

RISD MUSEUM

An American Idyll: 19th-Century Paintings and Decorative Arts, April 6, 2007-January 6, 2008

Paintings of American life in the 19th century convey an overwhelming sense of optimism. We are drawn to these idyllic views, to their dense forests and clear streams, children with fishing poles, and young girls in white summer dresses. They suggest to us a simpler time, when art was created with a specific set of skills and was judged by truthfulness to nature.

In fact, even seemingly benign scenes embody layers of cultural meaning. Landscapes represent wildernesses to be experienced with religious zeal or perceived as economic resources ripe for speculation. Portraits reveal the increasing complexity of American life at a time when personal freedom was being weighed against the impact of the abolition of slavery on trade and when less than half of the adult population had the right to vote.

The works of art on view in these galleries also form an autobiography of this museum in which new concepts of art-making confront time-honored traditions of process and design. Embedded in the works on view are some of the stories that define the evolution of American art and the American scene. Close viewers will be rewarded with further insights about an emerging American culture.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Winslow Homer, American, 1836-1910
On a Lee Shore, 1900
Oil on canvas
Jesse Metcalf Fund 01.003

Winslow Homer's dramatic view of the coast near Prout's Neck, Maine, was one of the first important American paintings to enter the RISD Museum's collection. Like so many 19th century-American artists, Homer had been a printmaker, draftsman, and successful illustrator before he learned to paint. Essentially self-taught, he came to employ fluid brushstrokes in a realist style that he applied to compositions of figures out-of-doors. His later work shifted from inhabited landscapes to wilder, unpopulated scenes. In these poetic compositions, he found a deeper level of emotional engagement with nature and its power.

Homer's view of the crashing Atlantic surf and a sailing ship "on a lee shore" address the dark reality of the ocean's dominating presence. Leeward winds blow towards the coastline. A craft that cannot alter its course to windward is at risk of being run aground or dashed upon the rocky coast. The painting's somber palette, broad, aggressive brushstrokes, and dramatically contained square format are combined to express man's vulnerability in the face of nature.



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Childe Hassam, American, 1859-1935

The Messenger Boy, 1903

Oil on canvas

Jesse Metcalf Fund 03.002



Hassam was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, and developed skills as an illustrator and watercolorist early in his career. After a trip abroad in 1883, he returned to Boston to paint atmospheric urban views that reflected the American interest in tonalism and the influence of James Whistler. Hassam's later trips to France exposed him to the fresh palette and broken brushstroke of the Impressionists, which he applied to urban scenes for the remainder of his long career.

In 1898, Hassam became a founding member of "The Ten," an association of like-minded American painters who sought improved exhibition spaces for their work. Some of Hassam's most celebrated subjects were views of Manhattan, usually painted with a bright palette. He became increasingly aware of the city's greater urbanization at the turn of the century and, like most New York painters, fled the city during the summer. To his friend Florence Griswold he wrote: "I don't know that I wish a very large dose of New York for any of my friends." This sentiment may underlie the faint grittiness of *Messenger Boy*, a street scene of shop fronts punctuated by a courier whose messenger bag is slung over his shoulder. This underpaid service was crucial to businesses that required the transfer of documents from one office to another; but Hassam was more interested in composition and atmosphere than in social realism. His subject is less the working messenger boy than the evocative weather conditions that veil the street in blue and yellow light.

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John White Alexander, American, 1856-1915

The Blue Bowl, 1898

Oil on canvas

Jesse Metcalf Fund 04.141.1

Alexander's *The Blue Bowl* was shown in Paris and Vienna before it appeared and was purchased by the Museum at RISD's Autumn Exhibition of 1904. Alexander, who had begun his career as an illustrator and political cartoonist for *Harper's Weekly*, had achieved international stature. His mysterious *Isabella* and the *Pot of Basil* had entered the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the French government had conferred a rare honor on an American by purchasing one of his works.

Like other young artists of his generation, Alexander was influenced by Whistler's tonalism (see Whistler's *Harmony in Blue: The Duet*) and by Japanese-influenced spatial organization. More than the Delft bowl of the title, it is the back of the alluring model's dress, spread out as she bends to observe a fallen bloom, that forms the true subject of the painting. Defined with thin washes of color on a roughly textured canvas, its sinuous curves and floral-patterned surface represent the height of Art Nouveau costume, pictorial design, and compositional daring at the turn of the century. A custom-designed frame bears a floral motif transformed into flattened rhythmic decoration.



George Inness, American, 1825-1894

In the Berkshire Hills, ca. 1877-1878

Oil on canvas

Jesse Metcalf Fund 09.085

During a long and successful career, George Inness embraced a belief in the interconnectedness of nature and spirituality. A trip to Europe in the 1850s exposed him to two important influences: the historical resonance of the Roman countryside and the intimate forest views of France's Barbizon painters. Less painstakingly topographical in his approach than earlier American painters, Inness developed a style in which landscape effects echoed human moods and sentiments.



Like sculptor Hiram Powers (his *Eve Disconsolate* may be seen in the first gallery), Inness became interested in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, an 18th-century Swedish scientist and theologian who preached that God was present throughout nature. In late works such as *In the Berkshires*, Inness used scumbling techniques to blur the landscape, suggesting the Swedenborgian tenet that all material objects were spiritually charged. When his methods were compared

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with the softened brushstrokes of the French Impressionists, he objected strenuously, calling the style a materialistic system that denied "the reality of the unseen."

Thomas Wilmer Dewing, American, 1851-1938

Lady in Gray, ca. 1910

Oil on canvas

Jesse Metcalf Fund 12.014

Dewing's subdued palette and intimate interior scenes were characteristic of Tonalism, a style that paralleled the development of American Impressionism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Strongly influenced by the Aesthetic Movement in the desire to create harmonies in all aspects of design, Tonalist painting could be identified by soft, diffused light and hazily rendered subjects. Dewing specialized in a figural version of this style and was known for images of women playing musical instruments. Like Whistler, Chase, and Alexander, whose color-themed paintings may be seen nearby, he often keyed the subject to a named tone, in this case the color gray. Dewing's circle also included the artists who gathered for the summer in Cornish, New Hampshire, and Dublin, New Hampshire. Like his neighbors Abbott Thayer and Willard Metcalf, he paid particular attention to the framing of his paintings (see the frames on their works in this exhibition). For *Lady in Gray*, he selected an American Renaissance altar style that may have been designed for him by Stanford White, the architect of Rhode Island's State Capitol and the Newport Casino, among many famous buildings.



