Edward W. Root's Art Library

Within a year of his death, approximately seven hundred art-related books and periodicals were transferred from Edward Root's home in Clinton, N.Y. to the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute's Art Reference Library. These volumes were part of a much larger collection Edward and Grace Root assembled during their lives. In 1919, the Institute's founding charter called for the establishment of an "auxiliary library" to complement its museum, art school, and music programs, but around 1956 when Root died the collection numbered fewer than two thousand volumes. Root's titles increased the size of the Institute's library by approximately one third. This gift was mentioned in the Institute's 1956-1957 year book and the Museum's 1961 exhibition catalog, the Edward Wales Root Bequest. While not the largest donation the Institute's library has ever received, Root's collection is certainly one of the most valuable because it reflects the arthistorical interests of an individual who played a key role in shaping the scope and character of the Museum's permanent collection, as well as reinforcing the library's role as a scholarly resource for research on the permanent collection.

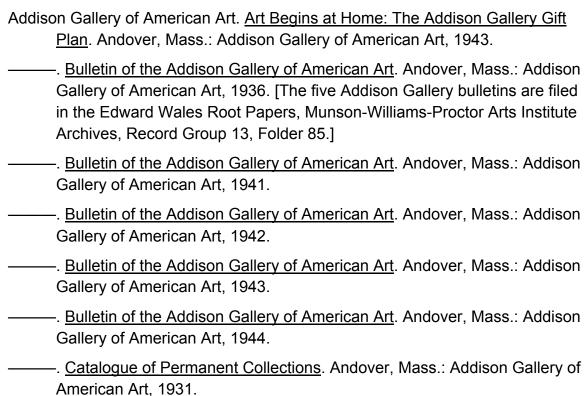
At the time of the bequest, no record was prepared of the titles Root gave the Institute. However, the following subject categories that were listed on a checklist of the thirty-eight packing cartons that were shipped from Clinton to the Institute provide an overview of Root's wide-ranging interests: European painting and architecture; American art and architecture; European and American sculpture; prints and printmaking; "minor" arts; photography and film; "exotic" art; mixed media; art history, theory and criticism; and periodicals. Some titles were returned to Mrs. Root because copies were already in the Institute's library. These duplicates may subsequently have become part of the collection of books she donated to Hamilton College's Daniel Burke Library in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Because the notes that Root made in the margins of some of his books and periodicals provide potentially valuable insights about his taste and aesthetic points of view, an ambitious effort was begun in 2005 to identity each of the Root volumes now in the Institute's library collection. Using the database of the

library's current thirty-thousand-volume collection, a list of approximately three thousand titles was prepared of all the volumes published through 1957. Library staff, interns, and student assistants checked each of these volumes for Root's bookplate. The provenance of some books was determined by the presence of Root's signature or initials. In other cases a small label that had been placed in the volume when it was cataloged in 1957 identified it as being part of Root's collection. If no bookplate, inscription or label was found, each page of a prospective volume was examined for handwritten notations that matched samples of Root's handwriting. The following list includes all the books, exhibition catalogs, serials, brochures, and pamphlets in the library that have been identified as of January 2008 as having been owned by Root.

Kathryn L. Corcoran, Library Services Director Kathleen Salsbury, Library Assistant Ellen B. Damsky, Editor

