Olinka Hrdy

Her Genius Wins Applause in the Art World Through Modern Masterpieces

By Jeanne d’Ucel

OSTAND once wrote a play, “The Far-Away Princess,” which is less well known than Cyrano or l’Aiglon, although in some respects more beautiful than either. It is the story of a troubadour who all his life loved a princess whom he had never seen and at last died without knowing that the lady was not equal to his dream. Does reality ever equal the dream? Is not starvation the best diet for the imagination, at least in the case of some out-of-the-ordinary people?

I remember distinctly the first picture Olinka Hrdy drew of Turner Falls. She had never seen Turner Falls; in fact, she had never seen any water falls, she had only heard descriptions of them. Free from all the limitations that reality imposes her fancy led her to depict something far more beautiful than Turner Falls can ever be, something unreal, fairy like. So perhaps Miss Hrdy should be glad for the monotonous years of her childhood spent in a rather bleak and uninteresting part of the country where her parents had come from far away Bohemia. They had settled near Prague, Oklahoma, in a colony of their own people. Yet they must have known homesickness; and although the new land held promising opportunities settling was an arduous task. There were difficult years. Olinka knew the stern struggle for life; she worked hard not only in the house but in the fields as well, and all the time she dreamt. The racial heritage of a tremendously gifted people was hers, she hungered for beauty; therefore she created for herself a world of fancy where her longings took form.
and color. All the things she had never seen and wished to see she invented: mountains of dizzy heights, rivers more limpid than any on earth, palaces fit for hours, awesome waves, giants and goblins, and what would you like.

When Olinka passes you on the street and gives you a cold stare, when she comes to see you and, after sitting silent for maybe hours, rises to say goodbye adding that she had a splendid time, then you may know that she told you the truth; she had a good time for she was pursuing some elusive dream fancy that you may see later on canvas in brilliant colors.

Still Miss Hrdy can face reality and she knows when to do so; in fact she shows at times a shrewdness one would hardly expect from such an unworldly person. She was living in Hester Hall during part of her university years and she was supposed to have a roommate. But there are roommates and roommates; even the best of them is a nuisance when one wants to dream undisturbed. So whenever prospects were around Olinka saw to it that the appearance of her room scared them away. She succeeded. Artists are expected to be disorderly, it seems natural, but it is also natural for ordinary mortals to prefer leaving them to their disorder.

DO not know how early Miss Hrdy began to paint. Perhaps before she ever saw a brush she tried in some other way to express her innate feeling for color. By the time she was in high school she had found her medium however and, using the attic of her parents’ house as a studio, she painted during the whole of a summer vacation. Through that summer her poor mother had to go up and drag her down to meals, for like most artists Olinka was so absorbed in her work that she lost all notion of time and became insensitive to hunger.

In the fall of 1923 Miss Hrdy came to Norman and enrolled in the university. She was rather impatient at first, eager to work without preparation, but she soon came to realize the need of a solid foundation and she threw herself into the task of mastering her technique.

During her first two years in Norman Olinka took little part in social activities, partly because of her introspective, dreaming nature. Besides she was making her way through school so that her time was limited. There were also courses which one has to take whether one likes them or not such as French which was her greatest bugbear, and she preferred to spend her rare moments of leisure with her brush and easel. In her junior year she
Ideals in the Educational Equation

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reflection of the teacher's inspiration with him.

"Unless the colleges preserve the spiritual attitude of life, it will be lost entirely. In the struggle for bread there is small chance of idealism. Even in college there are counterfeit coins in circulation and there are many ideals that simulate the spiritual but in reality are material and earthly. Hence, the selection between the higher and the lower things which has been cultivated in college life must be carried with you.

"My final message to every student is to seek not grades but scholarship; not honors but honor; not fine clothes but a fine spirit; not loyalty to fraternities or sororities but human kindness toward all; not social distinction but social service; not victory over other institutions but victory over a lower self in one's own institution; not a good time but a good life; not pleasure but God. This last statement Carlyle has summed up in his wonderful sentences, 'Love not pleasure, love God. This is the everlasting yes, wherein all contradiction is solved, wherein whose walks and works, it is well with him.'"