Frank Weston Benson, American, 1862-1951

Summer, 1909

Oil on canvas

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.912

In the light-filled *Summer*, Boston painter Frank W. Benson renders both figures and landscape with the broken brushstrokes of French Impressionism. Benson sketched his daughters and niece out-of-doors, took photographs to help him capture their poses, and later used these studies to create this finished studio version. They are posed on the cliffs near their family's vacation home on North Haven Island, Maine, relaxed and confident. Benson's vibrant models personify the beauty of a perfect summer day and also represent an



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idealized view of contemporary young womanhood, although it should be remembered that women would not be granted the right to vote until 1920.

Benson's career and his family's future were bright in 1909. A leading member of the group of American Impressionists known as "The Ten," he taught in both Boston and New York and was much sought after. RISD's president, Isaac C. Bates, a wealthy meat-packing magnate and art collector, was one of Benson's major patrons. He convinced Benson to participate occasionally in RISD studio critiques and actively sought to acquire Benson's work for the RISD collection. Like other Benson paintings owned by Bates, Summer's visual impact is enhanced by a handsome hand-carved and gilded frame, designed specifically for its subject by Foster Brothers, Boston.

Winslow Homer, American, 1836-1910

Fishin', 1879

Oil on canvas

Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.935

Homer spent the early years of his career as an illustrator, but was turning more and more to watercolor painting by the early 1870s. The translucency of watercolor against white paper effected a change in his ability to understand the representation of light. He transferred that knowledge to his oil paintings, eventually becoming a master in that medium as well.

In the summer of 1879, Homer spent time on Houghton Farm in Hurley, New York, using both watercolor and oil to document his continued interest in depicting figures in sunlight. In this small picture of a girl and boy fishing, he captures streaks of light along their slender poles and emphatically expresses it on their rose, blue, and yellow garments. The popular effect of these "freckled, straight-haired Yankee urchins" with their "calico sunbonnets and flannel shirts," stymied American writer and critic Henry James: "He has taken the least pictorial features of the least pictorial range of scenery and civilization ... has resolutely treated them as if they were pictorial ... and he has uncontestedly succeeded."



James Abbott McNeill Whistler, American, 1834-1903

Harmony in Blue: The Duet, ca. 1874

Oil on panel

Jesse Metcalf Fund 14.083



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After brief stints as a West Point cadet and a mapmaker for the U. S. Geological Survey, Whistler sailed for Europe to study painting in 1855. While in Paris, he gradually established a more personal style that he conceived in musical terms. From the 1860s on, Whistler painted in carefully selected tonal ranges and often titled his works “harmonies,” “symphonies,” and “arrangements.” In *Harmony in Blue: The Duet*, three characters from a traditional Italian Commedia dell’Arte troupe enact a dreamlike musical performance on stage: Harlequin at left, a Pierrot-type singer in white, and a gentleman in blue.

Whistler’s compositional inventions, scrims of color, and distinctive correlation of music and painting were key components of the Aesthetic Style, in which art, furniture, wallpapers, and textiles were all designed to create a harmonious interior environment. Although he settled in England, Whistler had far-reaching influence on younger American painters, including William Merritt Chase, Willard Metcalf, and John White Alexander (see works by them in this exhibition).

William Bradford, American, 1823-1892
Arctic Sunset, 1874
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. George H. Davenport 18.192



Despite their great similarity of purpose, William Bradford’s *Arctic Sunset* and Martin Johnson Heade’s *Brazilian Forest* are polar opposites. Painted within ten years of one another, they demonstrate the extent to which 19th-century American artists would go to study nature in its glorious extremes. Like earlier American landscape painters, Bradford, a New Bedford native, was attracted to the sublime in nature. A practicing Quaker, he consciously acknowledged his belief in a Creator and related it to his paintings: “... we have marked every dash of color which the great Painter in his benevolence vouchsafed to us.”

Bradford traveled to the Arctic in the late 1850s and again in 1869, later publishing a book that included both sketches and photographs of his later trip. He was accompanied by a team that included two professional photographers equipped with a large-format camera and crates of glass plate negatives. Back home in his studio Bradford would refer to the photographic prints to recreate natural phenomena, particularly the reflected light glancing off huge expanses of ice. His dependence on photographs was a necessity, as even in August the Arctic temperatures did not surpass freezing. When he went out to make color sketches in his notebooks, he was careful to dress in “the sealskin suits of the Eskimeaux.” In the lower

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right corner of the painting he includes an observant seal, a solitary native of this extremely cold part of the world.

John Singer Sargent, American, 1856-1925

Portrait of Manuel García, 1905

Oil on canvas

Museum Appropriation Fund 19.141

In anticipation of a group of friends and admirers commissioned John Singer Sargent to paint his portrait. Manuel García (1805-1906) had been a professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London and the voice coach of such legendary opera singers as Jenny Lind. He was renowned for a treatise on the human voice and for the invention of a medical device for the examination of the vocal cords. On the occasion of García's approaching 101st birthday, John Singer Sargent was commissioned to paint his portrait. Sargent posed García in profile and used selective color and drawing to chronicle his great age and grace. Limiting his palette to dark and light tones, he contrasted García's luminous head and hands with the severe elegance of his black clothing. This portrait of a centenarian acknowledged García's diminished physical presence, but it also celebrated his enduring intellectual strength.



Hiram Powers, American, 1805-1873

Eve Disconsolate, ca. 1850

Marble

Gift of Mrs. James B. Ames 19.216

Powers began his career in Cincinnati, Ohio, modeling wax figures for a tableau of Dante's Inferno. His style changed significantly after 1837, when he left the United States for Europe and established a studio in Florence, Italy. There he became a leading American neoclassical sculptor, selecting his idealized subjects from history, mythology, and religion. At a time when the American public was uncomfortable with nude sculpture, Powers justified his work through the noble sentiments his figures inspired and the spiritual beauty of the "unveiled soul."



Powers's popularity among wealthy American collectors was enormous. He offered patrons the choice of various versions of his

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works, including bust-length editions such as RISD's *Eve Disconsolate*. In the full-scale version, Eve modestly covers her nudity with her hands, mirroring Masaccio's fresco of Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden, ca. 1427, in the Church of the Carmine near Powers's studio. To meet demand, Powers worked from plaster models whose proportions were transferred to marble with the aid of a pointing machine. Like other neoclassical sculptors, he employed studio assistants to do much of the carving. A hallmark of his work was a special finishing process that he used on fine-grained Serravezza marble to create a close approximation of human flesh. Admirers also felt that the softening effect cast a further veil over the figure's nudity.