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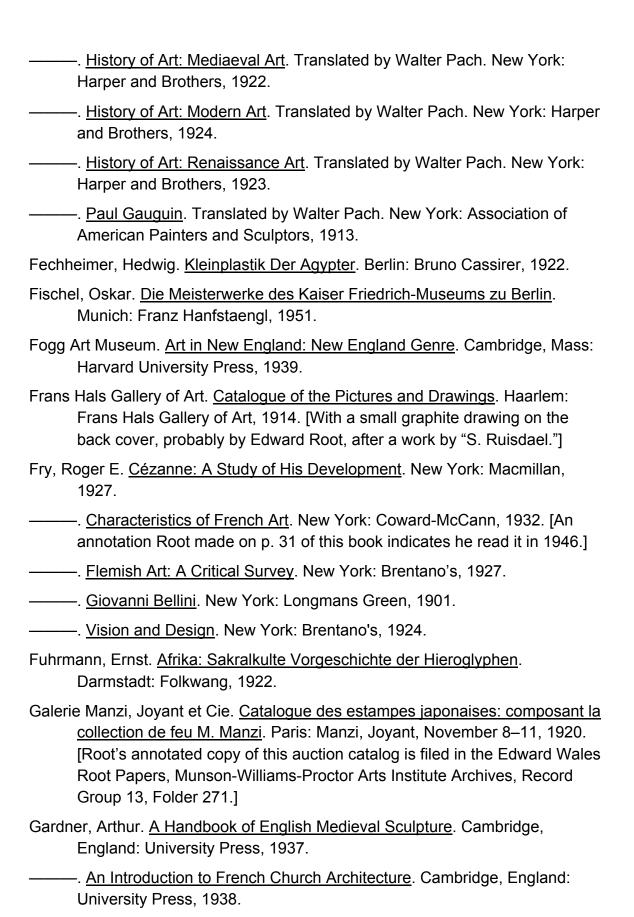
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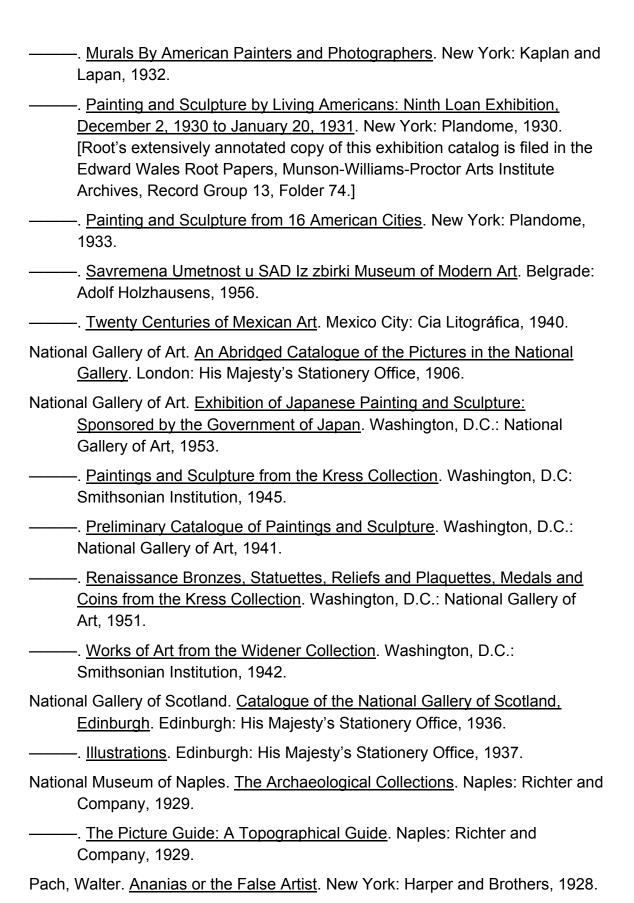
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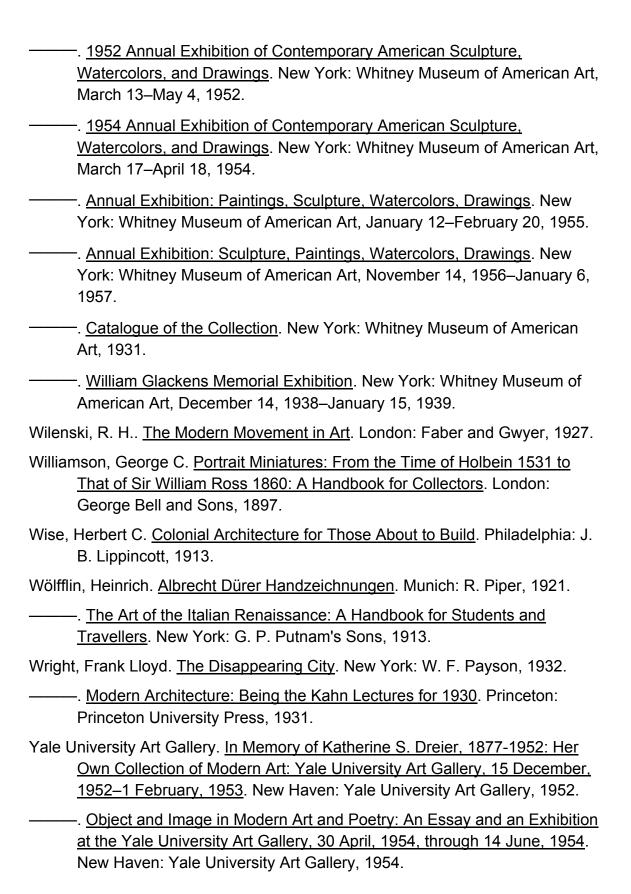
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