

# American Paintings, 1900–1945

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# American Modernism and the National Gallery of Art: "The Perfect Place"

The story of how the collection of modern American paintings at the National Gallery of Art was formed is a rather curious and little known one within the Gallery's larger institutional narrative.[1] When the Gallery opened in 1941, there were only a few American paintings and no contemporary or modern art of any kind on view. It was considered a conservative institution mainly devoted to the art of the European past. And yet, in stark contrast to the older, more established 19th-century institutions on the East Coast, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, or the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the National Gallery of Art, founded in the midst of two of the 20th century's most devastating maelstroms—the Great Depression and World War II—was markedly a child of the modern era.[2] From its inception, the Gallery's institutional identity was both inherently modern and, as the nation's gallery in the nation's capital, inherently American.

Another important context for understanding the evolution of the American modernism collection is the debate regarding the museum's organization that took place over the course of the 1920s and 1930s, before its official opening in 1941, and more specifically how that debate related to pressing issues regarding the role of contemporary art museums. The discussion of what a national gallery of art in the United States should collect and display took place in tandem with a consideration of what museums of American and modern art should collect and display. Then, as now, complex, dynamic problems surrounding the relationship of present to past and of modernism to nationalism and internationalism resisted easy answers, with theoretical ideals and strict divisions giving way to the evolving practical demands of running museums.

Given the Gallery's conservative reputation, it is surprising to learn that the primary sources for the collection of American modernist paintings can be traced back to a coterie of its most influential early supporters. Almost every major development in the field of American modernism at the Gallery is indebted

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in some way to either its first chief curator, John Walker, or to one of three early trustees: Chester Dale, Duncan Phillips, and Paul Mellon. If American modernism was not a particularly high priority for the Gallery in its first years, these "conservative" modernists nonetheless helped to establish at a very early stage a commitment to the field that proved to be persistent and effective. One of the most significant examples of this falls outside the parameters of this catalog: the gift of over 1,600 photographs by Alfred Stieglitz known as the Key Set given to the Gallery in 1949, at Phillips's urging, by Stieglitz's widow, Georgia O'Keeffe.[3] While the Stieglitz photographs sometimes lay fallow at the Gallery as the status of the medium waxed and waned, O'Keeffe's gift eventually led to the establishment of an independent department of photographs in 1990.[4] In the case of the painting collections, the masterpieces by George Bellows given by Dale in 1944 and 1963, the oils in the Alfred Stieglitz bequest directed to the Gallery by O'Keeffe with the encouragement of Walker and Phillips in 1949, and the construction of I. M. Pei's East Building, erected in 1978 with the informed patronage of Paul Mellon, were all crucial to the development of the American modernist holdings at the Gallery. Dale's and Phillips's interest in the followers of Robert Henri and Stieglitz respectively assured that a critical body of work by the artists associated with these progenitors of American modernism was put in place. The East Building catalyzed an active dialogue between modern art and the past, and established an effective architectural and conceptual framework for further developing the Gallery's American modernist collections.

This essay provides an institutional history of American modernism at the National Gallery of Art and demonstrates how, gradually, unevenly, and at times idiosyncratically, the Gallery's holdings of American modernist paintings have coalesced around the basic structural elements established by Walker, Dale, Phillips, and Mellon. These broader historical perspectives are intended to complement the primary content of this online publication: the detailed entries on individual paintings by the catalog's lead author, Robert Torchia, and other scholars.

#### NATIONAL AND MODERN

The great modernist patron and poet Gertrude Stein posited the dilemma museums faced in the interwar period succinctly: "You can be a museum or you can be modern, but you can't be both." [5] One of the premises underlying early

20th-century modernism was that the new movements represented a break from the past and in many ways from history itself. Ezra Pound's famous imperative to "make it new," rather than preserving the old, carried the day. The emerging institutions devoted to modern, contemporary, or, to use a period term, "living art," which came of age at that time, had to either accept or challenge that premise.[6] Further complicating matters was the uncertain status of American modernism during the 1920s and 1930s, when a general belief still prevailed that American art of any period was derivative and of secondary importance to that of Europe.[7]

Founded in 1929, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) initially took the position that it would not form a permanent collection but instead deaccession works more than 50 years old.[8] It would regularly jettison the past in favor of the present. A decade later, the National Gallery of Art self-consciously distanced itself from contemporary art by adopting policies that prohibited the Gallery from including and exhibiting paintings in the permanent collection until 20 years after an artist's death, and from deaccessioning.[9] At the time, these kinds of restrictions were a way for both of these young institutions to more sharply define themselves in relation to each other and to differentiate their missions from other museums. Such clear-cut collecting and exhibiting rules were, however, ultimately futile attempts to resolve dilemmas that 20th-century museums were constantly being confronted with in multiple forms, with new styles rapidly superseding each other and the present receding into the past at an ever faster rate. In time such rules would prove arbitrary and unworkable for both the modern museum and national gallery alike.

The formation of the National Gallery of Art was a particularly complex undertaking. By the early 1920s there was a growing consensus that the current display of works at the Smithsonian Institution's National Gallery of Art, a disparate collection then consigned to rooms at the National Museum of Natural History, was inadequate and that funds needed to be raised to erect a separate building for the nation's art.[10] The powerful Pittsburgh banker and financier Andrew Mellon, who had arrived in Washington in 1921 as Secretary of the Treasury under Warren B. Harding, intervened and made it known that he was willing to build an entirely new national gallery. Mellon soon also pledged to donate his superb collection of European old master paintings and sculpture to serve as the core of the museum's collection.

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Officially authorized by Congress in 1937 and designed by John Russell Pope, Mellon's museum was modeled on the National Gallery in London. As in London, Washington's collection was organized by various national schools of art: French, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, British, and American. At the museum's opening, the many gaps in the collection and empty galleries were immediately apparent. For an institution founded upon the proclivities of a collector of Old Master painting and sculpture it is not surprising that contemporary American painting was absent, especially when one considers that in 1941 the collection of American paintings from all periods consisted of 10 works.[11] The Gallery's many lacunae served as a challenge to Americans to complete what Andrew Mellon had begun and to participate in the building of a new national collection through private means, a challenge to which the nation soon enthusiastically responded. But, like its sister institution in London, the work of living artists was not included in the Gallery's portfolio.

Andrew Mellon's approach separated the function of the new National Gallery of Art not only from MoMA and the Whitney Museum of American Art (founded in 1930) but also from Washington institutions that were collecting the work of contemporary American artists, including the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Phillips Collection. It also set the Gallery apart from the Smithsonian, where natural history and art history had traditionally intersected. By placing the museum on a wholly new footing, Mellon's formulation gave the Gallery a fresh start as a singular national institution built for and dedicated to the great art of the past. Unlike museums of modern art for which the notion of a "permanent" collection was antithetical, Andrew Mellon envisioned the Gallery as a repository for time-tested, timeless masterpieces that would remain in its collection in perpetuity.

Mellon's generosity received almost universal approbation, but the Gallery's small American holdings, prohibitions against collecting contemporary American Art, and emphasis on other national schools immediately raised the question of whether it could truly claim to be a national museum. This was an especially pertinent criticism in the 1930s, when the federal government was supporting the nation's contemporary artists through the programs of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Federal Arts Project (FAP). The leading regionalist painter of the time, Thomas Hart Benton, voiced the concerns of many:

There is nothing national whatever in Mr. Mellon's museum. We are fortunate to have it, to be sure...[since] the collection...properly regarded...may provide immense stimulation for art in this country. But [the Mellon paintings] are not our art and we cannot for a moment regard them as such....If we don't want our culture to be a series of imitative gestures we must keep our educational procedures out of the hands of those...who are so certain that art is an attribute of the dead that they put thirty year death clauses in their purchasing programs to keep out the vulgarity of life.[12]

In addition to the issues surrounding American contemporary art, the National Gallery of Art also had not solved the issue that led to its founding: how to consolidate and display the Smithsonian's art collections, renamed the National Collection of Fine Arts in 1937. Cognizant of both problems, Congress, the same month it authorized the National Gallery of Art, proposed a "Smithsonian Gallery of Art." In addition to housing its historic art collections, the Smithsonian Gallery would be charged with encouraging and acquiring the works of contemporary American artists, the best of which would in theory, after the requisite 20-year probationary period, enter the National Gallery of Art permanent collection.[13] In 1939, the cutting-edge architects Eero and Eliel Saarinen of the Cranbrook Academy won a national design competition for the new museum, to be sited on the Mall directly across from the National Gallery of Art Pope building. Stymied by a lack of private funding, the opposition of cultural conservatives who favored the prevailing taste for neoclassical public architecture, and the outbreak of World War II, the Saarinens' remarkably prescient vision for a modern museum in Washington never came to fruition.[14]

Efforts to coordinate the missions of the various art institutions in Washington continued. In 1945, for instance, the Corcoran Gallery of Art curator Jeremiah O'Connor wrote to the National Gallery of Art director David Finley suggesting a cooperative arrangement that would carve out very distinct areas of responsibility: American art for the Corcoran and the National Collection of Fine Arts, modern art for the Phillips Gallery, and European art for the National Gallery of Art.[15] While a rational arrangement, O'Connor had overlooked the Gallery's stated commitment to collecting American art of the past and, more understandably, failed to register the Gallery's interest in American modernism. For, despite Andrew Mellon and his close associate Finley's indifference

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to modernism in general, there were in fact a group of knowledgeable and influential supporters of 20th-century American art among the Gallery's early ranks: John Walker (1906–1995), Chester Dale (1883–1962), and Duncan Phillips (1886–1966). Walker, along with Lincoln Kirstein and Edward Warburg, had established the Harvard Society of Contemporary Art in 1928, a forerunner of the Museum of Modern Art, and personally collected American modernists such as Morris Graves.[16] Dale was the friend and contemporary of many of the artists who had gathered around Robert Henri early in the century, including George Bellows and Guy Pène du Bois.[17] Phillips, meanwhile, was responsible for the first museum of modern art in the United States and was one of the most enthusiastic backers of the artists associated with Alfred Stieglitz, such as Arthur Dove, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, and Charles Demuth.[18]

Walker, Dale, and Phillips all honored Andrew Mellon's emphasis on the Old Masters of European art, but understood that the National Gallery of Art, while it might defer or be circumspect about its decisions regarding what, when, and how to collect American modernism, could not afford to ignore the field if it were to properly represent the history of American painting. Reconciling the spheres of modern, American, and European art would always be a difficult task, and trying to clearly differentiate them a self-defeating exercise for a national gallery. A more flexible approach was called for, and, in the wake of Andrew Mellon's death in 1937, just after the Gallery had received Congressional approval, it would be these younger men, all well versed in the issues of contemporary art, who would establish a more workable foundation upon which to build the Gallery's American modernist collection.

#### CHESTER DALE

In addition to his renowned collection of 19th-century French impressionist paintings, highly sought after by major museums across the country, Chester Dale also admired and collected works by the American painter George Bellows, a contemporary he had befriended in his youth in New York. By tragic happenstance, Bellows's paintings were eligible to be incorporated into the permanent collection shortly after the Gallery opened because of the artist's death from appendicitis at the age of 42 in 1925. Late in 1944, Dale, keenly aware of the pending 20th anniversary of Bellows's demise, purchased what many would consider the artist's greatest and most controversial painting, the iconic

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interracial boxing image *Both Members of This Club* [fig. 1]. Shortly afterward, Dale bequeathed the work to the Gallery so that it could enter the permanent collection the moment it became eligible on January 8, 1945.

Dale's gift of *Both Members of This Club* could not have been more significant for the future of American modernism at the Gallery. The painting's brutal, shocking subject matter and slashing, expressionistic brushwork broke decisively from the pieties of the Victorian past and embodied the raw violence and new energies that modernism had unleashed. No other American painting of the first decade of the 20th century declared its modernity more forcefully or expressed more insistently how important the achievements of Bellows's generation were and would be to the history of American art. Moreover, no other painting could have revealed so plainly the arbitrariness of the rule that prevented the inclusion of American modernists in the National Gallery of Art collection until well after their deaths.

Eventually, in 1963, the irrevocable terms that Dale attached to his bequest led directly to the termination of the 20-year rule. The Dale bequest put the trustees in a bind because it included major paintings by the most prominent of all living modernists, Pablo Picasso, and many others who would be precluded by the 20-year policy, ranging from Guy Pène du Bois to Henri Matisse. John Walker, who had been appointed director in 1956, recalled:

When Chester Dale died in 1962...the trustees were confronted with a problem. The penalty for refusing to show the work of living painters would have been the loss of an invaluable collection. For, according to Chester Dale's will, his gift to the National Gallery of Art was subject to the condition that 'said trustees of the National Gallery of Art shall agree to accept all of the property bequeathed to it.'...[The trustees] recognized that pragmatism is of necessity the philosophy of museums. By their acceptance of the Chester Dale Collection, in January 1963, they automatically had an obligation to exhibit the work of living painters."[19]

Because of Dale's terms, no longer would distinctions be made between painters like Bellows, who were unfortunate enough to have died in the teens and twenties, and his contemporaries like Georgia O'Keeffe, or for that matter leading European modernists like Picasso, who lived well past the midcentury mark.

Among Dale's 1963 bequest were two additional masterpieces by Bellows, *Lone Tenement* [fig. 2] and *Blue Morning* [fig. 3], works that further strengthened the Gallery's Bellows holdings and firmly established the artist as one of the pillars of the Gallery's American modernism collection.

#### **DUNCAN PHILLIPS**

The aggressively combative, competitive tone of a painting like Both Members of This Club in many ways reflected the character of a self-made businessman like Chester Dale. By contrast, Duncan Phillips, the scion of a wealthy Pittsburgh glass manufacturer, had a more self-contained, patrician manner. Both men collected French and American art. Paul Mellon remembered the relationship in blunt terms in his memoir Reflections in a Silver Spoon: "Dale hated Duncan, and the feeling was mutual. They were at different ends of the spectrum in personality, and I suspect that Chester was jealous of Duncan's collection and his reputation as a connoisseur." [20] Although the number and quality of the paintings Phillips gave to the Gallery paled in comparison to Dale's prodigious gifts and did not include any American modernist works, his presence on the board and the guiding example of his Phillips Memorial Gallery would prove invaluable to Walker and Mellon, something they both readily attested to. In Self-Portrait with Donors, Walker noted how important Phillips's early advisory role had been, especially given the lack of professional museum experience among staff and trustees in the Gallery's first days: "Our ignorance was matched by that of all our trustees except one, Duncan Phillips, who became my dearest friend and greatest supporter. He created and ran the Phillips Memorial Gallery, an institution unique in the world, which seems to some of us the perfect museum....In no other museum have I so enjoyed the contemplation of paintings, though there are only a few masterpieces and these mostly of modern art."[21] Mellon, when asked late in life what person had influenced him the most, was said to have replied, "Duncan Phillips." [22] If Both Members of This Club mirrored Dale's character, then something of Phillips's more gentle guiding spirit is evident in his first gift to the Gallery, Honoré Daumier's Advice to a Young Artist [fig. 4].

Phillips had been supportive of the initial planning in the 1920s for a new national gallery even as he was dealing with the many challenges presented by his own experimental museum of modern art. In December 1924 he corresponded with Frank Mather, an art historian at Princeton University and vice chairman of the

National Gallery Commission, regarding the "rising interest in a proposal for a greatly enlarged national gallery in Washington." Phillips opined that "there is no imperative need that I should abandon my plan," remarking optimistically that "there might be an opportunity to carry out my dream and at the same time help in the great project."[23] The following year, Phillips began organizing an exhibition tentatively entitled Paintings by Great Masters with Mather and others for the Gallery's suite of rooms at the Museum of Natural History.[24] A "loan exhibition of superb masterpieces," the show was to have featured works by El Greco, Rembrandt, Hals, Chardin, Courbet, Manet, Degas, Renoir, Cézanne, Whistler, Ryder, and others, with many drawn from the Mellon and Vanderbilt collections as well as from Phillips's holdings. Though the exhibition was never realized, Phillips's stated objective was to garner support for a new "Gallery Building by showing great pictures, which might well be donated to the National Gallery, in a totally inadequate setting." In highlighting the shortcomings of the galleries at the Museum of Natural History the "Great Masters" show was intended to bring the merits of the new building project to the attention of "the great billionaire collectors" and further "impress upon Congress the need for a substantial appropriation." [25] Phillips's wife, Marjorie, recalled how his efforts for the National Gallery of Art "clarified his own museum objectives. He did not believe that a national gallery would necessarily displace his more individual collection."[26]

Following his appointment to the first board of trustees, among Phillips's most important contributions to "the great project" was keeping the Gallery well informed of and engaged with contemporary American art, something his ongoing work at his own museum made him uniquely qualified for. One of the first manifestations of Phillips's role was the exhibition *American Painting: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day*, organized by the National Gallery of Art and presented at the Tate Gallery in London in 1946.[27] This project had been set in motion shortly after the Allied victory. Walker was put in charge of 18th- and 19th-century American painting, while Phillips was made the chairman of the committee appointed to make the selection of 20th-century American art that also included Alfred Barr from MoMA and Juliana Force from the Whitney. The show brought together an astonishingly wide and diverse swath of leading contemporary artists from all camps: Ivan Albright, Milton Avery, Thomas Benton, Peter Blume, Charles Burchfield, Paul Cadmus, Stuart Davis, Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, Edward Hopper, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Jacob Lawrence, Reginald

Marsh, Alfred Maurer, Robert Motherwell, Georgia O'Keefe, Horace Pippin, Man Ray, Ben Shahn, Charles Sheeler, Mark Tobey, Grant Wood, and many others.[28] The Tate Gallery exhibition "assembled" by the National Gallery of Art belied the prevailing notion of the Gallery as out of touch with contemporary developments and devoted solely to European Old Masters. It also proved to be something of a guide or blueprint for future acquisitions. In time, works by almost all of the artists represented in the London show would enter the Gallery's collection.[29]

Phillips also helped the Gallery forge relationships with the artists of the Stieglitz circle in a number of ways. A humorous moment occurred when John Marin, after attending a formal dinner hosted by Phillips, misplaced his official invitation while en route to the Gallery's gala opening reception in 1941. Phillips's associate director, Law Watkins, suggested to Marin that he try to bluff his way into the party by impersonating Watkins's wife, a feat Marin accomplished, though not without a few skeptical glances from the guards, by simply donning a long raincoat and combing his signature mop of long, unruly hair forward to cover his face.[30] Eight years later, significant works by Marin, widely considered to be America's preeminent modern artist, would enter the museum's collections through a series of less unusual, if no less complicated, negotiations between Phillips and Walker with the executor of Alfred Stieglitz's estate, Georgia O'Keeffe.

Following the death of the legendary photographer and gallerist in 1946, Phillips had initiated discussions between the Gallery and O'Keeffe about the disposition of the Stieglitz estate early in 1948. Consisting of hundreds of American and European works shown at Stieglitz's various galleries from 1906 to 1946, the bequest surveyed the history of early modernism in singular ways, something that Phillips, perhaps more than anyone other than O'Keeffe herself, fully appreciated. Moreover, Phillips clearly understood the implications of gifts from the Stieglitz collections, including Stieglitz's photographs, for American modernism at the Gallery, writing to O'Keeffe: "Such a standard would be set for the proposed collection of contemporary American pictures by such a gift that I would make it my responsibility to keep subsequent purchases...on a level not too far below such a beginning."[31] In a memorandum to the executive officers dated February 1, 1949, Walker reported: "Several months ago, at the request of Mr. Duncan Phillips...I discussed with Miss Georgia O'Keeffe the possibility of her donating to the National Gallery the 'key' set of her husband Alfred Stieglitz's photographs. Mr. Phillips is most enthusiastic about the project, for it will also

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mean that Miss O'Keeffe will give the Gallery a certain number of paintings by John Marin, Arthur Dove, Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and herself." Walker then offered a congenial solution to the roadblock presented by the 20-year clause: "These pictures, not being eligible at present for the National Gallery, can be lent to the Phillips Gallery for exhibition....This arrangement is entirely satisfactory to Mr. Phillips and to Miss O'Keeffe."[32] The gifts from the Stieglitz Collection—three Marin watercolors, one Hartley oil, one painting by Dove, and, most significantly, more than 1,600 Stieglitz photographs—were announced to the public in a press release dated June 29, 1949.[33] Other major parts of the collection were also distributed simultaneously to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Fisk University.[34]

Phillips's mention of "the proposed collection of contemporary American pictures" in his letter to O'Keeffe referred to a substantial endowment established at the Gallery in December 1946 with the express instruction that it "be used and applied for the acquisition of contemporary works of art by American artists, and in other ways to encourage contemporary American Art."[35] The source of the fund, anonymous at the time, was the Avalon Foundation, the philanthropic organization established in 1940 by Paul Mellon's sister, Ailsa Mellon Bruce.[36] In July 1948, Phillips wrote to John Walker in support of Walker's "great idea," advanced by Walker and Avalon trustee Donald Shepard, to apply the income generated by the endowment for an exhibition of "fifty contemporary American paintings, by five artists, selected by five authorities, every other year."[37] This tantalizing prospect would never come to pass. Instead, once again in deference to the 20-year rule governing contemporary art and to better address the readily apparent deficiencies in the Gallery's American collections in general, a number of exceptions to the fund's guidelines were soon made so that American art from all periods could be purchased.[38] Case-by-case approvals were no longer necessary after the Avalon Foundation formally agreed to change the terms of the fund in 1957.[39] Over the years, the endowment would make possible numerous major acquisitions ranging from Winslow Homer's Right and Left (1909) in 1951 to The Judgment Day (1939) by Aaron Douglas in 2014.[40]

O'Keeffe, as a modernist, was not averse to the notion that the old must give way to the new. Most likely reflecting her knowledge of the Museum of Modern Art's guidelines, she was willing to give all the institutions that received items from the

Stieglitz bequest the leeway to sell their paintings and works on paper (with the exception of Stieglitz's Key Set) if they were to determine after 25 or 50 years that they "have no further use for them." [41] She understood that "as these paintings are contemporary work, public opinion concerning them is still being made," and felt that once she had distributed the collection it "must make its own way." [42] O'Keeffe's iconoclastic attitude and modernist sensibility, as well as her incisive wit, was evident in her reaction to the austere empty spaces of the Gallery itself. She appreciated them in essentially the same way she enjoyed the clean, spare, modernist interiors of Stieglitz's last gallery, An American Place, or the pristine white spaces of her home and studio in Abiquiú, New Mexico:

I know the National Gallery hasn't a speck of dust in it anywhere....Maybe it should just be closed and pointed to as the perfect place—financed by the government but closed because nothing had to be done about it—The assistant curator pointed to a very large door—'Behind that door is unfinished space where American Art will be hung if we ever decide to open a section for it.' I don't mind if they keep the door closed."[43]

In the case of the National Gallery of Art, O'Keeffe's willingness to allow deaccessioning was moot; the Gallery's policy essentially forbade it. The 20-year rule, by contrast, sowed confusion and misunderstanding when O'Keeffe tried to augment her gift by placing on loan a number of works by Demuth and herself that she personally owned. Walker met with O'Keeffe in New York on May 11, 1949, and together they selected three items to present to Phillips and the other members of the Gallery's acquisitions committee: Chimney and Water Tower by Demuth, and O'Keeffe's Cow's Skull with Red and Line and Curve [fig. 5].[44] That September the committee responded enthusiastically to the O'Keeffes but thought that Demuth would be better represented by his work in watercolor rather than oil.[45] Before O'Keeffe could respond, Walker wrote again to inform her that the committee had reconsidered its policy regarding contemporary art and had "decided that custodianship of paintings which would not be exhibited at the National Gallery represented so many difficulties and complexities that the policy hereafter would be to ask prospective donors of contemporary art to give these pictures to other galleries, such as the National Collection of Fine Arts or the Phillips Gallery that work in close cooperation with the National Gallery."[46] This led O'Keeffe, quite reasonably, to question the Gallery's commitment to her, Demuth, and the other Stieglitz artists.[47] Walker calmed the waters by installing

all the Stieglitz-group paintings in his office and writing to reassure O'Keeffe "once more that my own enthusiasm for your paintings has never changed from my student days at Harvard in the twenties until the present time. I may say the same of my admiration for Demuth, Marin, and Dove."[48] Reflecting the dynamic and unstable relationship between modernism and museums that prevailed at the time, the Gallery's relationship with O'Keeffe would continue to be tested, and at times strained, up until her death in 1986. But it endured, and, following the abandonment of the 20-year rule in 1963, gradually benefitted the Gallery in ever more substantial ways, allowing it to better represent the Stieglitz artists and, by extension, the history of American modernism.[49]

More than Phillips's breadth of knowledge about the contemporary art world or his personal connections with the Stieglitz group, it was his profound understanding of the dilemma, articulated so clearly by Gertrude Stein, of how to reconcile the inherently radical modern and the inherently conservative museum that proved to be his essential contribution to the National Gallery of Art. Phillips described his gallery as "a museum of modern art and its sources," and from its founding in 1918 he had always believed that the old and the new, the past and the present, the ancient and the modern, if not completely reconcilable, could nevertheless be kept in fruitful dialogue with each other. In November 1929, the year MoMA opened, Phillips wrote: "Modernist art is not a revolution. It has evolved, like every other period, in a logical and gradual way. Its roots are deep in the remote past.... Our age, like every other, has its significant minorities, its non-conforming types, its contradictory and conflicting elements."[50] For Phillips, even the most radical modernist ruptures and divisions were tied to history and hence within the purview of traditional museums.

