Master' Pruszkowski who was an admirer of Frans Hals and Diego Velázquez (1599-1660) but also by sixteenth and seventeenth-century Dutch painting.[129] They were enthusiastically and critically received in Poland in 1928, however, the group met increasing criticism later by the Polish colorists and the avant-garde for their preponderance of drawing and traditional studio work.[130]

Other distinguished artists belonged to the Group of Four painters. As a group, they were not critically acclaimed but three of its members were part of the Polish Rhythm Group or the Rhythm Association of Plastic Artists that flourished between 1922

[125] *Polish Exhibition, 1933-1934*, not paginated.
[126] Wojciech Wlodarczyk, "Fellowship of Saint Luke," In Grove's *The Dictionary of Art,* vol. 10, Jane Turner (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1996), 871-2.
[127] Ibid., 871-2.
[128] *Polish Exhibition, 1933-1934*, not paginated.
[129] Wlodarczyk, 871-2.
[130] Wlodarczyk, 872.

and 1932.[131] The two featured in Brooklyn were Zofia Stryjenska (1894-1976) and Wladyslaw Skoczylas (1883-1934), whose woodcut *Janosik's Band,* c. 1910-1940 (Fig. 31) was illustrated in the catalogue.[132] The Rhythm Group artists "favored classicism and appreciated stylized drawing, rhythmic composition and decorative effects."[133] This can be seen in Skoczylas's *Janosik's Band*. [134] Members of this group made artistic contributions to commercial graphic art and in the decoration of Polish buildings. They also received several commissions from the state.[135]

Edward Alden Jewell said in his *New York Times* review of the *Polish Art Exhibition*:

> The exhibition argues vigorous and widespread activity, both in the craft field and in that of the so called "fine arts" – although the Warsaw Academy, it seems does not recognize any such distinction. The academy's program embraces all the branches, a fact that perhaps accounts, in part, for the unifying thread that seems to pull together into harmonious relationship so many diverse elements of Polish artistic expression.[136]

This exhibition was integral in legitimizing the work of Pratt and the ISA in that, as Jewell stated, it brought to the attention of the American public not just Polish art objects but also a wider view of Polish culture and customs. This was an important endeavor for the ISA during a time when Americans seemed receptive to exhibitions of this kind and new types of educational opportunities.

In the *Growth of Art in American Schools,* Frederick Logan describes that the decade of the 1930s was a particularly fruitful time for the arts, which helped to spark a

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[131] Wojciech Wlodarczyk, "Rhythm Group," In Grove's *The Dictionary of Art,* vol. 26, Jane Turner (New York: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1996), 298.
[132] Wlodarczyk, 298.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Edward Alden Jewell, "Art in Review: Polish Exhibition at Brooklyn Museum of Art, Gari Melchers Memorial Show," *New York Times* (21 October 1933), 13.

rise in museum education.[137] Logan wrote that as employment and payrolls dropped during 1929-1931, little time or energy went into new enterprises in anything but that eventually the population of the United States began to accommodate itself to an economically stringent regime.[138] Museums, libraries, programs of free summer concerts, and adult evening classes in vocational schools all reported steady expansion and intensely serious patronage by all age groups and from a cross section of intellectual and educational backgrounds.[139]

Logan goes on to say that: "Catering to this large and eager clientele, the American museums of art which possessed collections and endowments permitting some creative activity entered a period of educational exhibits never before equaled,"[140] allowing for exhibitions the size of the *Polish Art Exhibition, 1933-1934* in Brooklyn. He lists the Brooklyn Museum, along with the Metropolitan Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Museum of Modern Art as New York museums with resources to create important exhibitions.[141] The size of the *Polish Art Exhibition, 1933-1934*, with a quick count of the items listed in catalogue, was about 700 objects. This was a very large undertaking but museums were reassured by the popularity of the three World's Fairs that took place in Chicago (1933), New York (1934), and later in San Francisco (1939). Their success proved that the public was interested in seeing other cultures; the relationship of art and anthropology were broadening and deepening public awareness.[142] The ISA was an active part of this broadening of American culture.

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[137] Logan, 178.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Logan, 179.
[142] Ibid.

Philip N. Youtz, Director of the Brooklyn Museum (1933-38) wrote a letter to Pratt on November 30, 1934. He expressed an overwhelming sense of appreciation for Pratt and her efforts and validated the popularity of the exhibition with Americans. He wrote:

> I take pleasure in writing you to express my admiration of the distinguished Polish Exhibition which was first shown at the Brooklyn Museum and the circulated throughout the country.
>
> I can imagine no better good-will emissary between Poland and this country than this exhibition. It not only captivated the American imagination by its charming folk quality, but it also gave us a vivid resume of Polish [c]ultural development.
>
> To most of us the excellence of the Polish students' work came as a great surprise. Much of this children's work compared very favorably with the best decorative art done by contemporary professional artists.
>
> I hope you will convey to the Polish Government the sincere appreciation of this [m]useum and of the huge public of some quarter-million people or so who saw this exhibition while it was on display at the Brooklyn Museum.[143]

In the wake of this letter Pratt had already proposed in another letter to Youtz more folk art exhibitions to focus on Czechoslovakia in 1935, Romania in 1936, and Hungary in 1937.[144] She was very clear in the letter that these exhibitions were to focus on the cultural traditions of these cultures not just their production of art. Pratt said in her letter regarding the plans for these exhibitions:

> Together, I believe we could get a splendid educational project under way - - holding very tenaciously to the idea that we wish, through the studio and museum, to emphasize the need of awakening the creative impulse in America and promote an interchange of cultural ideas with the other peoples, for the purpose of a deepening of understanding of them and enriching our mental life, not for the purpose of acquiring or simulating their outward form of an inner artistic growth.[145]

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[143] Philip N. Youtz, typed letter to Elma Pratt, Record of the Office of the Director, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, New York, 30 November 1934.
[144] Elma Pratt, typed letter to Philip Youtz, Director of the Brooklyn Museum (17 December 1934), 2. Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, New York. Records of the Office of the Director (P.N. Youtz, 1933-38). International School of Art (1933-).
[145] Ibid, 3.

This quote is important because it reinforces that she was not only interested in the folk art but in folk traditions.

As Pratt continued to conduct the ISA abroad during the 1930s, she also kept a home base in the United States, primarily New York. However Sandusky, Ohio was one other location for her working laboratory, in the years 1936-38 she opened the Community Art Center.[146] This was an institution for the arts and music that served teachers and local community organizations, as well as groups from surrounding towns and neighboring states. Slide lectures, folk art, and textiles were presented at workshops given both on-site and off-site in schools, libraries, and community centers. This continued until WWII, when the Sandusky center was forced to close because of the economy. In the wake of the war Pratt could no longer travel to Europe so she continued her teaching in New York, Egypt, Mexico, and Guatemala.[147]

In the 1940s, Pratt opened a school in Mexico; her "students worked in Tlaquepaque, studying pottery designs under the shade of banana trees and from there they went to Taxco."[148] Two of Pratt's artists/teachers in 1940 were Alfredo Zalce (b. 1908) and Carlos Merida (1891-1985). Zalce was a Mexican painter and printmaker and Merida was a Guatemalan painter and printmaker who had collaborated with Diego Rivera (1886-1957) in Mexico. Again Pratt had secured art experts to conduct her courses. She worked with the National University of Mexico to give credits to the students enrolled with the ISA.

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[146] "Memorial Saturday for Miss Elma Pratt," 1977, newspaper clipping, Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio.
[147] Pratt Report.
[148] Mabel F. Knight, "Native Folk Crafts Studied at International Art School Under Noted Teacher of Art Teachers Around the World," *Christian Science Monitor* (25 September 1948): 7.

In the 1950s, it was back to Europe for Pratt and the ISA, although she still held Christmas sessions in Mexico.[149] Pratt extended her trips in Mexico and Guatemala and further south to Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Panama. In the middle of the decade she began work with the Pestalozzi Children's Village in Trogen, Switzerland; the Village was the first of its kind to be created by Walter Robert Corti (1910-1990). Corti was a Swiss philosopher who, toward the end of WWII, suffered quite a bout of tuberculosis and endured six years in a sanatorium trying to recover.[150] At that time he reflected often on the most defenseless victims of war, children, and he devised a plan to help them.[151] In 1944 Corti's article that proposed his plan was published in the Swiss periodical *Du.* He pointed out to his countrymen that Switzerland had not been bombed, their cities and buildings were intact, and they had been spared the suffering of other war-torn countries. Because of this he felt they had an obligation to help heal other lands.[152] Corti called for a village where war orphans could live and, in 1946, the foundation for the first Village began in Trogen. Its guiding principles would be based on the pedagogies of the Swiss educator Johann Henrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) who had taken in young victims of the Napoleonic Wars and taught and cared for them.[153] What Corti drew from Pestalozzi was the desire to provide these homeless children from various nations with a family atmosphere in which to live until they could return to their different lands of origin.[154]

The goal of Corti's Pestalozzi Children's Village was to help children become good citizens with an international outlook by providing a living environment that created

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[149] Millicent Taylor, "On Tour With a Paintbrush: Elma Pratt and Her Art School," *Christian Science Monitor* (27 March 1954): 14.
[150] "Villages of Peace," *The Elementary School Journal,* vol. 65, no. 4 (January 1965): 184-85.
[151] Ibid., 184.
[152] Ibid.
[153] "Villages of Peace," 185.
[154] Ibid.

a climate of tolerance without ignoring the students' national characteristics.[155] The children lived, worked, and played together and learned to respect each other's individuality while realizing how much they had in common.[156] The idea of bringing cultures together to learn from one another for an ultimately better society was an idea Pratt shared through the ISA. Pratt went back and forth between Trogen and the U.S. and other European sites quite often because she had a studio there in Switzerland for eighteen years. In her 1954-55 Christmas letter she wrote to friends:

> I have returned to Trogen, Switzerland and my desire to contribute in some way to the noble work of Robert Walter Corti, the founder of the Village, was greatly intensified. I'll have to send you a bulletin on it. Now all I can say is that I feel the need of this great service to the children of the world as pointed up by these 200 children working out their project in International Living and perhaps I can add something to their group and the great ideal they stand for. So ---I'll take several trunks of my International folk art material to Trogen and install my gay treasure in lovely sunny rooms looking out over a beautiful world. How the children will love them! No, I do not intend to stay here. I shall continue to "float." I call it just another "Sprout" of the International School of Art. There will be some fine experimentation worked out there I feel sure.[157]

Four years later in another Christmas letter, Pratt describes her time in Trogen further:

> Back again in Trogen I conducted a ten day workshop for the FICE – the International Federation of Children's Communities, -- also founded by our Dr. Robert Corti. There were members from England, Germany, Switzerland and Jugoslovia – [*sic*] an eager and responsive group. Northeast Switzerland offers endless and beautiful excursions – great water festivals, homes of "peasant-artists," castles, chair-lifts up into magnificent mountains and a consistent overall picture of harmonious, orderly, good living everywhere!
> Three days and the children were here again – and still are – with a rush of eagerness that is good to see. In three weeks my classes painted 185 pictures

[155] "Villages of Peace," 185.
[156] Ibid.
[157] 1954-1955 letter on International School of Art letterhead, typed in 1953 and signed by Elma Pratt, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.

