

The Nature and Functions of an Art Museum

What an Art Museum should be.

An Art Museum should be regarded, first, as an educational institution, its power to delight and amuse being secondary to its instructive function. It should possess the historical aspect incidentally, and treat the history of art concisely with the best examples of the work of all periods, never exhibiting mere relics ; therefore, the difference between an Art Museum and an Historical Museum must be kept distinct, though a close relation may exist.

Access.

Access should be so free for all that every man, woman and child of the community might be familiar with its contents. This, however, should be made compatible with the necessity of setting apart times for study by specialists and students. Free and pay days for the admission of the public would serve such a purpose.

School of Art and Design.

A school of art and design should be in close connection with such an institution ; the collection of works of fine and applied art serving as a storehouse for reference, and stimulating art activity of every sort. An enumeration of the leading sections will serve to show the vast importance of such a museum.

Contents of Art Museum.

There should be, as a matter of course, antiquities of all sorts, valuable as art productions ; examples of sculpture, painting, architecture and textiles, and of work in metals, wood, and pottery.

These and other heads, when sub-divided, would cover a vast field of work which it is necessary for the student to see and examine to fully appreciate and emulate ; and it is by the examination and contemplation of such works of art that the young are induced to undertake the development of their latent abilities.