

ART in the COLLEGE

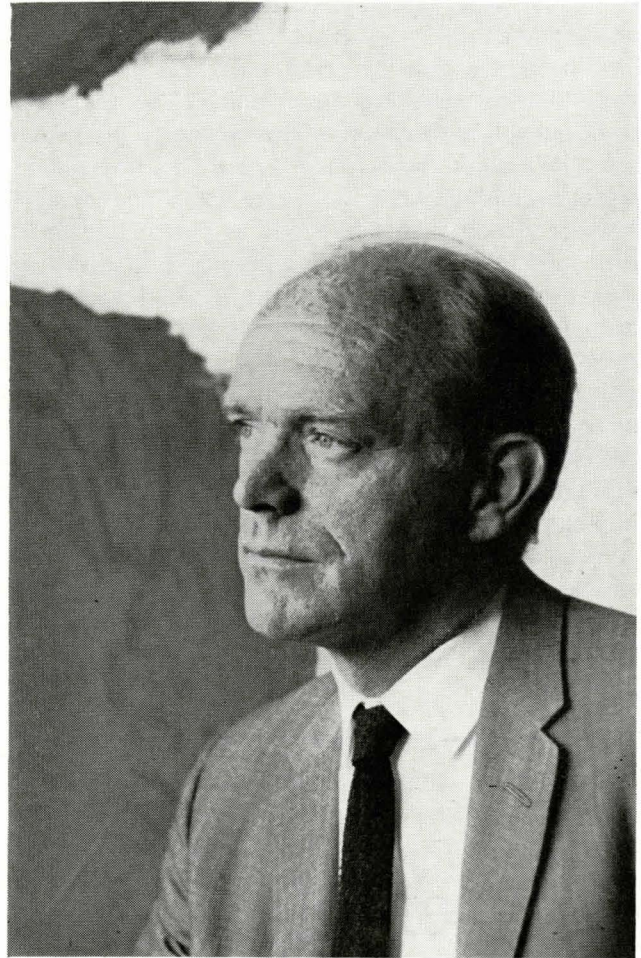
Eugene C. Goossen

New Chairman
of the Department of Art

As a result of years of intelligent and progressive leadership on the part of the former chairman, Edna Wells Luetz, the Hunter Art Department is one of the strongest in the country. Strength, however, entails responsibilities and more than a passing understanding of its sources.

In the last decade New York has become the center of the international art world. There now exists within reach a formidable array of genius and scholarship upon which we can and must draw for our faculty. Moreover, the City presents a potential in student material without equal anywhere. The Hunter Art Department must meet the challenge inherent in this apparently ideal situation. We must, certainly, maintain vital contact with what is happening in the arts everyday within a few blocks of us, yet at the same time we must reserve the right and duty of the university to keep its critical distance.

For example, we must not mistake the occasional leap toward a genuine American culture, exemplified here by the rise of the New York abstract expressionist school, as evidence of general achievement along broad lines. We have instead to face the problem of how to capitalize on such isolated instances by extending their symbolic possibilities into our culture as a whole. We are not, after all, aiming at a cultural *élite*, but at a whole culture, equal in homogeneity to that Anglo-Saxon wholeness which existed prior to the Civil War but which was necessarily abandoned as the implications of our continental space and our increasingly international heritages became clear. The fact that abstract expressionism has become popular has nothing to do with our problem. The popularization of an art movement is not significant if its significance is not understood. Popularization, in fact, is a way of killing something off. In a transitional period such as ours, wherein the most monumental structures we erect are put on a 20-year depreciation basis while still on the drawing



Professor Goossen came to Hunter to become Chairman of the Art Department from Bennington College, where he taught Art History, Criticism and studio classes. While there he initiated an exhibition program which included a number of shows now considered part of contemporary art history. Besides hundreds of articles on the arts for numerous journals and periodicals, he has published three books, two reprinted in French. His monograph on Stuart Davis, published by Braziller, was one of the first in the Great American Artist Series. He holds a Frank Jewett Mather award for outstanding art criticism and is currently a consultant on Art for an encyclopedia to be published by the Grolier Society. He has also served as Contributing Editor for the multi-language art journal printed in Zurich, Art International. Works in progress include, besides paintings, a collection of selected essays and a book on the study of form, style and meaning.

board, the best we can hope to save, perhaps, is the idea, not the thing.

The notion that art could exist only in an airless Bohemian no-space has been fading. The art school has gradually given way to the university art department. Whatever the reasons behind this, the outlook seems promising. Art is no longer something for aging lawyers to collect, but its study as part of the liberal arts curriculum has become prerequisite to a law degree. At the same time, the artist, or shall we say, the deeply committed student, is able to pursue his explorations in an environment at least as serious as his attitude toward his own discipline should be, and among people who are presumably concerned with culture and knowledge as a whole. The idea of the university as a fortress of untouchable tradition is nonsense, except insofar as it insists upon seriousness. And as an ivory tower it ranks lower than those constructed on Madison Avenue by the advertising agencies. Behind nonexistent walls art can be treated in the university for what it truly is, a body of human knowledge.

Art is a body of knowledge, however, which must be experienced to be possessed. While historical studies give us the chance to obtain a certain knowledgeable relation to art, i.e., an understanding of the potent form and force of objects of art from other times and places, this relation must be reinforced by direct experience. Only in the studio will the student begin to understand that the knowledge he seeks is not only of a world which has been given, but of a world which is yet to be made.

For the student who finds himself increasingly serious over the problems of creation we must provide the place and time for him to explore this seriousness. The BFA program on the undergraduate level is intended to do this. It is here that we separate the would-be lawyers from the would-be artists. Yet even here it must be remembered that while the professional world establishes certain standards useful to us in our teaching, our primary goal is not vocational training. To turn out students with a few skills but no commitment to any true knowledge of art is to do damage to the culture we pretend to value and desire to improve.

Hunter Man Receives Art Award

A Fratelli Fabbri Scholarship award "for outstanding performance in the field of art" was presented to Warren Infield '62 by Dr. Carlo Gasparini, Director of the Italian Information Center in Manhattan.

The scholarship, which provides for a three-month art course at the Accademia di Brera in Milan, plus a ten-day tour of major art centers in Italy, was donated by Fratelli Fabbri, leading Italian publishing firm, in tribute to the participation of Mayor Robert F. Wagner and the City of New York in last year's Italian Centennial celebration.

Mr. Infield was graduated from Cooper Union Art School in 1958, and earned his B.A. at Hunter College this year.

At presentation of Fratelli Fabbri Scholarship Award: Professor Goossen, Dr. Gasparini, Mr. Infield, President Meng

