

## “Art Should Always Ennoble” Emma Griesbach and Art Appreciation in the Women's Page of *The Farmers' Sun*, 1917-1922

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### Résumé de l'article

De 1917 à 1922, Emma Griesbach fut l'éditrice des pages féminines du *Farmers' Sun*, qui devint l'organe officiel de l'United Farmers of Ontario (UFO), un parti politique qui remporta les élections provinciales en 1919. Avec l'aide de Griesbach, une militante dans cette organisation, l'UFO rallia alors le soutien de l'United Farm Women of Ontario (UFWO) et de ses adhérentes. Dans les pages féminines du *Farmers' Sun*, Griesbach défendit les principes de l'UFO et de l'UFWO afin de pousser son lectorat féminin à s'engager, et cela dans le but d'améliorer la qualité de leur vie. Emma Griesbach encouragea notamment ses lectrices à se développer culturellement, un moyen selon elle d'améliorer leurs conditions de vie. Elle écrivit ainsi de nombreux articles pour les initier au monde de l'art, ce qui attira l'attention sur la question des rapports des femmes avec l'art en milieu rural.

# "Art Should Always Ennoble"

## Emma Griesbach and Art Appreciation in the Women's Page of *The Farmers' Sun*, 1917-1922

by Monda Halpern and Sonia Halpern

Between 1917 and 1922, Collingwood, Ontario farm woman and teacher Emma Griesbach edited the women's page of *The Farmers' Sun*.<sup>1</sup> The newspaper became the official voice of the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO), first a populist farm organization, then a provincial political party which swept to victory in 1919. Focused on issues of specific concern to male farmers, the UFO recruited rural female support through the United Farm Women of Ontario (UFWO), a women's auxiliary group in which Griesbach was a leading activist. Through her women's page in *The Farmers' Sun*, Griesbach espoused the tenets of the UFO to her faithful UFWO readers, and urged them to raise the quality of their lives by becoming politically active and aware. The intellectu-



ally sophisticated Griesbach urged farm women to better themselves through their own cultural and creative development. To facilitate this process, she wrote numerous columns in the *Sun* about a variety of artists and exhibitions, seeking to introduce isolated and overworked farm women to the urban and seemingly highbrow world of art. She particularly furthered the cause of Canadian art, expressing appreciation for its distinct style and themes. Griesbach proved popular among UFWO readers, and although she was not chiefly an art critic, her columns exposed farm women to lofty and educational discussions about culture in Canada.

Despite Griesbach's unique efforts, she is virtually unknown among historians and art historians alike who tend to focus on art criticism within

<sup>1</sup> *The Farmers' Sun* had formerly been named *The Weekly Sun*, which was founded by Goldwin Smith. The name changed in April 1919 when The Farmers' Publishing Company, a branch of The United Farmers' movement, bought the paper. See Melville H. Staples, *The Challenge of Agriculture: The Story of the United Farmers of Ontario* (Toronto: G.N. Morang, 1921), 60.

## *Abstract*

*Between 1917 and 1922, Emma Griesbach edited the women's page of The Farmers' Sun. The newspaper became the official organ of the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO), which swept to provincial victory in 1919. The UFO recruited rural female support through the United Farm Women of Ontario (UFWO) in which Griesbach was a leading activist. Through her women's page in The Farmers' Sun, Griesbach espoused the tenets of the UFO and UFWO to her female readers in an effort to make them more politically aware, and thus elevate the quality of their lives. Notably, she encouraged them to better their lot through their own cultural development. She wrote numerous columns seeking to expose them to the "highbrow" world of art. In doing so, Emma Griesbach shifts our attention to women's connection with art in the neglected context of rural life.*

**Résumé:** *De 1917 à 1922, Emma Griesbach fut l'éditrice des pages féminines du Farmers' Sun, qui devint l'organe officiel de l'United Farmers of Ontario (UFO), un parti politique qui remporta les élections provinciales en 1919. Avec l'aide de Griesbach, une militante dans cette organisation, l'UFO rallia alors le soutien de l'United Farm Women of Ontario (UFWO) et de ses adhérentes. Dans les pages féminines du Farmers' Sun, Griesbach défendit les principes de l'UFO et de l'UFWO afin de pousser son lectorat féminin à s'engager, et cela dans le but d'améliorer la qualité de leur vie. Emma Griesbach encouragea notamment ses lectrices à se développer culturellement, un moyen selon elle d'améliorer leurs conditions de vie. Elle écrivit ainsi de nombreux articles pour les initier au monde de l'art, ce qui attira l'attention sur la question des rapports des femmes avec l'art en milieu rural.*

the patriarchal and urban contexts in which it evolved. Historically, educated, middle-class men in artistic urban centres had been the leaders of influential art academies, art galleries and exhibitions, and artistic groups, and had been the consistent voices of the major art journals and reviews; they had hitherto set the standards for "good" and "bad" art. By extension, these men dictated the nature of art spectatorship, catering to a largely educated, middle-class, and urban male demographic like themselves. These

male viewers could appreciate, afford, and utilize art objects in their personal and business lives, opportunities that, collectively, were not available to rural folk generally, and to farm women specifically. Emma Griesbach's columns shift our attention to women as both art critics and spectators in the neglected context of populist rural life. Indeed, it is a rare primary source that links the lives of farm women to fine art.<sup>2</sup>

The UFWO, the group for which Griesbach was a leading advocate and pro-

<sup>2</sup> The subject of fine art, for example, seldom appears in the local meeting minutes of the Women's Institute (WI), rural Ontario's most popular women's organization. Typically, WI women addressed intellectual topics at meetings through their presentations on current events and Canadian and local history, and through their study of Home Economics, a subject promoted by the WI. Art was addressed occasionally in programs pertaining to Home Economics, a branch of which was aesthetics, but even then discussions about aesthetics most often related to general issues of home beautification. See Monda Halpern, *And*

# THE FARMERS' SUN

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE UNITED FARMERS OF ONTARIO  
PUBLISHED IN THE INTEREST OF THE FARMER, AND HIS NEIGHBOR

THE FARMERS' SUN, JANUARY 31, 1920. 3c PER COPY

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## GOVERNMENT OPENS ITS GUNS ON GROCERY "C"

**MERCY WILL GOVERNMENT ASKS**

...for investigation of Canadian...  
...will conduct case...  
...Government

**GOVERNMENT ASKS**

...Promote Investigation...  
...Will go Beyond the Two...  
...Associations to...  
...Evidence

...but also other persons and cor...  
...positions which the Attorney-...  
...General's agent might name...  
...When the necessary names...  
...are provided, formal charges...  
...will be formulated by the...  
...Board. The investigation will...  
...probably come on about Feb...  
...ruary 16 at Hamilton.

...Strong charges were made in...  
...the affidavit presented for the...  
...to Mr. Rookock, but it is on...  
...the verities there is evidence...  
...sufficient to put certain interests...  
...in a bad light before the public...  
...and send before the Board of Com...  
...missioners, and hear out the affi...  
...davit to the last clause.