When the National Gallery of Art was still in its infancy, the Phillips Memorial Gallery, situated in a quiet residential area near Dupont Circle in Washington, became an ideal crucible for testing ideas about how to present American modernism on the Mall at the foot of Capitol Hill. The solutions, both theoretical and practical, that Duncan Phillips worked out on an intimate, domestic scale at his "experiment station" beginning in the 1920s and continuing into the 1960s proved to be directly relevant to the Gallery's "great project" and its national, burgeoning, public mission. The prime example of this was Phillips's decision to connect his collection's original Georgian revival home to a modern wing via a skywalk in 1960. Bridging historic and modern architectural forms, the new

arrangement was one of the last and most important manifestations of Phillips's lifelong exploration of what a modern museum might be. It would serve as an important model for Walker and his successor, J. Carter Brown, as well as for Phillips's longtime friend, admirer, and fellow trustee, Paul Mellon, as planning began for a modern addition to the National Gallery of Art shortly after Phillips's death in 1966.

Paul Mellon, well versed in classical humanities, a supporter of the renowned modern psychologist Carl Jung, and a patron of modern architecture, shared much of Phillips's interest in the cultural and historical antecedents of modernism.[51] Having already worked with Aero Saarinen and Louis Kahn, Mellon enthusiastically supported the Building Committee's selection of the modernist architect I. M. Pei. Authorized by Congress and paid for entirely with Mellon funds, including those provided by Mellon's sister Ailsa Mellon Bruce, the new wing was shepherded to completion in 1978 by the Gallery's young director, J. Carter Brown.[52] Mirroring many of the same ideas Phillips had espoused at his museum but on a much grander scale, Pei's masterful plan set up a rich dialogue between the modern East Building and John Russell Pope's classical design for the 1941 West Building. Pei's trapezoidal design managed to contradict the stately, classical ordering of Pope's edifice and at the same time to harmonize with it. The subterranean concourse level that lay beneath the cobblestone plaza between the two buildings enabled visitors to shuttle back and forth between them and to experience on multiple levels how modernism was deeply embedded and interconnected with the history of Western culture. Yet when surveyed from the ground level, with the plaza's jagged, metal and glass pyramidal shards starkly set against the majestic marble calm of Pope's building, Pei's East Building could also be interpreted as something apart and in opposition to the classical Western tradition. The dialogue that the East Building initiated with the West Building provided an elastic conceptual and architectural framework for ongoing explorations into the nature of modern art in general and American modernism in particular at the Gallery.[53] By brilliantly confronting the dilemma of what a modern national museum could be, the East Building set the stage for the Gallery's remarkable growth in scholarship, exhibitions, education, conservation, and collecting. Constructed forty years after the Saarinens' visionary plan for the Smithsonian Art Gallery and at a point when there was much greater historical perspective concerning the accomplishments of the first

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generation of American modernists, Pei's masterpiece was a building whose time had come.

#### **BUILDING THE COLLECTION: ROBERT HENRI AND HIS CIRCLE**

Chester Dale's astute early gift of Bellows's Both Members of This Club in 1944 cleared the path for paintings by Henri and many of his other talented students and contemporaries traditionally associated with The Eight or the Ashcan school of urban realism, to enter the collection. In addition to Henri himself, numerous works by five of his cohorts from The Eight—John Sloan, Arthur Davies, Maurice Prendergast, George Luks, and William Glackens—and a quartet of his most successful acolytes—Bellows, Guy Pène du Bois, Edward Hopper, and Rockwell Kent—were eventually acquired. Henri's Whistlerian Young Woman in White and his vivid portrait of an Irish child, Catherine, became part of the permanent collection 20 years after the artist's death. These gifts were followed in 1954 by one of Henri's most absorbing urban landscapes, Snow in New York, courtesy of Chester Dale, and another full-length female portrait in 1956, Edith Reynolds, given by the sitter. Henri's debt to Dutch painting is evident in a 1973 gift, Volendam Street Scene. And in 1986, his incisive portraits of Mr. and Mrs. George Cotton Smith were donated by the Smith family. The Avalon Foundation funded the purchase of the Gallery's first work by Luks in 1950, the patriotic World War I subject The Bersaglieri. And in 1954, Dale, again mindful of the 20-year rule, donated Luks's powerful, unflinching portrait of the American workingman, The Miner.

In a very different vein, Davies's esoteric allegory of physical beauty and mystical transcendence, *Sweet Tremulous Leaves*, was included in Dale's 1963 bequest. In 1970, John Sloan's daughter donated her father's nocturnal evocation of the great modern city of New York as seen from the unusual viewpoint of one of its most notoriously bohemian, marginalized enclaves: *The City from Greenwich Village* [fig. 6]. Rounding out the Gallery's representation of The Eight are a painting by William Glackens featured in the epochal 1913 Armory Show in New York, *Family Group*, given by his son Ira in 1971, and a signature work by Prendergast donated by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon in 1971, *Salem Cove*.

In addition to his contributions as an artist, Robert Henri was perhaps the most influential teacher of his era. Among the successive waves of students who fell

under the spell of his inspirational, all-encompassing mantra of "art for life's sake" at the New York School of Art were four of the most talented members of the first-generation of American modernists: Bellows, Hopper, and Kent, all born in 1882, and Pène du Bois, born in 1884. Among the 1963 Dale bequest were two Parisian subjects by Pène du Bois from the late 1920s, a time when many American modernists were drawn to France, *Café du Dome* and *La Rue de la Sante*, as well as two New York scenes, *Hallway, Italian Restaurant* (1922) and an early work from circa 1912, *The Politicians*. All of these convey the artist's fascination with the shadowy, elusive encounters of modern urban life.

The group of five paintings by Bellows donated by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon in 1983 and 1986, together with the Dale gifts, gave the Gallery outstanding representative works from across the artist's career, and made its Bellows collection the strongest in the country. Little Girl in White (Queenie Burnett) (1907) is a harrowing portrayal of a young child laborer, a laundress, disconcertingly sitting for a formal portrait in the artist's studio. New York [fig. 7] is one of Bellows's most ambitious attempts to capture the multiplicity of the modern city. In addition, three later works demonstrated Bellows's restless search for new subjects and styles. My Family (1916), a domestic tableau, and Tennis Tournament (1920), a scene of high society at a casino and tennis club in Newport, are both unfinished works in progress. Nude with Hexagonal Quilt, with its uneasy blend of Old Master allusions and folksy eroticism, was painted in Bellows's Woodstock studio in 1924 shortly before his death.

The bequest from the John Hay Whitney Collection in 1982 included a quintessential boxing subject by Bellows, *Club Night*, and the first painting by Hopper to enter the collection, *Cape Cod Evening* [fig. 8].[54] The juxtaposition illuminated the intertwined destinies of the two artists. *Club Night* epitomizes the youthful notoriety of the dynamic action painter Bellows in the first decades of the century. This stands in stark contrast to a painting like *Cape Cod Evening* and his friend Hopper's slow ascent, beginning in the 1920s, to national and international fame as the painter of emptiness and stasis. Finally, an important painting of Greenland by the most controversial and iconoclastic of all of Henri's followers, Rockwell Kent, entered the collection in 2013 as a gift from Edward and Deborah Shein.[55] *The Citadel*, a monument of isolation, hints at the complex personality of a painter who was as embroiled with the heated national political issues of the day as he was detached and geographically distanced from them.

#### **BUILDING THE COLLECTION: ALFRED STIEGLITZ AND HIS CIRCLE**

After the initial gift from the Stieglitz estate in 1949 of Hartley's stark, primal New Mexico view, Landscape No. 5, and Dove's abstract image of larval insect metamorphosis, Moth Dance [fig. 9], it was another two decades before additional significant paintings by the artists closely associated with Stieglitz joined the Gallery's collection. Then in 1970, and in anticipation of the opening of the East Building, the Gallery for the first time bought a major American modernist painting using, in a further sign of the Gallery's new direction, discretionary monies from the Andrew W. Mellon Fund: Marsden Hartley's The Aero [fig. 10]. Part of an extended series of works Hartley did in Berlin just before and after World War I erupted, it is a prime example of his highly original idiom, a brilliant synthesis of French and German modern pictorial languages with other, more personal, esoteric visual and intellectual sources. The Aero is bookended in the Gallery's collections by two paintings done in the artist's home state of Maine at the beginning and end of Hartley's career: the early 1908 painting Maine Woods (a 1991 gift from Bernard Brookman) and his late masterpiece from 1942, Mount Katahdin, Maine (a 1970 gift from Mrs. Mellon Byers). Together the three works broadly trace the course of Hartley's career, from native son to peripatetic internationalist, to returning prodigal. In 1997 Dove's Moth Dance was joined by his assemblage Rain, and in 2000 by the luminous and radiant Moon from the collection of Barney Ebsworth, 50 years after the initial Stieglitz bequest. [56]

John Marin's fame rested first and foremost on his watercolors, so it is not surprising that only watercolors (no paintings) were included in the 1949 Stieglitz gift.[57] In 1986 and 1987 the Gallery became a major repository and an important center for the study of Marin's work in all media when the artist's son and namesake donated over 500 works on paper and a trove of 13 oils, including the remarkable *Grey Sea* (1938). More recently, the Gallery received one of Marin's last and most important paintings, *The Written Sea*, from the Shein Collection in 2009 [fig. 11]. In these two evocations of water, Marin conveyed the fluidity and the gestural qualities of his watercolors into his oils. The calligraphic lines of *The Written Sea*, as well as its title, resonated with the experimental drip paintings of Jackson Pollock and the interest in collapsing traditional distinctions between drawing and painting, making and representing, of other abstract expressionists at midcentury.

The year of the John Marin Jr. gift, 1986, also marked the passing of Georgia O'Keeffe. In 1987, the Gallery received eight paintings from the O'Keeffe estate, which were all designated by her as additions to her husband's bequest. The works ranged from the small, seven-inch-square study Shell No. 1 (1928) to one of O'Keeffe's largest canvases, Sky with Flat White Cloud (1962), to six of the seven oils from her famous Jack-in-the-Pulpit series of 1930. The Jack-inthe-Pulpit subjects exemplified O'Keeffe's remarkable ability to reinvent the traditional category of still-life floral painting, long associated with women artists, by investing it with organic, photographic, abstract, and sexual allusions. These encompassed the morbid 19th-century symbolist imagery of the poet Charles Baudelaire's Les Fleurs de Mal, the turn-of-the-century plant forms of art nouveau, and the hard-edged machine styles of art deco and precisionism of the 1920s. Among the gifts from the series was one of the three items O'Keeffe had originally lent to the Gallery in 1949, Line and Curve. Completing the Gallery's holdings are Winter Road I, a 1995 gift from the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, and the remarkable abstraction from O'Keeffe's annus mirabilis of 1930, Black White and Blue, another masterwork from Barney Ebsworth's collection.[58]

In addition to Marin, Dove, and O'Keeffe, the trio of artists with whom Stieglitz maintained a lifelong association, the Gallery also acquired works by equally notable figures closely linked to Stieglitz in the history of American modernism. These were artists whom the argumentative, competitive photographer initially championed during his directorship of the 291 Gallery, but from whom he then broke for various professional and personal reasons: Edward Steichen, Max Weber, and Charles Sheeler. Steichen had suggested that Stieglitz show both paintings and photographs at 291 beginning in 1908, and, as his agent in Paris, had directed leading avant-garde artists to the gallery, including Henri Matisse, Auguste Rodin, Constantin Brancusi, and Marin. Le Tournesol [fig. 12] was one of Steichen's last and most original efforts as a painter before he destroyed much of his work in a bonfire near his home outside of Paris and turned his full attention to photography in the 1920s. Max Weber had also befriended members of the French avant-garde and brought back small examples of the work of Henri Rousseau, Matisse, and Picasso to New York in his suitcase in 1909, objects that helped to educate Stieglitz and others about new European art. More than simply a passive conduit for others' ideas, Weber made a number of original contributions to contemporary explorations of cubism and the fourth dimension, two of which entered the Gallery's collection in 1970 and 1990: Rush Hour,

painted in 1915, and *Interior of the Fourth Dimension* from 1913. Charles Sheeler, Morton Schamberg, and Paul Strand were dubbed "the trinity of photography" by Alfred Stieglitz just as 291 closed in 1917. Although Sheeler soon fell out with Stieglitz over a rather minor criticism of the older photographer's platinum prints, he went on to produce a number of precisionist masterpieces that entered the canon of American modernism alongside works by O'Keeffe and Demuth, two of the "Seven Americans" whom Stieglitz promoted assiduously during the 1920s and 1930s. *Classic Landscape* [fig. 13], a gift from the Ebsworth Collection in 2000, represents a profound synthesis of painting and photography, and stands as a culminating achievement in the dialogue between the two mediums that Stieglitz and Steichen had initiated at 291 three decades earlier.

#### BUILDING THE COLLECTION: REGIONALISM AND FOLK ART

Around the time of the nation's bicentennial and the opening of the Gallery's East Building, several paintings by the major proponents of American regionalism were donated: Trail Riders by Thomas Hart Benton in 1975, Circus Elephants by John Stuart Curry in 1976, and Haying and New Road [fig. 14] by Grant Wood in 1982. The Gallery's regionalist and American scene holdings from the 1930s were also significantly bolstered by the gift of 5,000 American prints from the Dave and Reba Williams collection in 2008. Led by Benton from Missouri, Curry from Kansas, and Wood from lowa, the regionalists rose to prominence during the Great Depression by opposing what they characterized as the international urban modernism being promoted in New York by Stieglitz and others. They instead advocated an art that more closely reflected the rural lives and concerns of ordinary working people in their midwestern home states and across the country. While sometimes seen as simply conservative traditionalists or antimodernists, the regionalists, as recent scholarship on these artists has articulated, are better understood as important threads in the fabric of modernism itself.[59] Benton, for instance, produced color abstractions in a synchromist style after studying in Paris early in the century and later mentored and influenced Jackson Pollock at the Art Students League in New York. Alternately Stieglitz's support in the 1920s and 30s for rooting artistic practice in an intimate knowledge of American landscapes outside of Manhattan, whether in Maine, New Mexico, or elsewhere, can be related to the regionalist movement's emphasis on rural life.

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During the teens, many artists, critics, and dealers, in their search for a distinctive national form of modernism, began exploring an indigenous source of inspiration that seemed to exist beyond the influence of the European avant-garde and outside the traditional canons of high or fine art: American folk art. The modernists' ongoing fascination with folk art was later evinced in two distinctive collections that came to be housed at the Gallery. The Index of American Design, a compendium of 18,000 watercolor renderings of American decorative arts from the colonial period through the late 19th century, was commissioned by the Works Progress Administration beginning in 1935 and accessioned by the Gallery in 1943. Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch's collection of more than four hundred paintings and drawings of American folk art was accessioned by the Gallery between 1953 and 1980.[60] Modernist painters saw folk art as an authentic expression of American culture rooted in the past and, simultaneously, as a valid source of inspiration for contemporary art apart from any specific historical associations it might have. Because of this duality, folk art dramatized in powerful ways the complex relationship between past and present that was one of modernism's most salient characteristics.

In the Gallery's collection, this paradox of being both in time and out of time, insider and outsider, is found in the work of the painter and quilter Marguerite Zorach and the African American painter Horace Pippen, artists whose uncertain social, political, and cultural status was part and parcel of the modernist dilemma. *Christmas Mail* [fig. 15], given to the Gallery by the Zorach children in 1974, depicts a commonplace view of rural life in Maine that, while rendered in an outwardly direct and naïve fashion, is also inflected by Zorach's knowledge of the shallow, fragmented, planar space of cubist painting. In his *Interior* [fig. 16], Pippin, using a similar strategy, presents a seemingly unassuming scene of country life in a straightforward folk style. But the painting's cozy familiarity again belies its radical abstraction. Bold, flat shapes and insistent patterns composed of discrete, tactile, painted gestures on the surface of the canvas pull apart and flatten the representational elements. Here, the ostensibly warm, safe space and integrity of the interior is threatened and compressed, both psychologically and pictorially, by the ominous darkness looming at the window.



#### **BUILDING THE COLLECTION: MULTIPLE MODERNISMS**

The idiosyncrasies of the Gallery's American modernist collections, the works that cannot be easily categorized, or those created by less well-known figures or by artists whose styles constantly shifted, hint at something essential about the early modernist period in America in general: its inclusive, eclectic, radically democratic spirit and, concomitantly, its passionate belief and defense of independent artistic expression in all forms. Walt Kuhn, for example, was a key organizer of the landmark 1913 Armory Show and an adviser to John Quinn, one of the most adventurous American collectors of the early 20th century. But around 1930 Kuhn's interest in the more radical forms of modernism waned, and he felt little sympathy for the alternative approaches being offered by the regionalists or the social realists. In 1968 and 1972, a group of seven paintings, four still lifes, and three figure paintings from this late period of Kuhn's career were accessioned by the Gallery. They show an artist who, while well aware of the lessons of Paul Cézanne and Picasso, was searching for an indigenous, authentic style of painting akin at times to American folk art. Something of the loneliness and anguish of Kuhn's plight in trying to establish an autonomous artistic identity is registered in The White Clown [fig. 17], a staged depiction of an actor in the role of a circus performer, a work exhibited at the newly opened Museum of Modern Art in 1929.

In a similar but stranger, more morbid, and more forlorn vein are Ivan Albright's *There Were No Flowers Tonight*, a 1972 gift from Robert and Clarice Smith that was included in the Museum of Modern Art's landmark 1943 exhibition *American Realism and Magic Realism*, and Rico Lebrun's *The Ragged One*, a painting accessioned by the Gallery in 1974. Like Kuhn, Albright and Lebrun investigated the plight of figures existing at the edges of society in works that mirrored their own multifaceted personas. That complexity was evident in their far-flung interests and experiences. Albright, born in Chicago, was a medical illustrator for the army in World War I, fascinated by bodily decay and decline. Lebrun, from Naples, Italy, produced a series of harrowing works depicting the Crucifixion and the Holocaust. Both men also coincidentally worked in Hollywood in the early forties: Albright on the portrait featured in MGM's horror/drama based on Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1944) and Lebrun as an animator on Walt Disney's *Bambi* (1942). Another example of this type of untamed individualism is Lamar Dodd, a southern artist who taught and worked

in his home state at the University of Georgia. *Winter Valley* (anonymous gift, 1971), a bleak view of the outskirts of Athens, Georgia, seems to mark Dodd as a quintessential regional painter. Yet in the 1960s Dodd went on to work for NASA, creating paintings of the Mercury and Apollo space programs, several of which were shown at the Gallery's exhibition *Eyewitness to Space* in 1965, and later devoted some of his last canvases to events like the Oklahoma City bombing and the O. J. Simpson trial.

Even works by artists in the collection who more consistently pursued abstraction can complicate standard modernist narratives. In 1988, Raymond Jonson's *Variations on a Rhythm–U* (1933) was given to the Gallery by Dr. and Mrs. Robert Fishman. Jonson was born in Iowa and was influenced by the Chicago Armory Show in 1913 and Chicago modernists like B. J. O. Nordfeldt. In 1924 he moved to New Mexico, where he founded the Transcendental Painting Group in 1938. Jonson, in contrast with the artists of the Henri and Stieglitz groups, is representative of the many modernists who, because their careers unfolded outside of New York City, remained outside the dominant histories of modernism written by, and to some extent for, New Yorkers.

