

SOCIETY CONTINUES TO *Grow Young Artists*

by **Jim Cronin**
Courant News Writer

The Copley Society of Art, the country's oldest nonprofit arts association, has continued its original mission of supporting young painters through student art shows.

Located at 158 Newbury Street, the arts organization was created in 1879 by members of the first graduating class of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts who sought to retain the ties they had formed and to help each other in their struggles to become successful artists.

Their goal was to supplement the academic training of the Museum School, to assist their members in their artistic careers, to cultivate a spirit of fraternity among artists, and to promote the interests of art in the City of Boston.

The early days of the Boston Art Students' Association (BASA), the original name of the Copley Society, included lectures on prominent artists, art history seminars, and demonstrations on techniques in painting and drawing.

In 1891, BASA membership no longer required an affiliation with the Museum

School, and was opened to patrons as well as active artists. By 1892, the Association claimed 416 members.

In 1897, 100 masterpieces were shown, including works by artists like Corot, Reynolds and Van Dyck. In 1898, the Modern Painters Exhibition brought works by the French Impressionists to Boston. Then, in 1899, the "John Singer Sargent Exhibition" opened to news articles calling him the greatest living portrait painter in America.

In 1901, BASA decided that the organization was more than student-oriented, and changed its name to the Copley Society of Boston in honor of John Singleton Copley, one of America's earliest noted painters.

Under its new name, the Copley Society devoted itself to a broader support of the arts through educational programs and special artistic events, as well as exhibitions of members' works. By 1913, the society was preparing to show "The International Exhibition of Modern Art" in its galleries, which introduced modernism to Boston by presenting works by European artists like Kandinsky, Picasso and Van Gogh.

Today, the Copley Society claims more than 500 artist members participating in as many as 20 exhibitions each year. Artist membership is based on competitive review, juried exhibitions and a professional credentialing system, offering artists the opportunity for further distinction.

The society is holding its 20th annual student exhibition through Saturday, February 28, with work from students attending institutions like the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, the New England School of Photography and the Art Institute of Boston.

"We promote artists at all stages of their careers," said Susan Redgate, executive director of the Copley Society. "We have people who are mid-life who ... decide to devote themselves to their art."



A piece in the Student Show



Remembering Father by Tracy Cronin in the Student Show



Visitors enjoying the Holiday Small Works exhibit



Copley Society of Art Executive Director Susan Redgate



Artwork in the Student Show