...The charge of the Attorney-...  
...General may be divided in two...  
...parts. The first is directed at...  
...the manufacturers of certain...  
...lines of goods—not specified—...  
...handled by the wholesale pro...  
...cessors, and the second the whole...  
...sellers themselves. It is a...  
...straight statement of claim...  
...the offence in most formal leg...  
...al terms.

...The affidavit was couched in...  
...the language of the

**HON. J. E. CARON, OF AGRICULTURE STRONGLY**

**Hot Retort From Hon. J. E. Caron, Minister of Agriculture**

...Agricultural Experts Un...  
...Unfair to Farmers...  
...men—A Regula

When Albo Fortin, Member of the National Catholic Union, said that the workers were in the hands of profiteers and that the farmers were included in that category, and we putting the necessities of life of off their reach by means of a vicious reply from Hon. J. Caron, Minister of Agriculture of Quebec.

It was in the Agricultural Committee of the Legislature and at the out of a meeting of the Union in some time ago at Three Rivers, Que., where Albo Fortin had reported a resolution to the effect of the Government should prohibit exportation, wholly or in part, of certain products in the present on the ground that the shortage supplies caused the working class in suffer, and the cost of living increase.

Hon. Mr. Caron pointed out as reported in The Montreal Star, that not a single farmer had been lost to the Three Rivers' convent where Albo Fortin had admitted that they could not get any amelioration from the other classes of the Government should arbitrate under the farmers not to export of their produce. When the farmer hold their convention no one thought to try and dictate to workmen in the cities as to 4 hours of labor or what they should, and he wanted it understood the farmer worked longer hours, less pay and under less agree conditions all the year round. I did the labor men in the cities, I never had to leave their farms.

**WHY THE ELECTION ACCOUNTS HAVE BEEN SLOWLY PAID**

...and Chief Enumerators are, in themselves, very large, due to the enormous expense of enumeration and printing to secure all cases the subscribers

vincial secretary, grew out of the UFO, which had formed in 1914.<sup>3</sup> Founded by farm activist William Good, J.J. Morrison, J.Z. Fraser, and E.C. Drury in Toronto, the UFO was a populist provincial farm organization that sought to create a class consciousness among farmers. It was through this solidarity that the UFO farmers felt they could fight negative forces such as rural depopulation, urban capitalism, political corruption, and the

denigration of farmers by big business.<sup>4</sup> The success of the UFO came quickly. By February 1917, it claimed 8,000 members, and by 1920, after the election of E.C. Drury as Ontario's first (and only) United Farmer premier, it boasted 60,000 members.<sup>5</sup> This growth was due in part to the UFWO, which formed in 1918, and enjoyed a peak membership of 7,000 in 1921.<sup>6</sup> Unlike other women's auxiliaries that asserted their autonomy from men's

*on that Farm He had a Wife: Ontario Farm Women and Feminism, 1900-1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 161, fn. 6, and 75, 54.

<sup>3</sup> The following pages offering background information on the United Farmers of Ontario, on the United Farm Women of Ontario, and on Emma Griesbach borrow heavily from Halpern's *And on that Farm*. See Chapter 5 — "Think something else than kitchen": The Failure of the UFWO and Equity Feminism in the Inter-War Years," specifically pp. 88-101.

<sup>4</sup> Halpern, *And on that Farm*, 88-89.

<sup>5</sup> Staples, *Challenge of Agriculture*, 51, 64, 66.

<sup>6</sup> Secretaries Report, 1 December 1922, University of Guelph Archival Collections, Leonard Har-

associations, the UFWO, specifically its leadership, sought integration with the United Farm men, emphasizing the equality between farm women and men as essential to a united farming class.<sup>7</sup>

In 1919, the UFO bought *The Weekly Sun* newspaper, renamed it *The Farmers' Sun*, and declared it "the Official Organ of the United Farmers of Ontario."<sup>8</sup> The paper was to report on and respond to the interests and concerns of this farming class, and serve as political propaganda for the UFO.<sup>9</sup> First a weekly and then a twice-weekly, the paper claimed 12,000 subscribers in 1919; only two years later, this figure reached 40,000, making it one of the most popular newspapers in Canada.<sup>10</sup>

It was through the popular paper's women's page that the opinionated Emma Griesbach became the voice of the UFWO. As the editor of the page, Griesbach used the pseudonym "Diana" when she signed her editorials, possibly likening herself to the mythological huntress in her attempts to recruit women for the UFWO. "Diana" was first introduced in *The Weekly Sun* on 7 November 1917,

when the women's page was known as the "Home Page" or the "Home Department." Like other women's pages in newspapers, it primarily focused on household matters.<sup>11</sup> By mid February of 1918, however, the section had been renamed the "Sun Sisters' Page," "a page for women, Edited by 'Sister Diana' to which all women readers are invited to contribute."<sup>12</sup> In welcoming women to make submissions to the page, and calling them sisters, Griesbach created a democratic platform in keeping with the populist values of the UFO.<sup>13</sup>

While the women's page continued to offer "Recipes," "Cooking Hints," and "Household Suggestions," and added features such as "Fashion Hints" and "Training the child," its emphasis was no longer on domestic concerns, but on issues of greater political, economic, and intellectual significance.<sup>14</sup> The male editor of *The Weekly Sun* boasted that it would prove distinctive from all other "women's pages" because Sister Diana "is showing herself a THINKER," as opposed to most women, he implied, who were irrational,

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man/United Cooperatives of Ontario Collection, The United Farm Women of Ontario [hereafter Harman Collection], Minutes UFWO.

<sup>7</sup> Halpern, *And on that Farm*, 93-95.

<sup>8</sup> *The Farmers' Sun*, 2 April 1919.

<sup>9</sup> Staples, *Challenge of Agriculture*, 60, 112.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 114. The paper became a twice-weekly in January 1920.

<sup>11</sup> Sister, "A Page for Women," 6; *The Weekly Sun*, 20 February 1918, 6.

<sup>12</sup> *The Weekly Sun*, 20 February 1918, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Halpern, *And on that Farm*, 93.

<sup>14</sup> "A Page for Women," *The Weekly Sun*, 16 October 1918, 6. This new emphasis on encouraging rural women to contemplate loftier concerns was part of a larger trend at this time for both government and agricultural organizations to educate farm men and women about significant agricultural matters, especially those that would entice farm folk to stay on the land. See, for example, Linda M. Ambrose, "Better and Happier Men and Women: The Agricultural Instruction Act, 1913-1924," *Historical Studies in Education*, 16:2 (Fall 2004), 1-19.

illogical, or parochial. He foresaw the page as “a great Women’s Forum where opinions will be expressed and views will be exchanged by the Sisters.”<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, by mid October of 1918, the Sun Sisters’ page regularly featured two sections. First, it included “Diana’s” weighty editorials and opinionated letters to “Diana” from female readers. Griesbach herself later estimated that about 100 women or “Sun Sisters” had at some point corresponded with “Diana” at least once.<sup>16</sup> Second, it incorporated a column entitled “The Corner” which offered a summary of UFWO activities and events compiled by none other than Diana’s alter ego, Emma Griesbach.