John Frederick Kensett, American, 1816-1872
Lake George, Black Mountain, ca. 1869
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf 20.029



Born in Connecticut, Kensett learned the skill of engraving from his father. Through this training he not only became an exceptional draftsman, but also learned to render fine modulations of tone. After seven years of study abroad in Germany, he developed the ability to depict landscape paintings of exquisite and precise tonal range. After his return from Europe, Kensett's views won acclaim from American critics who were moved by their clarity of detail and atmospheric purity. Like other Hudson River School painters, he embraced his native landscape, making several trips to the American West. His later works, including *Lake George, Tongue Mountain*, filter out distraction and seem to represent a personal, tranquil encounter with nature. This painting was acquired in 1873 by Helen Adelia Rowe Metcalf, RISD's founder, at a sale following Kensett's death. It was later given to the Museum by the wife of her son, U. S. Senator Jesse H. Metcalf.

Theodore Robinson, American, 1852-1896
Afternoon Shadows, 1891
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.206



Robinson was one of the few Americans to study Impressionist painting techniques beside Claude Monet. He met Monet in Rouen in 1887 and settled in 1888 at the town of Giverny, where he remained for the next five years. *Afternoon Shadows* was one of two nearly identical paintings he made to show the lengthening shadows on a solitary stack of grain. It reflects a motif that Monet himself explored in his "Haystacks" series of twenty-five views between 1889 and

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1891, showing stacks of wheat at various seasons and times of day. Robinson's technique avoided extremes of color and was tighter than Monet's at this stage. As Robinson wrote in his journal, his aim was to combine Impressionism's "brilliancy and light of real outdoors" with "the austerity, the sobriety, that has always characterized good painting."

John Henry Twachtman, American, 1853-1902

Spring, ca. 1890-1900

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.290

Spring may have been a preliminary oil sketch for a larger painting. In the lower left corner it bears the red stamp of the exhibition and studio sale that took place shortly after Twachtman's death. In his last works, the artist explored the aspects of spontaneity and sincerity that were thought to be embodied in sketches. He worked from nature, here focusing his attention on a small brook behind his house on Round Hill Road in Greenwich, Connecticut. Of the American Impressionist group, Twachtman seemed least attached to academic form and perspective. He did not hesitate to express his painterly marks across the two-dimensional surface of the picture plane, emphasizing touch and movement in alternately drawn and patchily painted areas of color. His friend, painter Childe Hassam, described his work as "strong, and at the same time delicate even to evasiveness."



Willard LeRoy Metcalf, American, 1858-1925

The White Veil, 1909

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.293

In *The White Veil* Metcalf deftly uses a limited tonal range, Impressionist brushstroke, and flattened Japanese perspective to create a quiet winter landscape of Dublin, New Hampshire. Each choice, including the softly gilded frame designed by Charles Dudley Murphy, contributes to the aesthetic presentation of his subject. Trained at the Boston Museum School and then in Paris, Metcalf was a member of "The Ten," an association of American painters who separated their work from crowded annual exhibitions and organized smaller, more harmonious presentations in which wall colors as well as frames would be compatible with their paintings. Childe Hassam, William Merritt Chase, and Frank Benson, whose works may be seen nearby, were members of this group.



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Louis Comfort Tiffany, American, 1848-1933
Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company, American, active 1892-1932
Vase, ca. 1900
Blown Favrite glass
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.348



John La Farge, American, 1835-1910
The Great Pali, 1890
Oil on wood panel
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.397



John La Farge was uniquely gifted as a painter, watercolorist, and stained-glass artist. His work does not resemble that of his peers and is difficult to categorize. Even before Paul Gauguin traveled to Tahiti, La Farge had visited the South Seas with his friend Henry Adams, American man of letters. Late in the 19th century, after American painters had exhausted the vast landscape subjects of the American West and the marvels of South America and the Arctic, La Farge rejected the notion of stunning viewers with exotic island vistas. Instead he painted an intimate view of the Great Pali, a volcanic mountain pass above the Nuuanu valley outside Honolulu on the Hawaiian Island of Oahu. Its altitude is so great that the ocean may be seen breaking along the coast. Adams wrote that the view was one of the most beautiful he had ever encountered and that it “literally petrified” La Farge, who feared sketching in its strong south wind. Neither fear nor awe seem to have influenced this small painting, in which La Farge attempted to record the mysterious essence of the area. He was drawn to the muted colors and abstract shapes of the Hawaiian landscape and painted them “as a release from the modern realities of Hawaiian civilization.”

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James Martin, English, 1778 - 1853; active America, ca 1795-1820

Portrait of a Gentleman, ca. 1820

Pastel on paper

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2000.81

The identity of this distinguished African American gentleman has not been determined. It is likely that he was a New Yorker and possible that he was engaged in commerce or had served in the Revolutionary War. In the U.S. census of 1800, African Americans formed nearly twenty percent of the population, but within that number only ten percent were free. If he were a property owner in New York, he would have been among the small minority of African American males who had the right to vote. The portrait was long thought to be of Pierre Toussaint, a Haitian Catholic who was born into slavery. Brought to New York as a young man, Toussaint worked as a hairdresser, was freed in 1807, and became renowned for his charitable works. Known images of Toussaint include a miniature portrait and a photograph, but despite the similarly elegant costume and grooming in these portraits, Toussaint's features do not seem to match RISD's remarkably vivid likeness. The subject of this portrait remains a mystery.



The double-breasted blue coat with its rows of gold buttons was standard costume for a gentleman of this period. The light breaking around the sitter's head was likewise conventional for portraits of the time, but his gaze and expression are rendered with great empathy and care, as are his skin tone and silver hair. The painting has been attributed to James Martin, a British artist who worked in the New York area between 1794 and 1820. If this attribution is correct, this is Martin's finest work.

William Trost Richards, American, 1833-1905

Purgatory, Near Newport, ca. 1890

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mary and Redwood Wright 2004.107

Born of Quaker parents in Philadelphia, Richards worked as an illustrator before traveling abroad in the 1850s to study drawing and painting in Germany. He perfected his draftsmanship by filling notebooks with fine pencil sketches and also produced luminous watercolors of uncanny accuracy. An admirer of John Ruskin's writings and of British Pre-Raphaelite painters, Richards embraced the belief that artists should adhere to nature's truths, neither selecting nor eliminating its details.