In 1991, two works by Milton Avery entered the Gallery's collection during its 50th anniversary: Artist and Nude (1940) and Mountain and Meadow (1960). Although born in 1885 and part of the core generation of American modernists, Avery did not develop his essentially self-taught style until the early 1930s. With its broad fields of lyrical color and simple outlined forms that border on abstraction, his style hangs in the balance between the innovations of his peers like O'Keeffe and Dove and those of the postwar color field painters like Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb, whom Avery taught. By contrast, Stuart Davis at the age of 21 was one of the youngest participants in the 1913 Armory Show in New York. Multiple Views [fig. 18], the 1918 painting the Gallery received from his son Earl Davis in 2008, anticipates Davis's precocious gift for integrating a variety of seemingly disparate ideas and influences, from cubism to urban realism to popular commercial imagery, into a cogent whole, a talent that he would continue to develop throughout his long and productive career. While Avery's images seem to lyrically drift apart and float free from reality in broad amorphous shapes and clouds of ethereal, atmospheric color, Davis created sharp visual and thematic connections that bound disparate experiences together into a seemingly unbroken chain. This

practice epitomized what Wanda Corn, borrowing Davis's own formulation, has called American modernism's "Amazing Continuity."[61]

The idea of multiple modernisms has shaped the recent discourse about early 20th-century American art. Contemporary scholars have sought to restore the era's complex fabric by questioning the dominant teleological narrative constructed by major critics and historians at midcentury. Those accounts often subordinated and obscured the accomplishments of the first American avantgarde in order to privilege the postwar innovations of the abstract expressionists and others. The current emphasis on multiple narratives and questioning of traditional historical groupings and boundaries can be placed under the rubric of "postmodernism." Yet in many ways it simply mirrors the radically democratic aspirations of the first generation of American modernists. Henri and his followers were constantly searching for a framework that would allow artists of all types, from academicians to experimentalists, from the strict rule makers to the anarchistic rule breakers, to productively interact and coexist. Stieglitz's activities at 291 challenged boundaries and restrictions of all kinds: the notion of a dominant European avant-garde, the preeminence of the marketplace, and an entrenched fine art establishment that elevated painting and sculpture while ignoring his chosen medium, photography. This eclectic vision found expression in both the influential smaller group shows of the era, such as Henri's 1908 exhibition of The Eight and The Younger American Painters at Stieglitz's 291 gallery in 1910, as well as in the mammoth, omnibus installations like the 1913 Armory Show and the Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917. During the twenties and thirties, the ambitious task of presenting the many disparate, often contradictory, and always contentious strands of American modernism began to be taken up by museums.

Very early in the National Gallery of Art's institutional history, through Phillips and Walker, something of the all-encompassing philosophies of Henri and Stieglitz found their way into the Gallery's approach to American modernism. Phillips wrote eloquently of the "many mindedness" and "many sidedness" of modern painting: "Ours is a many-minded world.... Our concern should be to give those many minds a chance by not encouraging the molding of a mass-mind.... In our search for the best of every kind of painting an attitude of reflective, skeptical, critical, but always sympathetic and unprejudiced observation has an advantage over the attitude of a pledged person."[62] Questioning what he called "orthodox

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modernism," Phillips admired "that rare quality of the critical mind—the ability to perceive that in the house of art there are many mansions, and every single one of them at least interesting."[63] In 1948, Walker echoed Phillips's catholicity in an article discussing the Gallery's fledgling American collections: "In the House of Art there are many mansions...we have tried to show every important phase of American painting."[64]

#### "THE PERFECT PLACE"

Duncan Phillips incorporated his modern gallery in the midst of a personal family tragedy—the deaths of his father in 1917 and his brother from influenza in 1918—and a national tragedy overseas—the deaths of thousands of young soldiers following America's entry into World War I in spring 1917. Shortly after the war ended, Phillips helped to organize the Allied War Salon, an exhibition devoted to military images and soldiers' art, as he was making initial preparations that would lead to the opening of the Phillips Memorial Gallery in 1921.[65] A little over two decades later, and following the death of his own father in 1937, Paul Mellon would see the National Gallery of Art come to completion in 1941 in the midst of World War II. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December, the Gallery's activities were dominated by the war effort. There were nightly blackouts. The most important works of art were evacuated to George Vanderbilt's Biltmore estate in the mountains of North Carolina. Exhibitions were devoted to war posters and the works of war artists. And in 1943, the Gallery became the headquarters for the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas.

In the context of the existential threat of World War II, the effort to build collections of American modernism or of any kind was of secondary importance as the Gallery became part of the much larger and much more daunting mission of trying to restore the great repositories of Western culture that had been ransacked and looted by Nazi Germany. During the war, the West Building served as a peaceful retreat for visiting servicemen to contemplate the beauty and serenity they were hoping to return to the world. At the same time, its empty galleries and walls also would have brought to mind the denuded walls of museums in Europe and uncertain fate of the artistic legacy of Western civilization. The Gallery was a place to quietly contemplate not only beauty, but the terrible cultural voids opened by the conflict and the many lives that

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would never be recovered or mended. If one understands the Gallery to be a site that from its very beginning has been confronting the unsettling paradoxes of presence and absence, triumph and tragedy unleashed by the cultural and political forces of modernism, as a place to both celebrate and enjoy the "amazing continuity" and to acknowledge rupture and loss, then its early identification with American modernism is less surprising. The Gallery was an institution where the modernist dilemma of how to reconcile a present that was constantly being torn from its past was always at play. This unique and essential reality of the museum's identity eventually found fuller expression when the East Building opened in 1978, and it continues to define the institution to this day.

As O'Keeffe was making decisions about where to deposit the Alfred Stieglitz Collection, she seemed to intuit that the Gallery was a fitting home for American modernism, a truly modern gallery whose voids resonated with the abstract spaces of her paintings and the vast expanses of her beloved New Mexico landscape. She called it "the perfect place" because of the beautiful abstract quality of its freshly painted walls, brand new pristine galleries, and empty closed off rooms, not despite them. A two-way dialogue and alternating circuit between connections and disconnections, solids and voids, what is seen and not seen, occurs every day back and forth across the cobblestone plaza and underground concourse that link the Gallery's East and West Buildings. The Gallery has become a place where the many contradictions and paradoxes contained within the wide ranging eclecticism of American modernism can be experienced, its conservatism and radicalism, its search for a past and alienation from the past, its bodily realism and timeless formalist abstraction. The Gallery continues to strive to recognize every significant phase of American modernism, while being keenly aware of the practical limitations and intellectual dilemmas that make it a daunting task, a goal to which we can constantly aspire but never fully achieve. Old persistent questions still resonate through the many rooms of the Pope and Pei buildings. What is American? What is modernism? Only time will tell.[66]

Charles Brock

September 29, 2016

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS American Paintings, 1900 - 1945

#### NOTES

[1] I am first and foremost indebted to Robert Torchia for producing such a rich record of the Gallery's American modernist holdings. I am especially grateful to Nancy Anderson, Judy Metro, Sally Bourrie, and Lisa Shea for steadfastly supporting this project and guiding it to completion. Many thanks also to Harry Cooper, curator of modern art, who has encouraged a creative and productive dialogue between the American and modern art departments at the Gallery without which this catalog could not have happened. This essay has benefitted enormously from the expertise of my curatorial colleagues Nancy Anderson, Judith Brodie, Sarah Cash, Harry Cooper, Sarah Greenough, and Franklin Kelly. A special thanks to Sarah Greenough, who has served as my mentor and guide to the field. Finally, I would like to thank Maygene Daniels, Karen Schneider, and Jean Henry for pointing me toward so many illuminating documents in their respective archives at the National Gallery of Art and the Phillips Collection.

- [2] The National Gallery of Art began accessioning 20th-century American paintings from the Corcoran Collection in 2014. This latest chapter in the history of American modernism at the Gallery will be addressed in future versions of this online catalog.
- [3] See Sarah Greenough, Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set; The Alfred Stieglitz Collection of Photographs (Washington, DC, 2002).
- [4] Sarah Greenough has been the head of the department since its founding in 1990. The Stieglitz photographs were originally overseen by Elizabeth Mongan, curator of graphic arts at the Gallery from 1943 to 1963.
- [5] Stein was quoted by John B. Hightower, director of the Museum of Modern Art, in his foreword to *Four Americans in Paris: The Collection of Gertrude Stein and Her Family* (New York, 1970), 8.
- [6] Albert E. Gallatin opened his Gallery of Living Art in New York in 1927.
- [7] When Juliana Force offered Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's entire collection of contemporary American art to the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Edward Robinson, in 1929, she was summarily turned away. On the history of the

Whitney Museum of American Art, see Avis Berman, *Rebels on Eighth Street:*Juliana Force and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 1990).

[8] For a discussion of this policy, see Alan Wallach, *Exhibiting Contradiction: Essays on the Art Museum in the United States* (Amherst, 1998), 80–82. Wallach's third chapter, "William Wilson Corcoran's Failed National Gallery," provides a fascinating and thorough discussion of the historical prelude to the founding of Andrew Mellon's National Gallery of Art in 1937.

[9] The 20-year rule was part of the formal "Statement of Policy Governing the Acquisition and Exhibition of Works of Art" that was approved by the Acquisitions Committee on April 28, 1938, and by the full board on February 13, 1939. The Gallery could still accept works by living artists, but could not enter or exhibit them in the official "permanent collection" until 20 years after the artist's death. National Gallery of Art Archives.

[10] For the interrelated history of the two national galleries of art, see Lois Marie Fink's definitive study, "Defining Art for the Nation in Two National Galleries," chap. 3 in *A History of the Smithsonian American Art Museum* (Amherst, 2007), 54–93.

[11] The 10 works were: Mather Brown, William Vans Murray, Edward Savage, The Washington Family, Gilbert Stuart, Joseph Coolidge, Gilbert Stuart, Catherine Brass Yates, Gilbert Stuart, Lawrence Reid Yates, Gilbert Stuart, George Washington, Gilbert Stuart, John Randolph, Chester Harding, John Randolph, John Trumbull, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin West, Colonel Guy Johnson and Karonghyontye. An eleventh work was misattributed to John Singleton Copley as Richard, Earl Howe. It is now attributed to the British painter Joseph Wright as Portrait of a Gentleman. The Gallery's commitment to American art of the 18th and 19th centuries was established at a time when many other museums were not actively collecting or displaying works from those periods. The Gallery's goals were clearly articulated by its first chief curator, John Walker, in "American Masters in the National Gallery," National Geographic Magazine (Sept. 1948).

[12] Thomas Hart Benton, "Art vs. The Mellon Gallery," *Common Sense* 10 (June 1941): 173, as quoted in Lois Marie Fink, *A History of the Smithsonian American Art Museum* (Amherst, 2007), 89.

[13] Lois Marie Fink, A History of the Smithsonian American Art Museum (Amherst, 2007), 94.

[14] Lois Marie Fink, *A History of the Smithsonian American Art Museum* (Amherst, 2007), 96–103. Also see Richard Guy Wilson, "High Noon on the Mall: Modernism versus Traditionalism, 1910–1970," *The Mall in Washington, 1791–1991*, Studies in the History of Art 30 (Washington, DC, 1991), 142–167. Some of the elements of the design were later incorporated by Eliel Saarinen into the Des Moines Art Center in 1948.

[15] O'Connor attached a formal memorandum outlining these arrangements in a letter to Finley dated April 4, 1945, National Gallery of Art Archives. On David Finley, see David A. Doheny, *David Finley: Quiet Force for America's Arts* (Washington, DC, 2006).

[16] See John Walker, *Self-Portrait with Donors: Confessions of an Art Collector* (Boston, 1969), 24–27. Walker owned several works by Morris Graves. In May 1945, he lent *Wounded Gull* and, in January 1956, *Blue Bird* and *Bird Maddened by the Sound of Machinery* to the Phillips Memorial Gallery (see information in Phillips Collection Archives).

[17] On Dale, see Kimberly A. Jones and Maygene Daniels, *The Chester Dale Collection* (Washington, DC, 2009). Also see Jorgelino Orfila, "Art Collecting in America During the Interwar Period: The Chester Dale Collection of Modern French Art," *Archives of American Art Journal* 50, no. 1–2 (Spring 2011): 48–61.

[18] On Phillips, see Erika D. Passantino, ed., *The Eye of Duncan Phillips: A Collection in the Making* (Washington, DC, 1999); Susan Behrends Frank, ed., *Made in the USA: American Art from the Phillips Collection, 1850–1970* (Washington, DC, 2013); and Marjorie Phillips, *Duncan Phillips and His Collection* (Boston, 1970). Phillips was also an early trustee of the Museum of Modern Art.

[19] John Walker, National Gallery of Art, Washington (New York, 1979), 49-50.

[20] Paul Mellon, Reflections in a Silver Spoon: A Memoir (New York, 1992), 308.

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[21] John Walker, Self-Portrait with Donors: Confessions of an Art Collector (Boston, 1969), 35.

[22] This is recounted by Paul Richard, "The Man Who Left a Good Impressionist," *The Washington Post*, March 15, 1999, A6.

[23] Letter from Phillips to Mather, Dec. 12, 1924, Phillips Collection Archives. Also see Marjorie Phillips, *Duncan Phillips and His Collection* (Boston, 1970), 112, 208.

[24] This exhibition is documented in the Phillips Collection Archives, Box 3, Folder N 1925. Phillips was chairman of the committee of selection. The chairman of the exhibition committee was Mrs. William Corcoran Eustis, wife of the grandson of the founder of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, William Wilson Corcoran.

[25] Marjorie Phillips, Duncan Phillips and His Collection (Boston, 1970), 112.

[26] Marjorie Phillips, Duncan Phillips and His Collection (Boston, 1970), 112.

[27] American Painting: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day (London, 1946).

[28] Other artists represented were Hyman Bloom, Guy Pène du Bois, John Steuart Curry, Arthur B. Davies, Preston Dickinson, Arthur Dove, Philip Evergood, William Glackens, Morris Graves, William Gropper, John Kane, Bernard Karfiol, Karl Knaths, Jack Levine, Loren MacIver, Peppino Mangravite, John Marin, Jerome Myers, I. Rice Pereira, Joseph Stella, Maurice Sterne, Max Weber, and William Zorach.

[29] The only American modernists in the exhibition not currently represented in the Gallery's collection are Preston Dickinson and John Kane.

[30] Recounted in Marjorie Phillips, *Duncan Phillips and His Collection* (Boston, 1970), 102–103.

[31] Phillips to O'Keeffe, Feb. 4, 1948, Phillips Collection Archives. The letter is worth quoting at length: "It was good to see you at An American Place and to

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have a little talk with you about the distribution of the treasures left by Stieglitz to different museums. I do hope you will donate, as you suggested you might, to the National Gallery in Washington a few outstanding examples of Stieglitz, O'Keeffe, Marin, Demuth, and Dove....There could not be a better start than a group of photographs by the greatest of photographers, three watercolors by the greatest master of watercolors, and selected works by you and Demuth and Dove and perhaps Hartley. That may be too much to hope for in consideration of the expectations of the other museums. But please do not leave Washington out of your plans."

- [32] National Gallery of Art Archives.
- [33] National Gallery of Art Archives.
- [34] The Met received 428 works, Chicago 114 works, Philadelphia 31 works, and Fisk University 101 works. See Sarah Greenough, ed., *Modern Art in America:*Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries (Washington, DC, 2001); and Lisa Mintz Messinger, Stieglitz and His Artists: Matisse to O'Keeffe; The Alfred Stieglitz Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 2011).
- [35] Letter from Donald D. Shepard, cotrustee of the Avalon Foundation, to the trustees of the National Gallery of Art, Dec. 27, 1946, National Gallery of Art Archives. The Avalon trustees were Shephard, Ailsa Mellon Bruce, and Paul Mellon.
- [36] For an insightful study of the elusive and private Bruce, see Mary Morton, "Ailsa Mellon Bruce: Art Collector and Patron of the National Gallery of Art," in *Intimate Impressionism from the National Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC, 2013), 13–28. It is unclear what motivated Bruce to set up a fund for contemporary American art. She did not collect American modernist works and there is little evidence of her interest in the area.
- [37] Letter from Duncan Phillips to John Walker, July 27, 1948, National Gallery of Art Archives. In Walker's letter to Phillips, July 21, 1948, National Gallery of Art Archives, Walker had expressed his concerns about purchasing contemporary art with the Avalon Fund: "I feel certain that the Gallery will be given the most important Twentieth Century American paintings in time. Therefore, it is not

essential for us to try to buy such pictures out of the Avalon funds, since in doing so we are bound to make enemies of those artists whose work is not acquired." Walker then outlined his criteria for the Gallery's biannual: "1. An exhibition of modern painting which will enhance the prestige of the National Gallery of Art and show its interest in living artists. 2. An exhibition which will avoid the criticism directed toward all other exhibitions of contemporary art today, such as that: A. Exhibitions of modern art are confusing, being too big and too heterogeneous. B. Juries make awards only to obscure artists. C. Juries are too 'Modern' or too 'Conservative.' 3. An exhibition which will not compete with the Corcoran Biannual of Modern American Paintings or the similar exhibition at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. 4. An exhibition small enough to fit into the Central Gallery of the National Gallery of Art."

[38] The restrictions were clearly defined in the December 27, 1946, letter (see note 34). They specified that the income from the fund was only to go to artists living in the United States for more than five years and only for works produced in the last ten years.

[39] Letter from G. Lauder Greenway, cotrustee, Avalon Foundation, to John Walker, April 15, 1957, National Gallery of Art Archives: "The fund may be used for the acquisitions of any American work of art of any period rather than limiting such acquisitions to works produced not more than ten years prior to the date of acquisition."

[40] Other important works of American modernism purchased with the Avalon Fund were Max Weber's *Rush Hour, New York* in 1970, Arthur Dove's *Rain* in 1997, and the film *Manhatta* by Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand in 2008. On June 30, 1969, the Avalon Foundation and Paul Mellon's Old Dominion Foundation were consolidated to form the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Acquisitions made after that date are credited as "Avalon Fund."

[41] See Georgia O'Keeffe, "Stieglitz: His Pictures Collected Him," *The New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1949, SM24. Also see letter from O'Keeffe to David E. Finley, June 21, 1949, National Gallery of Art Archives: "It is my understanding that the National Gallery of Art will not sell or exchange any of the paintings in the Stieglitz Collection for at least fifty years, and that it will not sell or exchange any of the Stieglitz photographs at any time."

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[42] Letter from O'Keeffe to John Walker, Feb. 22, 1949; and Georgia O'Keeffe, "Stieglitz: His Pictures Collected Him," *The New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1949, SM24.

[43] Letter from O'Keeffe to Chabot, Dec. 18, 1948, in Barbara Buhler Lynes and Ann Paden, eds., *Maria Chabot—Georgia O'Keeffe: Correspondence*, 1941–1949 (Albuquerque, 2003), 473.

[44] The meeting is referenced in a memorandum dated May 13, 1949, written by John Walker, National Gallery of Art Archives. The three works were apparently never shown publicly at the Gallery.

[45] Walker to O'Keeffe, Oct. 4, 1949, National Gallery of Art Archives.

[46] Walker to O'Keeffe, Dec. 7, 1949, National Gallery of Art Archives.

[47] Walker to O'Keeffe, Jan. 24, 1950, National Gallery of Art Archives.

[48] Walker to O'Keeffe, Jan. 24, 1950, National Gallery of Art Archives.

[49] The three works placed on permanent loan to the Gallery in 1949 were eventually returned to O'Keeffe. *Line and Curve* was given to the Gallery, along with other important paintings by O'Keeffe, as part of the O'Keeffe bequest in 1987 and designated as part of the Alfred Stieglitz Collection. In 1994 Demuth's *Chimney and Water Tower* was acquired by the Amon Carter Museum and *Cow's Skull with Red* was purchased by Myron Kunin for his Curtis Galleries in Minneapolis.

[50] Duncan Phillips, "The Many Mindedness of Modern Painting," *Art and Understanding* 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1929): 50–51.

[51] See Paul Mellon, *Reflections in a Silver Spoon: A Memoir* (New York, 1992); and John Wilmerding, ed., *Essays in Honor of Paul Mellon, Collector and Benefactor* (Washington, DC, 1986).

[52] On J. Carter Brown, see Neil Harris, *Capital Culture: J. Carter Brown, the National Gallery of Art, and the Reinvention of the Museum Experience* (Chicago, 2013).

[53] The majority of the Gallery's monographic exhibitions devoted to the accomplishments of the American modernists have occurred since the East Building opened in 1977: John Sloan (1971), George Bellows (1957, 1962, 1983, 2012), Edward Hopper (2007), Alfred Stieglitz (1958, 1968, 1983, 1992, 2002), Georgia O'Keeffe (1987, 2000), John Marin (1990), Paul Strand (1990), and Charles Sheeler (2006). The East Building also provided a proper context for displaying important works like *The Aero* by Marsden Hartley as part of the permanent modern collection. Before 1977, only works by the Henri circle, namely the major paintings by Bellows, were consistently on view in the West Building. In 2016, the Gallery, in conjunction with the launch of this online catalog, inaugurated its first permanent collection gallery devoted to the Stieglitz group in the East Building.

[54] The 1982 Whitney gift also included works by Henri Edmond Cross, André Derain, Henri Rousseau, James McNeill Whistler, and Thomas Eakins.

[55] See Charles Brock and Nancy Anderson, *American Modernism: The Shein Collection* (Washington, DC, 2010).

[56] See Bruce Robertson, et al., *Twentieth-Century American Art: The Ebsworth Collection* (Washington, DC, 2000). *Rain*, consisting of twigs and rubber cement on metal and glass, is technically not classified as a painting and therefore falls outside the parameters of this catalog. In 1992 Arthur Dove's son, William, gave the gallery a group of 23 small works on paper.

[57] The watercolors were Movement No.9, Sea and Boat, Deer Isle, Maine (1927), Echo Lake, Franconia Range, White Mountain Country (1927), and Storm over Taos (1930).

[58] The Gallery also received an important group of O'Keeffe's early charcoal drawings from the teens as a gift from the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation in 1992. These gifts were designated as part of the Gallery's Alfred Stieglitz Collection.

[59] See, for instance, Erika Lee Doss, Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism (Chicago, 1991); James
 M. Dennis, Renegade Regionalists: The Modern Independence of Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, and John Steuart Curry (Madison, 1998); or Wanda Corn's

essay "Grant Wood: Uneasy Modern," in *Grant Wood's Studio: Birthplace of American Gothic*, ed. Jane C. Milosch (Cedar Rapids, MI, 2005).

[60] See Virginia Tuttle Clayton et al., *Drawing on America's Past: Folk Art, Modernism, and the Index of American Design* (Washington, DC, 2002); and for the Garbisch Collection, see Deborah Chotner, *American Naïve Paintings* (Washington, DC, 1992).

[61] See Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935* (Berkeley, 1999).

[62] Duncan Phillips, "Modern Art and the Museum," *American Magazine of Art* 23, no. 4 (Oct. 1931): 275.

[63] Duncan Phillips, review of *The Pathos of Distance* by James Huneker, *Yale Review* 3 (April 1914): 594–596. Phillips was describing the art critic James Huneker.

[64] John Walker, "American Masters in the National Gallery," *National Geographic Magazine* (Sept. 1948): 324.

[65] Duncan Phillips, "The Allied War Salon," *The American Magazine of Art* 10, no. 4 (Feb. 1919): 115–123.

