Introduction

The task before us is twofold: to discuss the concept of an art colony and to define succinctly the principal terms used herein for the various artistic theories and methods of painting.

I classify an "art colony" as a group of artists who have traveled to a specific place in order to live in close association, share common aesthetic interests and receive institutional support in a sympathetic community that recognizes their cultural and economic importance. This conclusion is a distillation of previous scholarship with modifications based on my own research.[1]

Art colonies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were not established overnight, but appeared as a gradual process. They began when the scenic beauties of a specific area were sketched by an increasing number of visiting painters. Jennie Cannon referred to these places as "venues of inspiration." They included alpine settings and desert plateaus as well as dramatic portions of the coast and pristine forests along meandering rivers. In the immediate proximity to these venues were settlements which varied in size from a fully incorporated municipality to a cluster of small buildings or even a modest guesthouse. Here artists found accommodations. After brief stays they returned to their cities of residence and marketed their paintings. The transition from a "venue of inspiration" to an "art colony" occurs when a significant number of professional artists take up a seasonal or permanent residence in order to share common aesthetic interests. The quantity of artists that constitutes a colony is admittedly arbitrary, but if we base our judgment on the early communities at Taos in New Mexico, Mason's Island in Connecticut and Laguna Beach in California, then at least eight to ten artists should be in continuous residence for a minimum of two to three months each year. These artists develop what Will South aptly calls a "collective presence" that becomes "a defining characteristic of their environment as much as that environment was a defining characteristic of their art."[2] Their motivation to congregate can be an ideological "return to nature" as well as the very practical necessity of cooperating with like-minded souls in the production and sale of their art in the colony. Two defining features of "membership" in an art colony are the artists' willingness to live *and* exhibit locally. The introduction of summer art schools makes the new community more self-conscious of its purpose. The mere presence of a quantity of painters in a given area does not constitute a colony. Before April of 1906 a sizable number of artists lived in Berkeley adjacent to its inspiring groves of oaks, but their aesthetic interests, apart from painting these trees, were directed across the bay to San Francisco. It was only after the great earthquake that Berkeley itself was cultivated as an art colony.

The community as a whole becomes conscious of its art colony when a few very basic institutions are established for the display and sale of works by local artists. These can include home-studios, galleries, clubs, art associations or even a hotel lobby. Their exhibitions attract the art-buying tourists and residents who recognize the importance of the art colony to the regional economy. Artists do not have to dominate their community, but they should possess a widely recognized status even in a large town. What especially characterizes these art colonies is the affection displayed by the community as a whole and the close proximity of the artists' residences. Unlike mid 19th-century Monterey, where the English speakers were a very conspicuous and at times unpopular linguistic minority, the colonies in Berkeley, Carmel and Laguna Beach were fully integrated. The vast expanse of the Monterey Peninsula, which covers over forty-five square miles,[3] had such an extremely diverse collection of settlements by the early 20th century, that it

cannot collectively be called an “art colony,” but rather many “venues of inspiration” with distinct art colonies in the towns of Monterey and Carmel. I do not accept the McGlynn thesis that an art colony existed in Monterey prior to 1901.[4] At various times Pacific Grove was the summer residence or permanent home for a number of painters, including William Adam, Eugen Neuhaus, Sarah Parke, Evelyn McCormick, Mary Brady and Charles Hudson. However, that community never developed a consciousness of its own artists, possibly because of the close proximity of Carmel and Monterey.[5] Art colonies are fragile and ephemeral by nature. For those founded in a sparsely populated wilderness, success leads to development, commercialization and the demise of the inspirational setting on which the artists depend. Colonies in centralized well-populated areas decline with the loss of inexpensive studios and accommodations as well as with the indifference of the population.