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Marine subjects increasingly became the focus of Richards's paintings after 1874, when he purchased a summer home in Newport. Scenes of the coast around Aquidneck and Conanicut recurred in his work over the next 30 years. This snowy beachscape was an unusual choice for Richards. Remarkable in its scale and simplicity, it captures a wide sweep of Newport's Sachuest ("Second") Beach under a glowering sky with streaks of pale winter sun breaking through. The sea is calm, and the drama associated with Purgatory Chasm is nowhere suggested. Instead, the snow drifts unceremoniously, and the curve of the shoreline gently leads the eye to the bluffs at the southwest end of the beach.

Jasper Francis Cropsey, American, 1823-1900

Landscape, Panorama, ca. 1865-1875

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Edward Burnet 21.471

Cropsey belonged to the second generation of American landscape painters later known as the Hudson River School, continuing the tradition of acute observation of native scenery. He was trained as an architect, but developed a deep understanding of landscape painting and produced views that ranged from quiet, luminous vistas to riotously colored autumnal forest scenes. In *Landscape, Panorama*, Cropsey thinly painted the sky with a pink glaze, highlighting it with blue-grays and whites to suggest floating clouds. His "brushless" style (his brushstrokes are nearly invisible) produced a luminous effect and through it a feeling of calm. Small in scale, this painting was subtitled *Panorama*, describing the generous sweep of landscape it captures.



Around 1860, the panoramic camera was widely used for photographs of European mountain views. Like Sanford Gifford (his broad composition of Lake Geneva may be seen in the next room), Cropsey may have adopted this format for its appeal to sophisticated collectors. Although the site is not identified, Cropsey was familiar with the Southern Catskills and with the Ramapo range near his estate at Warwick, New York.

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Abbott Handerson Thayer, American, 1849-1921

Mother and Child, 1886

Oil on canvas

Jesse Metcalf Fund and Special Gift 24.032

Thayer portrayed his first wife, Kate, and their son Gerald in a composition that intentionally evokes an Italian Renaissance Madonna and Child, demonstrating his deep affection for his family. During the years when Americans were “discovering” both Italy and its painters and when collectors such as Bostonian Isabella Stewart Gardner were actively buying Renaissance pictures, gestures to these early compositions extended even to the design of frames. Through a mutual friend, painter Thomas Dewing, Thayer developed a relationship with architect Stanford White, who designed the imposing frame for the portrait in the form of an altarpiece.



Thomas Cole, American, 1801-1848

Landscape (Landscape with Tree Trunks), 1828

Oil on canvas

Walter H. Kimball Fund 30.063

Thomas Cole, often called the father of American landscape painting, was born and grew up in industrialized England. He moved to the United States with his family in 1818, equipped with some skill as an engraver. While working for his father’s wallpaper and floorcovering business in Ohio, he received his first painting lessons from an itinerant portrait painter named Stein. In the early 1820s, he left home to pursue more sophisticated training, studying at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts before continuing on to New York.



Cole won early success at the National Academy of Design, New York, with paintings that celebrated unspoiled nature in a land ripe with promise. His compositions demonstrated acute observation and topographical accuracy, as well as European conventions of the “picturesque” and the “sublime.” Trips to the Catskills and the White Mountains inspired Cole to paint landscapes suffused with the drama of weather. In this landscape of 1828, a passing storm reveals a mountaintop bathed in sunlight. In the foreground at right is a “blasted” tree, a form that mediates between heaven and earth and represents the vulnerability of living things and the cycle of life and death. Nearly invisible to the eye at the top of the waterfall stands the figure of a Native American, his arm outstretched as if in acknowledgment of nature’s magnificence and power.

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Maurice Brazil Prendergast, American, 1858-1924

On the Beach, ca. 1914-1918

Oil on canvas

Gift of Miss Edith Wetmore 36.211

Prendergast was an odd choice for membership in The Eight, an association of young artists who exhibited together at Macbeth Gallery, New York, in the early 20th century. Although he never adopted the dark palette and urban subject matter of his peers, whom critics dubbed the "Ashcan School," they considered him a kindred spirit: "[He is] one of us – a very personal and original painter – quite unlike any other."

Prendergast was influenced by the watercolors of Cézanne and was familiar with the work of the Post-Impressionist painters Paul Signac and Georges Seurat. Like the latter, he depicted promenades and picnics, but these sunny aspects of contemporary life did not protect him from the barbs of critics. One called his high-keyed mosaics "a jumble of riotous color . . . for all the world like an explosion in a color factory." Prendergast lived in Winchester, Massachusetts, and made frequent excursions to the beaches of Nahant, Revere, and Gloucester, his preferred subjects.



Thomas Cole, American, 1801-1848

Genesee Scenery (Mountain Landscape with Waterfall), 1847

Oil on canvas

Jesse Metcalf Fund 38.054

Genesee Scenery was one of the last great works of Thomas Cole, whose early, romantic *Landscape* (1828) hangs above the mantel in the first gallery. By the late 1840s he had moved away from the aesthetic of dramatic effects, embracing instead nature's ability to offer viewers a deep sense of repose. "In the pure blue sky is the highest sublime," he wrote. "There is the illimitable."

Cole was considered the first professional painter to depict this spectacular section of the upper waters of the Genesee River, which flows north through New York State to Lake Ontario at Rochester from its source just south of the Pennsylvania line. This painting, which was reproduced as an engraving and published in 1849 in Holden's Dollar Magazine revealed a little-known landscape whose peacefulness contrasted with the bombastic beauty of the highly publicized Niagara Falls. Cole produced *Genesee Scenery* with the help of numerous carefully drawn sketches, and although it shows



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the middle of the three Genesee falls, it was intentionally a combination of views rather than an accurate depiction of a specific site. Cole created his composition as if perched at a viewpoint high above the footbridge and mill, from which he recorded details as specific as the many varieties of trees in the forest and the rusted hues of minerals in the rock.

Fitz Henry Lane, American, 1804-1865
View from Kettle Cove, Manchester-by-the-Sea, 1847
Oil on canvas
Jesse Metcalf Fund 38.068

Like many aspiring artists of his era, Fitz Hugh Lane began his career as a printer's assistant. Later a successful lithographer in Boston, he produced advertisements, trade cards, and sheet-music illustrations before making his first attempts at landscape painting. Lane's emphasis on drawing, which he learned by copying prints, is evident in this view of a New England harbor. He grew up around Gloucester, Massachusetts, and moved back there in the late 1840s, when he decided to dedicate himself to painting. Nostalgia for a simpler time may be sensed in Lane's rendering of working people in the clear light of early morning. Their activity in the shaded foreground emphasizes the bright stillness of the sea and sky beyond. While the landscape is portrayed with great realism, Lane's nearly brushless stroke in the reflective water and the pale pink sky suggests a spiritual realm. His combination of precise drawing and luminous color imply a reverence for nature that was a constant theme in 19th-century American landscape painting.



