

"New Glory" and Other Flag Exhibitions at the
Santa Barbara Museum of Art

Last year, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art began a series of flag exhibitions which will culminate in a national program to be presented in conjunction with the celebration of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. We call the bicentennial flag program "New Glory", in reference to one of the nicknames given to our national flag, "Old Glory".

Since most of the events of our "New Glory" project have yet to take place, I am presenting some information about one of the early events in this series, and to describe our project itself.

The first of our flag exhibitions was held last summer and presented the "Banners and Costumes of the Palio of Siena". Siena maintains a living medieval tradition of flags for the various sections - called contrade of the city, of flagthrowers and musicians dressed in the livery of the particular section. These reveal to those not well acquainted with medieval life how such a part of a total design concept a flag at first was. Flags of Siena and other banners decorated the front of the museum; inside, large banners for each of the contrade hung in the largest gallery of the museum and in the center mannikins displayed the accoutrements of both man and horse.

Fortunately, we have in Santa Barbara a young woman who was the first foreigner and the first woman to be captain of one of these contradas. Each has its own colors, its own heraldic design, its own animal or other symbol. She headed the contrada called Il Pantera, the Panther, whose colors are red, white and blue. The famous flag throwers or Alfieri of Siena have even refused invitations from their national government to perform abroad, but, to one of their own, they are very gracious. A team of Pantera flag throwers and a drummer along with their leader were guests of the museum and the Santa Barbara horse show for a week.

To thank Miss Wood for making the exhibition possible, we designed a special flag for her famous stables, adapted from the Pantera flag but featuring a "V" shape.

Other new flags in Santa Barbara include a flag I designed for the president of the museum, Mrs. Edward Valentine, which features hearts for Valentine and two piles in point, creating a "V". I also have my own Mills flag, derived from the striations depicted in the heraldic millstone.

Now, let me discuss our "New Glory" project itself. From the standpoint of the arts, of art history and art museums, I have always been impressed with how beautiful and how meaningful a well-designed flag is, and by many things about flag design, including the ways in which traditional heraldic principles can produce dramatic works of abstract art. Most Europeans, especially those in international maritime areas such as the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Great Britain, have an opportunity to see a rich and splendid variety of flags, ranging from flags as ancient as the cross flags of the Crusades to flags as new as those of many towns in Finland.

Americans love their national flag as deeply as the people of any other nation. However, through the years they have flown it practically to the exclusion of everything else. It is a huge country, with only two neighbors, so it seldom sees flags from elsewhere. Thus,

indadvertently, loyalty to the national flag on one hand and lack of additional flags from neighboring states on the other, has actually repressed the existence and the design quality of other flags for cities, states, counties, schools and the like. Although the many flags of America's colonial and revolutionary beginnings often have splendid flag design and distinguished design, there are not enough other flags, and too many of those which do exist are amateurish, ugly, impractical to produce, heraldically ignorant, ineffective and without interest even to those whose flag it is. There are a few handsome old state flags, such as the flag of Maryland. There are a few handsome new designs in effect, such as those for the State of Colorado and the city of Denver. There are a few handsome proposals for new designs, such as the one proposed for Montana by James Croft, which was described in an article in *The Flag Bulletin*, and those which Dr. Atle Grahl-Madsen has designed, to be mentioned below.

The purpose of our project is to single out good flag design in flag of American history, and to use it to inspire us to a higher level of flag design for the future. Some of the handsome flags of America's early years were presented in Whitney Smith's lecture.

Our "New Glory" project began in Santa Barbara with the raising of a design for a flag for our National Endowment for the Arts, co-sponsor of the project, which took place in one of the remaining buildings and gardens of the old Royal Presidio, established in 1789. The flag itself is derived from the eagle emblem of the endowment.

Today, over eighty museums throughout the United States have indicated a desire to take part in the Bicentennial flag program. They range from one of the oldest museums in the country, the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, founded by Benjamin Franklin, to one of the most contemporary, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Geographically, they range from Boston to Florida, from Southern California to Alaska. They will present, in displays both indoors and outdoors, well-designed historic flags, and groups of newly designed flags proposed by artists and designers, and juried by competent artistic judges. We hope some of these new designs will be accepted by the cities and other agencies they are designed for. We have two distinguished honorary marshals for the project, Senator Clayborne Pell and Congressman Brademas.

I would like to take this occasion to announce officially the appointment of the first two members of the National Advisory Committee for the "New Glory" project. They are our good friend Dr. Whitney Smith, Secretary General of the Fédération Internationale des Associations Vexillologiques and head of the Flag Research Center, who has always been personally helpful and understanding to me, as he has been to so many other fledgling American vexillologists, and secondly, Mr. Arthur Drexler, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. In addition to these two and myself as chairman, there will be a textile authority, a designer and a heraldic design authority, to be announced shortly.

The first flag event of the American Revolution Bicentennial was a fine one, if not one sponsored by our project. Rockefeller Center in New York City maintains a famous court of flags, which is regularly used for the flying of the flags of the United Nations. During the bicentennial era, the Rockefeller Center flag plaza will show the flags of the 50 states, along with flags of territories, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and a dozen historical flags and bicentennial

banners. These were first raised by scouts, to music, in the presence of the Mayor of New York City on February 27. I hope this presentation will draw more attention to our state flags. I hope it will also help our people to realize that most of these flags are very badly designed and would benefit immensely on the occasion of the bicentennial by being redesigned.

The first exhibition directly sponsored by "The New Glory" project will be a part of the opening Bicentennial exhibition at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which starts this June 4, presented in their grand tapestry hall at the top of their splendid central stairway, the exhibition is called "Those Valiant Upstarts". The lower area of the gallery will present dioramas and arms relating to the Battle of Bunker Hill; in the vault itself will be displayed 26 colonial and revolutionary era flags selected by me, and very capably made by the firm of Mr. John Tutour, president of Paramount Flag Company of San Francisco. He has real sympathy for custom production and historic projects, and I would like here to thank him for his interest and cooperation, without which the Boston project would not be the success it promises to be.

I would like to close by saying that we have had an enormous interest in two things in conjunction with the project. The first I simply call "special projects." These were unusually are competitions for new designs for flags for cities or other agencies. We have assisted in some small degree with the design of a new flag for the city of Lexington, Virginia. There are other special design projects, including one for an improved design for the flag of New York City. Lastly, I am excited and pleased at the interest which flag designers of every sort have taken in the thought of submitting to selected jurors proposed new design for flags for American cities, counties, states and other agencies. These include such capable and distinguished modern designers as Anders Holmquist, whose colorful designs as well as a remarkable series of proposals, very witty and handsome and knowledgeable ones, which have been made by Dr. Atle Grahl-Madsen for new designs for state flags at the occasion of this congress have been exhibited during a few weeks in the knight's hall of Medemblik castle,

I very much hope that, when you come to the United States in 1977, we can all look back on a successful project, and that we can present to you an exhibition of outstanding new designs, issued to mark the nation's bicentennial year.



"NEW GLORY"