



D E S I G N I N A M E R I C A :
THE CRANBROOK VISION

1925

1950

**Exhibition explores
Cranbrook's role
in modern design**



Carl Milles' *Triton Pool* is adjacent to Eliel Saarinen's peristyle at Cranbrook Academy of Art.

That George Gough Booth was involved in architecture and the decorative and applied arts is not surprising. His interests readily can be traced to the influence of family members who made livelihoods in these fields.

But one still must marvel at the intensity of Booth's commitment to the Arts and Crafts movement. After years of actively supporting and promoting the arts in Detroit, the philanthropist determined to transform his family's country estate into a community dedicated to art, education and culture.

One of his first actions—collaborating with Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen—turned out to be most fortunate. With the help of Booth's considerable resources and vision, Saarinen brought together a creative faculty and student body and in 1932 formally established an institution that would soon have a recognizable impact on twentieth-century design.

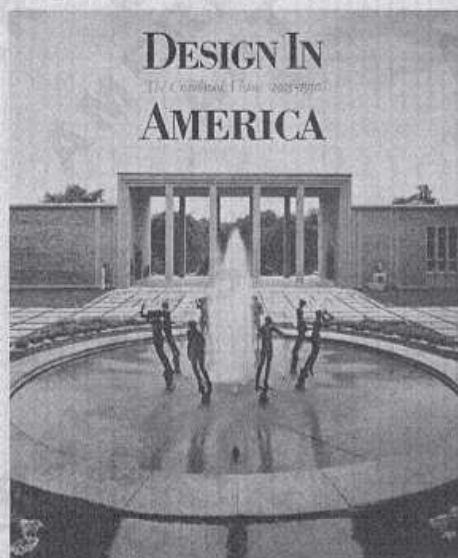
That influence is the focus of a major exhibition organized by the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. *Design in America: The Cranbrook Vision 1925-1950* comprises some 240 objects that track Cranbrook Academy of Art's role in the development of modern design principles. The architectural works, furniture, textiles,

ceramics, sculpture and other pieces in the exhibition exemplify the Academy's philosophy of an interdisciplinary, non-dogmatic approach to problem solving. Rather than foster the development of a "Cranbrook style," the Academy has encouraged an independent approach to finding design solutions.

The works of artists represented in the show—the Saarinens (Eliel, Loja, Eero, Pipsan), Charles Eames, Harry Bertoia, Florence Knoll, Maija Grotell, Carl Milles and some 20 others—are featured in this special section and in a 352-page catalog published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York.

After opening in Detroit on December 14, *Design in America* will travel to the Metropolitan Museum of Art before touring major museums in Europe. (See following page.)

Cranbrook has been described by nationally-known writers, critics and museum directors as "one of the most enchanted and enchanting settings in America," "an encyclopedia of design" and "one of the masterworks of American architecture." Through *Design in America*, the Academy celebrates its past achievements, which act as a constant stimulus and challenge to all those working and studying at Cranbrook today. ■



CATALOG

Design in America: The Cranbrook Vision 1925-1950 is published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York. The catalog has 352 pages with numerous color and black-and-white photographs.

Copies are available by sending a check to Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum Bookshop, P.O. Box 801, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013. Soft cover edition is \$25.95 plus \$3 postage and handling; hard cover is \$45 plus \$5.

Included in this section are excerpts from the catalog.

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

The Detroit Institute of Arts

December 14, 1983 through February 19, 1984

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

April 18, 1984 through June 17, 1984

Suomen Rakennustaiteen Museo/ Suomen Taideteollisuusyhdistys, Helsinki

August 1, 1984 through September 19, 1984

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

October 24, 1984 through January 21, 1985

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

April 1, 1985 through June 30, 1985

PREFACE

As Cranbrook Academy of Art embarks upon its second 50 years of activity, the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Metropolitan Museum of Art are pleased to present *Design in America: The Cranbrook Vision 1925-1950*. This exhibition is the first major presentation to document the emergence of modern American design in the second quarter of the twentieth century and could not have been realized without the continuous cooperation of the Academy. Cranbrook has long been one of the most important institutions in arts education in the world, and the larger Cranbrook community—which includes Brookside School, Cranbrook School, Kingswood School, Cranbrook Institute of Science and Cranbrook Academy of Art—is one of the most significant architectural complexes of its type.