Wings for Students

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and comprehend physics and mathematics.

Miss Violet Shoemaker, instructor in mathematics, and Clyde Fleming, 26 arts-sc, instructor in physics, are two of the school's chief aviation enthusiasts and have adapted their courses to the study of aviation problems.

All possible material is furnished by the government and an instructor, Lieutenant G. V. Holleman, of Post Field, Fort Sill, lectures twice a week to the students.

The most recent literature, diagrams and maps on aviation problems are provided for the school by the Advisory Committee on Aeronautics, the department of commerce and the air service corps, all of Washington and the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce of New York City.

Application has been made to the government for a training plane to be used for ground work. No license will be granted to fly this plane but research work in motors and instruments will be made with it.

Two sponsors of the course who are most enthusiastic, says Boyd, are J. C. Barnett, principal of the high school, and M. L. Cotton, superintendent. Hutton Bellah, 23 arts-sc, editor of the Altus Times-Democrat, is particularly interested in aviation and has added his influence to that of the twelve students and their instructors to convert Altus from a fear stricken community into one of the chief exponents of aviation training for high school students in the United States.

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entered a class in mural painting which was being organized by Miss Edith Mahier on her return from Italy where she had made a special study of frescoes. At once Olinka showed that her talent lay there; she seemed to have an innate feeling for flat colors and line rhythms, and she took a genuine, sometimes puckish delight in her compositions.

Her first complete mural was "The Maker of Dreams" for one of the dramatic art studios. This showed so much promise that Professor Jacobson helped Olinka make arrangements to cover her next year's living expenses by painting. This was naturally a very congenial work; it gave her much time for her art and afforded her a chance to try her wings. The result is a set of twenty panels in the dining hall of the girls' dormitories of the university.

These panels are greatly admired and draw many interested visitors although at first they were a source of unhappiness to the house mother. They depict the products of the earth: one panel shows in a dream sea marine life, fishes ready for the net, in another impish monkeys play with coconuts, still another shows a farmer plowing and sowing; a luscious watermelon is being plucked by a grinning black, harvesters work in the sun, domestic animals and game romp about, blushing lobsters peck at the toes of bathing beauties; in an orchard a bewitching lady exhibits oranges. All this pageant of food converges toward the central panels where medieval figures—the king and queen Olinka calls them—sit in state while attendants bring on heaped trays all the bountiful makings of a feast.

Her last year at the university Olinka paid for her board and room by decorating the Copper Kettle, a student restaurant. This is an open rafter hall reminiscent of some quaint Gothic inn in England.

Be in keeping with the architecture Olinka used figures dressed in medieval costumes in an allegorical composition which is yet modern in technique and pokes fun at modern college life. There poor Professor Sooner is overpowered and burnt at the stake by fervant students who did not pass in French; there are contests and tournaments with fans lustily singing some version of Boomer-Sooner; there are queens and jelly beans, dancers and jazz. A modern girl is seen bopping her hair and having her skirt shortened by a friend while the ladies of fashion of the ages look on disapprovingly. Near the pantry doors fat cooks prepare gargantuan feasts, waiters in freshman caps perform acrobatic stunts with trays, hopeful beggars turn upon all comers pleading and somewhat impudent faces.

For Olinka was particularly happy that year; her work was light; she felt the exhilaration of a new technique; she was at home in Norman having by that time acquired many good friends. She had even become the pet of the campus poets. They used to gather around her easel and they almost persuaded her to give up painting for versifying. Her murals at the Copper Kettle are happy and rollicking. They attracted trade in a noticeable manner, and although she received for them only her keep they are now worth more than the whole building.

After graduating Miss Hrdy spent the summer painting two scenes for the entrance of Central high school in Oklahoma City, designing also some modernistic stage drops and furniture.