William Holbrook Beard, American, 1824-1900
Santa Claus, ca. 1862
Oil on canvas
Jesse Metcalf Fund 42.265

In 1823, an anonymous poem appeared in the *Troy Sentinel*, a newspaper in industrial upstate New York. It was later credited to Clement Clarke Moore, a New Yorker of distinguished lineage who was a biblical scholar at Columbia College. Clarke acknowledged that he had composed *A Visit from Saint Nicholas* as a Christmas gift for his children, spinning a tale in which the sober Dutch bishop Saint Nicholas was now "chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf." More engaging by far was his means of transportation: "a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer."



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From the moment of its publication, the poem became an American favorite, conjuring a Santa Claus who slid down chimneys with a sack full of toys for good children. In an unbroken sequence of publications, illustrators have depicted the elfin benefactor “dressed all in fur from his head to his foot” or at the very least wearing a fur-trimmed hat. William Holbrook Beard, an animal painter and sculptor who later depicted Wall Street Bears and Bulls dancing together, seized the Christmas tale and reset it in a rarely depicted urban landscape. Efficiently tossing toys into chimneys, Santa rides in a delicate swan boat drawn by reindeer whose harnesses are decorated with silver bells. The magical event is viewed from a rooftop below skies that are clouded with dense coal smoke. The choking pollution of 19th-century American cities seems only to heighten the theatrical quality of this remarkable illustration, adding a veil of darkness to the mystery of Christmas Eve.

Alonzo Chappel, American, 1828-1887
The Landing of Roger Williams in 1636, 1857
Oil on canvas
Museum Works of Art Fund 43.003

Alonzo Chappel's painting represents the site where Roger Williams (ca. 1603-83) and a group of his followers were thought to have stepped ashore in 1636, refugees from their original settlement in Rumford, on the opposite bank of the Seekonk River. According to tradition, they were met by members of the Narragansett tribe with the greeting "What Cheer Netop" ("Welcome, friend") and directed to a nearby cove further west. Eventually, this site became the city of Providence.



This story of the landing was handed down as oral history for generations, but it was revived and made visually indelible by Chappel's 1857 painting. In the artist's imagined version of the event, Native American men, women, and children – some nude, others in full costume – greet Williams and his party and offer a peace pipe. Williams places one foot on a ledge of the bank and reaches with hands outstretched and palms down, a pose that is recreated in the statue of Williams that today overlooks Providence from the public park on Congdon Street. The painting was reproduced as an engraving and published in 1858 in J. A. Spencer's *History of the United States*. Because of its familiarity, it has become accepted in the popular imagination as a true rendering of an event that took place in 1636, rather than as an artist's theatricalized interpretation of history.

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A. Wighe, American, active 1849

Trial by Jury, 1849

Oil on canvas

Gift of Edith Jackson Green and F. Ellis Jackson 43.346

This mid-19th-century court scene is the only work by an otherwise unknown painter who signed his painting "A. Wighe," likely a pseudonym. The name suggests the artist's support for the Whig Party, of which U. S. Representative Abraham Lincoln was then an elected official. A Lincolnesque figure in a black top hat observes the trial from the lower left corner of the picture.



Wighe's *Trial by Jury* seems to take place far from the more serious concerns of the nation: the Mexican-American War (1846-48) and the issue of slavery in newly annexed territories. The barn/courtroom has the atmosphere of a rural gentlemen's clubhouse. While rowdy boys gambol in the hay, the club's older members are content to spend the afternoon listening, debating, and dozing. The legal contest concerns the pomaded fellow with his foot on a barrel at right. In spite of the satiric characterizations, the case being heard may have some historical merit. It has been suggested that the apparent city slicker is the heir to a local estate and that the trial may involve a New York State law granting land-use rights to tenant farmers, represented by the figure outside at left.

Eastman Johnson, American, 1824-1906

Sugaring Off, ca. 1861-1866

Oil on canvas

Museum Works of Art Fund 45.050

Nineteenth-century Americans who found their lives transformed by the Industrial Revolution took comfort in nostalgic paintings that described a simpler time and often suggested a moral lesson. Born in Maine, Johnson created a group of artworks that chronicled the celebration of maple-sap harvesting at a camp at Fryeburg. His concept for *Sugaring Off* lay somewhere between a grand history painting and a convincing reenactment of rustic life. He would have shown a large sketch such as this to prospective buyers, hoping to win a commission for a finished version. This particular idea never attracted a patron.



Even in this early stage, Johnson's depiction is lively and informative. Free and expressive underpainting and preparatory drawings reveal the groupings and situations planned for the final scheme. Attention

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to poses and gestures, notes of color, and general details of costume lend it authenticity. Viewers were encouraged to forget the Civil War then raging and to focus instead on the holiday spirit of this gathering and the peaceful continuity of pre-industrial America.

American
Native American Sachem, ca. 1700
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mr. Robert Winthrop 48.246

For decades, this painting of a Native American sachem (chief or leader) was misidentified as a portrait of Ninigret II. Recent scholarship indicates that the subject may be Robin Cassacinamon, the most influential Pequot leader in the decades following the Pequot War of 1637-38. Cassacinamon was known to have been a friend of the Winthrop family of Connecticut, through whom this painting descended. The tribe originally occupied the basin of the Pequot River (now Connecticut's Thames River), some 250 square miles bordering Long Island Sound. The word "Pequot" may be translated as "People of the shallow waters." They numbered about 8,000 just prior to European contact, which began in the early 1600s.



Although the portrait pre-dates the other works in this exhibition by more than a century, it has been included for its importance as an early representation of an historical Native American. Native Americans often appear in 19th-century American art as elements of a narrative (see Alonzo Chappell's *Landing of Roger Williams 1636*, nearby) or as romanticized symbols of their union with nature (see Thomas Cole's *Landscape* above the mantle). The artist is unknown, but it is likely that he was British or European and had received nominal training. The landscape may be a generalized "idyllic" site, copied from printed material or from another painting. The artist may also have relied on other sources for the stance of the figure, but the historically accurate costume suggests that the likeness is an intentional representation of a significant Native American individual.