Any definition of an art colony must be flexible enough to include the peculiarities of each community. For example, the Art Association in Berkeley had an open policy on exhibitions and a number of the displayed paintings were sent by artists who had never seen the University town. Since they had no commitment to the Berkeley art community, they cannot be included in my definition of colony “members,” but are classed simply as non-resident “exhibitors.” On the other hand, the Carmel art colony regarded itself as physically and spiritually distinct and was only open to limited outside participation. Contemporary sources indicate that all exhibitors in Carmel had to live on the Monterey Peninsula or spend the “season” sketching in that area. First-time contributors to the exhibits at the Carmel Arts and Crafts Club and the Carmel Art Association were required to appear in person with their work to meet the jury or exhibition committee; most repeat exhibitors did so habitually to insure the advantageous hanging of their paintings. Many prominent artists from Monterey, Pacific Grove and Pebble Beach were active in Carmel as teachers, community volunteers and organizers. Since every exhibitor lived in or near Carmel and displayed some degree of solidarity with that art community, no distinction is made in this study between resident and non-resident “exhibitors” – all are considered members of the Carmel art colony.

Ultimately, the success of any art colony rests with the reputation of its individual artists. To distinguish the exceptional artists from the merely respectable and the dedicated amateur is somewhat problematic because of the pressure to focus on figures that are popular *today* in private art galleries. In an effort to eliminate modern biases and remove all presuppositions regarding the “superstars” of the colonies, I have undertaken the immensely difficult task of writing a comprehensive biography based on contemporary sources for every member of both colonies, a total of almost five hundred separate entries. The specific character of the biographies is defined in the Author’s Explanatory Note at the beginning of Appendix 7. From these histories we can draw some startling conclusions. For example, from the mid to late 1920s, a period when many consider that the Carmel art colony had reached its apogee, eight artists, who are recognized today as outstanding figures, can be confirmed as preeminent based on the frequency of exhibitions *outside* the Monterey Peninsula and the degree of critical acclaim during their lifetimes: E. Charlton Fortune, Arthur Hill Gilbert, Armin Hansen, Joseph Mora, Mary DeNeale Morgan, John O’Shea, William Ritschel and William Silva. However, the same contemporary sources indicate that ten other Carmel exhibitors were quite exceptional and given equal if not more attention in the press: Roberta Balfour, Margaret Bruton, Ferdinand Burgdorff, Jennie V. Cannon, Gene Kloss, Edith Maguire, Clayton S. Price, J. Blanding Sloan, William C. Watts and Stanley H. Wood.

Likewise, in the first Berkeley art colony Edwin Deakin, William Keith and Xavier Martinez are today viewed as "the celebrities," but critics and the public between 1906 and 1911 held in the greatest esteem nine other Berkeley artists: Henry J. Breuer, Louise Carpenter, Charles M. Crocker, Carl Dahlgren, Jules Mersfelder, Perham Nahl, Charles P. Neilson, Eda Smitten and Elizabeth Strong. I have not censored any of this material and consequently many of the long-suppressed scandals, such as those involving Armin Hansen, Charles Dickman, Phillips Lewis, Jane Powers, Harry Seawell, Theodore Criley, Mary DeNeale Morgan and Will Frates, are laid bare. Because the biographies are so important to the history of the art colonies, they remain unabridged.

The life of Jennie Cannon is the story of survival and success in the highly competitive subculture of professional artists. What the reader will find in the ensuing pages is an insightful look at how artists marketed their works to a cultivated audience. Buyers often became patrons with repetitive purchases and in turn encouraged members of their extended families as well as friends to support the same painter. Several negative reviews by a peeved newspaper critic were generally far less important for an artist than the loss of one patron. The painters of California were not Virginia Woolf's shy retiring figures, who lived "lives of methodical absorption, adding stroke to stroke,"[6] but showmen who carefully manipulated their image in the press for optimum financial benefit. Occasionally, some were vulgar and even violent. When the commissions charged by public museums and private galleries became too burdensome, they turned increasingly to their own associations, social clubs and "studio teas" to market their work. Artists adapted to the financial constraints of the Great Depression by producing smaller canvases, watercolors and etchings that were affordable to potential buyers.[7] Despite the extremely competitive nature of selecting art for public exhibitions, there was a surprising level of congeniality and mutual support in their communities. The social rituals and customs, which they quietly shared among themselves, are detailed in Cannon's writings.

