

## **Forty-Five Years Later**

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I don't quite cover the sixty years of SECAC history—only forty-five years of it. My first SECAC meeting was at the University of Mississippi in 1956. Present was Dr. Clemens Sommer from the University of North Carolina, whom I chauffeured around Oxford in my old gear-shift car. He had come to Chapel Hill from the University of Freiburg, one of several people bought in by local Quakers. I took his graduate level Northern Renaissance art course when I was still an undergraduate, and we became good friends. So he, and my car, stands out in my memory. Thanks to Fred Moffett I received a copy of the program, which brought other people, talks, and panels to mind.

The twenty or so people present attended panel sessions with only a few talks—a very different program from the ones that we have come to enjoy at SECAC. I don't believe I went to the first day's sessions. I was probably left to guard Dr. David M. Robinson's collection of ancient art. Henry Hope, whom I would later enjoy at Indiana University, served as moderator for a session on the significance of subject in contemporary art. Herman Cherry, who was a visiting artist at Ole Miss, provided some remarks at the luncheon. In the afternoon new films on Miró and on color lithography were shown, followed by an address on Early-American Lithographs by John Carey and a panel on the Renaissance in Printmaking chaired by George Rickey of Tulane. I did attend the dinner at Sardis Lake Lodge where my professor, Davy Robinson, talked a bit about his collection and about Olynthus. Henry Hope gave the major address on contemporary sculpture.

The business meeting was held on Saturday morning. The minutes of the meeting record that George Cress reported on a survey of studio and lecture courses indicating the student load per faculty. If this survey were found, it would constitute interesting historical material. The Saturday-morning session I remember clearly. George Mylonas spoke on Minoan and Mycenaean art, especially his work at Mycenae. Indeed, he stayed on at Ole Miss for a week, and I had the privilege of hearing him in several class sessions on the same topic. The panel that morning was on critical methods applied to unfamiliar art objects. Dr. Sommer, with the help of someone else, had found some off-beat objects, including a painting of a horse which proved to be nineteenth-century American piece. Gulnar Bosch from

Wesleyan College in Georgia, Alfred Moir of Tulane, Bill Stars from Duke, and Dorothy Bridham of Dillard University in New Orleans tried to deal with it.

My second meeting was in 1964 in Chapel Hill at the Carolina Inn. This meeting, run by Joe Sloane and John Schnorrenberg, had a number of interesting sessions. Upon entering one on architectural history, the chair, Louise Hall of Duke, handed me a very large, raucous alarm clock which went off the second a speaker exceeded the fifteen-minute time allocation. One person, only about halfway through his paper when it sounded, was not too pleased. My memory of this conference was jogged when Barbara Schnorrenberg talked of the party she catered in the Ackland Art Museum at UNC out of its tiny kitchen. Chapel Hill punch—bourbon and ginger ale—was served.

I have attended SECAC on a regular basis since 1973 in Nashville, missing only one meeting until my 1998 retirement from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Throughout the '70s, '80s, and '90s Tina Updike and I would fly or drive to the beautiful Southeastern cities and enjoy the hospitality of the various educational institutions. Afterwards, in the car or all too frequently sitting for hours in the Atlanta or Charlotte airports waiting for connections, we would try to review in order where we had been and the highlights of the various conferences.

My paper initially was to be selected memories from the conferences, but there are too many of them and one's memory seems to focus more on the trivial than on that which is important. Moreover, in the twenty-fifth *SECAC Review* anniversary issue, published in 1992, a listing is given which continues that begun by Ralph Hudson and Beverly Heisner in 1977. However, I would make some observations. Reviewing the list I am struck by the range and importance of the speakers: Clement Greenberg, Leon Golub, William Wegman, John Szarkoski, Faith Ringgold, Alice Aycock, and Arnold Glimcher. The exhibits of art which have been opened up for SECAC are impressive: the Lewis Collection in Virginia, Jack Warner's in Alabama, the Virlane Collection in New Orleans. One of my favorite memories is Otto Piene's great *Brussel Rose* slowly inflating at Ole Miss. Certainly SECAC has provided some truly memorable social events anywhere it has met: Chapel Hill punch at the Ackland, Peggy McDowell's gathering at the Wax Works in New Orleans, and of course the party with Elvis at Graceland.