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Augustus Saint-Gaudens, American, 1848-1907

Amor Caritas (Angel of Love), 1898

Bronze

Museum Collection 48.352

Augustus Saint-Gaudens was born in Ireland of a French father and an Irish mother. The family came to New York shortly after his birth. Saint-Gaudens apprenticed to a cameo maker as a teenager and took classes at Cooper Union and the National Academy of Design. At nineteen he traveled to Paris to see the Universal Exposition and remained abroad for the next ten years. His training at the École des Beaux-Arts and his careful study of Renaissance sculpture in Italy provided the foundation for his informed and sophisticated style. Saint-Gaudens's early appreciation of the principles of relief sculpture, in which forms stand out more or less from a flat background, was learned from cameo carving. He later used relief techniques in medal and coin design, in portrait plaques, and in large-scale monuments such as the Civil War memorial to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth Volunteer Infantry (the first African American unit in the Union Army) located on the Boston Common.

Amor Caritas (Angel of Love) is a reduction of a larger gilded sculpture that Saint-Gaudens created at his studio in Cornish, New Hampshire. The production of smaller versions of acclaimed works was a common artistic practice in the 19th century. It satisfied patrons and was an important source of income for the artist. The draped and winged angel was one of Saint-Gaudens's signature themes. It evolved from a figure that he invented for a private tomb in 1880 and later transformed into caryatids (columns in the form of female figures) for a mantelpiece in Cornelius Vanderbilt's New York mansion.



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Alexander Stirling Calder, American, 1870-1945
Gorham Company Foundry, American, 1831-
Sioux Brave, Our American Stoic, 1912
Bronze
Gift of the estate of Dr. Helen C. Putnam 51.261

A. Stirling Calder, father of the well-known 20th-century sculptor Alexander Calder, was a renowned artist in his own right. Trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts under Thomas Eakins and at the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris, he later shifted from a highly academic style to one that embraced the simpler, more abstract lines of modernism. *Sioux Brave, Our American Stoic*, a bronze sculpture cast at the foundries of the Gorham Company in Rhode Island, demonstrates his interest in creating monolithic figures stripped of extraneous detail. His approach enhances the dignity of his subject and contrasts dramatically with the more illustrative style of his contemporary, Frederic Remington, whose *Mountain Man* may be seen nearby.



By the early 20th century, Native American populations had endured a long assault on their land and culture. Their numbers had dropped dramatically, and they were perceived by some as a vanishing race. Federal policies attempted and ultimately failed to “help” Native populations by forcing assimilation rather than by preserving their languages, customs, and physical culture. Artists such as Stirling Calder and photographer Edward Curtis sought to create dignified images of Native Americans, but their work also served an audience whose interest was based on nostalgia and on an ideal of the noble savage. Sculptures depicting Native Americans proliferated in the early years of the 20th century, when they were used to symbolize the American continent, its rivers, and its indigenous virtues. *Sioux Brave, Our American Stoic*, is a thoughtful digression from this sort of cultural appropriation. The title, assigned by Calder, suggests the Greek virtues of self control, fortitude, and detachment from distracting emotion, qualities that equip the individual to find peace within himself and endure great difficulty.

Asher Brown Durand, American, 1796-1886
Chocorua Peak, 1855
Oil on canvas
Gift of Rhode Island Art Association 52.104

Durand spent the summer of 1855 in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, staying at North Conway, near Mount Chocorua. It was his first return to the region in many years, and his absence had been punctuated by a trip abroad and exposure to European painting. The



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stark view of Mount Chocorua, a summit known for its sheer precipices, was unusual for Durand, who often enlivened his landscapes with small figures. Here he carefully avoids the drama of weather and concentrates his focus on the mountain's harsh profile.

By 1855, Durand was the senior and most admired painter of the American landscape. His friend Thomas Cole, whose *Landscape* may be seen above the mantel in this room, had died seven years earlier, and a new generation of artists would soon succeed his own. Conscious of the uniqueness of the American landscape, Durand published advice to younger painters in an art journal, *The Crayon*, the same year that he painted Mount Chocorua. In his article "Letters on Landscape Painting" he urged them to work directly after nature and to "go not abroad" but concentrate instead on indigenous resources and the scenery of their native land. He admonished painters to scrupulously represent nature, but allowed invention in details, such as the placement of a tree. He insisted on adherence to the "magnitude of objects and extent of space" in a landscape, and followed his own advice in his representation of Mount Chocorua.

Randolph Rogers, American, 1825-1892
Nydia, the Blind Girl of Pompeii, ca. 1860
Marble

Gift of Mrs. Mary Russell in memory of Mr. John Fiske Paine 53.423

As molten lava poured from Mount Vesuvius destroying all in its path, the little flower seller Nydia, the blind girl of Pompeii, guided her beloved Glaucus to the relative safety of the shoreline. The touching character from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1834 novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* so captured public imagination that Randolph Rogers's *Nydia* became the most popular full-length sculpture by a 19th-century American artist. Rogers modeled *Nydia* in 1853-54 and over the next 30 years received nearly 100 commissions for reduced or full-scale authorized copies of the figure. At least 52 of these were completed, thanks to the skill of Italian stone carvers whom he employed at his studio in Rome. RISD's marble, carved around 1860, is one of the smaller versions. A *Nydia* measuring nearly twice the size is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Nydia is perhaps Rogers's best-known idealized sculpture, but he also achieved recognition through public commissions, including one for the Columbus doors of the United States Capitol. A committee of prominent Rhode Islanders had him create the state's memorial to its deceased Civil War servicemen, which now stands downtown at the center of Providence's Kennedy Plaza. Along with the list of the war dead are four figurative panels, one of which depicts an African-



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American slave with broken shackles dangling from his outstretched arms.

Sanford Robinson Gifford, American, 1823-1881

Lake Geneva, 1875

Oil on canvas

Anonymous gift 56.166

Sanford Robinson Gifford attended Brown University between 1842 and 1844. After moving to New York in 1845, he studied watercolor painting and anatomy and developed an interest in the landscape paintings of Thomas Cole. Throughout his career Gifford exhibited paintings that reflected his interest in the Hudson River Valley, but he also created a body of work that documented his travels abroad. He made his first trip to Europe in 1855 and traveled there again in 1868. During the latter journey he sketched the 13th-century Château of Chillon near the shore of Geneva's Lac Léman. The castle had been made famous by a poem of George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824), and was a romantic destination for 19th-century travelers as well as a favorite subject of painters.