> requested by Bamberger's six stores, which will feature the Swiss Christmas. The Village will be highlighted.[158]

It seems fitting that Pratt wanted to participate and have the ISA associated with the Pestalozzi Village; she held many of the same values towards education as Pestalozzi. His theories had laid the foundation of modern elementary education. He believed that children learned through their own sensory experiences, self-activity, and contact with nature.[159] The effect on Pratt, she explained in an interview in 1971 was that, "For 18 years I made my home in Switzerland in a Pestalozzi village. This is a place for education of children, a teaching place – Pestalozzi is a teaching method – like Montessori – very important."[160] (Figs. 32 and 33)

Donna Darling Kelly, in *Uncovering the History of Children's Drawing and Art* examines Pestalozzi's theories and practices concerning children's art. She explains one aspect of Pestalozzi's theory that built on the educational philosophy of the Enlightenment theorist Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1788); "Pestalozzi followed many of Rousseau's guiding principles. Among these is that humans are inherently good and that society corrupts this natural goodness; and education based on nature can block this breakdown of natural goodness, growth is determined by stages, and the senses are the first pathway to knowing."[161] As I explained in Chapter One, Pratt wrote on one of the Oberlin alumni surveys her desire to stamp out all that was unlike God and, in more than one interview, Pratt revealed her distaste for modern industrial society and its ability to

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[158] 1958-1959 Christmas to Christmas letter, typed, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.
[159] Frank Caplan and Theresa Caplan, *The Power of Play* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973), 258.
[160] Dorothy Damele, "Traveler Gives Art To MU," *The Middletown Journal*, Women's Section (7 February 1971): page unknown. Article from the Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio.
[161] Donna Darling Kelly, *Uncovering the History of Children's Drawing and Art* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 19.

corrupt foreign nations like Poland and Mexico, two countries that she viewed as steeped in very old cultural traditions and laden with folk art that she thought would eventually disappear with time. Each time the ISA took groups abroad the hope was to diminish the importance of industrialization in foreign countries by recognizing the goodness, purity and sincerity in their existing customs and traditions.

Because of Pratt's attitude toward modernity in twentieth century, the ISA sought out villages that, at least in her opinion, were untainted by elements of modern society. She said in an interview:

> You know, when the people in little villages and on the farms began to paint their house, and get electric lights and buy radios, it was time for me to move on, because they began to forget how they made their own dishes and wove their own fabrics and made their children toys. The folk art dies when the people become modern – and it's happening all over the world.[162]

Pratt viewed the modern world as a destructive force against tradition and the natural world. While she feared for the perpetuation of folk art in modern society, she realized the importance of children experiencing traditions might have on its continuance. Pestalozzi wrote, "Everything a child learns is acquired by his own observation, by his own experience." [163] He believed that education should provide for the development of all the faculties and capacities of the individual and that it should meet each child's needs.[164]

> He [Pestalozzi] was against memorization without understanding, which was the educational procedure in widespread use. He believed in the need to train the senses, in children's self-activity, and in contact with nature…he freed pedagogy from dogmatic limitations and kindled in others active enthusiasm for universal educational.[165]

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[162] Damele, page unknown. Article from the Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio.
[163] Caplan, 259.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.

Pratt, in accordance with Pestalozzi, had the desire to meet the needs of children even though the ISA had primarily focused on adult education. I believe that she was interested in the Pestalozzi Village for philanthropic reasons but also because she was strongly interested in modern trends in education, like Pestalozzi's natural environment for learning based on exploration and discovery.

> Pestalozzi observed that children draw without any encouragement or assistance from adults but with little control, so they can't even draw a horizontal line first. They also do not seem to need any knowledge of art to find this an enjoyable pastime. He designed a mode of education that put the child as the focal point. In this child-centered position, the child developed his or her own abilities, rather than memorized rote facts.[166]

On the other hand Pestalozzi applied the principle *Anschauung*, a German term that means "sense impressions" or knowledge obtained by direct contemplation of the object before the senses, knowledge through observation.[167] This was one of the same principles on which Pratt developed her ISA and the Polish exhibition. She believed that by taking Americans to other countries to observe the artists and artistic productions of local crafts, Americans would broaden their sense of the self through a window to the world. The universal quality that humans share is that we make things with our hands and we learn by doing. Pratt's ISA applied the idea of learning by doing in the ISA courses and she was driven by the strong principles in the theories of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Cizek.[168]

John Dewey (1859-1952) was another famous educator who shared some of Pestalozzi's ideas. Dewey would have influenced Pratt's study at Columbia University. "In 1904, he [Dewey] went to Columbia University as professor of philosophy and

[166] Kelly, 25.
[167] Ibid., 21-22.
[168] Kelly, 22 and Caplan, 266.

remained there until his retirement in 1930.[169] Active for over sixty years, Dewey became the most authoritative single academic figure in America's educational history."[170] Pratt's interest and involvement in children's arts and education grew passionately over time but was no doubt sparked while studying at Columbia. Pratt's desire for children and adults to have real contact with folk art and immersive experiences abroad no doubt stemmed from her studies in the Teacher's College an affiliate of Columbia University.[171] Pratt and Dewey crossed paths at least one time in their careers when artwork from the ISA was included in an international children's art exhibition that opened on November 12, 1934 at Rockefeller Center in New York.[172] The exhibition featured international artwork from children ages five to fourteen and was by Hungarian children. Eunice Fuller Barnard's review quoted Dewey's response to the artwork of students who had yet been tainted by adult education:

> These foreign children's pictures seem more characteristic of their various countries than adult artists of the same nations would be. The French are distinctively French the Mexican incontrovertibly Mexican. It is so extraordinary that it is almost overwhelming. I wonder if these children have not an advantage in the sense of an ancient unified background to which they belong and which our children generally lack. In America our cities are so new, there is so much migration, so much variety and mobility in our surroundings that impressions perforce tend to be superficial. It is difficult for either adults or children to secure the old-world serenity and depth of feeling.[173]

Dewey believed that traditional schooling allowed little leeway for initiative and individual creativity.[174] Pratt voiced a similar sentiment:

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[169] Caplan, 265.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Columbia University Archives were able to confirm that she earned a Master's of Arts degree and graduated from the Teacher's College on May 1, 1922. She was enrolled in classes in the department of art and art education. Sandra Cooper, Alumni Relations Associate, Teachers College, Columbia University.
[172] Eunice Fuller Barnard, "Children of Many Nations Paint Their Worlds," *New York Times* (11 November 1934): SM10.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Caplan, 266.

> A child can get the flavor of a people if he knows something about their folk life and art. 'These pictures will always remain in a child's mind,' she relates. 'The child can grow up associating the country with its artifacts. I feel our children should have that,' she adds quietly. She says this way children will get to know their neighbors and not just the country's worst history – not just wars and wars and wars.'[175]

Another educator who influenced Pratt was Franz Cizek (1865-1946), "whose name is synonymous with 'child art,' a term he coined sometime in the late 1890s; [h]e was an artist and an educator who believed that children should be allowed to create like artists with the appropriate tools and imagination."[176]

Cizek was a formally trained artist who studied art in Vienna at the Academy of Fine Art in 1885.[177] During the Art Nouveau movement he became a member of the 'Secession' in Vienna, a group of progressive artists who were looking for new expressions of form in art.[178] They seceded from the academic art style in order to protest its constraints. Some of the members of the Vienna Secession included Cizek, Gustav Klimt (1864-1892), Josef Hoffmann (1831-1904), Josef Maria Olbrich (1867-1908), Kolo Moser (1860-1936), Carl Moll (1861-1945), and Otto Wagner (1841-1918).[179] The Secessionists were striving for "the total aesthetic refurbishing of life and [t]hey desired to train the public's eye so that its criteria of aesthetic judgment would mature" beyond the *Stilkunst* (great art) with which they were comfortable and accustomed to seeing.[180] Cizek showed members of this group the artwork of children to which they responded with astonishment and joy. Some went as far as to say that these

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[175] Burke, 16.
[176] Wilhelm Viola, *Child Art and Franz Cizek* (Vienna, Austria: Austrian Junior Red Cross, 1936), 12.
[177] Frank Whitford, *Bauhaus* (New York, NY: Thames & Hudson, 1984), 81-82.
[178] Ibid., 81.
[179] Cynthia Prossinger, "Secession, Vienna." In Grove's *The Dictionary of Art,* vol. 28, Jane Turner (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1996), 343-44.
[180] Ibid.