It was in the editorials where “Diana” endeavoured to politicize the UFO’s women allies. In addition to spouting the UFO party line, she repeatedly outlined for readers the goals of the UFWO, which included educating farm women in political affairs, elevating the status of farm women’s labour, and mobilizing farm women for political action.<sup>17</sup> Only with the full participation of both farm men and women, she declared, could solidarity among the farming class be achieved.<sup>18</sup>

To this end, a crucial aim of Griesbach’s editorials was to expand farm women’s horizons. She wanted to counteract the urban view that farm women

were necessarily backward, unsophisticated, and ignorant (an opinion which she herself held to some degree) by imbuing them with knowledge of the world beyond domesticity and their own backyard. She reasoned that knowledgeable, well-rounded, cultured women would become more intellectually and emotionally invested in the larger world, which would lead them to be more effective activists on behalf of the farm movement: “We have allowed ourselves to become household drudges, and that to raise ourselves in the scale of being we must get out of our kitchens often enough and stay out of them long enough to think something else than kitchen.”<sup>19</sup> In her often scholarly, impassioned expositions, the cerebral and self-assured Griesbach moralized about the import of various political, economic, and historical trends, and offered highbrow references to literature, music, and particularly the visual arts.<sup>20</sup> Griesbach believed that this new knowledge was key to creating savvy, sophisticated women who would ultimately make wise voters—that is, women who voted for the UFO.

In advocating that rural women become educated about art, Griesbach was working from the premise that they knew little about it. She was right. By the second decade of the twentieth century, fine art in Canada had primarily been

<sup>15</sup> “A Page for Women,” *The Weekly Sun*, 9 January 1918, 1.

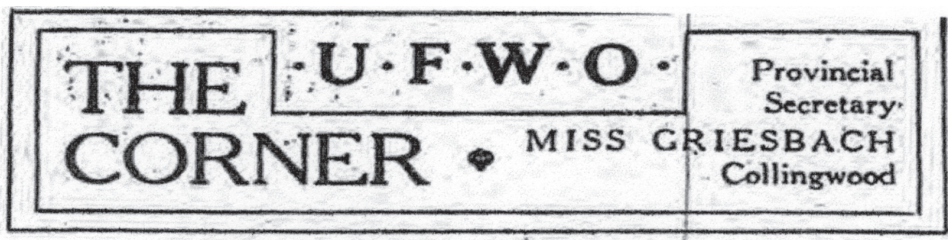
<sup>16</sup> Letter from Sister Lou to Diana [Diana’s response], *The Weekly Sun*, 29 January 1919, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Halpern, *And on that Farm*, 92.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-94.

<sup>19</sup> Emma Griesbach, “The Farm Woman of To-day,” *O.A.C. Review*, 32 (1919), 59.

<sup>20</sup> Halpern, *And on that Farm*, 92. Almost 15% of Diana’s total number of columns (35/280) is devoted to subjects pertaining to the visual arts.



produced and exhibited in urban centres such as Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, and had little impact on rural areas. Of course, rural women were well familiar with “craft,” such as quilting, embroidery, sewing, and the like. These activities had otherwise been known in the patriarchal art world as “low” art precisely because they had long been practiced in women’s domestic sphere, generally, and deemed inherently female, specifically, thereby precluding women’s need for any formal artistic education. Conversely, fine art, that is painting and sculpture, which had long been defined as the skilled realm of men, came to be known as “high” art for which an artistic education was relevant. Clearly, Griesbach’s goal for rural women was not to better acquaint them with “craft,” but to be their educational resource for the intellectual subject of high art of which they had virtually no knowledge in their somewhat circumscribed rural lives.

Moreover, farm women could not afford to be distracted by such “luxuries” as making, studying, buying, or viewing art.

Although farm women enjoyed a gratifying social life—joining women’s church and farm groups (such as the Women’s Institute [WI] and UFWO), attending sewing and quilting bees, and visiting with family and friends—they were overwhelmingly consumed with the survival of their farms, and expended money, time, and energy on little else.<sup>21</sup> As indicated by the enormous popularity of the WI, a farm women’s group focused on topics related to Home Economics, rural women were concerned specifically with the practical upkeep of farm and home. Griesbach acknowledged these priorities, but did not see them as excuses for women’s lack of art knowledge. “I wish,” she lamented, that “our people generally had the ‘habit’ of appreciation of good pictures.”<sup>22</sup>

Both Griesbach’s attention to her column and her pre-occupation with cultural pursuits were regarded with suspicion by some women who questioned whether she, who had the time to devote to such esoteric causes, was truly a farm woman.<sup>23</sup> Their concerns had some legiti-

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-63.

<sup>22</sup> Diana, “Art Again,” *The Weekly Sun*, 1 January, 1919, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Dorothy Wells to Diana, “Thoughts from Idleness,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 20 August 1919, 6. The often disparate sensibilities that have historically characterized rural and urban populations in Ontario, and that are alluded to in the letters to, and columns by, Diana, have been challenged by historian Adam Crerar in his examination of early twentieth-century Ontario writer Peter McArthur. Crerar argues

macy: Emma Griesbach had indeed been a farm girl, but was not a farm woman in the traditional sense. Born in 1864 in Collingwood, Ontario to Prussian immigrant Charles C. Griesbach and Johana Baker, who had established a family farm just outside Collingwood,<sup>24</sup> Emma trained as a teacher, assuming various posts in Ontario and Western Canada. By 1907, the year her father died, she was a school principal in Okotash, Alberta. By 1910, however, presumably to assist her widowed mother, who ultimately died in 1913, Emma had returned to Collingwood where her three brothers had been managing the family farm.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to pursuing a teaching career and leaving the farm to travel across country, Griesbach resisted conformity by remaining unmarried and childless. Certainly, these combined factors would not have sat well with some farm women who were overrun with their own household and child-rearing responsibilities. To

be sure, Griesbach's life did not take the path of the typical Ontario farm daughter who often married a farmer, bore his children, and led a life of domestic toil.

Griesbach confidently reconciled this disparity, however, by firmly identifying herself as rural folk while proclaiming one, yet significant, distinction. As Diana, she wrote to her detractors "I am a farm woman for sure, but I am a (partly) emancipated one."<sup>26</sup> She explained that she had no intentions of spending her life stifled within the confines of kitchen walls,<sup>27</sup> a lifestyle, no doubt, which accounted for the time that she could devote to cultural pursuits, and for her capacity to see beyond the insular way of life on the farm. By describing herself as "(partly) emancipated," Griesbach was not only referring to her self-imposed freedom from domesticity, but to her middle-class status as well. Indeed, Griesbach did not go out of her way to try to identify with the majority of farm women who were likely

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that McArthur's popular columns about life on his Middlesex County farm appeared in both London's *Farmer's Advocate* and Toronto's *Globe*, and appealed to rural and urban readerships alike. See "Writing Across the Rural-Urban Divide: The Case of Peter McArthur, 1901-24," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 41, 2 (Spring 2007), 1-17.