The beginnings of the Academy marked a unique moment in the development of American architecture and decorative arts. Cranbrook was one of the few institutions in this country that offered instruction in design during the 1920s and '30s, and its influence on architecture, interior design, art and crafts after World War II was crucial and extensive. Although many of the important artists who taught or studied at the Academy have received international recognition, the significance of their shared experience at Cranbrook has not, nor has the influence that Cranbrook exerted on their sensibilities ever been extensively explored. In addition to its significance in the area of arts education, Cranbrook's physical facility is one of the modern masterpieces of institutional architecture; the largest work of Eliel Saarinen, one of the finest architects of his age; and a building complex too little known, given its importance in its creator's oeuvre.

The exhibition includes over 200 objects and photo-panels and surveys the history of the Cranbrook facility itself as well as the achievements of the teachers and students who were present at the Academy by the time of Eliel Saarinen's death in 1950. The work of these artists and designers is traced through the early 1960s to give a sense of their mature accomplishments and of the aspects of their Cranbrook training that they continued to carry with them. This survey makes it clear that Cranbrook Academy of Art has had a unique position in the history of modern architecture, design and art. The reaffirmation of hand fabrication, clarity of design and revival styles that characterized the Arts and Crafts approach was continued there into the early modern period. The ancestors of George G. Booth, the patron who initiated and sponsored the creation of Cranbrook, were English craftsmen, and Booth's own interests in this area eventually led to his conception of a community that would make it possible for students to explore a wide range of the visual arts (as well as the sciences) and their interrelationship in one educational complex.

By happy chance, Eliel Saarinen was in Michigan when Booth made his decision to initiate this ambitious project. Saarinen's extensive experience in

his native Finland in the Arts and Crafts tradition made him an ideal choice as the designer to realize Booth's vision, and in cooperation they developed Cranbrook's unique architectural facilities and educational program. The history of Cranbrook illustrates the transition from Arts and Crafts concerns to industrial design, exemplifying an approach that respected tradition while exploring avant-garde concepts of form, technique and mass production...

Design in America: The Cranbrook Vision 1925-1950 would not have been possible without the extraordinary generosity of the IBM Corporation. We also wish to convey our thanks to the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities for grants received. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to all the lenders who have so generously allowed objects to be shown throughout the American and European tours.

Frederick J. Cummings, Director
The Detroit Institute of Arts

Philippe de Montebello, Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

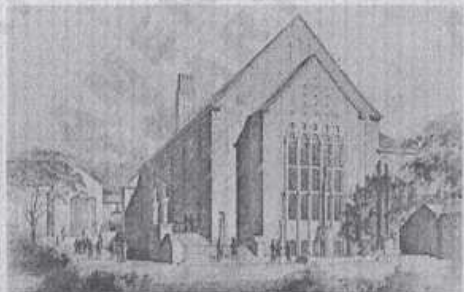
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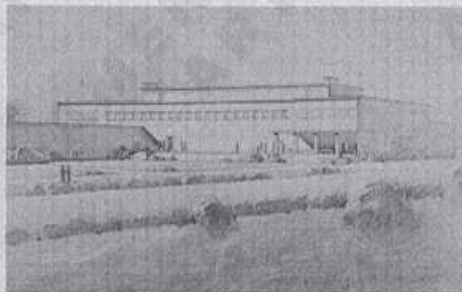
Saarin design, bridging tradition and modernism, pervades Cranbrook campus



Kingswood School



Cranbrook School



Cranbrook Institute of Science

Soon after Kingswood School Cranbrook opened in 1931, *Architectural Forum* published an article featuring the new building. "It is unnecessary to characterize the designer of Kingswood School, for the abilities of Eliel Saarinen need no introduction to any architect either in America or abroad," read the review, "and Kingswood School as the latest example of his work needs little comment as an exemplification of his designing genius. It is significant, however, as one of the most pointed lessons in cooperative designing which we have been fortunate enough to present for some time."

The school, with its fluted columns, copper roof and detailed interiors, is considered one of the finest examples of Saarinen design. The architecture is the work of Eliel, while wife Loja created the extensive rugs, tapestries and other textiles. Son Eero, who would become a celebrated American architect in his own right, was responsible for the furniture; daughter Pipsan was involved in interior design.