[66] The Gallery has recently acquired *The Judgment Day* by Aaron Douglas [fig. 19] and *A Black Bird with Snow-Covered Red Hills* (1946, promised gift) by Georgia O'Keeffe. Many other important American modernists are also represented in the Gallery's Corcoran Collection, including George Bellows, Thomas Hart Benton, Isabel Bishop, Oscar Bluemner, Patrick Henry Bruce, Arthur B. Carles, Arthur B. Davies, Stuart Davis, Manierre Dawson, Edward Dickinson, Aaron Douglas, Arthur Dove, William Glackens, Marsden Hartley, Robert Henri, Edward Hopper, Bernard Karfiol, Rockwell Kent, Leon Kroll, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Reginald Marsh, Alfred Maurer, George L. K. Morris, Jerome Myers, Guy Pène du Bois, Morton Schamberg, Charles Sheeler, John Sloan, Raphael Soyer, John Storrs, Max Weber, and Hale Woodruff.

#### **COMPARATIVE IMAGES**



**fig. 1** George Bellows, *Both Members of This Club*, 1909, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection



**fig. 2** George Bellows, *The Lone Tenement*, 1909, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection



**fig. 3** George Bellows, *Blue Morning*, 1909, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection



**fig. 4** Honoré Daumier, *Advice to a Young Artist*, 1865/1868, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Duncan Phillips



**fig. 5** Georgia O'Keeffe, *Line and Curve*, 1927, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe



**fig. 6** John Sloan, *The City from Greenwich Village*, 1922, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art,

Washington, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan



**fig. 7** George Bellows, *New York*, 1911, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon



**fig. 8** Edward Hopper, *Cape Cod Evening*, 1939, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, John Hay Whitney Collection



**fig. 9** Arthur Dove, *Moth Danc*e, 1929, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection



**fig. 10** Marsden Hartley, *The Aero*, c. 1914, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Fund



**fig. 11** John Marin, *The Written Sea*, 1952, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Deborah and Ed Shein



**fig. 12** Edward Steichen, *Le Tournesol (The Sunflower)*, c. 1920, tempera and oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Collectors Committee



**fig. 13** Charles Sheeler, *Classic Landscape*, 1931, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth



fig. 14 Grant Wood, *New Road*, 1939, oil on canvas on paperboard mounted on hardboard, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Strasburger



**fig. 15** Marguerite Zorach, *Christmas Mail*, completed 1930, inscribed 1936, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of the Zorach Children



**fig. 16** Horace Pippin, *Interior*, 1944, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Meyer P. Potamkin, in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art



**fig. 17** Walt Kuhn, *The White Clown*, 1929, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the W. Averell Harriman Foundation in memory of Marie N. Harriman



**fig. 18** Stuart Davis, *Multiple Views*, 1918, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Earl Davis



**fig. 19** Aaron Douglas, *The Judgment Day*, 1939, oil on tempered hardboard, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund, The Avalon Fund



## Notes to the Reader

This catalog encompasses paintings by American artists who were born primarily in the last quarter of the 19th century and came to prominence in the United States before 1945. Its first online release documents a group of 37 major works, including several paintings acquired from the Corcoran Gallery of Art after its closing in 2014. Many of these works are featured in the new East Building permanent collection galleries devoted to American modernism that were inaugurated in 2016 during the Gallery's 75th anniversary. A second installment of approximately 60 scholarly catalog entries is forthcoming.

The paintings cataloged here are arranged alphabetically by artist, and for each artist there is a short biography and selected bibliography. Each painting's page begins with an image of the work; the name, nationality, and life dates of the artist; and the title, execution date, medium and support, dimensions, credit line, and accession number of the painting. Each work is then discussed briefly in an overview, and at length in a full entry that includes a technical summary, provenance, notes, and bibliography. If present, any signature or inscription is transcribed, and if the painting was publicly exhibited at any time after its creation, an exhibition history is given.

#### **DATES**

The following conventions are used for dates:

1920	Executed in 1920
c. 1920	Executed sometime around 1920
1920–1925	Begun in 1920, finished in 1925
1920/1925	Executed sometime between 1920 and 1925
c. 1920/1925	Executed sometime around the period 1920–1925

#### **DIMENSIONS**

Overall dimensions are given in centimeters, height preceding width, followed by dimensions in inches within parentheses. Framed dimensions follow the overall dimensions.

#### **ACCESSION NUMBERS**

Accession numbers are noted after the credit line. This is a unique number assigned to every object in the National Gallery of Art collection. It is composed of (first) the four-digit year in which the object officially entered the Gallery's collection; (second) a number that represents the donation or purchase "lot" within the year of acquisition; and (third) a number recording the object within the lot. If necessary, these three parts are followed by a fourth letter or number, as, for instance, by ".a" for an obverse and ".b" for a painted reverse.

#### **INSCRIPTIONS**

If present, signatures or inscriptions on the paintings are recorded as accurately as possible. In these transcriptions, a slash with a space on either side of it indicates a new line; a slash without these spaces indicates that the slash is included in the text being recorded. All references to right and left with regard to the location of the signatures and inscriptions are to that of the viewer.

#### **PROVENANCES**

The Provenance gives the names of all known owners in chronological order. A semicolon between two names indicates a direct transfer of ownership of the painting, whereas a period indicates uncertainty about the chain of ownership and the whereabouts of the object between two documented owners. The names of dealers, agents, and auction house sales are given in parentheses. Notes provide sources, details of research, and discussion of outstanding questions.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORIES**

Exhibition histories record the presence of paintings in special exhibitions or as individual loans from an earlier owner to another institution. They are as complete

as possible and include exhibition catalog numbers (unless there was no catalog or the catalog was unnumbered) and a note if the painting was reproduced. We continue to update this information as our objects are included in new exhibitions or special loans, or when we learn about a previously unknown exhibition earlier in the painting's history.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHIES**

Each object page contains a chronological list of references that includes only those texts that specifically discuss the painting in the National Gallery of Art collection.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARIES AND INSTRUMENTAL METHODS**

Each entry includes a Technical Summary, which discusses the materials and techniques used by the artists in the creation of the paintings, as well as any changes and documented treatments. Each painting was examined unframed, in visible light, front and back. The paintings were examined with a stereomicroscope with magnifying power up to 100x and under ultraviolet light. X-radiographs were taken to answer questions regarding the paintings' construction and condition. Infrared reflectography was used for each painting to reveal underdrawing, compositional changes, and condition. The results of these examinations are discussed only when they yield information considered essential to interpretation of the painting.

The medium of the paint has not been analyzed unless stated in the Technical Summary. For the panel supports, the type of wood is specified only if the wood has been analyzed. Any scientific analysis that was used to help understand the paintings is cited. The procedures and equipment used for this analysis are described below.

Treatments performed by Gallery conservation staff after acquisition are described briefly in the Technical Summaries. Occasionally, records of earlier treatments are included in the Technical Summaries. Damages such as paint losses should be assumed to have been repaired and inpainted. Significant areas of inpainting are discussed in the Technical Summaries.

A variety of techniques and instruments were used to examine and analyze the paintings in this catalog. The equipment is described below:

Energy dispersive spectrometry (EDS): Small samples were examined with energy dispersive spectrometry using an Oxford Inca 300 spectrometer with a Super ATW Si(Li) detector on a JEOL 6300 SEM.

Fourier-transform infrared (micro)spectroscopy (FTIR): A Thermo Nicolet Nexus 670 instrument was used, fitted with a Continuum microscope. Spectra were collected in transmission mode at 4 cm-1 resolution. The samples were compressed between two windows of a Diamond Cell (Spectratech).

Gas chromatography / mass spectrometry (GC/MS): The samples were methylated with TMTFTH (TCI America, 0.5M in MeOH) or hydrolyzed using 6N HCl for 24 hours under vacuum. After removal of the HCl, the amino acids were silylated with MTBSTFA/TBDMCS. Samples were examined by gas chromatography/mass spectrometry on a 30 meter DB-5 column, a Varian Saturn CP3900 gas chromatograph, and a Saturn 2100T ion trap mass spectrometer.

Infrared examination: When infrared examination is designated by microns, one of four cameras was used: a Kodak 310-21X PtSi camera configured to 1.5-2.0 microns, a Mitsubishi M600 PtSi camera configured to 1.2-2.5 microns, an Indigo/FLIR Alpha Visible-InGaAs camera, and a Santa Barbara Focalplane SBF187 InSb camera. The latter two cameras were configured with various band filters between 1.1 and 2.5 microns. For the Kodak and Mitsubishi cameras, the images were captured using a ScionPCI framegrabber card in a Macintosh computer with Scanalytic's IP-Lab software. For the Indigo/FLIR camera, the images were captured onto a Dell computer with an IMAQ capture board housed in a Magma external PCI box, and IRVista software. For the Santa Barbara Focalplane camera, the images were captured using a Windows Empower tower computer and WinIR software. Nikon 55mm macro, 50mm macro, and 35mm lenses were used with the various cameras, as were Astronomy J, H, and K filters. The infrared reflectograms were automatically mosaicked and registered to a reference color image using a novel registration algorithm developed by George Washington University and the National Gallery of Art. For more information see Damon M. Conover, John K. Delaney, and Murray H. Loew, "Automatic Registration and Mosaicking of Conservation Images," in Optics for

*Arts, Architecture, and Archaeology*, vol. 4, ed. Luca Pezzati and Piotr Targowski, Proceedings of SPIE, vol. 8790 (Bellingham, WA, 2013).

Optical microscopy of cross-sections: Small paint samples (c. 0.25mm²) were removed using a scalpel and were mounted in polyester-type resin blocks. The samples were cut at right angles to the layer structure and polished using silicon carbide papers and examined using a Leica DRMX microscope.

Polarized light microscopy (PLM): Transmitted polarized light microscopy of dispersed samples was conducted using Leitz Orthoplan and Leica DMRX microscopes. Particle identification was accomplished by comparing characteristic features—including particle size, color, refractive index and relief, birefringence, extinction characteristics, pleochroism, and anomalous polarization colors of the unknown—to those of reference materials in the Forbes Pigment Collection and other reference collections.

Scanning electron microscopy (SEM): Small samples were prepared for optical microscopy and examined with a JEOL 6300 scanning electron microscope at magnifications 100x–10,000x. A Tetra backscatter electron detector was used to obtain BSE images.

X-radiography: X-radiography was carried out with equipment consisting of a Eureka Emerald 125 MT tube, a Continental 0-110 kV control panel, and a Duocon M collimator or a Comet Technologies XRP-75MXR-75HP tube. The image was captured on Kodak X-OMAT film or digitally using a Carestream Industrex Blue Digital Imaging Plate 5537. The scanned x-ray radiograph films or digital x-radiograph captures were automatically mosaicked and registered to a reference color image using a novel registration algorithm developed by George Washington University and the National Gallery of Art. For more information see Damon M. Conover, John K. Delaney, and Murray H. Loew, "Automatic Registration and Mosaicking of Conservation Images," in *Optics for Arts, Architecture, and Archaeology*, vol. 4, ed. Luca Pezzati and Piotr Targowski, Proceedings of SPIE, vol. 8790 (Bellingham, WA, 2013).

X-ray diffraction (XRD): The Philips x-ray generator XRG 3100 was used with a tube with a copper anode and nickel filter. The paint sample was mounted on a

glass fiber in a Gandolfi camera. Data were collected on film, and line spacings and intensities were estimated using a calibrated rule.

*X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (xRF)*: This is a noninvasive analytical technique, which was carried out using one of two systems. The first system used a secondary emission Kevex 0750A spectrophotometer equipped with a rhodium tube with either a barium chloride secondary target or a molybdenum secondary target using a variety of excitation conditions and a silicon lithium Si(Li) detector with a resolution of approximately 155eV @Mn Kα. For this system the range of Rh tube excitation was 40kV-60kV and 0.4mA-2mA. The second system used a Bruker ArtTAX Pro  $\mu$ XRF spectrometer, which uses primary excitation and is equipped with a helium (He) flush, a rhodium (Rh) x-ray tube, and a capillary optic lens with an analysis area of approximately  $75\mu$ m. In this system the x-ray tube voltage was 50kV, the current was  $200\mu$ A, and the accumulation time was 200 seconds.



# Credits and Acknowledgments

As with previous collection catalogs produced by the National Gallery of Art, *American Paintings*, 1900–1945 has involved many years of intensive work by many people. Its history, in fact, began at the turn of the new millennium, when Robert Torchia, having served as the lead author for *American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century, Part II*, agreed to begin researching the Gallery's collection of early 20th-century American paintings. We are grateful to Dr. Torchia for his meticulous scholarship and for his sustained dedication to this complex project.

The multifaceted nature of early 20th-century American painting has traditionally been reflected at the Gallery in the curatorial division between the department of American paintings and the department of modern art, the former generally responsible for figurative and representational works by artists like George Bellows and Edward Hopper and the latter having jurisdiction over more abstract paintings by artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe and Arthur Dove. The publication of American Paintings, 1900–1945 benefitted from the strong working relationship established between the departments of American and modern paintings by Franklin Kelly, now the Gallery's chief curator and deputy director, and Harry Cooper, curator of modern art. That spirit of collaboration has also extended to the department of photographs headed by Sarah Greenough and to the department of modern prints and drawings, formerly headed by Ruth Fine and now led by Judith Brodie. The numerous contributions of our curatorial colleagues to the field of American modernism informs this online edition at all levels. We are profoundly thankful to them for so generously sharing their expertise.

An important recent development in the history of the Gallery's collection of American paintings—the acquisition of major works from the Corcoran Gallery of Art—is also reflected in this catalog. Eight entries from the Corcoran's 2011 scholarly catalog edited by Sarah Cash, *Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, have been adapted for publication here. We thank Sarah Cash, Adam Greenhalgh, Dorothy Moss, and Jennifer Wingate for presenting their research in this new context. We also wish to thank Dare Hartwell, Lance Mayer,

Gay Myers, and Elizabeth Steele for their conservation records on the Corcoran objects, which served as the basis for those objects' technical summaries.

The Gallery's publishing office thoughtfully guided this project through its unique course and the transition from print to online publishing. It is hard to imagine a more experienced or capable staff. Many thanks to Judy Metro, editor in chief, Chris Vogel, deputy publisher, Wendy Schleicher, design manager, John Long, print and digital production associate, and Katie Brennan, program assistant. A very special thanks to Lisa Shea, project editor, who not only edited the catalog but kept everything on track and calmly and ably directed the catalog to the finish line. We are also grateful to the former senior editors responsible for the initial phases of the catalog: Mary Yakush, Karen Sagstetter, and, especially, Sally Bourrie.

Thank you to Nancy Yeide and Anne Halpern, assisted at times by Jason Di Resta, for attending to provenance, exhibition history, and bibliography issues in the midst of their day-to-day responsibilities for maintaining the Gallery's curatorial records. Senior conservator of paintings Michael Swicklik was responsible for examining the paintings and for the lucid technical summaries. Barbara Wood expeditiously gathered the image permissions. In the department of American and British paintings, we are indebted to curatorial assistant Zoë Samels and her predecessor, Nicole Stribling, as well as to Ellen Layman for assisting with myriad research questions, compiling artist biographies, and coordinating our efforts with other Gallery divisions. The newest member of our curatorial team, Sarah Cash, brought her unparalleled knowledge of the Corcoran Collection to bear on the project. Thank you to Arthur Wheelock and Jennifer Henel for their advice and, in conjunction with our publishing office, helping to pioneer a model for NGA Online Editions with their award-winning Dutch paintings volume that we were happy to follow. We look forward to availing ourselves of the dynamic capabilities of online publishing as the American paintings collection continues to evolve. Finally, we would like to collectively thank the many librarians, archivists, scholars, curators, collectors, art dealers, and museum professionals whose devotion to the field of American art makes projects such as these possible.

Nancy Anderson and Charles Brock

September 29, 2016

### National Gallery of Art

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#### **NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART**

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Franklin Kelly, deputy director and chief curator

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Peter A. Juley & Son, *George Bellows*, c. 1920, photograph, 1913 Armory Show, 50th anniversary exhibition records, 1962–1963, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

# Bellows, George

Also known as Bellows, George Wesley American, 1882 - 1925

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

George Bellows was born in Columbus, Ohio, on August 12, 1882, the only child of a successful building contractor from Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York. He entered Ohio State University in 1901, where he played baseball and basketball and made drawings for college publications. He dropped out of college in 1904, went to New York, and studied under Robert Henri (American, 1865 - 1929) at the New York School of Art, where Edward Hopper (American, 1882 - 1967), Rockwell Kent (American, 1882 - 1971), and Guy Pène du Bois (American, 1884 - 1958) were his classmates. A superb technician who worked in a confident, painterly style, Bellows soon established himself as the most important realist of his generation. He created memorable images of club fights, street urchins swimming in the East River, and the Pennsylvania Station excavation site and garnered praise from both progressive and conservative critics. In 1909 he became one of the youngest artists ever admitted as an associate member of the National Academy of Design.

In 1910 Bellows began teaching at the Art Students League and married Emma Story, by whom he had two daughters. After 1910 Bellows gradually abandoned the stark urban realism and dark palette characteristic of his early work and gravitated toward painting landscapes, seascapes, and portraits. His style changed as he

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explored the color theories of Hardesty Maratta and Denman Ross, and later Jay Hambidge's compositional system of dynamic symmetry.

Bellows helped organize the Armory Show in 1913, in which five of his paintings and a number of drawings were included. That year he was elected a full member of the National Academy of Design. He had leftist political views and contributed illustrations to the Socialist publication *The Masses* from 1912 to 1917. Bellows began to make lithographs in 1916, and his exceptional talent engendered a revival of interest in the medium. He worked in Maine, in Carmel, California, and in Middletown, Rhode Island, and was a founding member of the Society of Independent Artists and a charter member of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors. In 1919 he taught at the Art Institute of Chicago. After painting the landscape near Woodstock, New York, in 1920, he bought a house there the following year. He died of appendicitis in New York on January 8, 1925, at the age of 42.

Bellows, who never went to Europe, is regarded as a quintessential American artist whose vigorous style enabled him to explore a wide range of subjects from scenes of modern urban life to portraits of his daughters, to turbulent Maine seascapes. As an early biographer noted, Bellows "caught the brute force of the prize fighter, the ruggedness of the country pasture, the essence of childhood and recorded them appropriately not only for his own generation but for all time."[1]

[1] [Frederick A. Sweet], *George Bellows: Paintings, Drawings and Prints* (Art Institute of Chicago, IL, 1946).

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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- 1992 Mason, Lauris, assisted by Joan Ludman. *The Lithographs of George Bellows: A Catalogue Raisonne*. Millwood, New York, 1977.
- 1992 Quick, Michael, Jane Myers, Marianne Doezema, and Franklin Kelly. The Paintings of George Bellows. Exh. cat. Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Columbus (Ohio) Museum of Art; Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth. Fort Worth, 1992.
- 2012 Brock, Charles. George Bellows. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Royal Academy of Arts, London. Washington, 2012.

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George Bellows American, 1882 - 1925

# Blue Morning

1909

oil on canvas

overall: 86.3 x 111.7 cm (34 x 44 in.)

framed: 102.9 x 135.6 x 6 cm (40 1/2 x 53 3/8 x 2 3/8 in.)

Inscription: lower left: BELLOWS
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.82

#### **ENTRY**

From 1907 to 1909, George Bellows executed four paintings depicting the construction site of the Pennsylvania Station railroad terminal in New York City. Undertaken by the Pennsylvania Railroad under the leadership of its president, Alexander Cassatt (the artist *Mary Cassatt's* father), Pennsylvania Station (more commonly known as Penn Station) was an enormously ambitious project. Often compared with the Panama Canal, its construction was a technological feat that helped to transform New York into a thriving, modern, commuter metropolis. A tunnel had to be excavated under the Hudson River to accommodate a new electric train line that would connect Manhattan and New Jersey, and the station also facilitated travel to Long Island. The monumental terminal building, designed by the famous architectural firm McKim, Mead, & White, became the largest indoor space in New York. It comprised an impressive concourse, a waiting room inspired by the Roman Baths of Caracalla, and huge glass and steel train sheds.

The undertaking was of considerable interest to the general public, and throughout the years that Bellows worked on his paintings, newspapers and magazines

regularly reported on its progress.[1] By early July 1904, when he arrived in New York from Columbus, Ohio, an expanse of midtown Manhattan between Seventh and Ninth Avenues and 31st and 33rd Streets had been cleared for excavation by the New York Contracting Company. On August 20, 1905, The Washington Post reported on the progress of the excavation, calling it the "Biggest Hole Ever Dug in the Island of Manhattan." Although Bellows left no explanation why he selected the Penn Station construction project as the subject for several large oil paintings, these works were exhibited at important art organizations and thus proved critical to his developing career. His choice of subject was certainly influenced by the aesthetic dicta of his teacher Robert Henri, who urged students to seek out scenes of modern urban life. The excavation site was within walking distance of Bellows's studio in the Lincoln Arcade Building at Broadway and 66th Street. He may also have had a personal affinity with the subject because his father had been an architect and builder in Columbus. Given the sheer magnitude of the Penn Station project and the feats of engineering technology it entailed, there would have been no better example of modern life in New York City at that time.

The favorable reception of the first painting in the series, the bleak and bluntly realistic Pennsylvania Excavation [fig. 1], did much to establish Bellows's national reputation. The second painting, Excavation at Night [fig. 2], was also well received. Bellows gave the third picture, Pennsylvania Station Excavation [fig. 3], to his friend and studio mate Edward R. Keefe; it was never exhibited during Bellows's lifetime. Critics routinely tempered their praise for the first two paintings with reservations about what they perceived as the artist's excessive realism. When Pennsylvania Excavation was exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1908, Albert Sterner of The New York Times characterized it as "a realistic presentation of the big hole in winter with its bedraggled snow and slush and mud" whose "power and directness of treatment verges on unbridled, brutal crudity that is 'perfectly stunning' no doubt, but hardly satisfying artistically."[2] When Excavation at Night was exhibited at the New York Academy in 1909, James Huneker commented on its "grim ugliness" and doubted that Bellows would "win the favor of the crowd" because he was "uncompromising in his presentation of hard facts . . . and his candor compels him to present a pit full of steam drills and workmen, harshly lighted by electric rays, as he sees them."[3] Despite such negative comments about these two paintings, their originality, expressive power, and flawless bravura technique impressed the art cognoscenti and, second only to his boxing subjects, contributed to Bellows's prestige as an artist.