<sup>24</sup> Collingwood had been established officially as a town in 1858, just six years prior to Emma Griesbach's birth. Its rural status in the 1850s is evidenced by its description as "an almost uninhabited spot called 'Hen and Chickens Harbour,'" and an "impenetrable mass of cedar swamp." Indeed, in 1853, there were only four families residing in Collingwood. After 1858, the economic success of the Collingwood area soared as a result of the newly built railway line in the region, and the number of residents and businesses, particularly shipping, grew significantly. In fact, by 1880, it was referred to as "Chicago of the North." Collingwood, however, retained its agricultural image well into the decade with area citizens muttering that the acronym for the Ontario Simcoe and Huron rail line stood for "Oats, Straw, and Hay." See <[www.doorsofcollingwood.com/History.html](http://www.doorsofcollingwood.com/History.html)> Retrieved 1 Feb. 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Simcoe County Archives [hereafter Simcoe Archives] to Kerry Badgley, 13 July 1999; Death Register for Johanna Griesbach, 1913, Simcoe Archives; Griesbach [obituary], *Collingwood Enterprise-Messenger*, 28 February 1907, Simcoe Archives. Thanks to Kerry Badgley for the biographical information and sources pertaining to the Griesbach family.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Dorothy Wells to Diana, "Thoughts from Idleness," *The Farmers' Sun*, 20 August 1919, 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



of lower standing. In her columns, for example, she promoted the name of her Graybrook Farm to Greybrook Manor, no doubt to suggest a privileged status in the community. Surely, Griesbach believed that her expertise in, and columns about, “high” art also contributed to, and reflected, her elevated status.

For Griesbach, knowledge about art was the cornerstone of cultural intelligence, and her editorials reveal why she believed this to be true. She frequently philosophized about art by emphasizing the inspiring and ameliorative role it played in people’s lives: “Art is not something which may be left outside normal human life. It is absolutely human and natural to long for beauty. It is a human instinct... as the first necessities of food, clothing, [and] shelter....”<sup>28</sup> She asserted that “There is no more elevating pleasure, there is no nobler enjoyment than that derived from the study and contemplation of... art.”<sup>29</sup> On a number of occasions, Griesbach even compared man’s creation of art to God’s own design: “Nature is God’s way of expressing beauty, and art is man’s,” and “art is the best that man can do, as Nature is the best that the Creator can do....”<sup>30</sup>

Griesbach always promoted an art that made its viewers think and feel. For her, it was not enough for a picture to be aesthetically appealing—it had to be

imbued with a loftier quality that raised the viewer to new heights. In an editorial, with the revealing title “These Folks See Deeper Than We,” Griesbach expressed her belief that artists saw the world in a more profound way than non-artists. In referencing Group of Seven member Franz Johnston, and his painting *Fire Swept, Algoma* (1920), for example, she asked her readers “Would you or I have thought of a picture in a fire-swept scene?”<sup>31</sup> Griesbach, uncharacteristically, even grouped herself in with her readers to underscore her point about the special creative gift of artists.

Griesbach had little patience for works that conveyed no eminent meaning. In a 1919 column entitled “Interest in Art,” she wrote:

A scarlet dress or a blue or a green one may be very effective as a bit of colour, but one wants more than that in a picture unless one has the idea that the function of art is completely fulfilled when the eye is pleased. ...For my part, I do not care for pictures that communicate superficial or petty ideas... three young women dressing for a ball [is] very pretty in colour, but the idea shallow.<sup>32</sup>

In critiquing the painting *Summer Evening* (c. 1921) by William J. Wood, for example, she described the subject of people dancing in a pavilion as “innocuous.” Here, Griesbach was clear about what she saw as the primary function of art: “art should always ennoble,” and

<sup>28</sup> Diana, “Interest in Art,” *The Weekly Sun*, 22 January 1919, 6.

<sup>29</sup> Diana, “Art Again,” *The Weekly Sun*, 1 January 1919, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Diana, “Here are Both Nature and Art,” *The Weekly Sun*, 4 December 1918, 6; Diana, “An Hour and a Half in the Art World,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 10 December 1919, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Diana, “These Folks See Deeper Than We,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 24 April 1920, 6.

<sup>32</sup> Diana, “Interest in Art,” *The Weekly Sun*, 22 January 1919, 6.

then added, “here it doesn’t.”<sup>33</sup> In March of 1919, when Griesbach wrote about her groundbreaking visit to the 47th Annual Exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists, she documented her personal epiphany about art’s lofty purpose:

it just came to me all at once that one of the purposes of art is to develop our spirituality through the strong appeal it makes to that side of our nature. I never before ‘sensed’ it so clearly....<sup>34</sup>

In an era of rural depopulation and UFO resentment of urban life and exploitation, Griesbach went against the grain in consistently urging her female readers to venture often to Toronto in order to expose themselves to the fulfilling experience of looking at art. Aware of this unpopular request, she reasoned, “For some good things if we want them, we are obliged to go to the city; and one of these is an Art Exhibit.”<sup>35</sup> Her regular correspondence with Edward R. Greig,

curator of the Art Museum of Toronto (later the Art Gallery of Toronto), reveals her desire to partner with him to encourage rural women to travel to Toronto explicitly for the purpose of viewing the gallery’s exhibitions.<sup>36</sup> On 5 April 1920, Griesbach wrote to Grieg that “I have been pondering a lot on the question whether or not the Art Gallery + Diana could not help each other financially and *artistically!*,” and proposed that if she could make

a quite special study of the various exhibits, promptly when they appear, write a ‘readable’ article which at the same time makes a point of being informative (+ appreciative), and could get such articles into the big dailies, more people might really want to see the pictures and make the necessary effort *to go*, thereby adding to the revenue of the Art Gallery.<sup>37</sup>

In her letter dated just five days later, she reiterated her desire to expose rural folk to the art exhibitions in the city: “I want

<sup>33</sup> Diana, “A Little About Pictures,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 7 May 1921, 6.

<sup>34</sup> Diana, “In the Gallery and at the Station,” *The Weekly Sun*, 26 March 1919, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Diana, “Interest in Art,” *The Weekly Sun*, 22 January 1919, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Edward R. Grieg held the position of the Art Museum of Toronto’s first curator from 1912 to 1928. As noted above in this paper, the name of The Art Museum of Toronto officially changed to the Art Gallery of Toronto in 1919 during Grieg’s tenure. This explains why the institution is referred to by different names in Griesbach’s correspondence with Grieg before and after 1919, and, accordingly, why both names are used in this paper. The art gallery acquired its present name of The Art Gallery of Ontario in 1966. See Karen McKenzie and Larry Pfaff, “The Art Gallery of Ontario: Sixty Years of Exhibitions, 1906-1966” in *Racar: Revue d’art canadienne. Canadian Art Review* 7:2 (1980), 62. Griesbach’s letters to Grieg do not specifically mention women in regard to her readership. We may assume, however, that when she refers to *her* “readers,” she is alluding to women, given that her column appeared on *The Farmers’ Sun* Women’s Page. She stated, for example, that she wanted “to bring the first beginnings of the idea to my country readers.” See Letter from Emma Griesbach to Mr. E.R. Grieg, 28 September 1920, Art Gallery of Ontario Archives, Toronto, Ontario [hereafter Gallery Archives], Letters, 1912-1920, A-M. Undoubtedly, Griesbach would have wanted all rural folk to be interested in art, and to attend exhibitions in Toronto.