During the 25 years he collaborated with Bloomfield Hills philanthropist George Booth (1864-1949), Saarinen (1873-1950) designed four

Cranbrook institutions: Kingswood, Cranbrook School, Cranbrook Institute of Science and Cranbrook Academy of Art, where he also served as first president. *Design in America* explores these landmarks through models, drawings, photographs and furnishings. Evident is the architect's gift for thoughtful problem solving, rather than dramatic innovation. The buildings illustrate the talents of a man trained and experienced in traditional architecture, but whose resourceful responses defy narrow labels. In all his work, Saarinen demonstrates his belief in the interrelationship of the arts and crafts.

The fortuitous events that brought Saarinen to Cranbrook began in the early 1920s. Already an acclaimed architect in his native Finland, he came to the United States as a result of the 1922 Chicago Tribune competition. His entry placed second, and the design for a soaring tower with carefully proportioned setbacks influenced an entire generation of skyscrapers.

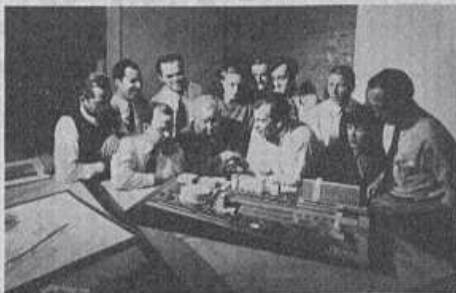
The Chicago competition was the immediate impetus for their visit to America, but the Saarinens had other reasons for considering a longer stay.

Economic and political conditions in Finland were such that commissions had become rare; the United States offered a much brighter future. Though they would visit their native land frequently, America would become the family's new home.

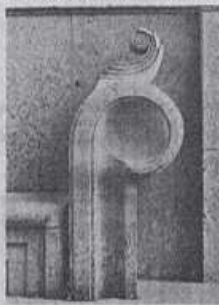
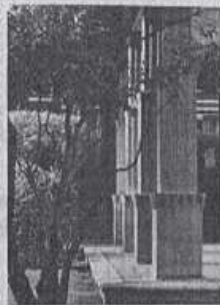
In the autumn of 1923, Saarinen was invited to be a guest professor at The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Among his students there were J. Robert Swanson and Henry Booth, one of George's sons. Through these young men, Saarinen was introduced to the elder Booth; thus began a collaboration that would last the rest of their lives.

The community founded by George and Ellen Booth and designed by Eliel Saarinen is renowned not only as an architectural masterpiece, but also as highly influential through the prominence of its faculty and graduates. Wrote Martin Filler in *House & Garden*: "...Cranbrook's precious setting, which is nothing less than the most comprehensive display of total design in America, is a lesson in how some of the most creative talents of our time were spurred on to greater creativity by the beauty that taught so well."

From its beginnings, Cranbrook Academy of Art



Eliel Saarinen, center, in dark jacket, is surrounded by students and associates, including Eero and Lillian Saarinen, c. 1948. Below are details of Kingswood School.



was intended to be a special place, different from other schools. This would be "a working place for creative art," Saarinen said, where artists-in-residence and students would work, learn and grow side by side. Those who came together here include a number of artists, designers, architects and craftsmen who would have major influences on twentieth-century design. The effect of people and place was electric. "My experience at Cranbrook was totally fulfilling," said city planner Edmund Bacon. "Indeed, all my perceptions were twice as sharp as they have ever been, before or since."

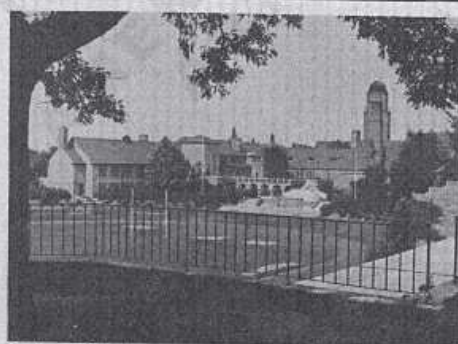
As recognition of his work at Cranbrook grew, Saarinen was invited to design various buildings across the country. Among them were the Kleinhans Music Hall, Buffalo, New York; Tabernacle Church of Christ, Columbus, Indiana; Crow Island School, Winnetka, Illinois; A. C. Wermuth residence, Fort Wayne, Indiana; and General Motors Technical Center, Warren, Michigan. Eero was a partner in many of his father's projects.

When Saarinen died in 1950, *Architectural Forum* editor Douglas Haskell wrote: "Eliel Saarinen rounded out a fruitful and orderly career at the age of 76 as an architect and planner of the twentieth century. His life was a measured, loyal and filial kind of life, leavened with wit and courtesy; his work is a profoundly considered and wholesome work, done with unstinting care and studied originality."