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Executed in March 1909, Blue Morning was the fourth and final painting in the series [fig. 4]. Bellows seems to have taken his critics' reviews to heart, because it is by far the most aesthetic and impressionistic of the group, devoid of "brutal crudity" and "grim ugliness." The picture takes its title from the bright, bluish light that pervades the scene, and is painted in Bellows's characteristic fluid, painterly technique. Unlike the other three pictures, it does not focus on the unedifying sight of the huge excavation pit, but rather the construction workers going about their business in the foreground. Marianne Doezema has demonstrated that the highly contrived view was a combination of factual observation and fantasy: "Bellows fabricated an ideal vantage point on the far side of Ninth Avenue at the center of the excavation. The scene depicted in Blue Morning would have been viewed from a point in midair."[4] Both the composition and lighting effects are complex. An elevated train track runs flush across the entire top margin, and a vertical I beam extends vertically down the right side. These framing devices compress and flatten space and heighten the abstract qualities of Bellows's design. The scene is dramatically backlit so that the figures are silhouetted against the hazy background, where the back of McKim, Mead, & White's partially completed terminal building rises out of the indistinct pit, looking much as it did in a contemporary photograph [fig. 5]. When Blue Morning was shown at the Exhibition of Independent Artists in April 1910, shortly before Penn Station opened in September, it was barely mentioned in the reviews. Frank Jewett Mather described it in passing as a "remarkable architectural composition."[5]

In December 1909, Bellows returned to the theme of urban transformation and progress in New York with *The Lone Tenement* and *The Bridge, Blackwell's Island* (Toledo Museum of Art), both similarly atmospheric paintings that allude to another major improvement in the city's transportation system: the newly erected Queensborough Bridge. The bridge still stands, but despite public outcry Pennsylvania Station was demolished in 1963, its grandiose statuary dispersed to other sites, to make way for Madison Square Garden. Sadly, *Blue Morning*, along with Bellows's three other Penn Station paintings, are among the few remaining mementos of what was once one of the greatest edifices of New York City's Gilded Age.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



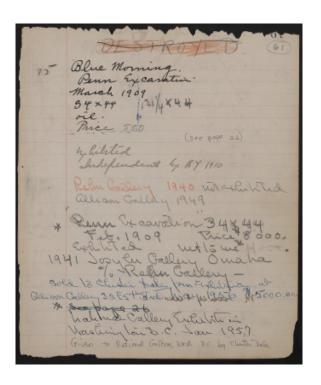
fig. 1 George Bellows, Pennsylvania Excavation, 1907, oil on canvas, Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts, Gift of Mary Gordon Roberts, Class of 1960, in Honor of the 50th Reunion of Her Class



fig. 2 George Bellows, Excavation at Night, 1908, oil on canvas, Crystal Bridges Museum of Art



**fig. 3** George Bellows, *Pennsylvania Station Excavation*, c. 1907–1908, oil on canvas, Brooklyn Musuem of Art, A. Augustus Healy Fund



**fig. 4** Entry from artist's Record Book about *Blue Morning*, The Ohio State University Libraries' Rare Books and Manuscripts Library and the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio



**fig. 5** L. H. Dreyer, *N*[*ew*] *Y*[*ork*] *Terminal of P*[*ennsylvania*] *T*[*unnel*] & *T*[*erminal*] *R*[*ailroad Co.*], Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York

#### **NOTES**

- [1] For a discussion of the construction of Penn Station, see Jill Jonnes, Conquering Gotham: A Gilded Age Epic; The Construction of Penn Station and Its Tunnels (New York, 2007).
- [2] Albert Sterner, "Art at Home and Abroad . . . Significance of the Exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy," *New York Times*, Jan. 26, 1908.
- [3] [James Huneker], "The Winter Academy," New York Sun, Dec. 21, 1909.
- [4] Marianne Doezema, *George Bellows and Urban America* (New York, 1992), 53.
- [5] Frank Jewett Mather, "The Independent Artists," Nation 90 (April 7, 1910): 360, quoted in Marianne Doezema, George Bellows and Urban America (New York, 1992), 55.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The plain, heavily woven fabric support was lined with wax and remounted on a new stretcher during treatment in 1970. The original canvas was prepared with a

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gray ground that is presumed to have been applied by the artist, but the absence of tacking margins makes this difficult to confirm. The paint was applied rapidly in thick layers, working in every passage virtually simultaneously. There is a good deal of impasto and visible brushwork, especially in the foreground. X-radiography and infrared reflectography were used to investigate the possible existence of an underlying painting, which is suggested by brushwork visible in raking light that does not correspond to the main painting. Examination with these techniques did not add any evidence to this theory. At the time of the 1970 treatment, it was discovered that approximately 2 3/4 inches of the original painting had been folded over the reverse of the top stretcher bar, thus reducing the painting's dimensions. Evidence suggests that this was done well after Bellows's death, perhaps in preparation for the 1949 or 1956 exhibition at H. V. Allison Gallery. Gordon Allison recollected that Blue Morning had been reframed prior to one of those exhibitions, and was "quite certain that the upper part was purposely covered by the rabbet so as to diminish the dark effect at the top." The painting was returned to its original dimensions in 1987. At that time, the painting was strip lined along the top edge, it was stretched onto a newly fabricated stretcher, the old varnish was removed, losses (particularly at the top edge that had been folded over) were filled and inpainted, and a synthetic varnish was applied.

#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1882-1925]; by inheritance to his wife, Emma S. Bellows [1884-1959]; purchased June 1956 through (H.V. Allison & Co., New York) by Chester Dale [1883-1962], New York; bequest 1963 to NGA.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1910 Exhibition of Independent Artists, Galleries at 29-31 West 35th Street, New York, 1910, no. 128 (in Paintings Galleries).

1940 Thirty-Six Paintings by George Bellows, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Ohio, 1940, no catalogue [according to records of paintings included in the exhibition; this exhibition not listed in the artist's Record Book].

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1949 Paintings by George Bellows, H.V. Allison & Co., New York, 1949, unnumbered catalogue.

1956 Paintings by George Bellows, H.V. Allison & Co., New York, 1956, no. 5.

1957 George Bellows: A Retrospective Exhibition, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., January-February 1957, no. 11, repro.

1957 Paintings by George Bellows, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Ohio, March-April 1957, no. 8.

1965 The Chester Dale Bequest, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1965, unnumbered checklist.

2010 From Impressionism to Modernism: The Chester Dale Collection, National Gallery of Art, January 2010-January 2012, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

2012 George Bellows, National Gallery of Art, Washington; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2012-2013, pl. 22 (shown only in Washington).

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- 1980 American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1980: 25, repro.
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- 1992 Doezema, Marianne. George Bellows and Urban America. New Haven and London, 1992: 49, 52-55, fig. 19, color pl. 4.
- 1997 Setford, David, and John Wilmerding. George Bellows: Love of Winter. Exh. cat. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; The Newark Museum, New Jersey; Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, 1997-1998. West Palm Beach, 1997: fig. 15, no. 22.
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- 2012 Brock, Charles, et al. George Bellows. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2012-2013. Washington and New York, 2012: 9, 23, 89, 92-93, 111, pl. 22.
- 2013 Corbett, David Peters. The American Experiment: George Bellows and the Ashcan Painters, with Katherine Bourguignon and Christopher Riopelle. London, 2013: 37-39, 46, color fig. 17.
- 2015 Wolner, Edward W. "George Bellows, Georg Simmel, and Modernizing New York." American Art 29, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 114-116, color fig. 6. Peck, Glenn C. George Bellows' Catalogue Raisonné. H.V. Allison & Co. URL: http://www.hvallison.com. Accessed 16 August 2016.

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George Bellows American, 1882 - 1925

# Both Members of This Club

1909

oil on canvas

overall: 115 x 160.5 cm (45 1/4 x 63 3/16 in.) framed: 133 x 177.8 cm (52 3/8 x 70 in.) Inscription: lower right: Geo Bellows Chester Dale Collection 1944.13.1

#### **ENTRY**

Painted in October 1909, two months after *Stag at Sharkey's* [fig. 1], *Both Members of This Club* is the third and largest of Bellows's early prizefighting subjects (the first being *Club Night*). When initially seen by the public at the 105th Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1910 (in which *Stag at Sharkey's* also appeared), a critic declared it "a powerful piece of work . . . a masterpiece of portrayal."[1] Bellows adhered to the same basic triangular composition that he had used so effectively in *Club Night* and *Stag at Sharkey's* by representing the two protagonists locked in a ferocious struggle on an elevated platform, towering over the audience below.[2] Silhouetted against a black background, they are dramatically illuminated by a harsh electric light. The presence of *Stag at Sharkey's* and *Both Members of this Club* at the Academy exhibition prompted one critic to imply that Bellows was guilty of repetitiveness: "To persuade Mr. George Bellows that the demonic energy and reality of his ring fights are excesses of a good thing . . . would be a public service, but he will doubtless find it out for himself without the assistance of any literary fellows."[3] In

one important respect, *Both Members of this Club* marks a reversion to the unmitigated savagery with which Bellows imbued his first prizefight painting, *Club Night*: he deleted the referee who mediates the proceedings in *Stag at Sharkey*'s.

Tom Sharkey's Athletic Club was a bar across the street from Bellows's studio in the Lincoln Arcade Building at Broadway and 66th Street in New York City. The Irish-born proprietor, Tom "Sailor Tom" Sharkey, was a former heavyweight champion who staged private boxing contests in the back room of his saloon.

Boxing had been legalized in New York State with the passage of the Horton Law in 1896. But that act was repealed in 1900 and replaced by the Lewis Law, which prohibited the sport.[4] Sharkey and others circumvented the Lewis Law by staging bouts in their private "clubs," where attendees paid membership dues instead of admission fees so that they could gamble on the outcome of the events. To maintain the act, boxers were announced in the ring as "both members of this club." Professional boxing was a proletarian sport, and its practitioners were mainly poor immigrants who lived in squalid urban neighborhoods. Habitués of places like Sharkey's were from more socially diverse groups, such as neighborhood regulars and middle- and upper-class men who frequented New York's demimonde [fig. 2]. Only men were admitted to prizefights at this time.[5]

The boxer on the right, whose pose is reminiscent of the Roman sculpture *Borghese Gladiator* (Louvre, Paris),[6] indisputably has the advantage, as he thrusts himself into his adversary. The white boxer shows all the signs of imminent defeat: his knee has begun to buckle, his body tilts precariously backward, his face and ribs are bloodied, and his head is oriented upward. The frenzied crowd below, sensing that the decisive moment in the contest has arrived, is completely absorbed in the action. Two figures at the far left have climbed up from their seats and peer through the ropes to get a better view of the fight. The spectators' faces are noticeably more caricatured than those in Bellows's first two prizefighting pictures, and it has been suggested that he was influenced by *Francisco José de Goya's The Vision of the Pilgrims of San Isidro* (1820–1823, Prado, Madrid).[7] The contrast between the colossal, straining figures of the contestants and the leering, distorted faces around the ring remind one of Bellows's statement that "I am not interested in the morality of prize fighting. But let me say that the atmosphere around the fighters is a lot more immoral than the fighters themselves."[8]

Bellows first called the painting "A Nigger and a White Man," but soon changed this blunt and racially charged title to the more complex and allusive *Both Members of This Club* [fig. 3]. The term "both members" is foremost a reference to

the requirement that the contestants be declared members of the private athletic clubs where they fought to circumvent the Lewis Law. While indicating that both fighters are members of an integrated, if rather dubious, fraternity, the second title further points with caustic irony to the fact that, during this era of institutionalized racism, the boxing ring was one of the few places where whites and blacks could ostensibly play by the same rules and interact on equal terms. Sometimes pitting the white Irish and black African American underclasses against each other, violent competitions such as illicit prizefighting offered both groups an avenue for achieving at least some measure of fame and a degree of racial equality within a segregated, prejudiced society. Finally, and perhaps most disturbingly, Bellows's title suggests the underlying violence of boxers and spectators alike and, by extension, all of humanity.[9]

Certainly Bellows intended this painting as a commentary on a much publicized recent phenomenon: the rise of the African American professional prizefighter. There were outbursts of racial antagonism after Jack Johnson became the first black heavyweight champion by defeating the white fighter Tommy Burns in Sydney, Australia, in 1908. Marianne Doezema has demonstrated at length that, after Johnson's win, the boxing world was "increasingly caught up in the vicissitudes of the 'white hopes.'"[10] The idea of a black boxing champion was so unsettling to the social order of the time that some people thought interracial bouts should be prohibited. One writer reflected: "It is really a serious matter that, if the negro wins, thousands and thousands of other negroes will wonder whether, in claiming equality with the whites, they have not been too modest."[11] Bellows's powerful delineation of a white fighter who is about to be defeated by a black opponent was a daring social commentary that challenged prevailing notions about white superiority and supremacy at the height of the Jim Crow era.

Some historians have attempted to identify *Both Members of This Club* with a specific match, but none of their suggestions are convincing.[12] Although the ambience is similar to Bellows's two previous boxing subjects set at Sharkey's Athletic Club, interracial fights were rare at the venue. Doezema has made a plausible argument, suggesting that the painting "may represent a bout witnessed at an athletic club in another part of the city, which the artist then set in the environment he knew well from repeated visits to Sharkey's."[13] While Bellows was working on *Both Members of This Club*, promoters were trying to lure the aging white heavyweight champion Jim Jeffries out of retirement to defeat Johnson. The anxiously awaited bout was a major news story when Bellows's

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painting was included in the Exhibition of Independent Artists in New York (organized by Bellows's mentor Robert Henri). Much later, Bellows returned to the prizefight theme in his lithograph *The White Hope* [fig. 4], which specifically depicts Johnson's defeat of Jeffries in Reno, Nevada, on July 4, 1910.[14] The artist's drawing *The Savior of His Race* [fig. 5], the source of an illustration in the May 1915 issue of *The Masses* magazine, alludes to Johnson's loss to Jess Willard on April 5, 1915, in Havana, Cuba.[15] In her insightful study of Bellow's boxing prints, Rachel Schreiber observes: "The cartoon and its caption mock the ways that Willard's defeat of Johnson was touted as a triumphant contest of race. Bellows exposes the speciousness of Christian evangelism's assumptions of white superiority."[16]

Both Members of This Club is arguably the most expressive and dynamic of the first three major oil paintings that Bellows devoted to the sport of prizefighting. When he returned to the boxing theme with three more paintings in the early 1920s, the sport had been legalized and was more socially acceptable. In these later works, the savagery, brutality, and raw excitement that characterize the first series is absent. Because of its controversial overtones of racial antagonism, Both Members of This Club, perhaps more than any other painting of its generation, best exemplifies Robert Henri's aesthetic dicta to depict the harsher, more vital realities of contemporary life. More than a century later, an early critic's summation of Bellows's early boxing paintings is still valid: "Call them brutal if you will, they hit you between the eyes with the vigor that few living artists known to us can command."[17]

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September 29, 2016

Both Members of This Club

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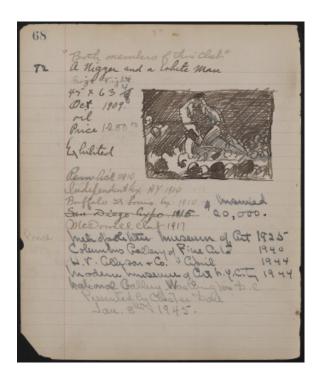
#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 George Bellows, Stag at Sharkey's, 1909, oil on canvas, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Hinman B. Hurlbut Collection 1133.1922. © The Cleveland Museum of Art



fig. 2 Henry "Hy" Mayer, "A Knockout by the Police," from Rupert Hughes, The Real New York (New York, 1904), 145, Library of Congress





**fig. 4** George Bellows, *The White Hope*, 1927, lithograph, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Fund

**fig. 3** Entry from artist's Record Book about *Both Members* of *This Club*, The Ohio State University Libraries' Rare Books and Manuscripts Library and the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio



**fig. 5** George Bellows, "The Savior of His Race," from *The Masses* 6 (May 1915): 11, Tamiment Library / Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University

#### **NOTES**

- [1] New York Evening Mail, quoted in Charles H. Morgan, George Bellows: Painter of America (New York, 1965), 104.
- [2] For a brief discussion of the compositional nuances of the three early boxing subjects, see Michael Quick, "Technique and Theory: The Evolution of George Bellows's Painting Style," in Michael Quick, Jane Myers, Marianne Doezema, and Franklin Kelly, *The Paintings of George Bellows* (Fort Worth, TX, 1992), 21–24, figs. 14 and 15.
- [3] "Art and Artists: Pennsylvania Academy—Second Article," New York Globe and Commercial Advertiser, Jan. 27, 1910; quoted in Charles H. Morgan, George Bellows: Painter of America (New York, 1965), 104. Marianne Doezema, George Bellows and Urban America (New York, 1992), 97, found

fault with the painting's spatial construction, saying that it belonged "to Never Neverland, and not to this mundane sphere, where such trifles as perspective have to be settled by scientific rules."

- [4] Boxing remained illegal until the passage of the Frawley Act in 1911, but even then only ten-round, no-decision bouts were allowed, in which the contestants used eight-ounce gloves.
- [5] This had changed by 1916, when Bellows represented a group of upperclass women and their escorts attending a boxing match at Madison Square Garden in his lithograph *Preliminaries* (see Lauris Mason, *The Lithographs of George Bellows: A Catalogue Raisonné*, rev. ed. [San Francisco, 1992], cat. 24).
- [6] E. A. Carmean, John Wilmerding, Linda Ayres, and Deborah Chotner, *Bellows: The Boxing Pictures* (Washington, DC, 1982), 33.
- [7] Eleanor M. Tufts, "Bellows and Goya," Art Journal 30 (Summer 1971): 363.
- [8] Letter from Bellows to Katherine Hiller, 1910, quoted in Thomas Beer, George W. Bellows: His Lithographs (New York, 1927), 15.
- [9] Sean Wilentz, "Low Life, High Art," The New Republic 207 (Sept. 28, 1992),43.
- [10] Marianne Doezema, *George Bellows and Urban America* (New York, 1992), 104.
- [11] "Topics of the Times: And May the Best Man Win!" *New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1909; quoted in Marianne Doezema, *George Bellows and Urban America* (New York, 1992), 106–107.
- [12] E. A. Carmean, John Wilmerding, Linda Ayres, and Deborah Chotner, Bellows: The Boxing Pictures (Washington, DC, 1982), 78, have suggested that the painting "depicts a fight at Sharkey's, possibly the one in March 1909 between the black Joe Gans, former lightweight champion, and Jabez White." More recently, Charlene S. Engel, "George Bellows and Lithography: A Graphic Eye Containing Multitudes," in D. Scott Atkinson and Charlene S. Engel, An American Pulse: The Lithographs of George Wesley Bellows (San Diego, CA, 1999), 32, n. 79, noted that "photographs of the fight between Johnson and Burns [the 1908 heavyweight championship in Sydney] show the similarities in height and physique of these fighters and those in Both Members of This Club."
- [13] Marianne Doezema, George Bellows and Urban America (New York, 1992), 106. An interracial boxing match was held at Sharkey's in August 1910, in which the African American fighter William Brown from San Francisco knocked William Ford from Philadelphia unconscious. "May Die from Fight Blows: William Ford Still Unconscious from Knockout at Sharkey A. C.," New York Times, Aug. 4, 1910.

- [14] Lauris Mason and Joan Ludman, *The Lithographs of George Bellows: A Catalogue Raisonné*, rev. ed. (San Francisco, 1997), 35, M. 96. For a biography of Jack Johnson, see Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes* (New York, 1983).
- [15] Marianne Doezema, *George Bellows and Urban America* (New York, 1992), 218, n. 127.
- [16] Rachel Schreiber, "George Bellows's Boxers in Print," *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 1, no. 2 (2010): 160.
- [17] Unidentified article in the *Sun*, quoted in Charles H. Morgan, *George Bellows: Painter of America* (New York, 1965), 104.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The support consists of a medium-weight, plain-weave, single-threaded fabric tacked to a five-member, key-type stretcher with a single vertical crossbar. The artist increased the size of this work early in the painting process. Filled tack holes seen in the x-radiographs reveal sections of the support that were once folded over a smaller stretcher and acted as tacking margins (8.5–9 cm at the left edge, 9.5–10.5 cm at the right edge, and 6–8 cm at the top). The filled tack holes are visible on the reverse of the unlined painting. The stretcher appears to be original, because of the inscriptions on it,[1] but the painting has been restretched several times. In the most recent remounting it was tacked in place out of square by approximately 2.5 cm below and to the left of its original position.

The paint was applied wet into wet as a thick paste with transparent washes. Much of the color in the torso of the figure at the right is due to a thin wash of brown paint through which the light ground is visible, adding luminescence to the tone. Most of the remaining paint is applied thickly with high impasto and with quickness and spontaneity. Many artist's changes are apparent in the texture of underlying impasto that does not match the design. Examples of these changes include a painted-out head in the lower left and a change of position in the right calf of the white fighter.

The condition of the painting is good. There are several small, patched holes and tears found on the reverse with corresponding losses of paint on the front. The painting was cleaned and inpainted in 1982. Several coats of different synthetic resin varnishes were also applied at that time.

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#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

[1] It is inscribed on both the reverse of the original fabric and on the stretcher. On the fabric, in paint: "Geo Bellows, 1947 B'dway, NY"; in red pencil: "Both Members Of This Club"; in white chalk: "# 1000.00". On the reverse of the stretcher, in red: "Do Not Put Any Varnish Or Oil Into This Canvas"; in pencil: "Mrs Geo Bellows, 146 E 19 St".

#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1882-1925]; by inheritance to his wife, Emma S. Bellows [1884-1959]; purchased 29 September 1944 through (H.V. Allison & Co., New York) by Chester Dale [1883-1962], New York; gift 1944 to NGA.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1910 Exhibition of Independent Artists, Galleries at 29-31 West 35th Street, New York, April 1910, no. 53.

1910 Fifth Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by American Artists, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, May-September 1910, no. 12.

1910 Fifth Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by American Artists, The City Art Museum, St. Louis, September-November 1910, no. 11.

1910 One Hundred and Fifth Annual Exhibition, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January-March 1910, no. 338.

1917 Exhibition of Paintings [by 12 different artists], The MacDowell Club, New York, 1917, no. 3.

1925 Memorial Exhibition of the Work of George Bellows, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1925, no. 10, repro.

1940 Thirty-Six Paintings by George Bellows, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Ohio, 1940, no catalogue.

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1944 Art in Progress: Fifteenth Anniversary Exhibition: Painting, Sculpture, Prints, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, May-October 1944, unnumbered catalogue, repro. 39.

1944 Paintings by George Bellows, H.V. Allison & Co., New York, March-April 1944, unnumbered checklist.

1946 George Bellows: Paintings, Drawings and Prints, Art Institute of Chicago, January-March 1946, no. 6, repro.

1946 Robert Henri & Five of his Pupils, The Century Association, New York, April-June 1946, no. 6, repro.

1957 George Bellows: A Retrospective Exhibition, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1957, no. 14, repro.