non-schematic forms were the foundations of the new art education.[181] Wilhem Viola, in *Child Art and Franz Cizek,* explains Cizek's pedagogy, contextualizing it in modern society:

> Children's art is like a window on the world; it works like a window to make a fragment of that world visible. It is an objective reproduction or reality that carries all the meaning within the image. The image is a child's reality, and the act of representation is the goal, not the truth behind the goal. The purpose of the act is the verisimilitude of what is viewed from the perspective of window with everything within the frame of the window viewed as reality. As a practitioner in this paradigm, Cizek looked at children's art for its truth and visual clarity. He saw an intuitive beauty and aesthetic statement in the renderings…The modernist mood gave the permission that had first been started so long ago by Rousseau…Child Art, like childhood, was not only different from adult art and adulthood itself but legitimate as an art from, not a poorly conceived copy of adult art. [182]

When Cizek opened his Juvenile Art Class in 1897, the program's principle was to "let the children grow, develop and mature" naturally and not to bend them in accordance with adults.[183] I believe Pratt fully understood this concept and wanted the ISA to practice this kind of instruction. Views like Pestalozzi's, Dewey's, and Cizek's influenced and translated into the realm of folk art as well as child art for Pratt. The authenticity she found in the art of children seemed to define the realm of folk art. Just as she saw children as having the ability to create without the interference of adult views, she saw the folk art of all nations as deserving to exist without the interference of modern society. Again, Pratt feared that the people from the different cultures she represented through the ISA were going to lose the traditions that they had been passing on to their children for centuries. Despite this fear she was able through her work to offer opportunities for children to learn through art about how the lives of people of different

[181] Wilhelm Viola, *Child Art and Franz Cizek* (Vienna, Austria: Austrian Junior Red Cross, 1936), 12-13.
[182] Kelly, 82-83.
[183] Viola, 13.

cultures, or even their own, were immersed in folkways. Glassie relates, "I have rejoiced in work in Turkey, where folk art is not a memory, nor the struggle of a few elderly people, nor the rebellion of a few small communities. It is a normal part of the life of everyone."[184] Pratt's work with adults and children through the ISA and exhibitions was a strong indication that she wanted to try to stop cultural decline by bringing cultures to each other and introducing active participants who made art not for an art market but because it was traditional, an integral part of their lives. Creativity is not reserved exclusively for formally trained studio artists; it is a manner of expression that is available to everyone in all cultures. Glassie says, "It is one message of folk art that creativity is not the special right of the rare individual. It is common property of the human race... [d]eepening our consideration we remember that art is the result of the merger of people and materials. It records the interaction of human beings with their physical environments. When we qualify that interaction as folk, we stress the social dimension."[185]

[184] Henry Glassie, *The Spirit of Folk Art: The Girard Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 17.
[185] Glassie, 88.

Chapter Three

The Use of Pratt's International Folk Art Collection at Miami University

In this last chapter, I will examine the interpretation of Pratt's collection in the museum environment as compared to Pratt's personal and educational goals. Different from the goals of other folk art collectors like Alexander Girard (1907-1993), Pratt wanted her collection to be used as a teaching tool and not for display. This is not to say that Girard did not see his collection as an educational resource; in fact, he designed a vibrant and contextual exhibition space for it at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico where international visitors can see it year round. By contrast, Pratt's collection is not on view for the public and has had only one major showing in the exhibition "Celebrating Cultural Diversity: Selections from the International Folk Art" *Collection* at Miami University Art Museum (February 6 - August 5, 1990). Before Pratt's death, the collection had only been exhibited on a small scale or used as examples during talks. Typically, in the standard museum environment, the quality and rarity of an object determines whether it is on display. This is where Girard's and Pratt's collections are vastly different. His is one that has attained high critical acclaim for its quality and manner of display while hers has hardly been acknowledged. This, I believe, goes back to the way in which these collections came into being.

Girard began his collection in the 1930s just shortly after Pratt who began hers in 1928. Girard and his wife, Susan, had visited Mexico and became captivated by the folk art.[186] He was an Italian-American architect and designer, born in American and raised in Florence, Italy and schooled in Italy and London.[187] Because the architectural work in

[186] Stanley Marcus, "Alexander Girard: Designer and Collector" in *The Spirit of Folk Art*, 11.
[187] Ibid., 12.

Europe was scarce, Girard was directed towards exhibition and interior design.[188] His first major job as a designer was with Sweden's department store Nordiska Company, designing rugs textiles, and furniture; Girard's first exposure to the international design movement,[189] known as the International Style.[190] From this point forward, Girard continued a heavy program of design and in 1951 he joined Charles Eames (1907-1978) and George Nelson (1908-1986) as the third member of the design team for Herman Miller furniture in Grosse Point, Michigan.[191] His first assignments for Miller were displays and exhibitions for the company's showrooms although during his tenure with Miller, he designed more than one exhibition for the Museum of Modern Art in New York.[192] One of the most acclaimed exhibitions was "Textiles and Ornamental Arts of India" in 1955, touted as Americans' first broad glimpse at Indian design.[193]

Girard's collection began in Mexico with purchases of "colorful terra-cotta toys, papier-mâché skeletons made for the celebration of the Day of the Dead and miniature bandstands bullfight rings, and festive carts."[194] He was so enthralled by the aesthetic value of this art that he purchased it in large quantities and later sold it wholesale in a specialty shop opened by Herman Miller, Inc. in New York called Textiles and Objects.[195] Although Girard was not directly using these objects as teaching tools, like Pratt did, at least he was certainly in the position of influencing the market for buyers in New York. Girard returned many times to Mexico "to buy a stock of textiles and artifacts

[188] Marcus, 12.
[189] Ibid., 12.
[190] Ibid., 12.
[191] Ibid., 12-13.
[192] Ibid, 13.
[193] Ibid, 13.
[194] Ibid., 11.
[195] Ibid., 11.

for the shop and to enlarge his own collection further."[196] Apparently aware of similar folk art items being bought and sold at the Gallery Shop at the Brooklyn Museum, Girard contacted Carl Fox, the gallery shop manager, regarding the museum's source for Latin American folk art. His inquiry is documented in the report written by Carl Fox on March 28, 1959 to Edgar C. Schenk, director of the Brooklyn Museum (1955-1959):

> This report was "[a] report on the shopping trip through parts of Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, and Puerto Rico, undertaken by Carl Fox, and Miss Elma Pratt for the Gallery Shop of The Brooklyn Museum from January 24 to March 13, 1959.
>
> The purpose of this trip was to explore, extend and consolidate old and new sources for folk arts and crafts which had been developed by Elma Pratt in the course of her travels through Latin America. If the report seems unnecessarily prolix, it is because I wish to recapture some of the highlights of memorable education in the location of source material, and in the more ancient art of paying less for more, all of which were so brilliantly taught me by Miss Pratt.
>
> That this knowledge is invaluable was recently brought to our attention when we learned that Neiman-Marcus of Dallas had sent five of their people into South America, including Mr. Marcus, over the past year. Four of his people, including Mr. Marcus, had visited the Gallery Shop searching for material they might be able to use in their forthcoming South American promotion. Two days before I left I received a letter from Alexander Girard, designer and collector, asking us for our sources in Latin America which would help him on a buying trip. Though I consider our museum shop as a public service and though I have always given freely of our local source material, I no longer believe that we should divulge all of our sources, particularly those we have paid for in time and money.[197]

This report substantiates that a competition in the folk art market existed in New York and that both Girard and Pratt were involved and contributed to the concept of turning culture into a commodity and brings to light contradictions in Pratt's work. For Girard, he was outright buying, selling, and collecting works of art. His 106,000-piece collection at the Museum of International Folk is proof that he wanted to build a

[196]Marcus, 11.
[197] "Report on the South American Trip," typed report by Mr. Carl Fox, Gallery Shop, Records of the Office of the Director. Depts: Gallery Shop (1958-1959), Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, New York, 2 April 1959.

collection. By contrast, instead of trying to build a collection, Pratt seemed to be promoting folk art through her ISA, immersive cultural experiences, and the learning of international traditions. Experiencing the folk who created the art was more important than possessing the actual objects. Her ISA programming served as a way in aiding the protection of traditional cultures from the over-civilization of modern society. Pratt said to Youtz in the letter proposing the Central European folk art exhibitions that the goal of these exhibitions was "to emphasize the need of awakening the creative impulse in America and promote an interchange of cultural ideas with other peoples, for the purpose of deepening of our understanding of them and enriching our mental life, not for the purpose of acquiring or simulating their outward form of an inner artistic growth."[198] Pratt had always been more interested in the folk than the art and yet, it seems that some of her affiliation with the Brooklyn Museum meant that she was participating in this elite social group that managed to elevate its own status "at the expense of the people whose work was being promoted."[199] In some ways Pratt's attempt at saving cultural traditions from demise by popularizing them put her in a position of philosophical contradiction. The nineteen-page report written by Fox is riddled with details about their Latin American tour and how Pratt was, in Fox's words, "a formidable exponent of this art and one which had resulted in obtaining for us the lowest price in every country."[200] They bought in marketplaces, from artists, and from dealers who were of European origin. Fox said at the end of the report: "At a time when folk art is disappearing, we must strive to

[198]Elma Pratt, typed letter to Philip Youtz, Director of the Brooklyn Museum, Record of the Office of the Director, Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, New York (17 December 1934), 2.
[199] Metcalf, "Black Art, Folk Art, and Social Control," 280.
[200] "Report on the South American Trip," typed report by Mr. Carl Fox, Gallery Shop, Records of the Office of the Director. Depts: Gallery Shop (1958-1959), Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, New York, 2 April 1959.