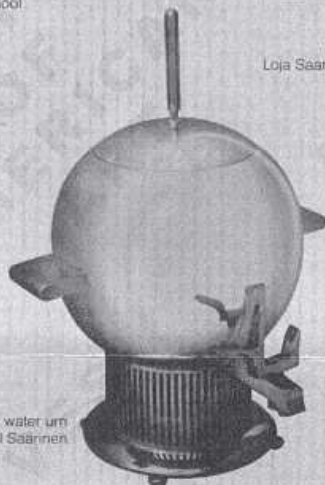
Nowhere is Saarinen's genius more evident than in the largest body of his life's work—Cranbrook. ■



Kingswood School

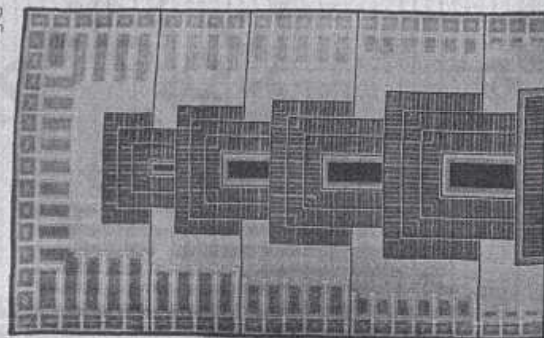


Cranbrook School



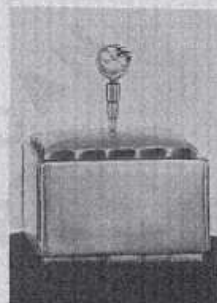
Sivetti water urn
Eliel Saarinen

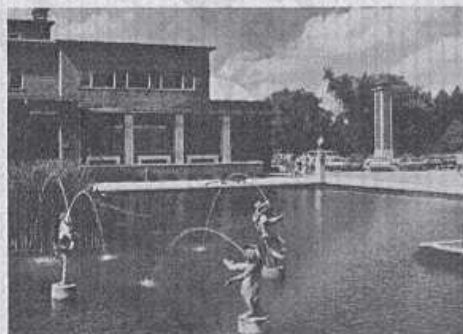
Rug
Loja Saarinen



The concern at Cranbrook with textiles, carpets and rugs...was not accidental. It was based on the belief that art should permeate the total environment.

Christa C. Mayer Thurman

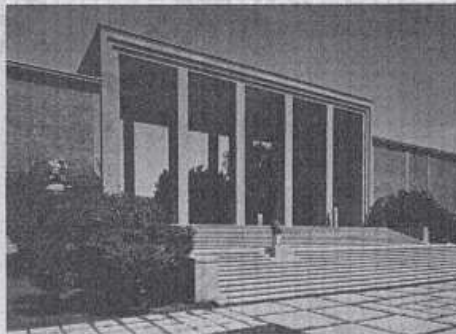




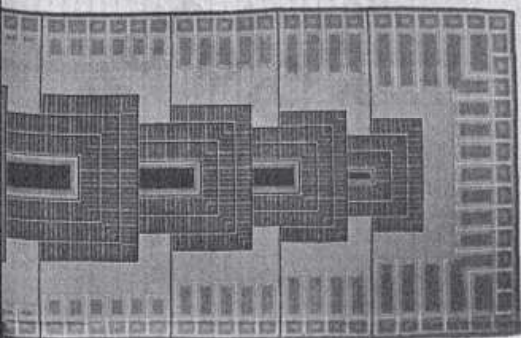
Cranbrook Institute of Science



Cranbrook Academy of Art



Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum



Costume design
Pipsan Saarinen Swanson



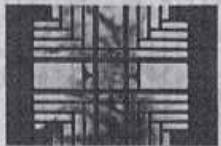
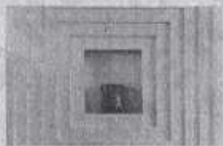
Chair for Kingswood School
Eero Saarinen

Eliel Saarinen's skill as a draftsman is proven in a number of exquisite drawings he prepared...

J. David Farmer

The founding of Cranbrook was a twentieth-century variation on an old American theme: creation of a dedicated community, a special world constructed in the service of some higher ideal.