1965 The Chester Dale Bequest, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1965, unnumbered checklist.

1982 Bellows: The Boxing Pictures, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1982, no. 3, fig. 29, pl. 5.

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George Bellows American, 1882 - 1925

# Club Night

1907

oil on canvas

overall: 109.2 x 135 cm (43 x 53 1/8 in.)

framed: 127.6 x 153 x 9.5 cm (50 1/4 x 60 1/4 x 3 3/4 in.)

John Hay Whitney Collection 1982.76.1

### **ENTRY**

The famous series of six oil paintings that Bellows devoted to the sport of prizefighting has had enduring appeal as a set of images that captures the essence of early 20th-century urban American life.[1] Executed in August and September 1907, *Club Night* is the first of three similar boxing subjects that the precocious Bellows painted in his mid-20s [fig. 1]. He returned to the theme in 1909 with *Stag at Sharkey's* [fig. 2] and *Both Members of This Club*. Although Bellows made a number of lithographs devoted to the subject beginning in 1916 [fig. 3], he did not produce another boxing scene in oil until 1923, when he painted *Introducing John L. Sullivan* (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York). In 1924 he produced the two final pictures of the series: *Ringside Seats* (Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC) and *Dempsey and Firpo* (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York). In addition to their art historical significance, these paintings are important documents that illustrate the evolution of professional boxing in the United States.

Bellows first called this painting *A Stag at Sharkey's* and named his second boxing subject *Club Night*. When the Cleveland Museum purchased the latter in 1922, he

switched their titles at the museum's request.[2] The original title was derived from a bar called Tom Sharkey's Athletic Club that was across the street from Bellows's studio in the Lincoln Arcade Building at Broadway and 66th Street in New York City. The Irish-born proprietor, Tom "Sailor Tom" Sharkey, was a former heavyweight champion who staged private boxing contests in the back room of his saloon. Boxing had been legalized in New York State with the passage of the Horton Law in 1896. But that act was repealed in 1900 and replaced by the Lewis Law, which prohibited the sport.[3] Sharkey and others circumvented the Lewis Law by staging bouts in their private "clubs," where attendees paid membership dues instead of admission fees so that they could gamble on the outcome of the events. To maintain the act, boxers were announced in the ring as "both members of this club." Professional boxing was a proletarian sport, and its practitioners were mainly poor immigrants who lived in squalid urban neighborhoods. Habitués of places like Sharkey's were from more socially diverse groups, such as neighborhood regulars and middle- and upper-class men who frequented New York's demimonde [fig. 4]. Only men were admitted to prizefights at this time.[4]

Bellows was first introduced to Sharkey's by a boxer named Mosey King, who was a friend of Bellows's roommate, Ed Keefe.[5] King had held the New England featherweight and lightweight titles before retiring in 1906 (he later had a 46-year career as the boxing coach at Yale University). The artist later remembered: "Before I married and became semirespectable, I lived on Broadway opposite the Sharkey Athletic Club, where it was possible under law to become a 'Member' and see the fights for a price."[6] Bellows first documented the activities there in *The Knock Out* [fig. 5], a detailed pastel-and-ink drawing in which a referee attempts to restrain the victor from inflicting further damage on an opponent who lies dazed on the floor. He then painted *Forty-two Kids* before returning to the prizefighting theme with *Club Night*.

Bellows was not the first American artist to depict boxing matches. As the sport grew in popularity during the second half of the 19th century, it increasingly appealed to folk artists, illustrators, and political cartoonists, as well as to academic painters. Thomas Eakins (American, 1844 - 1916), an artist that Bellows later pronounced "one of the best of all the world's masters,"[7] dealt with the subject in a series of three major paintings: *Salutat* (1898, Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA), *Taking the Count* [fig. 6], and *Between Rounds* (1899, Philadelphia Museum of Art). Bellows would certainly have been familiar with these works, but, characteristic of his generation, he eschewed Eakins's noble,

idealized interpretation of pugilism in favor of the gritty realism advocated by his friend and mentor Robert Henri (American, 1865 - 1929). Bellows's boxing paintings have more in common with his contemporary *William Glackens's* illustrations for H. R. Durant's story "A Sucker" in *Cosmopolitan* (May 1905), for example *A Right-hand Hook* [fig. 7], and George Luks's related subject *The Wrestlers* (1905, Boston Museum of Fine Art, MA).[8]

In addition to Eakins, Bellows's boxing paintings also pay homage to the European painters recommended to him by Henri. Whereas Bellows later drew inspiration from the rich black tonalities and biting satire of the 17th-century Spanish master Francisco de Goya (Spanish, 1746 - 1828) for *Both Members of this Club*, the smoky, atmospheric haze that envelops the scene in *Club Night* and Bellows's painterly technique and rendering of the crowd owes much to the great 19th-century French painter and caricaturist Honoré Daumier (French, 1808 - 1879). The critic James G. Huneker succinctly described the visceral effect of *Club Night*:

]. One pugilist is lunging in the act of delivering a "soaker" to his adversary. You hear, you feel the dull impact of the blow. A sodden set of brute mugs ring the circle—upon the platform the light is concentrated. It is not pleasing, this, or edifying, but for the artists and amateur the play of muscles and the various attitudes and gestures are absolutely exciting.[9]

Further heightening the drama of the composition, Bellows has used a low viewpoint, creating the impression that the spectator observes the struggle from just behind the audience that is gathered around the raised platform. Additionally, the harsh electric light dramatically illuminates the contestants' muscular bodies so that they stand out in relief against the dark background.

Bellows, who in his 1909 copyright application simply described *Club Night* as "two prize fighters [*sic*], one on the right lunges blow at crouching opponent on the left,"[10] based the painting on his personal observations of the unsavory proceedings at Sharkey's, and then executed it from memory in his studio. When boxing experts criticized him for depicting stances and gestures that real pugilists would never have used, he replied, "I don't know anything about boxing. I'm just painting two men trying to kill each other." To another such criticism he responded: "Who cares what a prize fighter looks like? It's his muscles that count."[11] Bellows's lack of interest in the technical aspects of boxing did not detract from his ability to

convey a vivid impression of the atmosphere at Sharkey's. Huneker's comment above is remarkably similar to the eyewitness account of French traveler Paul Charles Joseph Bourget, who attended a boxing match during the early 1890s:

The blows fall more heavily as the fight progresses. The bodies bend to avoid them. The two men are furious. One hears their breathing and the dull thud of the fists as they fall on the naked flesh. After several blows of harder delivery, the 'claret' is drawn, as they say, the blood flows from the eyes, the nose, the ears, it smears the cheeks and the mouth, it stains the fists with its warm and red flow, while the public expresses its delight by howls, which the striking of the gong alone stops.[12]

Even though its unsavory subject defied the era's conservative social mores, *Club Night* was accepted for exhibition at the National Academy of Design's "Winter Exhibition" that opened on December 14, 1907. Despite being disadvantageously hung over a doorway, the painting attracted considerable attention and commentary. A critic observed that "if the extreme of realism is sought, it may be found over the door of the Vanderbilt Gallery, as if placed there for the benefit of persons accustomed to looking up from ringside. Its title, 'A Stag at Sharkey's,' suggests a recent police problem."[13]

Another reviewer would later interpret *Stag at Sharkey*'s (then still called *Club Night*) as an outright condemnation of prizefighting:

It may be difficult for many to see why an artist who had the temperament to paint...other canvases with so much refinement should choose to paint such a subject as a prize fight, a large canvas called 'Club Night.' On a closer study of this painting, however, we find no attempt to glorify prize fighting; it is, rather, a painting inspired by disgust for such an exhibition; everything in the whole canvas reeks of degradation. There can be magnificence in a certain phase of brutal strength; there is eloquence in physical encounter which intoxicates to the extent of blinding one to the depravity of the proceedings. Lines, muscles, and action in a painting can convey this eloquence, but in the 'Club Night' we witness a prize fight shorn of all eloquence. Even the lines, although

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wonderful in their expressiveness, lack all nobility, portraying only the real quality of such a contest. One is convinced the author of the painting was inspired by the depravity of the scene rather than by the outcome of such a contest. The same can be said of the composition. The leering faces of the men who are sitting around the raised platform are all so powerfully suggestive of the artist's attitude of mind. I should be very much surprised if Mr. Bellows denied this.[14]

Bellows had already stated in 1910, "I am not interested in the morality of prize fighting. But let me say that the atmosphere around the fighters is a lot more immoral than the fighters themselves."[15] The heavily caricatured treatment of the spectators in the Gallery's *Club Night*, some of whom wear formal dress in an allusion to the wealthy men who "slummed" by attending these events, suggests a degree of social criticism. Caught up in the frenzied, violent atmosphere, they leer up at the pugilists, and their exaggerated facial expressions suggest that they derive a vicarious—and perhaps even voyeuristic—thrill from the sadistic match.[16]

Bellows's boxing images were censored numerous times during their exhibition in his home state of Ohio. A former schoolmate, the sports reporter Charlie Grant, arranged for *Club Night* to be displayed in the dining room of the Cleveland Athletic Club in 1908 in the hope that it might be acquired by that institution. Although a local newspaper called the painting "a remarkable specimen of the realist school,"[17] the purchase was eventually rejected on the grounds that the subject was offensive to female guests. In Columbus in 1911, Bellows's boxing drawing *The Knock Out* was quarantined in a separate gallery away from women and children.

Critics reacted with simultaneous admiration and revulsion for the morally ambiguous spectacle of two heroic prizefighters locked in a titanic struggle within the confines of a sleazy, smoke-filled back room of a New York saloon. Both the artist's interpretation of the subject and the public's response to it reflect the uncertain status of boxing at the time. While many Americans found prizefighting a brutal and savage pastime, others thought that recreational boxing, and even settling disputes with fisticuffs, was a natural manifestation of masculinity. No less a person than President Theodore Roosevelt practiced boxing and openly advocated the sport. Marianne Doezema has discussed how Bellows's boxing subjects evolved in an era when "concerns about the impact of industrialization

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and urbanization . . . were expressed as fear of overcivilization and degeneracy, but fundamentally as anxiety about virility in American life."[18] The period's fascination with athletic activities in general and boxing in particular was a manifestation of concerns about declining masculinity, and Bellows's sensational paintings attracted notoriety because they "flaunted the prim codes of effete society and brandished one of the most primal manifestations of masculine hardness."[19]

Critics also considered Bellows's choice of subject matter and artistic style to be directly influenced by his own masculinity. One allowed that the boxing subjects of *Stag at Sharkey's* and *Both Members of This Club* were undeniably brutal, but that "they hit you between the eyes with a vigor that few living artists known to us can command. Take any of these Parisian chaps, beginning with Henri Matisse, who make a specialty of movement—well, their work is ladylike in comparison with the red blood of Bellows."[20] When *Club Night* was shown at the National Academy of Design's winter exhibition in 1908, a critic commented that it was one of two pictures by the artist in which "he has presented passing phases of the town in a manly, uncompromising manner."[21] By early 1911, when Bellows had his first solo exhibition at the Madison Art Galleries, his reputation had become so inextricably bound to his boxing pictures that one critic used pugilistic terminology to describe his entire oeuvre: "The strong arm method of painting is what George goes in for, and he has got art pounded to a frazzle here in this twenty-four-round contest. Two dozen heavyweight pictures and a knock-out [*sic*] punch in every one!"[22]

In 1922, Bellows looked back on *Club Night* and pronounced it "not much good."[23] It had been his first attempt to paint a major canvas devoted to the theme of prizefighting, and he probably felt that the idea was better developed in the more dramatic and energetic *Stag at Sharkey's* and *Both Members of This Club*. Even today, the latter two paintings have greatly overshadowed their lesser-known predecessor. Nevertheless, *Club Night* is a powerful image in which Bellows recorded his initial impressions of the savage fights in the backroom of Sharkey's Athletic Club and established the basis for further explorations of what would become his most famous subject.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**

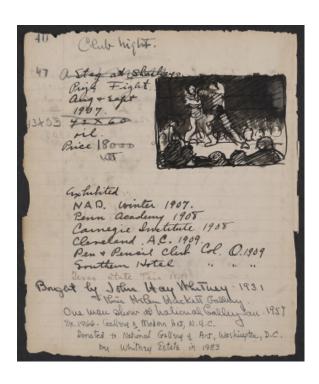


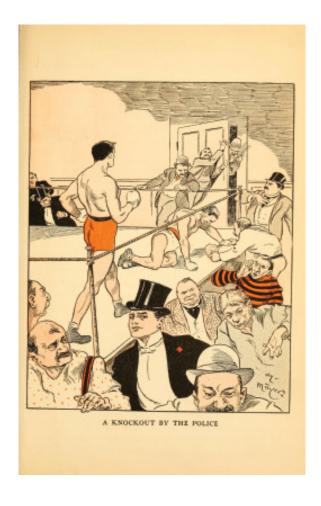
fig. 1 Entry from artist's Record Book about Club Night, The Ohio State University Libraries' Rare Books and Manuscripts Library and the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio



fig. 2 George Bellows, Stag at Sharkey's, 1909, oil on canvas, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Hinman B. Hurlbut Collection 1133.1922. © The Cleveland Museum of Art



**fig. 3** George Bellows, *The White Hope*, 1927, lithograph, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Fund



**fig. 4** Henry "Hy" Mayer, "A Knockout by the Police," from Rupert Hughes, *The Real New York* (New York, 1904), 145, Library of Congress



**fig. 5** George Bellows, *The Knock Out*, 1907, pastel, ink, and graphite, Crystal Bridges Museum of Art, Bentonville, Arkansas. Image: Dwight Primiano



**fig. 6** Thomas Eakins, *Taking the Count*, 1899, oil on canvas, Yale University Art Gallery, Whitney Collections of Sporting Art, Given in Memory of Harry Payne Whitney, B.A. 1894, and Payne Whitney, B.A. 1898, by Francis P. Garvan, B.A. 1897, M.A. (Hon.)



**fig. 7** William Glackens, "A right-hand hook had landed squarely on the point of his chin. It was all over," from H. R. Durant, "The Sucker," *Cosmopolitan* 39, no. 1 (May 1905): 90, Library of Congress

#### **NOTES**

- [1] John Wilmerding has observed that, "They were among his most popular pictures in his lifetime and have remained compelling for audiences to this day." John Wilmerding, "Bellows' Boxing Pictures and the American Tradition," in E. A. Carmean, John Wilmerding, Linda Ayres, and Deborah Chotner, *Bellows: The Boxing Pictures* (Washington, DC, 1982), 13.
- [2] The change in title was explained by Bellows's wife Emma in an interview she gave in February 1955 to Kib Bramhall for his senior thesis on Bellows at Princeton. Bramhall wrote: "An interesting sidelight . . . was explained to me by Mrs. Bellows. . . . In 1922 the Cleveland Museum . . . preferred the colorful title *Stag at Sharkey's* and asked George if he would mind switching the names . . . Bellows readily agreed." Bramhall shared this reference in a letter to Franklin Kelly, deputy director and chief curator, National Gallery of Art, dated February 10, 2013.
- [3] Boxing remained illegal until the passage of the Frawley Act in 1911, but even then only ten-round, no-decision bouts were allowed, in which the contestants used eight-ounce gloves.
- [4] This had changed by 1916, when Bellows represented a group of upperclass women and their escorts attending a boxing match at Madison Square Garden in his lithograph *Preliminaries* (see Lauris Mason, *The Lithographs of*

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- [5] Charles H. Morgan, George Bellows: Painter of America (New York, 1965),69
- [6] George Bellows to William Milliken, June 10, 1922, curatorial files, Cleveland Museum of Art, OH; quoted in Marianne Doezema, "The 'Real' New York," in Michael Quick, Jane Myers, Marianne Doezema, and Franklin Kelly, *The Paintings of George Bellows* (Fort Worth, TX, 1992), 105.
- [7] Unspecified letter to Robert Henri of late 1917, quoted in Charles H. Morgan, George Bellows: Painter of America (New York, 1965), 215. For a discussion of Eakins's boxing paintings, see Carl S. Smith, "The Boxing Paintings of Thomas Eakins," Prospects 4 (1979): 403–420, and Martin A. Berger, Man Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood (Berkeley, CA, 2000), 112–120.
- [8] For a survey of American antecedents to Bellows's boxing series, see John Wilmerding, "Bellows' Boxing Pictures and the American Tradition," in E. A. Carmean, John Wilmerding, Linda Ayres, and Deborah Chotner, Bellows: The Boxing Pictures (Washington, DC, 1982), 13–25. Glackens's illustrations are discussed by Marianne Doezema in George Bellows and Urban America (New York, 1992), 80–82.
- [9] "Academy Exhibition—Second Notice," New York Sun, Dec. 23, 1907; quoted in Marianne Doezema, George Bellows and Urban America (New York, 1992), 67, n. 1.
- [10] E. A. Carmean, John Wilmerding, Linda Ayres, and Deborah Chotner, Bellows: The Boxing Pictures (Washington, DC, 1982), 29.
- [11] Charles H. Morgan, *George Bellows: Painter of America* (New York, 1965), 77.
- [12] Paul Bourget, Outre-Mer: Impressions of America (New York, 1895), 334–335; quoted in Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bolger, and David Park Curry, American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885–1915 (New York, 1994), 234.
- [13] "National Academy's Exhibition Opened," *New York Herald*, Dec. 14, 1907; quoted in Marianne Doezema, "The 'Real' New York," in Michael Quick, Jane Myers, Marianne Doezema, and Franklin Kelly, *The Paintings of George Bellows* (Fort Worth, TX, 1992), 104.
- [14] "The Art of George Bellows," Aesthetics 3 (Oct. 1914–July 1915): 53.
- [15] Letter from Bellows to Katherine Hiller, 1910, quoted in Thomas Beer, George W. Bellows: His Lithographs (New York, 1927), 15.
- [16] For a discussion of the possible homoeroticism of *Stag at Sharkey's*, see Robert Haywood, "George Bellows's *Stag at Sharkey's*: Boxing, Violence,

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- and Male Identity," Smithsonian Studies in American Art 2 (Spring 1988): 3-15.
- [17] Charles H. Morgan, George Bellows: Painter of America (New York, 1965),
- [18] Marianne Doezema, George Bellows and Urban America (New York, 1992), 68.
- [19] Marianne Doezema, George Bellows and Urban America (New York, 1992), 69. In a more humorous vein, Bellows, who was probably sensitive to these social issues because he was an accomplished athlete, later ridiculed the national mania for physical fitness in such lithographs as Business-Men's Class (1916, M. 20). He derived this particular lithograph from an illustration that he had made for *The Masses* in April 1913. Two other lithographs, *The* Shower-Bath (1917, M. 45) and Business-Men's Bath (1923, M. 145), deal with the same theme.
- [20] Unspecified newspaper review from The Sun, quoted in Charles H. Morgan, George Bellows: Painter of America (New York, 1965), 104.
- [21] J. Nilsen Laurvik, "The Winter Exhibition at the National Academy of Design," International Studio 33 (Feb. 1908): cxlii.
- [22] Undated clipping, possibly from the New York World, Jan. 1911, in Bellows's scrapbook, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Library, quoted by Marianne Doezema, "The 'Real' New York," in Michael Quick, Jane Myers, Marianne Doezema, and Franklin Kelly, The Paintings of George Bellows (Fort Worth, TX, 1992), 109.
- [23] Letter from Bellows to William Milliken, June 10, 1922, curatorial files, Cleveland Museum of Art, OH.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a medium-weight, plain-weave canvas that has been primed with a white ground. It is lined with a more tightly woven plain-weave canvas and aqueous adhesive, and is stretched onto a five-member, keyable stretcher that is probably not original. The size of the painted surface has been expanded by approximately one inch on both the top and bottom, apparently by flattening the original tacking margins and making them part of the painting. All along these edges, filled tack holes are clearly visible, as well as ridges of paint that would have marked the original dimensions of the painting. The paint has been applied thickly in dark tones with visible brushwork. Scumbles of lighter paint describe many of the details. Some brushstroke texture visible in raking light that is

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unrelated to the visible image suggests a different painting beneath. X-radiographs confirm the existence of a boy's portrait under the visible painting, oriented so that the left edge of Club Night would be the top of the portrait [fig. 1]. There are some other artist's changes in the positions of the boxers' gloves and in the silhouette of the boxer at the left, particularly in the position of his proper left leg. The painting was treated in 2010. In this treatment, a few old losses were revealed during the removal of an old, discolored, natural resin varnish. The losses were re-inpainted and a layer of synthetic resin varnish was applied to the painting.

Club Night © National Gallery of Art, Washington

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#### **TECHNICAL COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Detail of x-radiograph, George Bellows, *Club Night*, 1907, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, John Hay Whitney Collection

#### **PROVENANCE**

(The Hackett Galleries, New York); purchased 1930[1] by John Hay Whitney [1904-1982], Manhasset, New York; deeded 1982 to the John Hay Whitney Charitable Trust, New York; gift 1982 to NGA.

[1] According to Whitney collection records, the painting was purchased in 1930, which was the year The Hackett Galleries printed their prospectus for the painting. The date given in the artist's record book, in an annotation by Emma Bellows, is 1931, and she writes that Whitney bought the painting "thru Helen Hackett Gallery." Copies of the Whitney records, the prospectus, and the page from the artist's record book are in NGA curatorial files. The *Herald Tribune* of 24 May 1931 announced: "'Club Night,' the subject in question, which has just been sold by the Hackett galleries to an unnamed collector, stands out among Bellows's works as one of the four most powerful subjects of its type." (Carlyle Burrows, "Pictures for the Road and a Bellows Canvas," *Herald Tribune* [24 May 1931]: repro.)

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#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1907 Winter Exhibition, National Academy of Design, New York, 1907-1908, no. 383, as A Stag at Sharkey's.

1908 One Hundred Third Annual Exhibition, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January-February 1908, no. 251, as A Stag at Sharkey's.

1908 Twelfth Annual Exhibition, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, April-June 1908, no. 20, as A Stag at Sharkey's.

1909 Art Department, State Fair of Texas, Dallas, October 1909, no. 7, as A Stag at Sharkeys.

1909 Cleveland Athletic Club, Ohio, 1909, as A Stag at Sharkey's [according to the artist's Record Book].[1]

1909 Pen and Pencil Club, Columbus, Ohio, 1909, as A Stag at Sharkey's [according to the artist's Record Book].

1909 Southern Hotel, Columbus, Ohio, 1909, as A Stag at Sharkey's [according to the artist's Record Book].

1915 Paintings by George Bellows, N.A., Gallery of Fine and Applied Arts, Los Angeles, 1915, possibly no. 16.

1925 Commemorative Exhibition by Members of the National Academy of Design (1825-1925), Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Grand Central Art Galleries, New York, 1925-1926, no. 249, repro.

1934 Sport in Art from Ancient to Modern Times, for the Benefit of the Artists and Writers Dinner Club, The Junior League of the City of New York, 1934.