<sup>37</sup> Griesbach to Grieg, 5 April 1920, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M. Thanks to Adam Crerer for drawing our attention to this collection, to Larry Pfaff at the Art Gallery of Ontario for providing us with copies of the correspondence, and to University of Western Ontario graduate student Nassisse Solomon for her research assistance.

to try out my idea, which is simply this, to bring the Toronto ART idea to every-day people through the Toronto Art Gallery.” She continued by rhetorically asking, “why [does] not the whole population habitually visit the exhibits?”<sup>38</sup>

Grieg was less optimistic about this venture than Griesbach, as his response lists various impediments to such a plan. He cited upcoming exhibitions that he deemed inappropriate for this educational purpose, and the implausibility of large newspapers running her articles.<sup>39</sup> Yet, Griesbach did not appear fazed by Grieg’s negativity. This attitude was consistent with her steadfast commitment to this cause, as well as her unwavering self-confidence: “You know, I am conceited enough to think I could make people want to see the pictures, if I tried to do that!”<sup>40</sup> In keeping with her enduring goal of getting rural people to travel to the Toronto gallery, Griesbach used at least ten separate occasions in her column to prod her readers to go there. She must

have understood, however, that enticing her pragmatic readers with art might not have been enough, as she also made mention in her column of the gallery’s accessible location by public transit, its low weekday admission fee of 25 cents, and its no-charge entry on weekends.<sup>41</sup>

Certainly, Griesbach indicated to her readers that she practiced what she preached, writing of her routine visits to urban centres to view art exhibits. She described her visits to the Cleveland Art Museum,<sup>42</sup> the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, and the Art Museum of Toronto. She expounded on their exhibitions, commented on the works, and, in the case of the Ontario galleries, summarized her conversations with its curators, Eric Brown and Edward R. Greig, respectively, whom she referenced regularly in her columns.<sup>43</sup>

Griesbach’s attention to these two major galleries in particular may be due in part to the significant events occurring at both institutions during her tenure as

<sup>38</sup> Griesbach to Grieg, 10 April 1920, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M. Griesbach’s commitment “to bring the Toronto ART idea to every-day people through the Toronto Art Gallery” was evident in her 1920 chance encounter with Ontario Premier E.C. Drury. In a 1920 letter to Grieg, Griesbach described a train ride with Drury, during which she strongly encouraged his interest in art by urging him to visit the Art Gallery of Toronto: “He is much interested in Art—at least his interest is awakening, and you may be sure I did my best to wake it “then some.” She then informed Grieg that she told Drury of her regular practice of visiting the Art Gallery of Toronto, and “suggested that he do so” as well. In promoting the Gallery to Drury, Griesbach’s ultimate hope, of course, as she stated in a later letter to Grieg, was that the Premier would incorporate the “Claims of Art” in his speeches, so “the attention of the farm folk will be gained.” See Griesbach to Grieg, 23 September 1920 and 28 September 1920, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M.; Ontario Heritage Trust website, <[www.heritagefdn.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts\\_1\\_9518\\_1.html#9544](http://www.heritagefdn.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_9518_1.html#9544)>. Retrieved 6 October 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Grieg to Griesbach, 8 April 1920, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M.

<sup>40</sup> Griesbach to Grieg, 5 April 1920, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M.

<sup>41</sup> Diana, “English Painters’ Pictures,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 1 January 1921, 6.

<sup>42</sup> Diana, “Here are Both Nature and Art,” *The Weekly Sun*, 4 December 1918, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Eric Brown served as Director and first full-time curator at the National Gallery of Canada from 1910 to 1939. For information on Edward R. Grieg’s position and tenure, see f.n. 36 of this paper.

Diana from 1917 to 1922. After opening in 1880, and consecutively occupying two small spaces in Ottawa buildings, the National Gallery of Canada had moved to The Victoria Memorial Museum edifice in 1912, only to be forced to close its doors from 1916 to 1921 when politicians sought much-needed meeting rooms after fire had destroyed the centre block of the Parliament Buildings. In the meantime, in an effort to keep part of its collection out of storage and circulating, the Gallery loaned its artworks to numerous art institutions all over Canada, spreading its name across the country.<sup>44</sup> There surely must have been great excitement among Canadian art-enthusiasts when the National Gallery of Canada re-opened its doors in 1922.<sup>45</sup> In 1918, the Art Museum of Toronto, which was founded in 1900, was newly housed in a magnificent beaux-arts-style structure

designed by Pearson and Darling, and acquired its new name, The Art Gallery of Toronto, a year later in 1919. As a result of their dramatic changes, both of these institutions garnered media attention during this time period, and clearly captured the notice of Griesbach.<sup>46</sup>

Although she promoted these urban art institutions, Griesbach also advocated that farm folk should not always have to travel to the city to see fine art. Rather, the art should on occasion travel to rural areas. Having a heightened awareness of rural people's reluctance or lack of opportunity to go to the city, she hoped that "one day the government owned art treasures may be loaned...to communities other than urban," and foresaw that this kind of consistent exposure to art would reap significant benefits for rural life.<sup>47</sup> Griesbach enthusiastically supported the idea that rural school boards and com-

<sup>44</sup><[www.gallery.ca/125/english/history.html](http://www.gallery.ca/125/english/history.html)>. Retrieved 28 January 2009; <[www.gallery.ca/125/english/history\\_vignettes.html](http://www.gallery.ca/125/english/history_vignettes.html)>. Retrieved 23 February 2009.

<sup>45</sup><[www.gallery.ca/125/english/history\\_vignettes.html](http://www.gallery.ca/125/english/history_vignettes.html)>. Retrieved 23 February 2009. This source states that during the closure of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian art-lovers were said to be "clamouring for the sight of pictures."

<sup>46</sup>Frank Gehry, "The Art Gallery of Ontario," 1, <[www.designboom.com/history.html](http://www.designboom.com/history.html)> Retrieved 28 January 2009. Since 1912, the Art Museum of Toronto had been housed in the Georgian manor known as the Grange, and then occupied the new building in 1918, a Grange addition. Griesbach's enthusiasm for the Art Museum of Toronto might have been augmented by the fact that the Grange was bequeathed to the Museum by Goldwin Smith, founder of *The Weekly Sun*. See McKenzie and Pfaff, "The Art Gallery of Ontario," 62.

