

# Dora W. Erway

*November 19, 1889 — December 5, 1976*

Professor Erway, the wife of Edgar W. Erway, was associated with the College of Home Economics at Cornell, in the Household Art Department from 1921 to 1945 and was acting head of that department from 1944 to 1945. When the department name became Housing and Design, she served as associate professor from 1945 to 1956 and was named professor emeritus after her retirement in 1958.

Professor Erway's distinguished career as an artist began in her native Fitchburg, Massachusetts, when she was eight years old and in third grade. During elementary school, her work was published in School Arts magazine. While in high school and at Massachusetts Normal Art School, she began extracurricular activities, studying under many of the finest teachers in this country and abroad. Eight summers between 1906 and 1916 were spent at Commonwealth Art Colony, Boothbay Harbor, Maine; in the summer of 1917 she studied design at Chicago University and in 1918, color with Albert Munsell and sculpture with Cyrus Darlin in Boston. Three years at Columbia University included summer and evening classes of painting at Provincetown, Massachusetts, and Textile Vocational School and Manhattan Trade School in New York City. In 1919, she received the highest grade in the New York City examination for New York textile vocational teachers. Her interests also included courses in psychology at Brown and Cornell universities; education and architectural design at Cornell and interior decoration at Lucy Taylor's school at Nantucket, Massachusetts; painting in Paris, France; color with Rudolph Schaeffer; and theatre design and crafts with Norman Edwards and Douglas Donaldson in Hollywood, California. She painted in the Saguenay region, Canada, studied the life habits and crafts of the San Ildefonso Indians of New Mexico, and painted in Georgia and Cuba, as well as in Japan, China, and India. During a sabbatic leave in 1955, she spent seven months in South America studying Inca civilization and culture. She traveled extensively in the United States, Europe, and around the world.

A gown and wrap of Paris design, made in Hong Kong during her travels to the Orient, have been added to the Cornell Costume Collection. Her American costume dolls, designed by her students, have been exhibited twice yearly at Uris Library, Cornell University. One doll was given by Queen Marie of Rumania.

Professional experiences before coming to Cornell included teaching of sculpture and social welfare work in North Bennett High School, Boston; supervising drawing, manual training, and clothing, public schools, Maine; directing industrial art, public schools, New Jersey; and teaching home furnishings, color and design in Massachusetts,

Maine, New Jersey, Connecticut, and at the University of Nebraska. She did free-lance work in textile and costume design, selling to well-known firms such as Cheney Silk.

Mrs. Erway's paintings, largely water colors, were widely published in French art magazines and exhibited in many cities in the United States, including a one-woman show at Dudensing Gallery, New York City. Her name was listed in *Leading Women of America*, *Who's Who in the East*, and *Art contemporain livre d'or*.

Her articles on teaching design were published in the *Journal of Home Economics*, and she served as associate editor of the journal for five years. For six years, she was chairwoman of the Related Art Committee of the American Home Economics Association and was responsible for that committee becoming a division of the association. She was also responsible for a two-year traveling home economics art exhibit that was shown from Maine to California. She organized working home economics art committees with state chairpersons in thirty-six states. She was vice president of the New York State Southern Tier Home Economics Association.

Mrs. Erway made art a way of life, inspired others with the beauty and wonder of the world around her, and allowed no compromise of standards or achievements. The year of her death she received seventy-five Christmas cards from former students. To them and her associates, Dora Erway remains a legend.

*M. Vivian White, Ruth B. Comstock*