

Subject: (Smithsonian) aims, cost indication etc.

of 1920 (From Annual Report: The Smithsonian Institution, operations and expenditures (published in 1922))

Racial Groups and Figures in the Natural History Building of the U.S. National Museum.

"...Professor Holmes brought to this work exceptional artistic training, a keen appreciation of the requirements of exactitude, and the faculty of enlisting the interest of others in the task...are examples as serving well the purposes of science and at the same time fulfilling the requirements of art.

..The designing of these groups and directing their preparation and installation was a difficulty and exacting task but one in which Professor Holmes had the hearty cooperation of his associates.

Able sculptors were enlisted in the work of modeling the figures, among whom were U.S. J. Dunbar, Henry J. Elliott, and Frank Lemon. Theodore Mills modeled some of the single-costumed figures; and certain individual works of sculpture are by John J. Boyle, M.K. Bush, Brown, Achille Collin, M. Herbert and others. Skilled preparators were employed in the very important work of casting, setting up, and painting the figures, foremost among whom are H.W. Hendley and W.H. Egberts.

In designing a lay-figure group the necessary studies of the peoples to be represented are made. Individuals are selected to illustrate the salient features of the people, their arts and industries, their costumes, and their physical characteristics; and such features of their environment as can be utilized. The end sought is to assemble the figures as in a picture, which will tell the story forcibly and at once.

The group when designed, together with drawings, photographs, and other necessary data are turned over to the sculptor and the living model is posed for him.

The cast is made in plaster of Paris...appropriately painted, costumes are added, and wigs are provided. The figures are then assembled under the eye of the artist and with necessary changes composed into the group. When this is done the ground is put in, labels written and the group is ready for exhibition.

"A group of entire plaster figures in a case 12' by 8' by 9' complete, costs about \$2,500. If the figures are to be clothed the work is expedited and additional cost. .by employing frame work of wood, which is filled out with tow, burlap etc. and then exposed, hands, head, feet etc. modeled, painted and added to the figure...

The dwelling groups are constructed from literary and from photographic data, and are not difficult to make. Their excellence depends upon the skill of the constructor and the amount of data secured. They cost, exclusive of case much less (about \$150 for small ones) (simple, one building ones, without figures)

...They are also made, so far as possible, historically correct and represent the races in the aboriginal state, or in the period before changes due to contact with civilization had modified them..a great majority of the groups depict native life as it can not be observed at present and are thus valuable records

The exhibit enables one to form an impression of the characteristics of the races, their village and family life and their arts and industries with a minimum of effort...

...the labels strive to convey the necessary facts in clear and simple language...

CARE and CLEANING of PLASTERS and BRONZES.

Plasters may be cleaned by covering them with a layer of starch paste. When almost dry, peel off carefully.

Or.....

Cast may be submerged entirely under water and left to soak. While still submerged a sponge may be rubbed over the surface lightly. The dirt will loosen and float on top of the water. Every particle of this ~~mud~~ must be lifted off on top of a blotter, and when no sign of dust is seen, the cast may be removed and left to dry in a dust proof place. A thin coat of shellac may be applied later, which makes a stronger and easier surface to keep clean.

Mending.

Mix plaster very weak (less plaster, more water). Let it stand a few minutes without stirring. Use directly ~~without~~ on water soaked surfaces of the broken plaster model, and brace these so no movement whatever takes place while setting.

To avoid the slight difference in color, when retouching is necessary, mix equal parts of plaster and water and use this directly without mixing further. Keep a bowl of water handy and a soft brush for smoothing final surface.

Cleaning Bronzes.

Rub bronzes thoroughly once a week with a flannel cloth. Do not rub too hard or too long on salient features such as noses, cheekbones, etc., but evenly on the entire surface, avoiding friction or pressure..

If a bronze has been neglected for a long time and is covered with accumulated dust, it is well to

Malvina Hoffman

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