When Gifford painted Lake Geneva back in New York, he relied on his sketches, but very likely also turned to photographs to help him reconstitute the scene. By the 1860s, the invention of a large-format panoramic camera permitted the capture of fine black-and-white images of this location. Such photographic prints were sold to travelers by European firms such as Braun and Company. The format perfectly suited Gifford's sweeping view of the wide expanse of lake and the hazy peaks of the Dents du Midi. Gifford's exceptional ability to capture the luminosity of sky and water transforms the landscape, bathing it in a faint rosy glow.



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Gorham Manufacturing Company, American, 1831-

William Christmas Codman, English, 1839-1921

Joseph Edward Straker, English, 1843-1912

Franz Ziegler, German, 1869-1934

Potter and Company, American, fl. 1878-1910

Martelé Writing Table and Chair, 1903

Ebony, mahogany, boxwood, redwood, thuya wood, ivory, mother-of-pearl, silver, mirrored glass, and gilded tooled leather

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick B. Thurber 58.095ab



Mary Cassatt, American, 1844-1926

Simone in a Blue Bonnet, ca. 1903

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 60.095

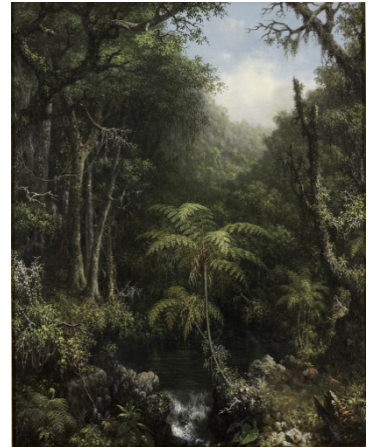


Mary Cassatt was the only American artist to participate in the Impressionist exhibitions of the 1870s and 80s in Paris. A close friend of Edgar Degas, she was among the most advanced painters of her generation, as well as an innovative printmaker and exceptional pastellist. Her models were often female members of her household, whether in Paris or at her country home at Château de Beaufresne in the nearby Oise region. Between 1903 and 1904, Cassatt made at least 20 pictures of a little blonde girl named Simone, posing her in large colorful bonnets decorated with ribbons and feathers. In this portrait, Cassatt uses her draftsman's skill to render the child's face, then brushes in her hair and costume with thick strokes of paint. The unfinished state of the painting reveals further information about Cassatt's technique. Although she paints a dark background to project the figure forward, she otherwise preserves the natural brightness of the canvas, a technique used by the Impressionists to enhance their ability to represent an overall light tonality.

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Martin Johnson Heade, American, 1819-1904
Brazilian Forest, 1864
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. C. Richard Steedman 68.052

The lure of science and exotic landscapes was strong enough to divert Martin Johnson Heade from the placid haystacks and marshes of his native New England. From late 1863 until the spring of 1864 he traveled in Brazil, seeking local species of hummingbirds to be depicted in oil paintings and chromolithographs. His trip was apparently sponsored by Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, who like himself was captivated by the study of natural phenomena.



Heade's inscription on the wooden stretcher of this painting emphasized his own botanical interests: "From Forest Studies in South America - - Tree Fern." Indeed, the tall fern that springs from the lower right of the painting is the featured specimen, bathed in a soft light that distinguishes the structure of each frond. The tiny figures of a man and his dog provide a sense of scale and suggest the nearly overpowering density of this humid environment. Heade made carefully annotated studies of the plants he encountered in the Brazilian forest, perhaps intending to use them to illustrate a publication on the flora of this exotic world. He relied on the careful drawings in his sketchbooks when he painted this picture back in a studio in London. The small view was shown in New York, where it was purchased by Governor Henry Lippitt of Rhode Island.

William Sidney Mount, American, 1807-1868
Portrait of Hannah Muncy Smith, 1852
Oil on canvas
Gift of Dr. William M. Muncy 70.100

Hannah Muncy Smith's sober demeanor reflects her age and her station in life. She lived in Pentaquit on Long Island, New York, and was very likely a widow and a property owner. An inscription by the artist on the back of the painting indicates that she was painted at 73 years old, an advanced age for a time when American women were not expected to live beyond their forties. Her appearance has been likened to the busts of stoic Roman matrons, while her costume recalls the dark robes and meticulous white bonnets seen in Dutch portraiture.



William Sidney Mount, also a native of Long Island, is best known for his lively scenes of life along its eastern shores. He painted relatively few portraits, but he expressed satisfaction with this one when he described its process in his notebook:

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I made a drawing of an old lady, Mrs. Hannah Smith, aged 73 with india ink. After I dismissed the sitter, I glazed the cap with cobalt and the background and dress, with black and burnt sienna mixed and used thinly megilp drying oil [a painting medium consisting of mastic varnish and linseed oil]; my object – to kill or subdue the white ground so that I could see the head (the effect) better while dead coloring. In the last sitting I scumbled pure white and touched parts I wished to leave transparent – the portrait successful in color and likeness.

William Morris Hunt, American, 1824-1879
Portrait of Ellen M. Brown (Mrs. Ellen Berry), 1874
Oil on canvas
Bequest of Mrs. Ellen M. Berry 77.034

Ellen M. Brown, a talented amateur musician, was about 18 years old when she sat for William Morris Hunt. The artist and teacher was highly regarded in Rhode Island. He had social connections to families in Boston, Newport, and Providence, and was the brother of architect Richard Morris Hunt, the designer of several Gilded Age Newport mansions and of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Educated at Harvard College, Hunt went abroad in his twenties and received most of his training in Paris. He was influenced there by figure painter Thomas Couture and by the realist artists who worked in and around the forest of Fontainebleau and the village of Barbizon. When he returned to the United States, he conducted a summer art school in Newport, imparting Barbizon School techniques to his students. In the portrait of Miss Brown, he applies their methods, designating his subject with broad masses of light and dark that he then refined with thin washes of color and highlights of thick impasto.