<sup>47</sup>Diana "Interest in Art," *The Weekly Sun*, 22 January 1919, 6. Collingwood is cited as a location that borrowed works from the National Gallery of Canada during its closure from 1916 to 1921. See <[www.gallery.ca/125/English/history\\_vignettes.html](http://www.gallery.ca/125/English/history_vignettes.html)>. Retrieved 23 February 2009. That these works found their way to this relatively small, rural location begs the question of whether Collingwood resident Griesbach was instrumental in bringing the artworks to this region. Evidence for this possibility points to at least one letter written from Griesbach to Grieg at the Art Museum of Toronto asking his permission to "secure for exhibition in this town [Collingwood], one or more pictures of the Exhibition [sic] now on in Toronto." See Griesbach to Grieg, 24 January 1919, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M. In this particular case, however, Grieg could not grant her request, as the Public Library Building where Griesbach had wanted to display the art was not fireproof. See Grieg to Griesbach, 27 January, 1919, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M.

munity halls rent a few works of art for several months at a time (with accompanying explanatory notes) to familiarize rural people with the various elements of art: “People rent all sorts of things they cannot afford to buy,” reasoned Griesbach,—“a farm, a house, an automobile, even a dress suit!” She espoused the view that since “rural people are farther from art collections than city folk... and practically never have an opportunity to listen to an exposition on art,” then art must be taken to them. “If we cannot bring the people to art,” she declared, “let us bring art to the people.”<sup>48</sup>

Griesbach took a special interest in Canadian art, and regularly encouraged her readers to do the same in order to promote a Canadian cultural identity. As she put it, this focus “fosters the growth of Canadianism.”<sup>49</sup> Griesbach wrote,

Our Art must spring from Canadian soil, must receive their shaping in Canadian brains, must be interpreted and moulded so as to be in accord with the spirit and genius of the Canadian people...to develop a genuine and vital national existence ... which will constitute our destiny—the Destiny of Canada.<sup>50</sup>

This nationalistic agenda was well served by the accessible farming metaphor that she included in her May 1921 column:

“We should cultivate our own fields, and not spend our valuable time leaning over the fence and cultivating our neighbour’s.”<sup>51</sup> Clearly, Griesbach was condemning Canadian infatuation with American culture.

In addition to cautioning Canadians against Americanization, Griesbach expressed contempt for their Euro-centrism. In an editorial entitled “Let us Be Canadian!,” Griesbach conveyed her dismay that, in a list of university extension courses, virtually all of them dealt with European culture, with little reference to Canada: “If we Canadians do not and will not cultivate and develop appreciation of our home folk, who will do it?” She went on to ask with her characteristic sarcasm, “I wonder how many lectures they give in European Universities on Canadian Art and Letters?” She went on to write that “ignorance” of our own culture “reflects discredit upon us.”<sup>52</sup>

Not surprisingly, the nationalistic Griesbach was a big fan of the Group of Seven. She respected what she deemed their innovative style and unique Canadian spirit, and regretted that the public had not yet embraced the Group.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, she praised them for not offering Canadians “Europeanized Canadian art.”<sup>54</sup> In describing their work, Griesbach

<sup>48</sup> Diana, “Renting Pictures,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 16 July 1921, 6.

<sup>49</sup> Diana, “To Make Us Glad,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 24 December 1921, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Diana, “Our Destiny,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 4 December 1920, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Diana, “Correspondents,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 28 May 1921, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Diana, “Let us Be Canadian!,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 12 February 1921, 6.

<sup>53</sup> Diana, “The Big Show,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 24 September 1921, 6.

<sup>54</sup> Diana, “A Little About Pictures,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 7 May 1921, 6. Of course, we now know that the Group of Seven’s work was largely informed by Scandinavian and French Post-Impressionist painting, influences the Group did not openly claim at this time. See the forthcoming publication by Ross King, *Modern Spirits: The European Adventures of the Group of Seven*.

asserted that “their individuality, their independence, the avowed Canadianism of their spirit and aims...all tend to command them to lovers of art and no less to those who believe that Canadians should see Canada through Canadian eyes, and interpret what they see in that spirit.”<sup>55</sup> She admired, for example, J.E.H. Macdonald’s *The Solemn Land*, 1921, referring to its “majesty of largeness,” and “boldness and ruggedness.”<sup>56</sup>

In an editorial entitled “An Interesting Place and Some Interesting Persons,” Griesbach informed her readers of her plans to include regular quotations by Group of Seven members. She believed these words would allow her readers to gain a better understanding of the Group’s artistic goals: “you will look for it,” she urged, “and read every word of it, won’t you?”<sup>57</sup> True to her plan, Griesbach later included quotations by Macdonald, whose studio she visited and profiled in a December 1920 column, and by Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson<sup>58</sup>, and Arthur Lismer. She also supplied her readers with the locations and dates of many of the exhibitions in which the Group of Seven, and other Canadian artists, were featured.

Despite her nationalistic concerns, Griesbach certainly did not embrace all works by virtue of the fact that they were Canadian. In a column called “An Hour and a Half in the Art World,” she wrote

about her visit to the Royal Canadian Academy exhibition—172 paintings on display at the Art Gallery of Toronto. She divided the pictures into six distinct categories: the first five were “Big Canvases,” “War Pictures,” “Rural Scenes” (she always sought out this category so her readers would relate to the subject-matter), “Little Pictures—one-would-like-in-one’s-home,” and the “Very Modern.” The sixth category she called “Couldn’t Imagine!!-Why-they-were-painted pictures,”<sup>59</sup> paintings that she thought fell short of art’s lofty potential.<sup>60</sup> For Griesbach, however, these images were still worthy of examination in order to compare and better comprehend the merit of the more successful works.

Far be it from Griesbach to be repelled by even the most perplexing painting. This attitude is suggested in a number of documented accounts, including her letters to Grieg of the Art Museum of Toronto. She informed him in a 1919 correspondence, for example, that she was disappointed about missing an exhibition at the Museum, precisely because he had characterized all of the paintings as challenging, either for their cleverness or, conversely, for their unappealing aesthetic: “I do not know which I regret most missing,” she stated, “those that you considered ‘quite intelligent,’ or those that you considered were ‘be-

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Diana, “An Interesting Place and Some Interesting Persons,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 13 November 1920, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Diana, “A Little About Pictures,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 7 May 1921, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Diana, “An Hour and a Half in the Art World,” *The Farmers’ Sun*, 10, December 1919, 6.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

yond' you."<sup>61</sup> When she wrote to Mr. Grieg on another occasion, requesting his assistance in sending artworks to Collingwood, she insisted, "we should like something within our easy comprehension. Yet, not too easy either."<sup>62</sup> Griesbach shared with her readers her own experiences with baffling art by describing in her column particular exhibitions that featured it. She discussed the occasion of the 47th Annual Exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists, for instance, where she decided to spend the most time on the Canadian paintings "whose message could not be grasped at first glance."<sup>63</sup> Certainly, Griesbach, always one to challenge herself, wanted to inspire her artistically unsophisticated readers to emulate her own intellectual curiosity and perseverance, which she so proudly and repeatedly recounted.