encourage their renewal. This dedication has guided [Pratt] in all in all her travels. It has never been merely a matter of "good taste." It has been a sympathetic human being, as an enthusiast and as a teacher that she has devoted herself to the perpetuation of the arts and crafts."[201] But at whose expense? For Pratt's ISA, it seemed that she had always been concerned with the perpetuation of the arts and crafts of a culture as evidence of the endurance of traditions. In some ways I believe that Pratt thought that by creating a strong market for folk art she sustained the traditions in which they were made. Cooley argued that in the

It is interesting that Pratt was so involved this kind of marketing because the items she acquired and used in accordance with the ISA were objects that she herself deemed as "everyday things." But this kind of affiliation was not her entire life's work and I still think that her mission was to educate through these "everyday things." Pratt's collection displayed in a museum installation would not aptly acknowledge her educational mission. She believed people would best learn by engaging in hands-on experiences with folk art and she wanted people to understand that while learning about other cultures they could also learn about their own place in humanity. She did not concern herself with building a collection to be passed on later for museum display. Pratt envisioned hands-on learning opportunities were people would touch, play, and even wear the objects in her collection, the types of activities most museums and galleries discourage. The 'do not touch' policy is very appropriate in most art museums but in the case of Pratt's collection, it takes the folk art out of its original cultural context. Stephen Weil said in *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Inquires Into Museums and Their Prospects*: "Museums that fail to understand that

[201] "Report on the South American Trip," typed report by Mr. Carl Fox, Gallery Shop, Records of the Office of the Director. Depts: Gallery Shop (1958-1959), Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, New York, 2 April 1959.

meaning is contextual, not inherent, run the danger of misinforming their public. Museums that do understand this interaction and are able to account for it in the exhibition practices may not only enrich their visitors' understanding of other cultures but, conceivably, their own culture as well."[202] Weil recognized that museum workers "are not merely passive reflectors of the world…but active participants in how the world is perceived and understood, participants in the creation of its meaning, shapers of reality."[203] Pratt was the "active participant" of her collection, along with many of her students, and she ensured during her lifetime that the folk art was used as an educational tool, not purely for aesthetic display. Pratt's contextual interpretation of folk art gave it meaning and the ability to be displayed as evidence of cultural universalities between multiple nations, not just collectible objects.

In a way, Pratt protected the integrity of the art she had gathered from the small corners of the world where she sought out the artistic inspirations and cultural heritage. She devoted her whole life to education through art. Her collection came about through footwork and discovery on her excursions associated with the ISA. How she acquired all of the objects is not clearly documented; there are neither purchase receipts nor any personal accession records. What exists instead are a few whimsical stories recorded by Pratt and newspaper reporters. Mable F. Knight, who was a student of the ISA and who also authored an article for the *Christian Science Monitor* (1948), recounted a segment of her trip with Pratt in Mexico:

> She [Pratt] leaves the beaten tracks and makes for rural scenes. It happened that I spent a fortnight with Elma in Patzcuraro, a most illuminating one. We would invade one patio home after another. If we did not know the people, we would

[202] Stephen E. Weil, *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Inquiries Into Museums and Their Prospects* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 14.
[203] Weil, 17.

> ring the doorbell, ask if they had chocolate or some dulce [sweets] for sale. Many times they had but if not they would invite us in to proudly exhibit to us their distinctive Colonial home. Elma even asked one of these Tarascan women if she might buy the hand-embroidered belt she wore, and the woman smilingly consented. [204]

An account like this demonstrates that Pratt was not collecting in a tourist market. She sought out artists or happened upon them and did not pass on the opportunity to meet, know, and understand them. The objects she collected in this way become more than just things to be possessed and collected; they were artifacts to be used.[205] Jean Baudrillard, in his essay, "The System of Collecting," asserted that any "object can have two functions: it can be utilized, or it can be possessed."[206] He explains once utilitarian objects become possessed, they are divested of their function, abstracted from a practical context and take on a subjective status. [207] Pratt tried to keep the folk art she had acquired from being divested of its function and purpose. Instead she maintained that the folk art should be in a setting where traditional cultural aesthetics could be taught by using the artifacts. I believe she was successful until her death and while it seems Miami University carried out her desires with small exhibitions and talks for a short time after her death, her collection now resides in storage.[208]

In her absence, Pratt's collection has been abstracted into a collection of nostalgic possessions. The collection, for Pratt, held a valuable life force and she used it in instructional settings that she believed could influence Americans. Although more than

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[204] Mable F. Knight, "School Interest in Mexican Arts – Future Builders –: Native Folk Crafts Studied at International Art School Under Noted Teacher of Art Teachers Around the World," *Christian Science Monitor* (25 September 1948): 7.
[205] Jean Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting," *The Cultures of Collecting*, eds. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 8.
[206] Baudrillard, 8.
[207] Ibid.
[208] David Berreth, Gift History, Miami University, Interoffice Memorandum, Miami Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio (28 August 1987).

2,500 pieces of folk art and children's art from around the world that ended up comprising her collection were important to her facilitating lessons at her school, it was the artists, craftsmen, and teachers associated with the ISA for whom she had deepest attachment.[209] One would need to encounter these objects with proper contextual interpretation in order to provide a learning experience that recognized the people of theses nations not just their folk art. In a lecture to the Western Art Association (ca.1950), Pratt stated:

> If our country men, who live close to nature, and our own children will be taught and encouraged to develop this creative ability and express themselves in terms befitting their local environments we, too, can come into a stronger, more vital, more significant art era without dependence upon foreign sources and treasures and influences. We shall better understand our neighbors and friends across the sea and be able to give them our keener appreciation. We need not feel then that we are a parasitic growth, feeding upon the fruits of their more leisurely, more productive rhythm of life. [210]

Clearly, the act of acquiring folk art for Pratt resulted in more than just the act of accumulating objects for a collection; she had a much higher mission. Her collection came together with the purpose and reason to educate, and she believed, as many collectors do, that the folk art was imbued with the life force that could communicate the traditions of these international cultures.[211]

Today Pratt's collection of international folk art is part of the 16,000 artworks in the permanent collection at the Miami University Art Museum in Oxford, Ohio. [212] Pratt's friend and colleague, Orpha Webster, professor emeritus of art at Miami

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[209] Werner Muensterberger. *Collecting: An Unruly Passion, Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 40.
[210] "What Our Fashions and Homes Owe to the European Peasant," typed script with "Lecture" written at the top by Elma Pratt, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio. The lecture was most likely given in 1953 or 1954.
[211] Muensterberger, 40.
[212] Visiting Information, Miami University Art Museum Web site, www.fna.muohio.edu/amu/visiting, downloaded (12 December 2005).

University, shared Pratt's vision of art to educate and encouraged Pratt to donate her collection to Miami University. John Dolibois, then a vice-president of development and alumni affairs, recounts in *Pattern of Circles* that Webster was a loyal supporter of a museum on Miami's campus from its inception and had relationships with influential people like Pratt and Walter Farmer (1911-1997), a former student, noted author, and interior decorator in Cincinnati, and prominent art collector.[213] Webster was of the opinion that Farmer's acquisitions should come to Miami University.[214] His collection consisted of ancient Roman artifacts, pre-Columbian glass and statuary, Lurstian bronzes, paintings, etchings, tapestries, and antique furnishings.[215] Dolibois recalled Farmer's reaction to a request that he give all this to the university: "He'd love to give his collection to Miami, but only if we have some place to display it. He wasn't about to have his precious treasure stored in boxes in some basement or warehouse. It was meant to be seen and appreciated. So, if Miami wanted it, Miami would have to build an art museum."[216]

The Miami University Art Museum had yet to be built in the late 1960s when Dolibois broached this conversation with Farmer and it would not be completed until 1978. Farmer and Pratt shared the same passionate sentiment for their collections, yet they were worlds apart on the issue concerning how their collections would be used. Farmer expected his collection only to be seen and appreciated whereas Pratt expected hers to be used and handled. She expressed her desire to university officials and it was

[213] John Dolibois, *Pattern of Circles* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press), 231.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.

recounted in the gift history of the collection written in 1987 by David Berreth (b. 1949), then director of the Miami University Art Museum:

> From all accounts – both written documents and personal recollections – the Pratt collection was given without formal conditions or restrictions. In fact, Miss Pratt indicated that her collection was not intended for museum display. She wrote to John Dolibois: "The exhibit material is - as I have tried to make clear – not made up of outstanding pieces. Some – yes. Rather it is a valuable educational asset. I thought of it being put away in drawers and cupboards. According to the lesson or lecture of the day or week it would be taken out and arranged."[217]

Pratt was adamant that the folk art she had acquired was not intended to be exhibited only as museum objects. Berreth further notes in the gift history, "Orpha Webster also writes: 'Miss Pratt feels that her collection would be of more value in a university where it would have wider use, than in a museum.'"[218] Webster made this comment before the museum was opened but in the gift history Berreth was trying to point out that while it seemed that Pratt's collection had no place in a museum it was in fact used as a promotional tool along with Farmer's collections to get support for the university art museum.[219] He says:

> The concept of housing the objects in a museum setting was nurtured by Orpha Webster who discussed with John Dolibois and others, the value of using such a collection in gathering support for a campus art museum, which had been long-desired by Orpha and Walter Farmer, among others. This tactic of promoting the Pratt collection to help get a museum built proved successful, and major, if vague, plans were announced about the uses of the Pratt collection in a new museum setting.[220]

Berreth recommended that Miami University make selections of objects from the collection that were "felt to be of the most value for periodic display and for classroom or

[217] Berreth, Gift History, 2.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.

special project use in the art museum context."[221] The remainder of Pratt's collection, including Berreth suggested, "duplicates, reproductions, posters, maps, notebooks, and objects of minimal esthetic or instructional value, should be de-accessioned in one of several ways."[222] The first option was to offer the unwanted items to Miami University departments like the School of Education, Sociology, and Anthropology.[223] The second possibility was to offer the remainder to art teachers in local school districts.[224] Option three suggested exchanging, selling, or giving the objects to another university or another museum with special interest in folk art.[225] Finally, option four was to sell the items in a public auction.[226] If none of these dispersal methods were successful, Berreth suggested, "the materials be disposed of."[227] He declared that the museum would continue to hold a condensed version of the Pratt collection including only "the highest quality folk art objects for public display and teaching purposes."[228] It was only eleven years after Pratt's death when Bereth suggested that her collection, which represented her educational endeavors, should be disposed of or dispersed in some manner.