Neil Harris



Cranbrook artists, designers, architects influence look of twentieth-century America

The history of Cranbrook Academy of Art encompasses some of the most distinguished and recognizable names associated with modern design. Intentionally small in size, the Academy has had a disproportionately high number of such faculty and students. Eliel Saarinen's reputation helped attract such notables as sculptor Carl Milles, ceramist Maija Grotell and weaver Marianne Strengell, while many students—particularly Charles Eames, Florence Knoll, Harry Bertola and Eero Saarinen—would go on to achieve national acclaim.

Design in America features the works of these and other Cranbrook artists and craftsmen who, according to Wolf Von Eckardt, have had "a decisive influence on the look of twentieth-century America."

Among them are architects and city planners Ralph Rapson, Harry Weese, Edmund Bacon and Benjamin Baldwin; designers Don Knorr and David Rowland; silversmiths Arthur Nevill Kirk and Richard Thomas; and fiber artists Jack Lenor Larsen, Maja Andersson Wirde, Robert Sailors and Ed Rossbach.

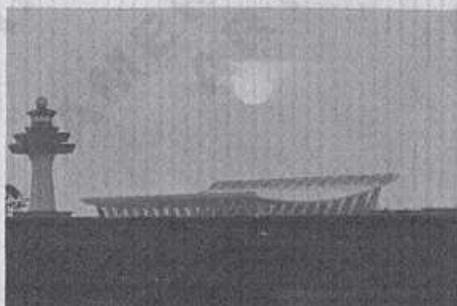
Also: sculptors Marshall Fredericks and Tony Rosenthal; ceramists Toshiko Takaezu, William Watson, Harvey Littleton, Waylande Gregory, Charles Dunsenbury and Leza McVey; and painters Zoltan Sepeshy and Wallace Mitchell.

Their diverse works range from Eero Saarinen's St. Louis Arch to Rapson's armchairs, from Larsen's "Remoulade" fabric to Eames' storage units. Whether large or small, each work exemplifies Eliel Saarinen's emphasis on individual solutions and on integrating materials for a total design concept.

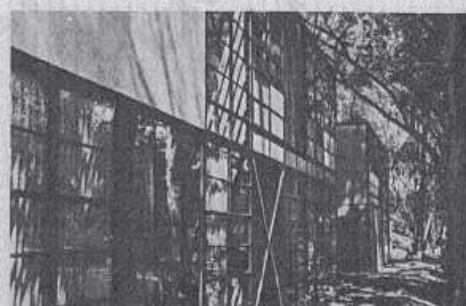
And those represented in the exhibition are but a sampling of the many talented artists who passed through Cranbrook during its first few decades. Countless others have produced work that enriches our lives in obvious and subtle ways every day.

"(Founder George Booth) would undoubtedly be amazed...at the number of nationally and internationally important designers and craftspeople who emerged from his visionary school, influencing not only the fields of crafts and the way they are wedded to art in other media, but architecture and manufacture as well," wrote Renwick Gallery director Lloyd Herman in *Museum Magazine*.

"Through the craftsmen who have themselves made objects that bring beauty and harmony into houses, factories, schools and museums, and other Cranbrook graduates who shaped America's buildings and the manufactured products within them, Booth's idea (to found Cranbrook) has immeasurably improved the human environment of our nation and the world." ■



Dulles International Airport, Washington D.C.
Eero Saarinen



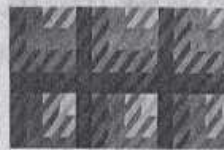
Eames study house and studio, Santa Monica, California
Charles and Ray Eames



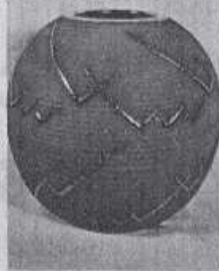
Harry Bertola, Cranbrook, 1941

...The design philosophy that was developed at Cranbrook encouraged diverse expression linked not by appearance or even clearly-defined principles of design, but rather by a consistent attitude toward place and materials.

David G. De Long



Larsen



Grotell



Milles



Bertola



Grotell



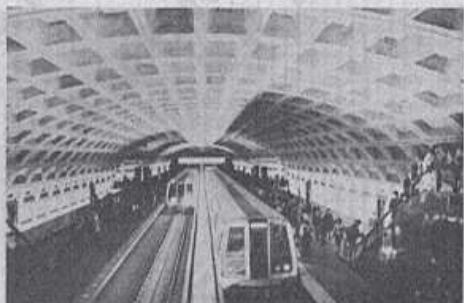
Bertola



Knoll International Showroom, San Francisco, California
Florence Knoll



Tyrone Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Ralph Rapson



Washington Metro System, Washington D.C.
Harry Weese & Associates



George G. Booth, Charles Eames, Cranbrook, 1939



Maja Grotell, Cranbrook, 1939

The story of interior and furniture design at Cranbrook is one of the most important chapters in the history of twentieth-century American design.