By encouraging rural women to frequently attend art exhibitions, Canadian or otherwise, and to become more aware of the intellectual benefits of art, Griesbach was hoping not only to develop their cultural growth, but also to raise their standards of personal taste. The often-condescending Griesbach made no secret of the fact that if their homes were any indication, Canadian

rural people had poor aesthetic judgment. In one of her editorials, Griesbach quoted a friend who held this same opinion. The friend recommended that when purchasing art, people not buy items that they like (the presumption being that it will be bad); they should buy art that has been deemed worthy by "acknowledged judges," and then they should "LEARN" to like it.<sup>64</sup> Griesbach clearly agreed with this approach, as she later printed this advice a second time, with the hope that it would assist women to decorate their own homes more discerningly.

Indeed, in a 1922 letter about art appreciation, which she wrote to UFO founder William Good, Griesbach described the appalling décor in two country homes that she visited. She berated the art and furnishings in a "superior artisan's" rural Collingwood dwelling as "simply trash," and described the artistic taste of a "prominent professional man" as "wretched." She continued the letter by stating that "I could not with the best will in the world tell you of a half a dozen rural homes in Ontario whose adornments in the way of pictures I would carry away as a gift—nor would I accept them to hang on my own walls, at any price."<sup>65</sup> When Good responded to Griesbach's

<sup>61</sup> Griesbach to Grieg, 21 October 1919, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M. The exhibition (6 September-1 October 1919) to which Griesbach and Grieg referred consisted of the paintings and drawings of Stephen Haweis. See McKenzie and Pfaff, 67. Haweis (1879-1969) was born in England, worked in Paris in the early part of the century, and travelled to Africa, the Bahamas, and America prior to settling in Dominica beginning in 1929. He was primarily a genre painter. See <www.avirtuatldominica.Com/culturalicons.cfm>. Retrieved 23 February 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Griesbach to Grieg, 24 January 1919, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M.

<sup>63</sup> Diana, "In the Gallery and at the Station," *The Weekly Sun*, 26 March 1919, 6.

<sup>64</sup> Diana, "Short Lengths," *The Weekly Sun*, 12 February 1919, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Letter from Emma Griesbach to W.C. Good, 8 April 1922, Library and Archives Canada [hereafter Archives Canada], W.C. Good Papers [hereafter Good Papers], Volume 5, File--Correspondence 1922.

critiques by asserting that “we must not be too harsh in our judgments,”<sup>66</sup> Griesbach staunchly defended her position: “O pray do not deprecate good taste! It is wiser to make good taste a goal than good morals for if people have good taste they will not have bad morals!”<sup>67</sup>

From 1919 onward, Griesbach offered the occasional hints about interior design, which included advice about picture framing and hanging, but it wasn't until 1921 that she devoted significant space to the topic. Her guidance, however, comprised anything but tips on makeshift home-decorating projects. Instead, in 1921 she enlisted Group of Seven member Arthur Lismer (1885-1969), who was now Vice-Principal of the Ontario College of Art, to explain the principles of art to her readers, and discuss their application within the context of the home. By way of letters addressed to “Diana,” Lismer wrote a three-part series that Griesbach titled “Good Taste and Harmony in the Home” in which he defined the principles of art by discussing their philosophical and pragmatic relevance. He wrote that “art is the very highest formulation of thought,”<sup>68</sup>

and encouraged readers to decorate their homes by utilizing the same stylistic components as one would in creating a painting: “it doesn't matter whether it is the drawing of a flower or the decoration of a room, there must be an appreciative grasp of the laws of harmony, of rhythm of colour, line and tone, and the bringing of these things together.”<sup>69</sup> He also attempted to appeal to Diana's female readership by frequently stating that art must be accessible to everyone, and by relating its importance to other domestic concerns: “it can be shown that art, like charity, begins at home.”<sup>70</sup>

Griesbach reiterated that farm women were in need of Lismer's teachings because personal taste did not come naturally, but needed to be developed. “The only way we can get this knowledge,” she wrote, “is in the way we get any knowledge, by education.”<sup>71</sup> In her typically direct manner, she stated, “Most of us think we possess good taste...99% of us possess only potential good taste.”<sup>72</sup> By adhering to the principles of art as explained by Lismer, Griesbach hoped, women would have homes “of greater taste and charm.”<sup>73</sup> Of course, for Griesbach, the more taste-

<sup>66</sup> Good to Griesbach, 16 May 1922, Archives Canada, Good Papers, Volume 5, File--Correspondence 1922.

<sup>67</sup> Griesbach to Good, 19 May 1922, Archives Canada, Good Papers, Volume 5, File --Correspondence 1922.

<sup>68</sup> Diana, “Good Taste and Harmony in the Home” (includes Letter II by Arthur Lismer), *The Farmers' Sun*, 22 October, 1921, 6.

<sup>69</sup> Diana, “Good Taste and Harmony in the Home” (includes Letter I by Arthur Lismer), *The Farmers' Sun*, 15 October, 1921, 6.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Diana, “Good Taste and Harmony in the Home” (includes Letter III by Arthur Lismer), *The Farmers' Sun*, 29 October, 1921, 6.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*



ful home was not an end in and of itself, but a vehicle by which women could expand their minds about culture generally, and thus elevate the quality of their lives. It is not surprising that the uncompromising Griesbach enlisted Lismer for her cause, as he came to be considered “the foremost artist-teacher in Canada.”<sup>74</sup> Indeed, she thought it a coup to acquire the renowned Lismer for her page, and encouraged her readers to take careful note of what he had to say.

Lismer’s willingness to contribute to *The Farmers’ Sun* was likely partly due to early twentieth-century Canadian notions about the inextricable connection between art and the land, as exemplified by the Group of Seven members themselves. Between the two world wars, there was a growing fascination with all things folk and rural, which became a significant component in the establishment of a Canadian distinctiveness in the arts. Many Canadian artists, including Lismer, echoing the tenets of agrarian groups like the UFO, “saw rural and resource-based communities as a reflection of Canada’s ‘true nature,’” and expressed this connection in their work.<sup>75</sup> Added to his con-

cern for a national identity were Lismer’s pedagogical concerns as an art teacher, making his role as a *Farmers’ Sun* art educator a perfect fit.<sup>76</sup>

The procurement of Lismer must have made it all that more astonishing for Griesbach when, in 1922, *Farmers’ Sun* editor J.C. Ross informed her that she was fired from her post as the women’s page editor.<sup>77</sup> Despite the space that Griesbach had devoted to domestic matters the previous year, Ross stated that there had been an increasing demand on the part of readers for articles dealing with cooking, sewing, and children, and that Griesbach’s editorials had unfortunately neglected these popular topics in favour of less accessible subjects. In March of 1922, Ross wrote UFO founder William Good that “Miss Griesbach has her following and there will be some who will miss her letters and activities, but on the other hand, the majority of our readers found her letters too long and weighty.”<sup>78</sup> Provincial executive officer and Griesbach supporter Alice Webster defended Griesbach’s writings. In a 1922 letter to Good, she praised “Diana,” as she has

laboured at her heart’s desire to advance the

<sup>74</sup> Angela Nairne Grigor, *Arthur Lismer, Visionary Art Educator* (Montreal: McGill Queen’s University Press, 2002), 349.