However, according to Berreth's gift history, outside of Webster and Dolibois, the plan for the collection met with opposition from the beginning. In 1969, Webster began correspondence with the university's art department, alumni office, and the office of President Philip Shriver.[229] Upon discussing this proposal with his Advisory Council on Development, President Shriver "rejected the offer in February 1970, citing an inability

[221] Berreth, Gift History, Recommendations (September 1987).
[222]Ibid.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Berreth, Gift History, 1.

to meet the cost requirements of storage and staff."[230] This is the same opposition Pratt encountered when she offered the collection to Oberlin College. This did not deter Webster, and she continued to lobby for the collection. Within two months of the President's rejection, Dolibois had arranged for Pratt and her collection to come to Oxford under the sponsorship of the Alumni Association with the goal in mind to convince the President and other skeptics of the educational value of Pratt's collection.[231] Dolibois arranged not only for Pratt's personal housing but also for that of the collection, which would be in the former library of the McGuffey School, in McGuffey Hall; it arrived in April 1970.[232]

Pratt was an active curator of her collection and coordinator of a folk art program in Oxford, Ohio at Miami University.[233] This was an impressive task after "recovering from a light stroke and a severe fall"[234] she suffered in May or June of 1970.[235] She began to instruct with it once again through displays, slide talks, demonstrations of techniques relative to the culture, and festivities that involved music and costume from that highlighted culture. Pratt's lifelong mission was to educate Americans about international folk art and she desired to show a new and eager group of artists, teachers, students, and citizens of Oxford that, as she herself stated, "nature and tradition have been the European peasants' best teachers." [236] In May 1970 Pratt offered her collection to the university in a one-sentence letter to Dolibois.[237] According to Berreth, "only an

[230] Berreth, Gift History, 1.
[231]Ibid.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Pratt Report, not paginated.
[235] Oberlin College Biographical Form. Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin Ohio.
[236] "What Our Fashions and Homes Owe to the European Peasant," typed script with "Lecture" written at the top by Elma Pratt, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.
[237] Berreth, Gift History, 1.

unsigned undated carbon copy exists" and "[t]here is no subsequent written record of the university ever officially accepting the gift and no mention of the fate of the Alumni folk art program."[238]

Berreth explained that a gap in communication existed until early 1972 when Dolibois wrote to Pratt and inquired about the plans for developing the use of the collection and cataloguing its contents.[239] During this time Pratt's health began to fail and she moved to the Garden Manor Nursing Home, at the same time that she was named official consultant and advisor of the collection.[240] All of her personal affairs were being handled by Dolibois who had been granted power of attorney.[241] It seems that some controversial and angry letters had passed between Dolibois and Pratt, including her treatment by the university.[242] Berreth wrote, "Dolibois was so upset that he even offered, at one point, to ask the Trustees to return the collection to Miss Pratt."[243] Once this controversy had passed Pratt continued to work with the collection, cataloguing, organizing, writing programs and lessons until her death in 1977.[244]

Under the care and direction of Sterling Cook (1917-2002), at the time the appointed coordinator for the university gallery displays and later Kathryn Travis (dates unknown), who was likely a volunteer working with Cook,[245] and with Pratt acting as a

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[238] Berreth, Gift History, 1.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Ibid., According to an update issued to Oberlin College via Orpha Webster on July 16, 1970, Pratt had broken her left wrist and had moved into Garden Manor Nursing Home. Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin Ohio. In Berreth's Gift History he said Pratt had gone to the Oxford View Retirement Community.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Berreth, Gift History, 1.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Berreth, Gift History, 1-2.
[245] Robert F. Schmidt, Miami University Archives, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio (13 February 2008). According to Schmidt, Sterling Cook was the first curator at the Miami University Art Museum. Cook worked for the university from 1972-1986, first as the coordinator of exhibits then as curator. Also, according to Schmidt, Kathryn Travis was the wife of Dennis Travis, who was successively Grad Associate, Instructor of Botany, and Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Science from 1969-1978.

consultant, on June 21, 1972, an exhibition showcasing a third of Pratt's collection opened in a temporary art center in Miami University's Rowan Hall[246] (Figs. 34a-b). This exhibition was described by a reporter for *The Miamian* as "costumes of many lands, jewelry, toys, decorative household objects such as lamps and candlesticks, potters, coin banks, masks, fabrics, figurines, dolls and many other objects…[t]he collection also includes photographs, slides, records and books." [247] During the period of 1972-1977, parts of Pratt's collection were displayed at Rowan Hall Art Center, and a Folk Art Advisory Board was appointed.[248] Berreth explained that the purpose of the committee was to "help legitimatize and define the purpose of the collection…[h]owever the group was never able to determine the role, and many of their ideas were unrealistic, or floundered for lack of leadership and follow-up."[249] With Pratt suffering from failing health, attempting to recover from a broken hip,[250] and generally unable to act at the helm, her collection was soon to be sentenced to a life in storage. An educational resource that once recorded her travels and relationships with the artisans and children of many cultures was now being looked at as a burden for its lack of quality and its nearly unmanageable large quantity. Because it lacked museum quality artifacts, it was a weak option to be permanently exhibited. But to view the collection as an enormous mass of invaluable museum objects is to miss the point of its educational value completely.

When the Miami University Art Museum opened in 1978, the Museum Committee (which included members of the Folk Art Advisory Board) charged with

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Schmidt confirms that Kathryn was never actually on as paid university staff at the university, so it is most likely that she was a volunteer.

[246] "Folk Art on Display," *The Miamian,* vol.1, No. 33 (15 June 1972): page unknown. Clipping from the Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio

[247] Ibid.

[248] Berreth, Gift History, 2.

[249] Ibid.

[250] De Soucy interview.

planning exhibits decided that Pratt's collection would not be given a separate exhibition space; this was to afford Farmer's collection more room.[251] Berreth asserted that not showing Pratt's collection at the opening of the museum "effectively reduced the university's public commitment to the collection"[252] and additionally, the Folk Art Advisory Board ceased to function.[253]

Since the Miami University Art Museum opened, only one major museum exhibition has been organized using Pratt's collection, *Celebrating Cultural Diversity: Selections from the International Folk Art Collection at the Miami University Art Museum* (February 6 through August 5, 1990).[254] The catalogue (Fig. 36) gives a minimal amount of information about Pratt, her ISA, and the educational foundation of the collection. The exhibition also included folk art given by other donors.[255] There were sections devoted to toys and miniatures, textiles including costumes, jewelry, ceramics, wooden objects, lacquerware, painted or carved gourds, straw objects, folk art related to belief systems, and two-dimensional works.[256] This exhibition focused, as frequently happens in museums, on the objects, not the cultures and traditions that produced them. This would not have been appropriate in Pratt's eyes since she stated on several occasion that she did not want her collection to be used in this way.

After Pratt's death in 1977, there was no one to ensure that the collection would always be shown with an educational component and cultural interpretation, although this was an important condition of her donation (only, it wasn't officially donated). In a 1972

[251] Berreth, Gift History, 2.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Edna Carter Southard and Bonnie Nelson Mason, Celebrating *Cultural Diversity: Selections from the International Folk Art Collection* (Oxford, OH: Miami University Art Museum, 1990), 1.
[255] Ibid., 10.
[256] Ibid., 4.

article published in *The Miami Student*, Kathryn Travis, a volunteer coordinator of the collection remarked:

> "This is the largest collection of folk art in the world. Miami is fortunate to have such a collection." According to Ms. Travis, Ms. Pratt contributed the collection to Miami because "she thought Miami had the insight and the type of cultural appreciation to take full advantage of the collection. She gave the collection with the stipulation that is not be used as a museum piece but a teaching laboratory."[257]

It is one of the largest collections of folk art by anyone's standards, and I argue that was likely the first of its kind. While Miami University Art Museum now has 2,500 examples from her collection, in her 50 years of travel, Pratt, over those years, had at one point acquired 8,000 examples of folk art.[258] One of Pratt's obituaries mentions the use of the collection: "At Miami, it has been available for the particular use most important to her – as a 'working resource for education' Portions of it are loaned out to public schools, art clubs and university classes in sociology, geography, design and religion."[259] Exhibitions were also installed at Rowan Hall, the campus libraries, and public libraries in Oxford and Liberty, Indiana. [260] These kinds of loans were more aligned to the use of Pratt's collection as a teaching tool. The context in which she used the collection was as an educational tool for her lectures around the nation and abroad. Pratt wanted contextual instructional sessions that explored the cultural traditions of the international folk art.

This idea of objects in context was shared by Girard and his exhibit in the Girard Wing at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico which opened in

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[257] "Collection of Folk Art Depicts Cultural Styles," *The Miami Student* (17 September 1972): page unknown. Clipping in from the Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio.
[258] Burke, 16.
[259] "Memorial Saturday for Miss Elma Pratt," obituary clipping from the Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio.
[260] Southard and Nelson, 7.