For the 1977 Virginia Tech conference in Blacksburg led by Dean Carter, James Madison University hosted Dorothy Gillespie and Joyce Kozloff, who then went on to Blacksburg for the conference. Dorothy, a native of Roanoke, Virginia, became very interested in SECAC, attending many

meetings and inviting us to her studio in New York for a party during the 1982 College Art Association conference.

JMU in Harrisonburg, Virginia, hosted the 1982 meeting, which was not successful in terms of attendance, but during this conference the SECAC Exhibition Grant got underway resulting in Mary Ann Fariello's exhibit at Chattanooga in 1983. In addition, Irish artists and art historians were invited to attend. They clearly enjoyed and profited from it. This is an area where I have always thought SECAC could do more. CAA is so impossibly large. A smaller group like SECAC can extend friendship and individual interest effectively. The arts councils of Ireland, Scotland, perhaps Great Britain and possibly other countries might pay the way of their people.

Beginning at Chattanooga, Tina Updike, Randy Mack, John Schnorrenberg and I worked on a new constitution for SECAC. The ideas were largely John's. He presented them in a low-keyed, organized manner. SECAC's good fortune in having John's effective, committed leadership over the years has resulted in the strong and vital nature of this organization. The new constitution for SECAC was adopted at Richmond in 1984, calling for a president with a three-year term separate from the conference organizer, who formerly had been simultaneously president for a one-year term. I accepted the initial three-year presidency, which covered the conferences in New Orleans arranged by the late Carolyn Kolb, Tuscaloosa with Virginia Rembert, and Knoxville with Donald Kurka and the late Dale Cleaver. A member of the SECAC Board of Directors must be from the state of incorporation, Virginia, in order to file the required papers, and so I was second vice-president beginning in 1978 until my presidency began, and then again second vice-president until relieved of this arduous duty a few years ago by Pam Simpson. I was on the board forever.

At the time of the Harrisonburg conference and during my presidency I tried to bring into active relationship with SECAC various affiliates: Southeastern Women's Caucus for Art (SEWCA, an affiliate of the Coalition of Women in the Arts Organizations [CWAO]), Visual Resources Curators (VRC), Southern Graphics Council (SCG), Foundations in Art: Theory and Education (FATE), and for a time the Southern Association of Sculptors (SAS). As well we explored a relationship with Mid-America College Art Association (MACAA), something which John Schnorrenberg managed to effectively begin in 1992. Under the leadership of Bob Craig, the Southeastern Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians (SESAH) first entered into association with SECAC at Tuscaloosa in 1986 and continues to meet conjointly with SECAC periodically.

The question last summer, when I was asked to do this presentation, was what— from forty-five years of activity—should I deal with in this paper? Simple, I thought. I shall get out my SECAC files and note a few letters and programs. But where are those files? I finally found two folders—one on SEWCA and one on the Harrisonburg conference. I better turn them over to Fred Moffett now for the SECAC archives at the University of Tennessee before they get lost again. If the files from the time of my presidency ever turn up, I'll turn them over as well. Take a lesson from me and secure your records.

Another lesson comes from the late Gulnar Bosch. In 1991 in Memphis, a memorable conference thanks to Jim Ramsey and Elvis, a group of us treated Gulnar to a birthday drink at the Peabody—the hotel where the ducks walk from the elevator to a fountain. On this particular day the ducks were watched with fascination by the artistic elite of the Southeast. Afterward, walking with her back to the conference hotel, Gulnar indicated how much she had profited from SECAC and expressed the need to support it in every way, including financially. “Put the organization in your will,” she said. This she did very generously, and we should all emulate her.

SECAC does well what it is intended to do—provide a forum for the arts community of the Southeast through the annual meeting and through the *SECAC Review*. My final message is to treasure this organization and the people who are a part of it. Make everyone welcome; enjoy the personal and professional friendships. Be interested in the research and art you find among the members. I hope the participants in SECAC during the twenty-first century will find the same encouragement, hospitality, and intellectual challenge which have enriched the lives of its members during the twentieth century.