<sup>75</sup> Exhibition review, *Come a Singing*, curated by Andrew Hunter, <[www.instantcoffee.org/projects/shows/soundtracks.reg.phtml](http://www.instantcoffee.org/projects/shows/soundtracks.reg.phtml)>. Retrieved 23 February 2009. The author cites the work of anthropologist Marius Barbeau and folklorist Edith Fowke as important resources for this exhibition.

<sup>76</sup> Lismer himself had asserted, “art and education were both necessary and intrinsic parts of his life, extending far beyond his membership in the Group of Seven.” See Grigor, 349.

<sup>77</sup> Griesbach was replaced by Violet Dickens. See Letter from J.C. Ross to Emma Griesbach, 26 January 1922. Archives Canada, Good Papers, Volume 5, File—Correspondence 1922. There is no indication that Emma Griesbach’s career as an art columnist extended beyond her position as *The Farmers’ Sun* Women’s Page editor between 1917 and 1922.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from J.C. Ross to W.C. Good, 9 March 1922, Archives Canada, Good Papers, Volume 5, File--Correspondence 1922.

cause of the farm women and in this she has been eminently successful. She has given us literature superior to that supplied by any other women's page or journal...."<sup>79</sup>

There is some evidence to suggest that the Sun Sisters readers appreciated Griesbach's efforts to elevate their lives, which included her sophisticated columns on art. In a 1919 letter, "Maria of York County," for example, wrote to "Diana": "I am glad that you are giving us some talks on art. It is a word one scarcely ever hears in the country. I have been reading Ruskin lately, and your talking of art made me notice what he said about it...." Maria then proceeded to ask Diana for further explanations of Ruskin's text.<sup>80</sup> In a 1920 letter to Grieg, Griesbach had written that "many discriminating persons have spoken to me in warm praise of my 'picture' articles,"<sup>81</sup> and in a 1922 letter that a demoralized Griesbach wrote to Good, she defended her popular appeal, noting further that the letters she

received lamenting her dismissal from the paper have "come in the main from rural women,"<sup>82</sup> her target readership.

In responding to Webster's defense of Diana, however, Good asserted that her sophisticated editorials, presumably including those on art, "appealed to a rather limited number of our readers."<sup>83</sup> Indeed, it appears that the columns about high culture held no interest for Good himself when, in a 1922 letter to Griesbach, he admitted that "I have not given any great attention to so-called Art...."<sup>84</sup> But Good's concerns about the articles' narrow appeal was likely related to his greater unease about the shrinking membership of the UFWO generally, especially as compared to the popularity of the WI. By the mid 1920s, the provincial UFWO had all but folded, with a membership of only 2,312 by 1926<sup>85</sup>; in contrast, the provincial WI claimed over 30,000 members.<sup>86</sup>

The decline of the provincial UFWO

<sup>79</sup> Letter from Alice Webster to W.C. Good, 4 February 1922, Archives Canada, Good Papers, Volume 5, File--Correspondence 1922.

<sup>80</sup> Diana, "Another Art," *The Weekly Sun*, 5 March, 1919, 6. John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a British art critic, writer, poet, and artist, whose essays on art and architecture were highly influential from the mid nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Given that most farm women in early twentieth-century Ontario acquired no more than a grade ten education level, the intellectual works of Ruskin that "Maria" was perusing made for highly unusual reading material, and is suggestive of Griesbach's influence on "Maria," as well as on other women who hadn't written to "Diana."

<sup>81</sup> Griesbach to Grieg, 5 April 1920, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M.

<sup>82</sup> Letter from Emma Griesbach to W.C. Good, 8 April 1922, Archives Canada, Good Papers, Volume 5, File--Correspondence 1922.

<sup>83</sup> Letter from W.C. Good to Alice Webster, 15 March 1922, Archives Canada, Good Papers, Volume 5, File --Correspondence 1922.

<sup>84</sup> Good to Griesbach, 1 April 1922, Archives Canada, Good Papers, Volume 5, File --Correspondence 1922.

<sup>85</sup> Secretaries Report, 5 December 1927, 177, Harman Collection, Minutes UFWO. The UFWO officially terminated in 1943, with the UFO following suit in 1944. See Harman Collection, File 802; Margaret Kechnie, "The United Farm Women of Ontario: Developing a Political Consciousness," *Ontario History*, 77 (December 1985), 277.

<sup>86</sup> Annie Walker, et al., *Fifty Years of Achievement* (n.p.: Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario,

was attributable to a variety of factors. They included the 1923 fall of the Drury government, inexperience and clashes within the UFO, and a dwindling farm population.<sup>87</sup> But it seems UFO leaders also blamed the highbrow Griesbach, firing her in favour of a women's page editor devoted to domestic concerns. Perhaps as a last ditch effort to help save the UFWO, they seemed intent on refashioning it after the WI. Certainly, and to Griesbach's dismay, most UFWO clubs at the local level had long resembled WI groups, focusing on home economics and household matters, and rarely conversing about fine art.<sup>88</sup>

From 1917 to 1922, Emma Griesbach's editorials in the Women's Page of *The Farmers' Sun* encouraged her UFWO readers to expand their horizons in order to become more politically savvy and vital. One way she did this was through her

numerous columns on art that attempted to educate rural women about the merits of art, to encourage them to experience it first-hand by attending gallery exhibitions, and to understand its stylistic principles for successful home decorating. She wanted her rural readers to feel as passionate about art as she did when she declared, "life without the ART idea is not life at all."<sup>89</sup> By promoting the intellectual, spiritual, and practical functions of art, particularly that of one's own country, Griesbach, although she could be accused of condescension toward her readers, hoped to imbue them with a heightened sense of self that made for more sophisticated and confident voters and activists. Ironically, in the end, it was this desire to elevate women that contributed to her own demise as the women's page editor of *The Farmers' Sun*.

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1948), 2, Queen's University, Joseph S. Stauffer Library, The Edith and Lorne Pierce Collection of Canadiana [hereafter Pierce Collection]; Ontario Department of Agriculture, *Report of the Women's Institutes of the Province of Ontario*, 1918, part 1 (Toronto, 1919), 120, Pierce Collection.

<sup>87</sup> Kechnie, 273-74; Jean Macleod, "The United Farmer Movement in Ontario, 1914-1943," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1958, 204. Halpern's book argues that a chief reason that the provincial UFWO failed was its adherence to equity feminism rather than to the more popular social feminism, which the WI promoted. See *And on that Farm*, 79-105. For an explanation of these terms, especially as they relate to farm women, see 3-18.

<sup>88</sup> Halpern, *And on that Farm*, 101-103.

<sup>89</sup> Griesbach to Grieg, 28 September 1920, Gallery Archives, Letters, 1912-1920, A-M.