Because the art discussed in both volumes will be compared to movements and seminal figures in Europe and America, it is appropriate to provide a few very brief explanations. The Barbizon school, several of whose members included Charles-François Daubigny, Jules Dupré and Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, refers to that loose association of primarily landscape painters in mid 19th-century France who followed the Romantic Movement's worship of nature and rendered their bucolic world in sumptuous, darkly shaded colors. Tonalism, an offshoot of Barbizon painting and its East Coast corollary as practiced by George Inness and the American Luminist Movement, was popular in northern California and characterized by the elimination of sharp details within gauzy contours and by the domination of one muted color to which all other hues harmonized.

Impressionism refers primarily to that community of French painters who in the 1860s and 1870s believed that immediate visual impressions must be rendered with little regard for formal academic composition or carefully finished treatment. Upon a normally white canvas that was devoid of elaborate under-painting the Impressionists applied bright *complementary* pigments whose juxtaposed combinations had been tediously catalogued by French chemists to ascertain the most dramatic effects.[8] The intent was to animate objects and even transitory shadows in a sunlight of direct and reflected colors. Because the color black, dark outlines and neutral tones in general were often eliminated, the partially dissolved forms were defined by the arrangement of imprecise broken brushstrokes and the immediate proximity of contrasting pure hues. To capture the ephemeral qualities of reflected light "objectively" paintings had to be made rapidly out of doors

(*en plein air*). A luminescent vibrating atmosphere and a high tonality became the hallmarks of the Impressionists. Under the influence of Japanese prints and Western photography perspectives were occasionally flattened at unusual angles, resulting in an asymmetrical arrangement of forms and an absence of solidity. The Impressionists generally eschewed the ugly and vulgar aspects of society and chose to emphasize subjects with commonplace themes. Instead of the panoramic allegorical landscapes of the mid 19th-century painters, they preferred scenes of unencumbered nature from an intimate viewpoint. Three of the most prominent members of this school, Claude Monet, Pierre Renoir and Camille Pissarro, became Post-Impressionists by the late 19th century.

Édouard Manet, Impressionism's contemporary, is in a class by himself. Although he shared with the Impressionists a love of modern subject matter and on occasion even experimented with bold brushwork and the superficial effects of reflected light *en plein air*, he was unconsciously leading the world into Post-Impressionism. Under the influence of Velazquez, Murillo and Goya he relentlessly experimented with his subject matter. In his many portraits the sitters, often in compromising or vulgar postures, unashamedly gaze out in defiance. Manet added mystery by placing his subjects in spatial relationships with inanimate objects that were intentionally ambiguous. Tightly cropped compositions and the near reduction of forms into two-dimensional shapes added further disquietude to the work of this iconoclast. His stark impersonal realism, an anathema to the classic academic traditions of the day, aroused indignation.

Post-Impressionism is that heterogeneous collection of predominantly French styles and schools that are collectively united by their departure from Impressionism. Many early 20th-century critics believed that the latter was a contrived manipulation of the visual field which required the suppression of imagination, emotion and memory. Others, such as the Neo-Impressionists George Seurat and Paul Signac, evolved from Impressionism into a more scientific aesthetic with color dots placed in a balanced, almost mechanical pattern of "decorative harmony." At another end of the spectrum was Symbolism (Synthetism) with its highly subjective and simplified treatments that interpreted commonplace and philosophical topics as vividly colored allegories and dreams. The amorphous Nabis movement, which included among its ranks Paul Sérusier, Pierre Bonnard and Maurice Denis, expanded on these themes by using mysticism and theosophy to translate the visions of an artist's consciousness into stylized flat shapes and unmodulated bright colors. From this group Henri Matisse and the Fauvists developed the extreme intensity of their pure colors which they applied for emotional and decorative effect. Paul Gauguin influenced many of the Nabis with his Symbolist content and by employing large areas of contrasting colors to evoke specific sensations rather than for any representational function. Vincent Van Gogh abandoned his early experiments with Realism and Impressionism to became the forerunner of Expressionism in which he adapted his bright palette and thick application of oils for the symbolic exaggeration of nature – his expression of man's terrible passions and the turmoil of his own mental breakdown.