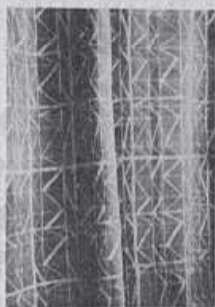
R. Craig Miller

Cranbrook's growing reputation was directly attributable to the fact that its faculty was readily accessible to the student. Very few other art institutions in America could boast of the existence of similarly open channels of communication between instructor and students.

Davira S. Taragin



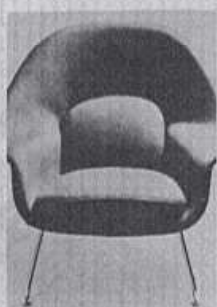
Eames



Stongell



Berfoia



Eero Saarinen



Miles



Eames

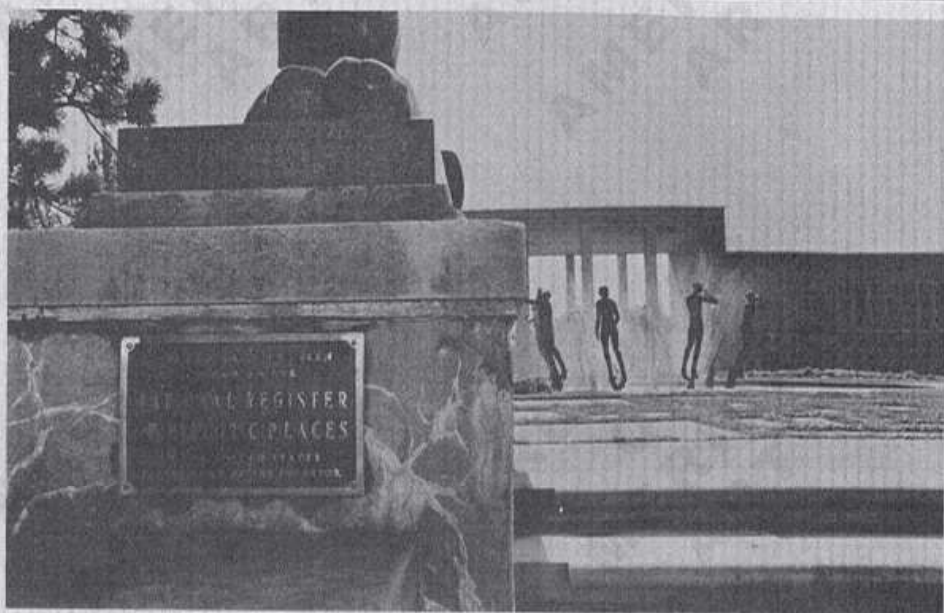
Past serves as inspiration for Academy today

Cranbrook is opportunity. So said one artist-in-residence at a recent meeting held to discuss the present mission and philosophy of the Academy. The nine faculty members, who each head a department, agreed that the concepts and thoughts expressed by Eliel Saarinen are relevant today. In the original brochure of 1932, the first president described the Academy as "a working place for creative art." Although times and styles have changed, commitment to the individual, the creative process and the pursuit of excellence remains constant.

From throughout the world, 150 graduates come to work towards masters' degrees in nine major disciplines: architecture, ceramics, design, fiber, metalsmithing, painting, photography, printmaking and sculpture. Those fortunate enough to study here will find opportunity—the opportunity to study, learn and grow. Through its architecture, art and grounds, Cranbrook offers an environment exceptionally conducive to learning. Collaborative and interdisciplinary activities are encouraged; students work with faculty members, visiting artists and other students. Within the studios, the emphasis is on individual creativity, with each student having a personal program and working space. At Cranbrook, the student becomes artist.

In the words of *TIME* magazine critic Wolf Von Eckardt, "Cranbrook is working, intensely working, on a future that lives up to its past."

Roy Slade
President
Cranbrook Academy of Art ■



Cranbrook Academy of Art, which continues to produce distinguished artists today, is a validation of Saarinen's educational approach.

Joan Marter



The influences of Cranbrook are still with us, and still being renewed.

Robert Judson Clark

