

Of Christmas Art

an international art competition for paintings of Christmas—the Hallmark Art Award—nearly 10,000 French and American artists submitted canvases. Seventy of the winning paintings are now on a tour of American art museums and many will eventually be reproduced on Christmas cards. There is little doubt that hundreds of others will find permanent residence in homes, churches and galleries, both here and abroad.

In past years, the Hallmark firm has reproduced such widely varying Christmas art as El Greco's "The Annunciation," Salvador Dali's "Three Wise Men," Van Gogh's "Vegetable Garden" and works of Renoir, Cezanne, Picasso, Monet, Max Weber, Georgia O'Keefe and many others, classic and modern. This year, in addition to Winston Churchill, Grandma Moses, Peter Hurd and Alexander Ross, other well known artists represented with Christmas work are Marcel Vertes, Richard Koppe, Henry McFee, Jacques Maroger, Harold Stevens, Lily Cusing and many others. Their work has almost universal appeal and an emotional content ranging from the deeply religious to the gay holiday spirit and a nostalgic vision of a child's Christmas.

Not every American can visit the great art galleries. Few can afford to purchase original paintings for their homes. But almost everyone can collect fine art of Christmas cards—"the art gallery of all the people" as it has been termed. And that, to judge from thousands of expressions received by Hallmark every Christmas-tide, is just what the American people are doing. Some tell how they mount Christmas cards in frames for their living room walls, others classify them by schools of art in scrapbooks or file boxes, and teachers and students alike utilize them in art classes.

Christmas card collections are hardly recent innovations, however. The British Museum has a collection which contains the Horsley card mentioned above and many others. Only a few years ago among skating prints in the same museum was found a card attributed to one William Maw Egley, a 16-year-old engraver's apprentice, which bore the date 1842. A descendent of Egley's subsequently cited his forbear's diary, however, to establish that the card originated in 1848—two years after Henry Cole's. Too, some researchers

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THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CARD, probably was this greeting painted by the English artist, John Calcott Horsley, for another Englishman, Sir Henry Cole, in 1846. Sir Henry dispatched a

thousand copies that Christmas. Although there is some dispute over the "first" card, it is generally accepted that the practice of sending Christmas cards began in England in the 1840's.