1982. He once said: "Part of my passion has always been to see objects in context. I've often felt that objects lose half their lives when they are taken out of their natural settings . . .if you put objects into the world which is ostensibly their own, the whole thing begins to breathe."[261] Girard created a world for his collection when he designed the exhibition space, an environment where the folk art of many nations could mingle together, not only under the roof of the same pavilion but many times objects of different ethnic origin are arranged together in display cases as small vignettes, exposing the veins of creativity that run through every culture. Approximately ten percent of the 100,000 objects in his collection are on display and represent over 100 different international cultures integrated into a one world design. Henry Glassie states in *The Spirit of Folk Art: The Girard Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art*: "Context is the source of interpretation, the environment of significance. Outside context there is no understanding…Things out of context are in the wrong context."[262] James Clifford said in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art,* ideally the history of a collection "should be a visible aspect of any exhibition so as to resist the tendency of collections to become self-sufficient."[263] The problem is that ethnographic art might be viewed and ultimately judged as "works of universal art."[264] Although Pratt could see the universal qualities in the folk art of various nations, she never intended them to be viewed solely in the context of an art museum.

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[261] Jack Lenor Larson, *Folk Art from the Global Village* (Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1995), 53.
[262] Henry Glassie, *The Spirit of Folk Art: The Girard Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 17.
[263] James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 229.
[264] Ibid.

Prior to Girard, Pratt made the same effort in her collection of piecing together what she referred in her lecture to the Western Art Association as "the design of One World."[265] She discovered that in foreign cities and villages, art was not considered a luxury but an integral part of social and civic life.[266] Art to Pratt did not need to represent the Western tradition of painting and sculpture. It was the "everyday things" that eventually would comprise her collection, a wide variety of utilitarian objects, decorative objects, toys, and textiles created with variety of mediums. Pratt saw folk art as a method of shaping culture and Glassie asserted this same opinion in *The Potter's Art*:

> In the ethnographic study of art . . . it is wisest to attend to the full range of media, noting how values obey and ignore the limitation of craft discipline while people express themselves and shape their culture . . .people who are biologically alike use the same materials and similar techniques to realize cultural difference and human unity.[267]

While according to Glassie and the pedagogies that Pratt followed, cultural difference can bring to light human unity, I argue that to accurately interpret her collection it must be studied as an ethnographic material culture. Glassie describes in part what making an ethnographic study of material culture means in *Material Culture*:

> The study of material culture is, in academic terms, a transdisciplinary movement designed to expand and integrate the study of art. It uses historical and ethnographic techniques to understand art as a part of common human experience. It adds the anthropological idea of culture to art history in order to make art a part of history in general. It adds the art of the people to general history to make it more democratic. It gathers archaeological and geographical, historical and ethnographic evidence to locate art in the world.[268]

Understanding that art was part of the common human experience was a concept that Pratt wanted to convey in her ISA. To look at her collection as material culture, instead

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[265] Elma Pratt, "Discovering Other Cultures Through Their Arts," 57. From a lecture that Pratt gave at the Western Art Conference, from the Miami University Art Museum Archives, Oxford, Ohio.
[266] Ibid., 55.
[267] Henry Glassie, *The Potter's Art* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 18.
[268] Henry Glassie, *Material Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 67.

of trying to examine and judge its aesthetic worth or market value, is the best way to interpret and learn from the folk art in her collection. In *Material Culture,* Glassie further describes the study of material culture:

> In practice, the study of material culture is the study of creativity in context…Philosophically, material culture study is founded upon the genetic right of human beings to create and the manifest reality of delimiting conditions…Politically, the study of material culture confronts prejudice and seeks justice, resisting forces that deny art or history – excellence or significance – to human beings on the basis of gender, say, or race or class or culture. It demands the construction of an idea of art and an idea of history that can meet the needs of all people during their struggle to shape for themselves fulfilling and decent lives.[269]

The message of morality and cultural unity was something that Pratt could control when she was director of the ISA and both curator and interpreter of her collection because she had an understanding of the ethnography of the cultures from which her collection is formed.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett recognized in *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* that concerning objects of ethnography, there must be an organizational component developed by a curator who has worked intimately with the objects and the culture to produce an exhibition so that the objects are not left without interpretation and are therefore out of context. Kishenblatt-Gimblett says, "[T]he curators play at the intersection of art and anthropology."[270] Pratt understood the importance of contextualizing the folk art into an immersive educational experience. Photographs and descriptions of the exhibitions that took place in Rowan Hall show that there was an attempt by Pratt and her assistants to design the space to give visitors a view of how these "everyday things" might have been used, or arranged in a house, and in some instances,

[269] Glassie, *Material Culture*, 67-68.
[270] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press), 250.

there were even ladies to model traditional costumes of the cultures being exhibited.[271] It was Pratt's effort, in her final years, to keep the folk art in her collection in an educational context. I think that the folk art that comprises it will be deemed an accumulation of nostalgic souvenirs if it is not treated as an excellent example of international material culture.

The folk art Pratt acquired is indeed of simple design and, without her or a strong mission outlining the use of it, these artifacts became a collection of souvenirs. Susan Pearce, in *Museums, Objects and Collections,* says there are three modes of collecting objects -- as souvenirs, fetish objects, and systematics. She defines souvenirs:

> Souvenirs are objects which take their collection unity only from their association with either a single person and his or her life history, or a group of people like a married couple, a family or say, a scout troop, who function in this regard as if they were a single person. They cover a huge range of possible objects. Examples chosen at random include children's toys…a sampler…a powder compact…[272]

This perfectly defines the present state of Pratt's collection. She and her ISA functioned as one entity and the result of her studies and travels is the collection residing at Miami University Art Museum. Pratt's collection was a result of her bringing international cultures together and teaching the roots of "tradition continuity of past into present."[273] Without an association with her and the history of her educational endeavors, or without her or others who shared her beliefs there to carry on Pratt's intended use of the objects, the folk art has now turned into an accumulation of her personal souvenirs. Pearce also writes: "Souvenirs usually arrive as part of what curators call 'personalia' or 'memorabilia' and sometimes the personality to which they are attached was sufficiently

[271] "Collection of Folk Art Depicts Cultural Styles," page unknown.
[272] Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 69.
[273] Pearce, 72.

interesting or notorious to throw a kin of glamour-by-association over the pieces."[274] I argue that Pratt's life and the ISA are of sufficient interest but since she was not a notorious personality, nor did she strive to be, her collection appears to be more like memorabilia than a valuable educational tool.

Pearce further asserts that this kind of souvenir collection "will not be displayed unless [the objects] can be hooked on to an historical exhibition…"[275] A close examination of the Pratt' international folk art collection at the Miami University Art Museum would need to be done to verify if any of the objects appeared in the *Polish Art Exhibition, 1933-34.* Even so, this investigation might only legitimize a few pieces of folk art out of the approximately 2500-piece collection. Without Pratt alive and the ISA out of existence, this collection, which was an intrinsic part of the historical past of both, is difficult to effectively exhibit and interpret. Pratt believed that these examples of folk art had the ability to transcend the boundaries of cultures and express tradition as a way of life. The problem, according to Pearce, is that if the examples of folk art have taken on a status of souvenir, then they only have the power to reveal a memory of the past but cannot relive it.[276] Pearce says:

> Souvenirs are intensely romantic in every way…[t]he romantic view holds that everything, and especially everybody, had a place in the true organic wholeness which embraces human relationships, in the traditional continuity of past into present…[i]t asks us to believe that life is not fractured, confused and rootless but, on the contrary, suffused with grace and significance.[277]

[274] Pearce, 72.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.

Pratt's collection was a result of her bringing international cultures together and teaching the roots of "traditional continuity of past into present."[278] Her collection aided the ISA in achieving her educational goals, just as the goals of the ISA helped to interpret her collection. It stands out as such at the Miami University Art Museum because it is in a museum that does not have comparable selections of folk art with which Pratt's collection could be exhibited.

Pearce says about personal history "souvenirs discredit the present by vaunting the past, but it is an intensely individual past – no one is interested in other people's souvenirs."[279] No one is interested, unless as Pearce said, the objects can be linked to the infamous and distinguished. Since historically, Pratt was neither infamous nor distinguished, her collection has become a nostalgic collection of souvenirs made of simple form and design and created mostly by unidentified artists. Berreth suggested to weed through Pratt's collection and keep only those objects of the highest quality and aesthetic interest, perpetuating the idea, which museums often do, that simple "everyday things" give the impression of uninteresting and are not visually bold enough to interest museum visitors.

An object's visual interest to museum visitors can only be measured in comparison with other objects as organized by the museum and its curators. Svetlana Alpers refers to this "way of seeing" as the "museum effect" in her essay "The Museum as a Way of Seeing."[280] She asserts that it is the ability of museums to turn all objects

[278] Pearce, 72.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Svetlana Alpers, "A Way of Seeing," in eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 26-27.

into works of art for attentive looking.[281] Museums tend to isolate the material culture of other people from its world and by doing so, Alpers suggests that ethnographic objects are offered up for attentive looking and thus transformed into art of Western cultures and their worth judged with the same criteria.[282] In this setting Alpers said, "[w]hat the museum registers is visual distinction, not necessarily cultural significance."[283] She explained at the beginning of her essay that early museums were built around collections pieced together because the objects were "judged to be of visual interest."[284] The folk art in Pratt's collection was not made by the folk artists in hopes that their works would be offered for attentive looking. The cultural value that is placed on works of art that were created for attentive looking can not be compared to "everyday things" like dolls, pull toys, and whistles, essentially material culture, in Pratt's collection which embody a different cultural dynamic.[285] Exhibiting of the material culture of other people is the museum effect, in that the objects become isolated from their world.[286] Alpers said that she found it troubling that "[m]useums turn cultural material into art objects."[287] I believe that Pratt wished to avoid this as well.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett asks about the display of objects of ethnography in *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*: "Why save, let alone display, things that are of little visual interest? Why ask the museum visitor to look closely at

[281] Alpers., 26.
[282] Alpers, 26-27.
[283] Ibid., 30.
[284] Alpers, 26.
[285] Ibid., 30-32.
[286] Ibid., 26-27
[287] Ibid., 31.

something whose value lies somewhere other than in its appearance?"[288] She defines perimeters for ethnography when she writes:

> Ethnographic artifacts are objects of ethnography. They are artifacts created by ethnographers. Such objects can become ethnographic by virtue of being defined, segmented, detached, and carried away by ethnographers. They are ethnographic, not because they were found in a Hungarian peasant household, Kwakiutl village, or Rajasthani market rather than in Buckingham Palace or Michelangelo's studio, but by virtue of the manner in which they have been detached, for disciplines make their objects and in the process make themselves.[289]

Perhaps without Pratt acting as the "medium of ethnographic representation" her collection ceases to perform in the educational function she once used it. Instead, the collection remains in storage indefinitely because it is now deemed unworthy of exhibition.