Quezal Art Glass and Decorating Company, American, active 1901-20
Tumbler, ca. 1910-20
Blown iridescent glass
Gift of Mrs. Harvey W. Burgher 77.068



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Quezal Art Glass and Decorating Company, American, active 1901-20
Tumbler, ca. 1910-20
Blown iridescent glass
Gift of Mrs. Harvey W. Burgher 77.069



John Singer Sargent, American, 1856-1925
A Boating Party, ca. 1889
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Houghton P. Metcalf in memory of her husband,
Houghton P. Metcalf 78.086



Born in Florence, Italy, to American parents, John Singer Sargent was brought to Paris in 1874 to enroll at the École des Beaux-Arts and to study advanced painting technique in the studio of Carolus-Duran. Over the next ten years he won attention at the Paris Salon with original subject pictures and portraits. In 1884 his daring portrait of the socialite Virginie Gautreau (*Madame X*), drew fire from conservative critics and placed his future at risk. He departed from Paris that summer to visit friends in England, eventually settling there. He made his reputation during the 1890s through the creation of dazzling portraits of the British and American upper class and industrial elite.

A Boating Party depicts Sargent's sister Violet and his friends Paul and Alice Helleu vacationing in the English countryside. He used the theme of carefree idleness, a favorite motif of his holiday works, to experiment with Impressionist composition and technique. The painting suggests the influence of Claude Monet, whose related subjects Sargent had seen at Giverny in the late 1880s. The background, which was left unfinished, shows that Sargent had not yet mastered the use of broken brushmarks. On the other hand, his confidence is apparent in the placement of figures, reflections in the water, and in the asymmetric organization of the boats. In his own amusing twist on dramatic cropping, Sargent keeps the flat red punt

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from slipping out of the picture plane by anchoring it with Helleu's right leg.

Louis Comfort Tiffany, American, 1848-1933
Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company, American, active 1892-1932
Bowl, 1925
Blown Favrile glass
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph K. Ott 84.212.1



Henry Ossawa Tanner, American, 1859-1937
The Wailing Wall, ca. 1898
Oil on canvas
Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 84.234



Tanner was the most celebrated African-American painter at the turn of the century. The son of an African Methodist Episcopal bishop, he studied art with Thomas Eakins from 1880 to 1882 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Paintings he exhibited there and in New York attracted several patrons who sponsored his study in France. He traveled to Paris in 1891 and established an international reputation there. Like James Whistler, Mary Cassatt, and John Singer Sargent, Tanner settled abroad, living in Paris for the remainder of his life.

In 1897 Tanner received a medal at the Paris Salon for *The Raising of Lazarus*, a painting that was purchased by the French government for its collection of contemporary art. Later that year he traveled to Palestine, where he intently observed the landscape, costume, and customs of its people in order to assure the accuracy of his biblical scenes. *The Wailing Wall* is a study showing devout Jews, their heads covered by prayer shawls, standing at the holiest place of prayer in the Jewish world. Known as the Western Wall, it is a remnant of the retaining wall that underlay the Second Temple of Jerusalem.

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William Merritt Chase, American, 1849-1916

Portrait of a Lady in Pink, ca. 1888–1889

Oil on canvas

Gift of Isaac C. Bates 94.010

Chase developed his technical virtuosity in Munich during the 1870s, studying with the academic portrait and history painter Karl von Piloty. When he returned to New York he abandoned the characteristically dark tones of Munich and pushed his color toward a lighter Impressionist palette. The model for *Lady in Pink* was one of Chase's students, Mariette "Pansy" Benedict Cotton. Chase was an influential teacher at the Art Students' League in New York City and then at his own Chase School, and he also gave summer classes near Southampton, Long Island, his home. Chase considered the portrait one of his best, submitting it for exhibition at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. It represented his eclectic painterly skills from the use of finely shaded modeling in the sitter's face and arms to bravura brushstrokes in her frothy pink gown. Like many of his contemporaries, Chase acknowledged a debt to James Whistler, devising his painting as a tonal study and employing a decorative Japanesque scrim as a unifying background. At the conclusion of the Columbian Exhibition, Providence collector and RISD board chairman Isaac C. Bates purchased the portrait. It was the first work by a living American artist to enter the Museum's collection.



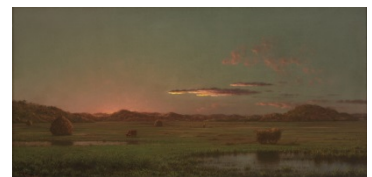
Martin Johnson Heade, American, 1819-1904

Newburyport Marshes, Sunset, ca. 1875-1880

Oil on canvas

Collection of James G. Mumford EL002.80

Heade created more than one hundred paintings of marshes and meadowlands near the New England coast. In this scene of dusk at Newburyport, Massachusetts, he is characteristically meticulous and restrained. The horizontal format is common to Heade's marsh compositions, as is the use of a tonal palette to express mood and indicate time of day. He bathes his landscapes in clear light, picking out shapes and reflections to animate a still and limited composition. In many of these personal, localized views of nature, Heade avoids dramatic effects of weather, preferring his landscapes to be intimately scaled and contemplative.



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Edward Mitchell Bannister, American, 1828-1901

Oaks, ca. 1880

Oil on canvas

Extended loan by Mr. and Mrs. Edward A. Giarusso EL014.80

In 1876, Edward Mitchell Bannister became the first African-American artist to win a national award when he received first prize at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition for a painting entitled *Under the Oaks*. A contemporary described it as a “simple composition, quiet in tone but with strong oppositions,” characteristics that also apply to the landscape on view here. Like other Rhode Island landscape painters, Bannister was inspired by the work of the French Barbizon artists: intimate, contemplative views of nature rendered in muted tones with softened brushstrokes. The style stood in contrast with the work of late Hudson River School painters who continued to represent nature’s tiniest details even toward the end of the century.



Frederic Remington, American, 1861-1909

The Mountain Man, 1903

Bronze

Lent by Andrew O. Ott EL024.82

Nostalgia for the disappearing American West fueled the success and reputation of illustrator Frederic Remington, whose bronze sculptures became sought-after reminders of the daring of American expansion. *The Mountain Man* is a highly realistic counterpart to Remington’s first sculpture, the iconic bronze figure of a cowboy on a bucking horse that even today is exhibited in the White House. Cast with meticulous attention to detail at Roman Bronze Works in New York, the weary trapper descends a perilous slope on his trusty packhorse. Nearly all of Remington’s 22 bronzes depict Western subjects. Their popularity endured, and their seeming truthfulness to life was admired by collectors long after Remington completed the last of them, *The Stampede*, in 1909, the year of his death.



Thomas Eakins, American, 1844-1916

Phidias Studying for the Frieze of Parthenon, ca. 1890

Oil on wood

Collection of the Eakins Press Foundation TL59.2003