The fall saw her in Tulsa where she undertook the mural decorations for the interesting and altogether modernistic Patti Adams music studio built by the gifted young architect, Bruce Goff. This was indeed an opportunity for Olinka as the building, departing boldly from the hackneyed and conventional, offered her the best chances to use the abstract compositions which she loves. And she had the joy of working with an understanding and sympathetic architect in such a way that their individual works harmonize.

In the recital hall stands the central mural decoration representing "The Art of Music" in an abstract way and using colors to form a symphonic whole. Eight other panels depicting chamber music, vocal music, folk music, etc. and the jazz music of the future will complete the decorations of this beautiful hall. There is also a strange and intriguing screen painted by Olinka for the piano studio.

Besides this mural work Olinka has painted for her own pleasure many

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the provost and Happy Hans, the tiger
and the Brahman, also delineating the
tragic love story of Koong Shhe and
Chang.

The book is a defense of puppetry
intended for use among school chil-
dren, whose peculiar form of artistic
expression it is. It is dedicated by
Ethel Gray to those who "have eaten
every breakfast from the midst of
the lotus pond with never a thought of
Koong Shhe and the others."—C. (l.

Afield in Literature

The Dial magazine announced in
its June issue that it would suspend
publication with the July, 1929, is-
-... The Dial was estab-
lished by Francis F. Browne in 1908 in
Chicago, as a book review magazine.

A biographical and critical study of
the late Donn Byrne by Thurston
Macauley is announced by the Cen-
tury Co. for publication in late Oc-
tober. Mr. Macauley sails for Ire-
land in July, and will be the guest of
Mrs. Dorothea Donn-Byrne at Cool-
main castle in County Cork. The
manuscript of this book will be com-
pleted in the same study from which"Field of Honor" was written.

An unpublished collection of lec-
tures by Immanuel Kant, delivered
at Königsberg university between
1776 and 1780, will be published this
fall by the Century Co. under the
title, "Lectures on Ethics." They will
throw an interesting light on this
period of Kant's mental life, concern-
ing which little information has been
available.

B. A. Botkin, editor of Folk-Say,
published in June by the University of
Oklahoma Press for the Oklahoma
Folk-Lore Society (Price $1.50), has
announced a group of distinguished
associates on the editorial board. These
include J. Frank Dobie, editor of the
Texas Folk-Lore Society publications,
Edwin Ford Piper, professor of En-
lish in the state university of Iowa,
Louise Pound, professor of English in
the University of Nebraska, Percy
Mackaye, poet and dramatist. These
will be advisory editors.

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Olinka Hrdy

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water colors searching for values, ex-
perimenting and giving form to her
dreams of colors and lines. These wa-
ter colors are very interesting and have
been praised by art lovers and con-
noisseurs.

To decorate the Tulsa club Miss
Hrdy wanted to use motives based on
the romance of oil. This was a pleasing
subject for Olinka who is keenly awake
to the fantastic beauty of modern ma-
achinery and the accelerated rhythm of
modern life. She gathered many photo-
-... She is now learning
the technique of stained glass window dec-
-... It is a matter for rejoicing
that Olinka Hrdy has been able to find
appreciation for her work; too often
gifted artists especially when their
tendencies are modern find difficulty
in marketing their talents, for many
people are afraid of anything novel or
usual.

The vital progressiveness of Tulsa
where such things are possible is a
good sign for the artistic future of
Oklahoma. It means that we may hope
to see the day when, instead of wast-
ing money on dubious antiques and
works whose only value is that of a
name, people will enable the living
artist to produce by getting a fair
remuneration for his work. When that
day dawns then art will come into its
own and flourish as it has not flour-
ished since the Renaissance.

Edgar Bruce Wilson, '28 arts-sc.,
has completed a year of study at Bos-
ton university and will study at Har-
vard next year for a master's degree
in social sciences. Wilson will spend
the summer at Camp Waldron in the
White mountains of New Hampshire
where he will be assistant director of
activities.

John F. Burton, '18 arts-sc., is a phy-
-sician and surgeon at the Parmley-Og-
den clinic, Electra, Texas.

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