My vision for this collection would be to find out if any of the objects in her collection could be linked to the Polish art exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in 1933. Perhaps the Miami University Art Museum would elect to keep those items in their permanent collection. For the remainder of the items, I think that swift repatriation to the cultures from whence they came is a viable option, even if this means cultural centers in the U.S. Or maybe if Pratt's collection could be seen and compared to other bodies of folk art, it would find a welcome home in a museum that specializes in folk art. An attempt to revive Pratt's ISA and contextualize all of the folk art and children's art in the collection is, as Pearce said, "not repeatable but reportable," and an event that is to be remembered but not relived.[290] I propose that perhaps the most effective option would be to begin a loan program with these objects. Many major museums in the U.S. have already modeled this kind of educational resource which includes sending out a variety of

[288] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 17.
[289] Ibid., 17-18.
[290] Pearce, 72.

multimedia and curriculum aids for classroom and some institutions even send objects. One of the best models of this program is at The Newark Museum in Newark, New Jersey. They have sixteen collection categories that support the areas of art, natural and physical science, and social studies, as well as U.S. and world history and they bill it as an exciting opportunity for immersive learning. For example, under the category of Eastern Europe, the museum's website says: "Open your students' minds to the world. Send them on a journey through the countries of Eastern Europe where they can examine objects such as embroidery samples from Russia or felt cutwork from Hungary. Enliven your lesson with the arts from this region of the world by learning such artistic techniques as Ukrainian wax resist for masterly designed Easter eggs."[291] This seems exactly like what Pratt envisioned. If the creation a loan program like this is too costly or requires more staff support than available at Miami University then maybe some of Pratt's collection could be sent to a program just like the one at Newark. Pratt wanted the collection used, handled, and worn, not just exhibited. The collection still has great potential as a teaching tool to bring cultures together. However, as a mass of boxed objects, it is a wasted resource.

[291]The Newark Museum, www.newarkmuseum.org/EducationPrograms/EducationPrograms.aspx?id=296, downloaded (14 November 2007).

Conclusion

Pratt's mission was to educate people through the folk art of international cultures. When I proposed to write my thesis on the Elma Pratt Collection of International Folk Art at the Miami University Art Museum in Oxford, Ohio, I thought that I was going to examine and analyze the 2,500-pieces in terms of formal qualities. Additionally, I thought I would discover the universal themes shared cross-culturally in the folk art. But what I found in the course of researching Pratt's life was that the most important theme of all and it did not reside in the collection itself but the reason it exists– Pratt's passionate interest in humanity.

The research in this thesis proves that from a very early age Pratt's interest in the arts blossomed into a lifelong commitment to help people from other nations learn about each other by being introduced to the traditional arts of their own culture and others. After completing her own education, Pratt's growing interests matured into the ISA. The travel and the personal connections she made through the ISA provided the opportunities to educate through the folk art she accumulated as she traveled.

The research conducted thus far uncovered an unexpected amount of information about Pratt and the ISA. Gleaning information from the archives at Oberlin College, Columbia University, the Miami University Art Museum, and the Brooklyn Museum, interviewing Pratt's close friend Marilyn De Soucy, and numerous databases like the *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, the Ford Foundation, and the like has been an enlightening discovery of how poignant Pratt's work was then and how her mission to educate could transcend and be applied to educational settings in the twenty-first century.

Major questions arose in the research and writing of this thesis that invite further investigation. These questions begin with the fact that there is more to know about Pratt's immediate family heritage and the ways her upbringing influenced her path in life. It must be determined through more examination how she was or if she was related to the Pratt family who was instrumental in founding the Brooklyn Institute in 1823 as the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library which was later reorganized as the Brooklyn Institute in 1843, and again in 1890 as the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences.[292] The museum building opened in 1897 as the Central Museums of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences which is currently known as the Brooklyn Museum.[293] In Pratt's letter to Youtz, the one proposing the Central European exhibitions, Pratt seems to indicate that there may be a familial connection when she says, "I shall call you [Youtz] before I go over to "our family" luncheon at the Pratt Institute. I would like to have the Pratt brothers decide to include a summer course with me abroad as a good extension course and worth of credit toward their degree."[294]

Uncovering some of Pratt's experiences at the Brooklyn Museum led to more questions about folk art in the first half of the twentieth century regarding the exhibitions at other major New York museums, the market for buying and selling folk art, and the competitive environment this created in the art and museum arenas. Interesting comparisons could be made about the scope and manner in which these institutions were exhibiting international folk art. Even a closer look at the exhibition design that Girard

[292] Tara Cuthbert, Archives Assistant, Libraries and Archives, Brooklyn Museum, correspondence with the author (26 February 2008).
[293] Ibid.
[294] Elma Pratt, typed letter to Philip Youtz, Director of the Brooklyn Museum (17 December 1934), 5. Brooklyn Museum Archives, Brooklyn, New York. Records of the Office of the Director (P.N. Youtz, 1933-38). International School of Art (1933-).

did for the Museum of Modern Art in the 1950s would have a place in the continuation of this research.

My suggestion to interpret Pratt's collection as material culture could not have come about without investigating her ISA. This institution is where all of her pedagogy and philosophy regarding art, culture, and civilization culminated. A review of the coursework she completed at the two primary institutions of education, Oberlin and Columbia, would supplement the examination of the foundation of her ISA. There are small details regarding the ISA that could provide more insight to Pratt's life and collection such as how Pratt financed the ISA and whether it was her only source of income. A timeline of the school, its locations, and the artists and scholars who were associated with it would place Pratt in an influential position in both the art and museum arenas of the twentieth century.

My work on this thesis has led me to conclude that Pratt's collection at Miami University Art Museum deserves to be completely documented and catalogue, including the supplemental slides, recorded talks, and books. This would be the perfect springboard to start organizing exhibitions and a loan program.

The strongest implication of this thesis is that through the examination of Pratt's life and her school of art, her collection can be examined and interpreted differently in the future. To be the successful and effective educational tool that Pratt once made it, the collection should no longer be considered a folk art collection but a collection of material culture.

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The American Folklife Center, The Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/folklife/

Ford Foundation, http://www.fordfoundation.org

Miami University Art Museum, http://www.fna.muohio.edu/amu/

The Newark Museum,
www.newarkmuseum.org/EducationPrograms/EducationPrograms.aspx?id=296

Oberlin High School, http://www.oberlin-high.org/1906/

Pen & Brush, http://www.penandbrush.org

Pestalozzi Children's Foundation, http://www.pestalozzi.ch

Robert College, http://portal.robco.k12.tr/Default.aspx

Zakopane – Travel Guide, www.ezakopane.pl/poland/

Appendix

Figure 1 – Reprinted from the article "Sandusky Woman to Get Merit Cross from Poland for Work: Decoration Given for Advancement of Art" in the *Sandusky Daily News* (February 1939), photo by Mound Studio. The article facsimile is from Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.

Figure 2 – Pratt's Golden Cross of Merit, awarded to Pratt in 1939 by Consul General Waclaw Gawronski in Chicago for the Republic of Poland. The medal is in the permanent collection of Miami University Art Museum in Oxford, Ohio, photograph by the author.

Figure 3 – Tin horse cutout, Mexico, mid-20th CE, EP 177, collection of Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio. Photograph by the author.

Figure 4 – Wooden toy horse pulls, Scandinavian, mid-20th CE, collection of Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio. Photograph by the author.

Figure 5 – Tooled wood, hand-painted dolls, Sweden, mid-20th CE, collection of Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio. Photograph by the author.

Figure 6 – Tooled wood, hand-painted dolls and house, Hungary, mid-20th CE, collection of Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio. Photograph by the author.

Figure 7 – Bull-shaped whistle, Mexico, mid-20th CE, collection of Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio. Photograph by author.

Figure 8 – Figure-on-burro whistle, Mexico, mid-20th CE, collection of Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio. Photograph by author.

Figure 9 – Playful figurines, vessel whistles at feet, Mexico, mid-20th CE, collection of Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio. Photograph by author.