Like Manet, Cezanne does not fit into any one movement, but he inspired many of the Post-Impressionists as well as the Cubism of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Cezanne rejected the contemporary emphasis on two-dimensional forms and stressed the crafting of an object's volume from multiple viewpoints with the subtle modulation of colors in parallel brushstrokes.

I define Graphic Arts in the broadest sense to include *prints* from wood, stone, metal, glass, and linoleum as well as *drawings* in pen & ink, silverpoint, pencil, charcoal, crayon, and chalk. Modernism is an intentionally and conveniently vague term that signifies those provocative artistic

trends that undermine the accepted order *at any given time*. Thus in the 1870s the Impressionists are Modernists, but by the 1920s the latter refers to more "radical" groups like the Surrealists. American painters were profoundly influenced by the 19th- and early 20th-century artistic developments in Europe. The phrase "California Impressionism" will not be used in this study simply because the majority of Pacific Coast plein air painters between 1915 and 1940 were stylistically "academic" or Post-Impressionists. Several California artists, such as Guy Rose, William Clapp, Joseph Raphael and Alson Clark, successfully adopted French Impressionism.

The most original minds defy categorization. They find a philosophical basis by exploring their own emotions and not in plagiarizing their forbearers. For Jennie Cannon, Impressionism was a means to an end, not the end itself. For a decade she mastered that aesthetic and played with variations on that theme, but eventually abandoned the movement (Plates 4a-6a). She believed that the mere display of dappled light with its repetitive virtuoso brushwork was an empty affectation. Cannon eschewed "objective" formulae to create forms and employed instead various techniques to capture her state-of-mind, always negotiating that precarious road between spontaneity and method. She intended that her paintings, with their certainty of conception, should elicit an emotional, not an analytical response. Her visual experience was internalized and imaginatively recreated with warmth and unhesitating subjectivity. Unlike the "state of feeling" that William Keith sought to evoke in his work, Jennie was far more assertive and actually wanted to interpret that world as a psychological experience, as if it were a transcendent snapshot of a dream. For Cannon painting was also an act of condensation, the object of which was to discover the truth. Because hundreds of personal and environmental factors reshape that truth every day, her typical oil on canvas, what she euphemistically called a "sketch," was usually completed outdoors in one prolonged sitting. Only touch-ups and enhancements were applied later in the studio. This explains the normally small size of her works. She annoyed some critics, who habitually sought comfort in an artist's uniform style, by displaying at the same exhibition pieces that differed radically in respect to palette, style and texture. A few of her contemporaries, such as the immensely talented and highly underrated Raymond Boynton and Frank Coburn, dared to bring this level of volatility to their work. Jennie kept abreast of the most recent trends in art, especially the work of American Modernists. She admired their conceptions and willingly adopted "radical" elements that suited her personality, but she always remembered that her paintings had to attract buyers. This penchant kept her work refreshingly current in the competitive art market.

Endnotes – Introduction

1 At present the most valuable work on this subject, *Colonies of American Impressionism*, is authored by Deborah Solon and Will South (Solon, pp.18ff).
2 Solon, pp.18ff. In Chapter 14 of Volume 2 the size of the art colonies and the nature of their institutions will be discussed in detail.
3 Clark, p.330.
4 McGlynn, p.3; cf. Shields, pp.1ff.
5 PGR, July 6, 1906, p.4; MDC, July 7, 1908, p.4; Fink, *Monterey*, pp.167ff; Lucy N. McLane, *A Piney Paradise by Monterey Bay: Pacific Grove*, San Francisco, 1952.
6 Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, New York, 1931.
7 CCY, August 5, 1938, p.11.
8 "Complementary" refers to colors that are opposite on the conventional color wheel and consequently in contrast with one another.