Figure 10 – Elma Pratt, *Salt Boys of Chiapas* from *Mexico in Color* (1947), EP1272, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

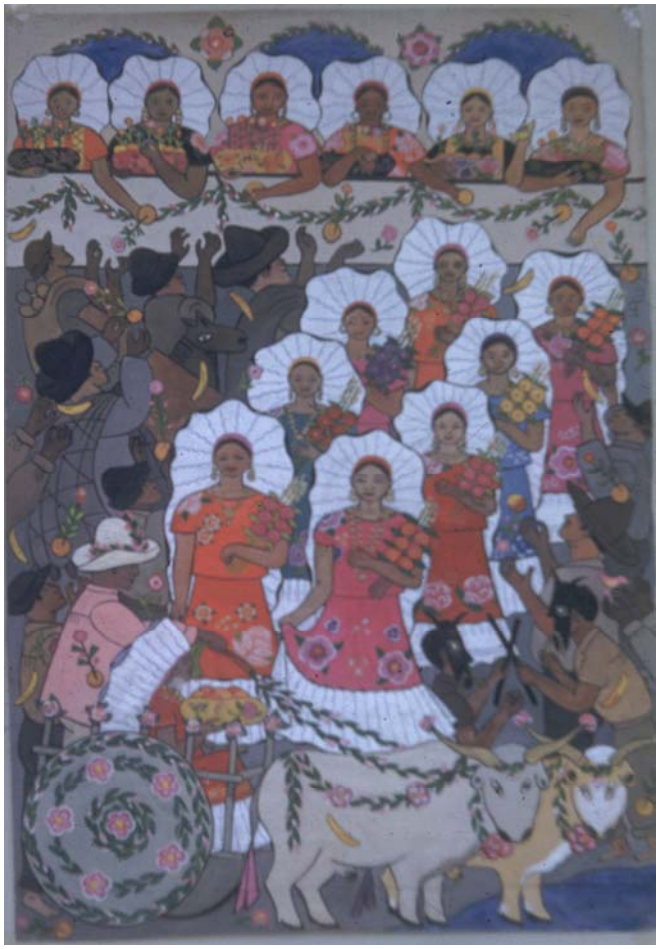

Figure 11 – Elma Pratt, *Festival in Ixtepec* from the portfolio *Guatemala in Color* (1958), EP1269, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 12 – Elma Pratt, *Shoppers in Ixtepec* from *Mexico in Color* (1947), EP1270, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 13 – Elma Pratt, *An Old Patamba Jug* from *Mexico in Color* (1947), from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 14 – Pratt working with children in the Der Abu Hennis, Egypt, 4.12.30, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 15 – Pratt working with children in the Der Abu Hennis, Egypt, from Elma Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 16 – Children working in Der Abu Hennis, Egypt, 4.12.32, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 17 – Girls working on wool paintings at the Der Abu Hennis, Egypt, 4.12.39, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 18 – Pratt saying goodbye to children for the day at the Der Abu Hennis studio, Egypt, 4.12.32, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 19 – Pratt with children inside the Der Abu Hennis studio, Egypt, 4.12.26, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 20 – Pratt on CEOSS (Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services) boat with Captain, 1st Mate, and Abdul (Pratt's bodyguard and cook), near Der Abu Hennis, Egypt, 4.12.24h, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 21 – Tatras Mountains area, Poland, group of International School of Art students, 1928, 3.43.8a, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

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Figure 22 – Pientene excursion with ISA students in carriages, Poland, 3.43.9, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 23 – Pientene excursion with ISA students in rafts of hollow logs, Poland (below), 3.43.10, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 24 – Pientene excursion with ISA students in Poland, 3.43.12. The boughs held by gypsy children for rafts to pass under. From Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 25 – Pientene excursion with gypsies playing at a picnic spot, Poland, 3.43.14, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 26 –ISA students in local costumes, Meszerkervesd, Hungary, 3.2.66, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 27 – ISA students relaxing in the courtyard at Mayan Inn, Chichicastenango, Guatemala, 925, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 28 – ISA students en route to Patamba, Mexico, 1.32.17, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 29 – Boleslaw Cybis, *Meeting,* c.1932, oil painting, reproduced from the catalogue *Polish Exhibition, 1933-34*, publication by the International School of Art.

Figure 30 – Jan Zamoyski, *Nurse,* c. 1920-50, oil painting, reproduced from the catalogue *Polish Exhibition, 1933-34*, publication by the International School of Art.

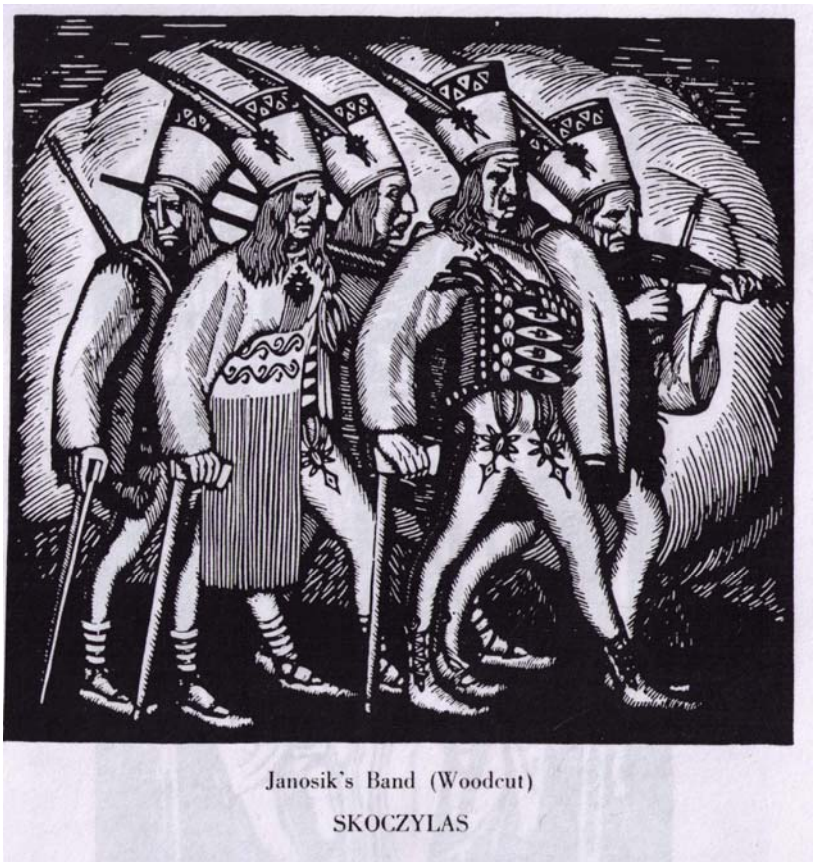

Figure 31 – Wladyslaw Skoczylas, *Janosik's Band*, c.1910-1940, woodcut, reproduced from the catalogue *Polish Exhibition, 1933-34*, publication by the International School of Art.

Figure 32 – Children in one of the houses, Pestalozzi Village, Trogen, Switzerland, 3.73.1, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figure 33 – Child with drawing, Pestalozzi Village, Trogen, Switzerland, 3.73.3, from Pratt's collection of slides archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

Figures 34a (left) and 34b (right) – Elma Pratt showing artwork at Rowan Hall, 1972, photos archived at Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

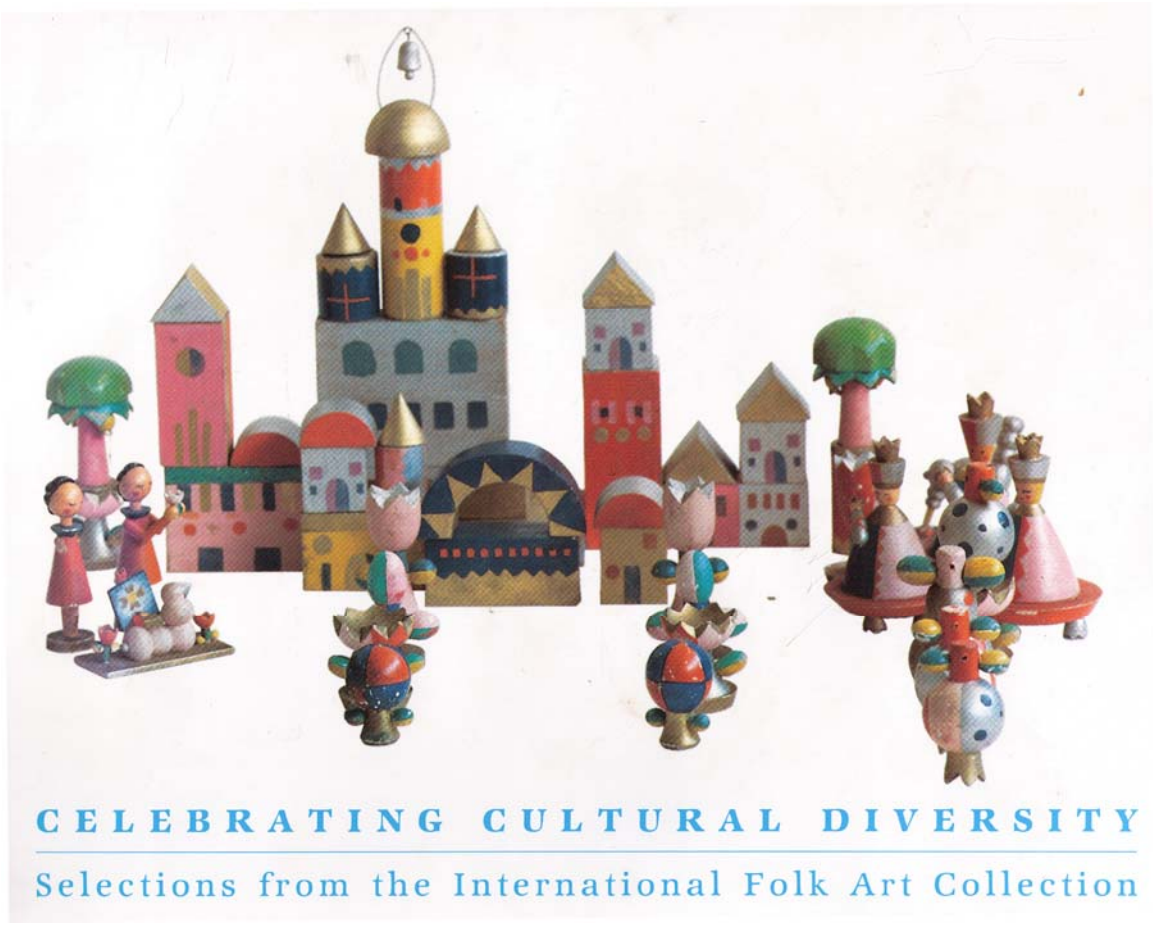

Figure 36 – Reprinted from the cover of the exhibition catalogue *Celebrating Cultural Diversity*, featuring an Austrian painted wooden toy village, from the Elma Pratt International Folk Art Collection, EP1546A-Z, collection of the Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.