1957 George Bellows: A Retrospective Exhibition, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1957, no. 5, repro.

1958 The Museum and Its Friends: Twentieth-Century American Art from Collections of the Friends of the Whitney Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1958, no. 6, repro.

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1959 The American Muse: Parallel Trends in Literature and Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1959, no. 14.

1960 Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture Collected by Yale Alumni: An Exhibition, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, May-June 1960, no. 131, repro.

1960 The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Exhibition of Independent Artists in 1910, Delaware Art Center, Wilmington; Graham Gallery, New York, January-April 1960, no. 2.[2]

1966 George Bellows: Paintings, Drawings, Lithographs, The Gallery of Modern Art, New York, 1966, no. 8 (of paintings list), repro.

1968 American Art from Alumni Collections, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, 1968, no. 143, repro.

1971 What is American in American Art, M. Knoedler and Co. [benefit exhibition for the Museum of American Folk Art], New York, 1971, no. 89, repro., as Club Night at Sharkey's.

1982 Bellows: The Boxing Pictures, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1982-1983, no. 1, fig. 25, pl. 7.

1983 The John Hay Whitney Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1983, no. 66, repro.

1984 The American Figure: Vanderlyn to Bellows, Mansfield Art Center, Ohio, 1984, no. 45, repro.

1986 Loan to display with the permanent collection, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C., 1986-1987.

1992 The Artist at Ringside, The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio; The National Art Museum of Sport, Indianapolis, 1992, unnumbered checklist, repro. 27 (shown only in Youngstown).

1992 The Paintings of George Bellows, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Columbus Museum of Art; Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, 1992-1993, fig. 8 (shown only in New York, Columbus, and Fort Worth).

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1994 American Impression and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth; The Denver Art Museum; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1994-1995, no. 3, fig. 223.

1996 Visions of America: Urban Realism 1900-1945, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, 1996, no. 1, repro.

1998 Gifts to the Nation from Mr. and Mrs. John Hay Whitney, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1998-1999, no catalogue.

1999 America: The New World in 19th-Century Painting, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna, 1999, no. 135, repro.

2005 Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film, 1880-1910, Grey Art Gallery & Study Center, New York University, New York; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., 2005-2007, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 175.

2007 Life's Pleasures: The Ashcan Artist's Brush with Leisure, 1895-1925, Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville; The New -York Historical Society; The Detroit institute of Arts, 2007-2008, no. 34, repro.

2009 American Stories: Paintings of Everyday Life 1765-1915, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009-2010, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 174.

2012 George Bellows, National Gallery of Art, Washington; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2012-2013, pl. 16.

2013 George Bellows and the American Experience, Columbus Museum of Art, 2013-2014, no catalogue.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY NOTES**

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[1] In addition to the artist's own record, the painting is documented as having been exhibited at the Cleveland Athletic Club in "A Stag at Sharkey's, Real Fight Picture," Cleveland Press (18 December 1908): 12.

[2] Although the NGA painting was included in this exhibition as if it had been in the 1910 exhibition whose fiftieth anniversary was being celebrated, it was actually the Cleveland Museum of Art's painting Stag at Sharkey's (known as Club Night prior to 1921/1922) that was in the original 1910 show.

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	(September 1912): 334, repro.

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- 1965 Morgan, Charles H. George Bellows. Painter of America. New York, 1965: 9, 76-78, 89-90, 255, repro. 312.
- 1971 Braider, Donald. George Bellows and the Ashcan School of Painting. New York, 1971: 43, 45, 48, 132.
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- 1992 American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1992: 28, repro.
- 1992 Doezema, Marianne. George Bellows and Urban America. New Haven and London, 1992: 83-89, fig. 33, color pl. 8.
- 1992 Doezema, Marianne. "The New York City of George Bellows." Antiques 141, no. 3 (March 1992): 487, color pl. 10.
- 1992 Quick, Michael, Jane Myers, Marianne Doezema, and Franklin Kelly. The Paintings of George Bellows. Exh. cat. Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Columbus (Ohio) Museum of Art; Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, 1992-1993. New York, 1992: 13, 19, 21, 105-106, 107, 108, fig. 8.
- 1995 Oates, Joyce Carol. George Bellows: American Artist. Hopewell, New Jersey, 1995: 3-5.
- 2007 Haverstock, Mary Sayre. George Bellows: An Artist in Action. Columbus,

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Ohio, 2007: 37-38, color repro. 39.

2012 Brock, Charles, et al. George Bellows. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art,

Washington; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Royal

Academy of Arts, London, 2012-2013. Washington and New York, 2012:

23, 39, 41, 71, 74, 77, 215, pl. 16.

Peck, Glenn C. George Bellows' Catalogue Raisonné. H.V. Allison & Co.

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George Bellows American, 1882 - 1925

# Forty-two Kids

1907

oil on canvas

overall: 106.7 × 153 cm (42 × 60 1/4 in.)

framed:  $124.1 \times 170 \times 7.3$  cm (48 7/8 × 66 15/16 × 2 7/8 in.)

Inscription: lower left: Geo Bellows

Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase, William A. Clark Fund) 2014.79.2

#### **ENTRY**

Forty-two Kids was painted in August 1907 [fig. 1], less than three years after George Wesley Bellows had left his home state of Ohio at the age of 22 to study art in New York City.[1] He enrolled at the New York School of Art under Robert Henri, the artist and influential teacher around whom congregated the so-called Ashcan school of urban realists. Bellows fully subscribed to his mentor's credo, creating work "full of vitality and the actual life of the time."[2] Forty-two Kids exemplifies Bellows's early work, much of which depicts metropolitan anecdotes, including the illegal boxing matches for which he would become best known.

In Forty-two Kids, nude and partially clothed boys engage in a variety of antics—swimming, diving, sunbathing, smoking, and possibly urinating—on and near a dilapidated wharf jutting out over New York City's East River [fig. 2].[3] The wharf is painted with broad, fluid strokes from a heavily laden paintbrush, and the "little scrawny-legged kids in their naively indecent movements" are sketched with Bellows's characteristic vigor and economy of means.[4] The vague grid formed by the wharf's rough-hewn planks provides a stable compositional platform for the

jumble of "spindle-shanked little waifs" distributed seemingly at random across the foreground and middle ground of the canvas.[5]

Forty-two Kids elicited significant attention when it was first exhibited. It was recognized as "one of the most original and vivacious canvases" at the National Academy of Design's 1908 exhibition,[6] where Bellows won the second-place Julius Hallgarten Prize for another painting, North River (1908, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia).[7] This was only the second year Bellows had submitted to the academy. It was an auspicious sign; in April 1909, the organization inducted Bellows as one of the youngest academicians in its history.

Although it was viewed with "a pleasurable sensation" and relished for its "humor" and "humanity,"[8] *Forty-two Kids* did not receive universally positive reviews. One critic condemned it for "the most inexcusable errors in drawing and general proportions,"[9] while another denounced it as "a tour de force in absurdity."[10] It had been controversially denied the prestigious Lippincott Prize at the Pennsylvania Academy's 1908 annual exhibition owing to the jury's fear that the donor might be offended by the title and subject of the painting.[11]

Bellows was aware of this incident. He wanted Robert C. Hall, who purchased Forty-two Kids from the Thirteenth Annual Exhibition of the Carnegie Institute in 1909, to know that "the management, feeling that Mr. Lippincott would not like the decision, would not allow the award."[12] When asked if he thought the jury feared Lippincott would object to the naked children, Bellows deflected attention by quipping: "No, it was the naked painting that they feared."[13] He did not elaborate, leaving unclear whether he meant the painting's sketchy appearance or its lowly subject.

Although Bellows's painting appears innocent enough to viewers today, the mixed reception likely stemmed from the connotations of what one critic called the "curiously freakish subject."[14] Even as Bellows's scene recalls *Thomas Eakins's* 1885 painting *Swimming* [fig. 3], it also echoes the lowbrow style and content of comic strips like *Hogan's Alley*, which chronicled the capers of its slum-dwelling protagonist, the Yellow Kid.[15] Where Eakins evokes a tradition of Arcadian naturalism, aligning his nude, sun-dappled subjects with classical antiquity, Bellows's undeniably modern kids are accorded no such nobility. Around 1900, the slang term "kid" connoted young hooligans with predilections for mischief and petty crime; its lower-class associations would have been clear to Bellows's audience.[16] Bellows had used colloquial titles before, in his 1906 paintings *Kids* 

(now in the collection of James W. and Frances G. McGlothlin) and *River Rats* (private collection, Washington, DC). The latter employs an epithet for juvenile delinquents that draws on an established rhetorical link between immigrants and animals. This association was also applied to the kids in the Gallery's picture, who were described as "simian."[17] This was likely a reference to the then-popular caricature of Irish Americans as apelike,[18] although the varied skin tones of Bellows's kids appear to reflect the range of ethnicities—Italian, Russian, German, Polish, and Irish—represented in the poor neighborhoods of Manhattan's East Side.

The "simian" slur was surpassed by another critic, who declared: "most of the boys look more like maggots than like humans."[19] Another simultaneously likened Bellows's kids to insects and germs when he suggested that "the tangle of bodies and spidery limbs" was akin to "the antics of magnified animalculae."[20] Even Bellows's widow, Emma, used entomological vocabulary when she recalled the "old dock" north of the Fifty-Ninth Street Bridge, from which her husband might have made preparatory sketches for *Forty-two Kids*, describing the area as a "dead end neighborhood—swarming with growing boys."[21]

Contemporaneous literary descriptions of New York City's tenements relied on metaphors that linked recently arrived immigrant slum dwellers and their dirty environments with all manner of unhygienic animals. The colorful similes applied to Forty-two Kids can be understood in this context.[22] From 1890 until the mid-1920s, some 25 million immigrants entered the United States. With the Immigration Act of 1891, the federal government established rigorous medical screening that, among other things, barred persons suffering from contagious diseases. Foreigners, in general, came to be judged as diseased and contagious.[23] Bathing, in municipal swimming pools and open-water floating baths, was endorsed as a healthy and hygienic form of exercise, a way of cleaning, quite literally, recently arrived immigrants. Bellows's swimming hole, however, is far from salubrious. As one critic noted, the painting has "a bituminous look ill assorted with the idea of bathing." [24] Although Bellows reportedly said, "One can only paint what one sees,"[25] Forty-two Kids elicited responses that went beyond the painting's superficial and purely visible subject and drew on the distasteful metaphors with which the city's immigrant populations were associated. Described as bacteria, maggots, and insects, Bellows's kids were characterized as vectors of contagion, an affiliation quite in keeping with the widely held belief, at the beginning of the 20th century, that unrestricted immigration posed a very real threat to individual Americans' well-being and the nation's social health.

Forty-two Kids

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Adam Greenhalgh

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**

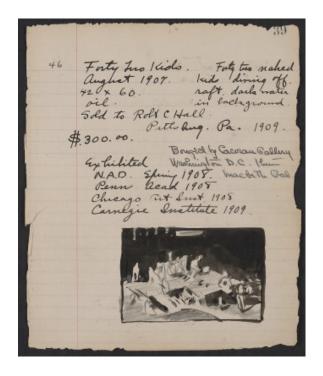


fig. 2 City children—bathing for free at the Battery, New York City, 1908/1916, photograph, George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

fig. 1 Entry from artist's Record Book about Forty-two Kids, The Ohio State University Libraries' Rare Books and Manuscripts Library and the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio



fig. 3 Thomas Eakins, Swimming, 1885, oil on canvas, Amon Carter Museum of Art, Fort Worth, Texas

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#### **NOTES**

- [1] The August 1907 date of completion for Forty-two Kids is recorded in Bellows's Record Book (Record Book A, p. 39). Thanks to Glenn Peck for providing a copy of the Record Book page (see fig. 1). This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011).
- [2] "George Bellows, an Artist with 'Red Blood,'" *Current Literature* 53, no. 3 (Sept. 1912): 342.
- [3] The setting is established by a letter from Bellows's widow, Emma, to Marian King, Jan. 23, 1959, NGA curatorial files.
- [4] Philip L. Hale, "Boston Art Shown in Philadelphia," *Boston Herald*, Jan. 26, 1908, Special sec., 1.
- [5] Charles L. Buchanan, "George Bellows: Painter of Democracy," *Arts and Decoration* 4, no. 10 (Aug. 1914): 371.
- [6] New York Herald, quoted in Charles H. Morgan, George Bellows: Painter of America (New York, 1965), 83.
- [7] The Julius Hallgarten Prize was bestowed annually from 1884 to three domestically based American artists under the age of 35.
- [8] John Cournos, "Three Painters of the New York School," *International Studio* 56, no. 224 (Oct. 1915): 244; and James Gibbons Huneker, "The Spring Academy: Second Notice," *New York Sun*, March 21, 1908, 6.
- [9] Maude I. G. Oliver, "Art News of the Week," *Chicago Record-Herald*, November 8, 1908, sec. 6, 5.
- [10] Joseph Edgar Chamberlin, "An Excellent Academy Show," *New York Evening Mail*, March 14, 1908, 6.
- [11] The jury had originally voted 8 to 2 in favor of awarding Forty-two Kids the Lippincott Prize. Robert Henri, diary entry, Jan. 23, 1908, Robert Henri Papers, reel 886, frame 12, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- [12] Bellows to John W. Beatty, c. May 24, 1909, Papers of the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, PA, reel 14, letter group 565, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- [13] "Those Who Paint What They See," *New York Herald*, Feb. 23, 1908, Literary and Art sec., 4.
- [14] C. H. C., "Carnegie Institute Exhibition, the Figure Subjects: First Notice,"

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- New York Evening Post, May 1, 1909, sec. 1, 5.
- [15] Rebecca Zurier, Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School (Berkeley, CA, 2006), 221.
- [16] See Marianne Doezema, *George Bellows and Urban America* (New Haven, 1992), 147.
- [17] John Cournos, "Three Painters of the New York School," *International Studio* 56, no. 224 (Oct. 1915): 244.
- [18] L. Perry Curtis, Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington, DC, 1997).
- [19] Joseph Edgar Chamberlin, "An Excellent Academy Show," *New York Evening Mail*, March 14, 1908.
- [20] "George Bellows, an Artist with 'Red Blood,'" *Current Literature* 53, no. 3 (Sept. 1912): 345.
- [21] Emma Bellows to Marian King, Jan. 23 and Feb. 6, 1959, NGA curatorial files.
- [22] Molly Suzanne Hutton considers connections between Ashcan paintings, animals, and dirt in "The Ashcan City: Representational Strategies at the Turn of the Century" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2000), chap. 2.
- [23] Howard Markel and Alexander Minna Stern, "The Foreignness of Germs: The Persistent Association of Immigrants and Disease in American Society," Milbank Quarterly 80, no. 4 (2002): 757. See also Ian Kraut, Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace" (Baltimore, MD, 1995).
- [24] Philip L. Hale, "Boston Art Shown in Philadelphia," *Boston Herald*, Jan. 26, 1908, Special sec.
- [25] "Those Who Paint What They See," *New York Herald*, Feb. 23, 1908, Literary and Art sec., 4.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a medium-weight, plain-weave canvas that was primed with a thin grayish-white ground that was commercially applied, evidenced by its presence on the still-intact tacking margins. The painting is lined with a plain-weave canvas using aqueous adhesive, and is stretched onto a nonoriginal keyable stretcher. The paint was applied very freely and spontaneously. In some places, especially in the lower part of the design, the paint is thin enough that the light ground color is visible and the texture of the fabric remains prominent. In other areas, however, the paint was applied more thickly, often with substantial brushmarks and points and ridges of impasto. The great majority of the paint was

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applied wet into wet and shows signs of blending and smearing of one color into another. In many places, the artist used a sizeable brush to define the larger design elements, such as the boards of the dock, with a few bold strokes. The paint that describes the deep blackish water in the background was slow-drying and quite liquid. Drip marks in this area are evident in the upper right, indicating that the painting was turned on its side and the black paint continued to flow. In many figures, the artist used a small, stiff, flat brush to produce his characteristic streaky, blended strokes of paint that define the boys' bodies with a great economy of means. Many random bumps of paint are visible throughout the surface, indicating that the artist scraped up dried paint from his palette and allowed it to become incorporated into his colors. The paint layer is in good condition, with only a few small inpainted paint losses scattered throughout, some areas of mild abrasion in the lower third of the painting, and some areas of prominent drying cracks. The edges are also heavily retouched. Corcoran conservation records show a number of treatments throughout the past century, and indicate that the varnish layer is complicated by the addition of a thin wax layer, followed by two successive synthetic resin coatings applied many years apart.[1]

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

[1] Lance Mayer prepared a comprehensive technical summary for *Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011). A copy of this summary is available in NGA conservation files.

### **PROVENANCE**

Collection of the artist, New York; purchased 1909 by Robert C. Hall [1865-1914], Pittsburgh;[1] on consignment by 26 February 1923 with (Wunderly Brothers, Pittsburgh);[2] purchased by 12 October 1925 by Mr. [1889-1962] and Mrs. Peter Glick, Pittsburgh;[3] purchased November 1931 through (William Macbeth, Inc., New York) by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington;[4] acquired 2014 by National Gallery of Art.

[1] The painting was purchased from Bellows during the painting's showing at the

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Carnegie International exhibition in 1909; see the Corcoran Gallery of Art Accession Record Sheet in NGA curatorial files. Bellows sold the work to Hall for \$300; Jane Myers, "'The Most Searching Place in the World': Bellows's Portraiture," in Michael Quick et al., The Paintings of George Bellows, exh. cat., Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Columbus (Ohio) Museum of Art; Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, 1992-1993; Fort Worth and Los Angeles, 1992: 232 n. 38.

- [2] The painting was consigned to Wunderly Brothers at an unknown date after Hall died, and was "in and out of Carnegie Institute for a number of years;" Peyton Boswell, Jr., "Bellows' First Patron," Art Digest 17, no. 8 (15 January 1943): 3. According to the Corcoran Gallery of Art Accession Record Sheet (in NGA curatorial files), the painting was found in storage at the Carnegie Institute and sent from there to Wunderly Brothers. The dealer lent the painting to the 1923 Bellows exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, which opened on February 26.
- [3] The Glicks bought the painting from the Wunderly Brothers at an unknown date, but Mrs. Peter Glick is listed as lender of the painting to the 1925 Bellows memorial exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which opened on October 12.
- [4] Corcoran Gallery of Art Accession Card, in NGA curatorial files.

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1981 Of Time and Place: American Figurative Art from the Corcoran Gallery, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; Cincinnati Art Museum; San Diego Museum of Art; University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington; Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga; Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa; Portland Art Museum, Oregon; Des Moines Art Center; Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida, 23 September 1981 - 21 May 1983, no. 30, repro.

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### NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS

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2007 Life's Pleasures: The Ashcan Artists' Brush with Leisure 1895-1925, Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville; New-York Historical Society; Detroit Institute of Arts, 2 August 2007 - 25 May 2008, no. 49, repro.

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### **EXHIBITION HISTORY NOTES**

[1] The exact dates of the exhibition are not given in the catalogue; the title page has only "held at the time of the New York World's Fair."

[2] A letter of 13 June 1950 (from Sydney Key, Curator, The Art Gallery of Toronto, to John Palmer Keeper, Curator, Corcoran Gallery of Art) and an undated latter of shortly thereafter (from the Corcoran's director to Sydney Key), confirms the loan (copies of both letters are in NGA curatorial files).

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George Bellows American, 1882 - 1925

# Little Girl in White (Queenie Burnett)

1907

oil on canvas

overall: 158 x 87 cm (62 3/16 x 34 1/4 in.)

framed: 171.5 x 107 x 8.6 cm (67 1/2 x 42 1/8 x 3 3/8 in.)

Inscription: upper center reverse: Geo Bellows / 1947 Bdway / [illegible]49 N.Y. /

"QUEEN" / "GIRL IN WHITE"

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1983.1.2

### **ENTRY**

In this sympathetic image, the artist has represented the demure laundry girl Queenie Burnett attired in a simple white dress and black stockings, posing with her hands folded before her, set against a dark brown background. Queenie's difficult life as a child laborer is manifested in her gaunt face, exaggeratedly large eyes, unkempt hair falling over her shoulders, and her awkward figure. Bellows has also managed to capture his subject's uneasiness at finding herself in an artist's studio posing for her portrait.

Originally titled *Little Laundry Girl* [fig. 1],[1] this portrait of a figure in a white dress is reminiscent of *James McNeill Whistler's Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, the full-length portrait that had inspired such diverse images as *William Merritt Chase's* fashionable society portrait *Girl in White* (c. 1898–1901, Akron Art Museum, OH) and *Robert Henri's* slightly tawdry *Young Woman in White*. In painting the young, working-class girl who delivered his laundry, Bellows, like Whistler, was flaunting the conventions of grand-manner portraiture traditionally reserved for the social elite. He was also following the advice of his friend and teacher Robert Henri, who admonished Bellows to select subjects that reflected the realism of modern urban life. Fulfilling that goal, he portrayed the recreational activities of New York City's lower-class children in such paintings as *River Rats* (1906, private collection) and *Forty-two Kids*. In 1907, he began to explore the street-urchin genre

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popularized in the United States during the last quarter of the 19th century by Frank Duveneck (American, 1848 - 1919) and especially John George Brown (American, born England, 1831 - 1913). Bellows painted two full-length portraits of individual children, Little Girl in White and Frankie the Organ Boy (both 1907, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO), and the following year he executed the three-quarter length Paddy Flannigan (Erving and Joyce Wolf Collection). Like the other artists in Henri's circle, Bellows eschewed the traditional idealizing approach with his youthful subjects, instead portraying them in a bluntly realistic manner.

The painting's unusual mix of aestheticism and realism is simultaneously appealing and unsettling. A newspaper reporter who visited Bellows's studio in 1908 may have had Little Girl in White in mind when he commented on portraits of "street gamins." He noted that although they were "brimming with humor," the images possessed a plaintive quality "which brings tears and sends people to rescue work."[2] However, the blunt realism of Bellows's early works often provoked critics. A reviewer for the New York Evening Mail criticized it as a "flat failure, looking as if it were cut out of wooden blocks."[3] Despite the portrait's mixed critical reception, it was immensely popular with the general public. Little Girl in White is noteworthy as the first of Bellows's figural works to be widely exhibited throughout the country. He was awarded the first Hallgarten Prize of \$300, reserved for artists under the age of 35, when the painting was shown at the National Academy of Design in 1913.[4]

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Entry from artist's Record Book about *Little Girl in White*, The Ohio State University Libraries' Rare Books and Manuscripts Library and the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio

## **NOTES**

- [1] Bellows first listed the portrait in his Record Book A (no. 42, 35) as *Little Laundry Girl*, but the title was later crossed out and replaced with *Little Girl in White* and *Queenie Burnett*. In 1913 he listed it in his Record Book A "Sales and Proffesional [sic] Income" as *Queenie*.
- [2] New York Herald, quoted in Marianne Doezema, George Bellows and Urban America (New Haven and London, 1992), 131.
- [3] Charles H. Morgan, *George Bellows: Painter of America* (New York, 1965), 104.
- [4] A minor controversy ensued when the academy was accused of nepotism, because Bellows, along with two other award recipients, had also served as jurors for the exhibition. Charles H. Morgan, *George Bellows: Painter of*

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America (New York, 1965), 168, cites various newspaper accounts of the incident.

### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The medium-weight, loosely woven fabric support was at some point lined with a wax/resin adhesive and remounted on a nonoriginal stretcher. Bellows apparently altered the size of the composition at least twice, because the background paint layers extend into the side and bottom tacking margins and there is a set of old tacking holes and a horizontal edge of thickly applied original paint below the top edge. Infrared examination reveals sketchy background details (a higher upper edge of the floor and a vertical architectural element to the right) that are not visible to the naked eye. The artist applied paint vigorously, with highly textured and unblended brushstrokes in the white dress progressing to a much smoother application in the dark areas and background. There are small, scattered paint losses in the middle of the painting, and ultraviolet examination reveals older losses that have been overpainted. In a recent treatment of the painting (2005–2011), in which the old varnish and most of the overpainting was removed, the extent of these losses was revealed. The losses in white dress are rather extensive in the center; they consist of an old, branched tear and numerous little gouges in the canvas that occurred long ago during an effort to scrape off an old patch adhered to the reverse with white lead. Severe abrasion of the background, particularly in the brown areas just to the left of the figure, was also revealed when the overpaint was removed. A newer tear is found in the upper left. Also during this treatment, the wax lining was removed and replaced with a polyester fabric adhered with synthetic adhesive. A new surface coating of synthetic resin was applied after new inpainting of the losses was applied. When the lining was removed, an inscription was revealed on the reverse.[1]

## **TECHNICAL NOTES**

This inscription reads, "Geo Bellows/ 1947 Bdway/ .146.E49. N.Y./ "QUEEN"/ "Girl in White"

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### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1882-1925]; by inheritance to his wife, Emma S. Bellows [1884-1959]; her estate; purchased May 1963 through (H.V. Allison & Co., New York) by Paul Mellon, Upperville, Virginia; gift 1983 to NGA.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1908 Special Exhibition of Contemporary Art, The National Arts Club, New York, 1908, no. 56, as The Girl in White.

1909 Twenty-Second Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings and Sculpture by American Artists, Art Institute of Chicago, 1909, no. 23, as Girl in White.

1910 One Hundred and Fifth Annual Exhibition, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1910, no. 601, as Girl in White.

1911 [George Bellows Exhibition], Madison Gallery, New York, 1911, as Girl in White.

1911 Special Exhibition and Sale of Oil Paintings by George Bellows, N.A., Marshall Field & Company, New York, 1911, no. 14, as Girl in White.

1912 Paintings by George Bellows, Art Students League of Columbus, Public Library, Columbus, Ohio, November 1912, no. 19, as The Little Laundry Girl.

1912 Paintings by George Bellows, N.A., Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, December 1912, no. 19, as The Little Laundry Girl.

1913 American Artists, Department of Fine Arts, Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto, Summer(?) 1913, no. 230, as Little Girl.

1913 Eighty-Eighth Annual Exhibition, National Academy of Design, New York, March-April 1913, no. 216, repro., as Little Girl.

1913 Montclair, 1913 [according to the artist's Record Book].

1913 Paintings by Fine New York Painters, Saint Botolph Club, Boston, November-December 1913, no. 5, as Girl in White.

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1913 Seventeenth Annual Exhibition, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, April-June 1913, no. 22, as Little Girl.

1913 Special Exhibition of Paintings by George Bellows, N.A., Detroit Museum of Art, January 1913, no. 19, as The Little Laundry Girl.

1914 American Fine Art Section, Anglo-American Exposition, London, 1914, no. 170, as Little Girl.

1915 A Catalogue of Paintings, Gallery of Fine Arts, Panama-California Exposition, San Diego, 1915, no. 49, as Little Girl in White.

1916 "Los Angeles Circuit", 1916 [according to the artist's Record Book].

1962 Modern American Painting: 1915, The Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego, 1962-1963, no. 1, as Little Girl in White.

1963 George Bellows, H.V. Allison & Co., New York, 1963, no. 1, as Girl in White (Queenie Burnett).

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1992 The Paintings of George Bellows, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Columbus Museum of Art; Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, 1992-1993, fig. 10.

2012 George Bellows, National Gallery of Art, Washington; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2012-2013, pl. 12.

2013 The Armory Show at 100: Modernism and Revolution, The New-York Historical Society, New York, 2013-2014, not in catalogue.

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- 1992 *American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1992: 28, repro.
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- 2012 Brock, Charles, et al. George Bellows. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2012-2013. Washington and New York, 2012: 9, 49-50, 133, pl. 12.

Peck, Glenn C. *George Bellows' Catalogue Raisonné*. H.V. Allison & Co. URL: http://www.hvallison.com. Accessed 16 August 2016.

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George Bellows American, 1882 - 1925

## The Lone Tenement

1909

oil on canvas

overall: 91.8 x 122.3 cm (36 1/8 x 48 1/8 in.)

framed: 123.2 x 153.4 x 12.7 cm (48 1/2 x 60 3/8 x 5 in.)

Inscription: lower left: Geo Bellows Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.83

### **ENTRY**

In December 1909, Bellows executed two Manhattan cityscapes (this one and *The Bridge, Blackwell's Island* [fig. 1]) depicting the nearly completed Blackwell's Island Bridge, now known as the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge or 59th Street Bridge [fig. 2]. These paintings, displaying the artist's bravura style, are thematically linked to his four views of the Pennsylvania Station excavation site (e.g., the Gallery's *Blue Morning*) in that they depict a major construction project in the modernization of New York City. The third of eight structures built across the East River, the Queensboro Bridge passes over Blackwell's Island (now known as Roosevelt Island), linking midtown Manhattan with Long Island City in the borough of Queens. It was designed by the municipal department of bridges and completed in 1909 at a cost of about \$20.8 million. The steel, two-tier bridge with two cantilevered spans was designed by Gustav Lindenthal and decorated with ornate ironwork and finials by the architect Henry Hornbostel. It is noteworthy as the first major bridge in New York City to depart from the suspension form.[1]

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The Bridge, Blackwell's Island, with a view from beneath and slightly south of the bridge, looking across the East River over Blackwell's Island toward Long Island City, was painted first. Bellows then produced The Lone Tenement, which depicts a solitary, six-story tenement building at the base of the bridge on the Manhattan side of the East River that, for some reason, had not been demolished when the area was razed. The tenement stands in the center of the composition, to the left of one of the bridge's supporting piers, and is shown in a three-quarter view so that its front, distinguishable by the fire escape, and windowless sidewall, bearing the remnants of old advertising posters, face the viewer. The fence around the structure's entrance indicates that it has been abandoned and may be awaiting demolition. A cluster of sketchily delineated human figures are gathered in the left foreground amid the expanse of muddy, half-melted snow, warming themselves before a fire. Two bare, narrow trees on the left echo the dilapidated state of the tenement building and contribute to the scene's aura of desolation and abandonment. The bird's-eye vista is oriented toward the northeast, encompassing Manhattan on the left, the East River, Blackwell's Island, and the borough of Queens on the opposite shore.

Tenements were multiunit residential buildings first designed in the middle of the 19th century to serve as cheap rental housing for New York's growing population of poor and working-class immigrants. These dank, dreary, and overcrowded dwellings soon became notorious for their unsanitary conditions. Social reformers identified tenements as breeding places of crime, disease, and poverty, and sought legislation to improve their conditions.[2] The Tenement House Law of 1901 established higher standards of construction for new buildings and created the Tenement House Department to modernize what were thenceforward called "old law" tenements. Bellows, like his Ashcan School colleagues, often used tenement buildings in his views of impoverished neighborhoods like Manhattan's Lower East Side and was certainly aware of their more sinister connotations. When the artist was asked about the tenements in his Excavation at Night (1908, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR), he responded: "Those tenement houses behind the excavation always give me the creeps. They're just ordinary houses—but there is something about them that gets me."[3] He later used tenements as the setting in Cliff Dwellers [fig. 3].

Blackwell's Island also had numerous negative associations, because it was the site of an almshouse, a workhouse, and a penitentiary. By 1921, these institutions had become so notorious for overcrowding, violence, and drug trafficking that the

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city tried to improve the island's reputation by renaming it Welfare Island.[4] But despite its ominous allusions, The Lone Tenement is a remarkably expressive and appealing composition, in which mystery and an aura of plaintive eloquence is communicated through the artist's exceptionally fluid brushwork and manipulation of light and color. Paint is applied in a variety of ways, from passages of thick impasto just to the left of the tenement building to a series of quick calligraphic marks used to describe a group of figures milling outside the building to the right. Bellows's bold, expressive palette of oranges, golds, and violets, especially evident in the upper left quadrant of the canvas, is also distinctive.

When The Lone Tenement was exhibited in Bellows's first one-man show at the Madison Art Galleries in 1911, a reviewer characterized it as "a lonely tenement house in a squalid district," and remarked on the artist's habit of depicting "the rough and raw side of the Metropolis."[5] Bellows may have wanted to convey a sense of the despoliation and lost communities that progress often leaves in its wake, or show that the status of the disenfranchised remains unaltered, and is perhaps even worsened, by urban modernization. The faceless wraiths cut adrift in the foreground seem as outmoded as the three-masted ship docked at the left, which had been rendered obsolete by such vessels as the steam-powered tugboat that churns along in the river.[6] If it is not possible to fully discern Bellows's attitude to the dispossessed underclasses depicted in The Lone Tenement, it is clear that he was responding to his teacher Robert Henri's plea to make the neglected and overlooked areas of New York, where so many lived, worked, and died, primary subjects of modern art.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 George Bellows, The Bridge, Blackwell's Island, 1909, oil on canvas, Toledo Museum of Art, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. Image: Photography Incorporated, Toledo



fig. 2 Entry from artist's Record Book about Lone Tenement, The Ohio State University Libraries' Rare Books & Manuscripts Library and the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio

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**fig. 3** George Bellows, *Cliff Dwellers*, 1913, oil on canvas, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Fund (16.4)

## NOTES

- [1] The bridge and its surrounding area are discussed in Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven, CT, 1995), 211–212, 970, and 1020.
- [2] For an early survey of the matter, see Robert W. Deforest and Lawrence Veiller, *The Tenement House Problem*, 2 vols. (New York, 1903). See also *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven, CT), 1161–1163.
- [3] "Began Career as Illustrator on Makio," Lantern, undated clipping in Bellows's scrapbook, George Bellows Papers, Special Collections Department, Amherst College Library, Amherst, MA; quoted in Marianne Doezema, George Bellows and Urban America (New Haven, 1992), 44.
- [4] Blackwell's Island has had a long history. Captain John Manning bought it in 1668 and retired there in disgrace after surrendering New York to the Dutch in 1673. Early in the 18th century it passed to Manning's son-in-law, Robert Blackwell, after whom it was named. Blackwell's Island was acquired by the city in 1828. The prison was relocated to Riker's Island in 1934. The Urban Development Corporation of New York State undertook a project to

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- transform Welfare Island into a residential community in 1971 and renamed it Roosevelt Island.
- "Matters of Art," New York Daily Tribune, Jan. 29, 1911, section II, p. 5; quoted in Marianne Doezema, "The Real New York," in Michael Quick, Jane Myers, Marianne Doezema, and Franklin Kelly, The Paintings of George Bellows (Fort Worth, TX, 1992), 109.
- [6] Bellows similarly juxtaposed an old ship and a steam tug in Silver Day (1912, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, FL).

### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The plain-weave, medium-weight fabric support has been glue lined to a heavier plain-weave fabric and mounted on a nonoriginal stretcher. The artist applied paint in multiple layers of thick, impastoed brushstrokes, sometimes using a palette knife as well. He employed both translucent and opaque paint mixtures, alternating between wet-into-wet and wet-into-dry techniques. In raking light it is possible to see large brushstrokes beneath the area of the tenement building that do not correspond to the design on the surface. No infrared or x-radiograph examination has been conducted to explain this aberrant brushwork; perhaps there is another painting beneath. Craquelure has developed in the most thickly applied passages, and extensive areas of wrinkling appear throughout the surface. A thick, glossy, discolored surface coating was removed in a 2009 conservation treatment. At that time, small losses concentrated in the light areas of the sky, the blue of the river, and the trees on the left were inpainted, and a new synthetic varnish was applied.

### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1882-1925]; by inheritance to his wife, Emma S. Bellows [1884-1959]; purchased 3 February 1945 through (H.V. Allison & Co., New York) by Chester Dale [1883-1962], New York; bequest 1963 to NGA.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

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1911 Collection of Pictures and Sculpture in the Pavilion of the United States of America, Roman Art Exposition, Rome, 1911, no. 135.

1911 [George Bellows Exhibition], Madison Gallery, New York, 1911.

1912 One Hundred and Seventh Annual Exhibition, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1912, no. 57.

1914 The MacDowell Club, New York, 1914 [according to the artist's Record Book].

1915 Department of Fine Arts, Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto, 1915, no. 82.

1931 Important Paintings by George Wesley Bellows, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Ohio, 1931, no. 268.

1944 Paintings by George Bellows, H.V. Allison & Co., New York, 1944, unnumbered checklist.

1946 George Bellows: Paintings, Drawings and Prints, Art Institute of Chicago, 1946, no. 8, repro.

1957 George Bellows: A Retrospective Exhibition, National Gallery of Art, January-February 1957, no. 15, repro.

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1965 The Chester Dale Bequest, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1965, unnumbered checklist.

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2016 National Gallery of Art. Highlights from the National Gallery of Art,

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URL: http://www.hvallison.com. Accessed 16 August 2016.

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George Bellows American, 1882 - 1925

## New York

1911

oil on canvas

overall: 106.7 x 152.4 cm (42 x 60 in.)

framed: 134.6 x 181.8 x 10.1 cm (53 x 71 9/16 x 4 in.)

Inscription: across bottom: Geo Bellows; upper left reverse: "NEW YORK" / GEO BELLOWS / 146 E 19 / N.Y.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1986.72.1

### **ENTRY**

Bellows scholar Charles H. Morgan described this congested urban scene as "a remembered synthesis of a midsummer traffic jam, the Madison Square area packed with heavy delivery carts, patient Percherons, and crowds of pedestrians, the stolid buildings closing in on the sweltering scene."[1] The scene is actually set in the winter, and although it is based on a viewpoint looking uptown toward Madison Square from the intersection of Broadway and 23rd Street, Bellows did not intend it to represent a specific, identifiable place in the city. He instead drew on several such bustling commercial districts to create an imaginary composite, impossibly crowded image that would best convey a sense of the city's frenetic pace of life.[2] Completed in February 1911, *New York* is a remarkably ambitious painting in which visual details give way to the overwhelming movement and dizzying complexity of the modern metropolis as Bellows seeks to capture the dynamic, elusive essence of New York City [fig. 1].

The bird's-eye view presents modern skyscrapers towering in the distance behind a row of 19th-century structures. Hoards of pedestrians stream across the

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foreground amid a profusion of horse-drawn carts and trolleys. They are caught in a variety of attitudes, some purposefully striding forward, others trying to cram themselves into a crowded trolley at the left, and yet others resigned to being stuck in an endless stream of traffic that seems to flow both to and from the congested avenue at the upper right. Although most of the faceless figures have lost their individuality in the crowd, some stand out by virtue of their gestures, such as the policeman directing traffic, the man shoveling snow, and the driver perched high on his cart. The compressed perspective contributes to the scene's unrelenting claustrophobia. The only area of open space—as well as the sole manifestation of nature—is the small, snow-covered park in the middle ground that is punctuated by barren, leafless trees. Bellows has enlivened the gray wintery haze that pervades the scene with occasional bright patches of green, red, and yellow. Especially noteworthy in this respect are his depictions of advertising signs on the sides of buildings and vehicles, the majority of which are tantalizingly almost legible.

New York conveys a sense of the contemporary urban ambience of New York. In 1907 a writer for Harper's Magazine described Madison Square as "an incessant progression: carriages and cabs, stages, drays, policemen on horseback, automobiles uncountable, ladies driving down to shops or on social errands in lower Fifth Avenue, all kinds of interesting people . . . a ceaseless and spirited panorama."[3] Some critics who saw New York at the National Academy of Design's annual exhibition in 1911 found it harsh and confusing, yet discerned some redeeming characteristics. James Huneker of the New York Sun reflected this ambivalence:

The amazing transcription of New York life, an ugly, grimy, cross section thereof, by George Bellows . . . is crudely realistic, an almost impossible attempt by a painter with an eye that envisages a thousand details to make out of the jumble of oppositions a picture. But the synthetical grasp is lacking. There is too much portrayed, too much literalism, too little left to the imagination, too harsh an insistence upon the raw facts of a street scene. . . . We presume to call this 'New York' of his 'amazing,' we only wish it were composed of finer art. Naturally Mr. Bellows refuses to see his city through the rose colored glasses of Childe Hassam or Colin Campbell Cooper, or the matter-of-fact manner of robust Paul Cornoyer. We applaud his individual attitude. The thrice confused life of a local quarter is

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tempting to a realist's brush, but to get it all into one picture and then compel it to come out at you across the frame is a well nigh impossible task. One applauds George Bellows and at the same time shudders at his truth-telling ugliness. If New York is really such a dirty, vile Gehenna as he pictures, then it is time the Fathers saw his pictorial arrangement and hastened to remedy so disgusting a state of affairs. Just how far truth should dominate a work of art we dare not say; even the doctors of aesthetics disagree on this point. . . . One thing is certain, if this canvas of Bellows is not very alluring it hums with life; not the overtones, but the noises and smells and disillusionizing sights.[4]

A critic for the *New York Times* declared that *New York* was an example of Bellows "at his worst," and opined that it "is very much the inchoate mass of unrelated types and objects that the poor old city is in reality when stripped of all her fascinating atmospheric disguises. It is a picture to move a beauty-loving observer to bleak despair, so devoid is it of the element of charm. Nor has it the austerity of pure truth." Despite these strongly worded objections, the writer concluded that "it blusters around a turmoil of trucks, cars, vegetable carts, and pedestrians, and whatever aesthetic message it may have is indistinguishable in the hubbub, nevertheless there are both solidity and movement there, and there is freshness of color, and some day far in the future it will be pointed out, no doubt, as the best description of the casual New York scene left by the reporters of the present day."[5]

Other critics were more receptive. A writer for the *Craftsman* had trouble finding the correct distance from which to view the painting, but concluded:

If you are fortunate enough to strike just the middle distance when you first see it you are filled with amazement, so full is it of motion, of stirring existence. Trucks are darting through the crowd. Men and women are hurrying across the streets, trolleys are clanging their way in and out, a policeman is keeping people from being run over, you feel the rush, you hear the noise, and you wish you were safely home.[6]

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New York was greeted with enthusiasm when it was exhibited at the Marshall Field & Company department store in Chicago in October 1911. The perceptive H. Effa Webster of the Examiner described it as

crowded with giant architecture, crowds of people, lines of vehicles, all environing a street and surging over the highway; it's the story of tumultuous life in a stupendously built city. This picture is not so attractive as some other examples, but it shows the wonderful truth of the artist in depiction, and he paints truth in all these sweeps and details. This picture rings with sincerity in a marvelous combination of big and little reflections that are actual, although clothed with subtle art.[7]

Another Chicago critic observed that *New York* "rings with sincerity.... No wonder Bellows is tagged with the Gotham personality.... This artist's work is worth going to see: it is a lesson in individuality in art."[8]

The scholarly literature has emphasized that New York is the preeminent painting that deals with the theme of modern urban life. Recently one art historian characterized it as "the painted apotheosis of the early 20th-century city," a "picture of modernity in excess." [9] More accurately, it addresses New York City, specifically midtown Manhattan, as a city transitioning from 19th-century gentility to 20th-century hustle and bustle. Quiet, upper-class, residential neighborhoods like Madison Square and Union Square became commercial districts bordered by skyscrapers and teeming with activity. By embracing contemporary life and representing what is now an all too familiar sight in places like Times Square, Bellows revolutionized the New York urban landscape tradition. To use Samuel Isham's phrase, conventional painters, and even the progressive realists among the Eight such as George Benjamin Luks (American, 1866 - 1933), William Glackens (American, 1870 - 1938), and John Sloan (American, 1871 - 1951), often idealized their urban subjects to create "beauty removed from urban realities."[10] A perceptive critic like Huneker recognized that Bellows had rejected the standard formula used by American impressionist and tonalist artists for their numerous sitespecific urban park scenes. Bellows's novel interpretation of the modern urban environment, along with its implicit message of questioning the idea of progress, was a shock to conservative critics who were accustomed to idealized works such as Childe Hassam's Union Square in Spring [fig. 2], or any of a number of such

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scenes by Colin Campbell Cooper. The prediction that the New York Times critic had made in 1911 has come true, and Bellows's New York can indeed be regarded as "the best description of the casual New York scene left by the reporters of the present day." Vik Muniz's New York City, after George Bellows (Pictures of Magazines 2) (2011) is one measure of its continuing currency.

Robert Torchia

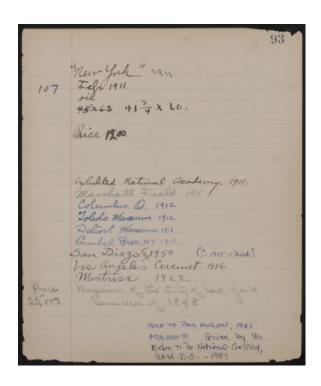
September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Entry from artist's Record Book about *New York*, The Ohio State University Libraries' Rare Books and Manuscripts Library and the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio



**fig. 2** Childe Hassam, *Union Square in Spring*, 1896, oil on canvas, Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts, purchased with the Winthrop Hillyer Fund

### **NOTES**

- [1] Charles H. Morgan, *George Bellows: Painter of America* (New York, 1965), 129–130.
- [2] See Marianne Doezema, "The 'Real' New York," in Michael Quick, Jane Myers, Marianne Doezema, and Franklin Kelly, *The Paintings of George Bellows* (Fort Worth, TX, 1992), 111–114, for a discussion of the painting's composite nature.
- [3] E. S. Martin, "Moods of a City Square," *Harper's Magazine* 115 (August 1907): 406.
- [4] [James Gibbons Huneker], "The Spring Academy," *New York Sun*, March 17, 1911.
- [5] "Art at Home and Abroad: Academicians and Associates Show Excellent

 $\begin{subarray}{ll} New\ York \\ \hline © \ National\ Gallery\ of\ Art,\ Washington \end{subarray}$ 

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Pictures at the Spring Exhibition," New York Times, March 19, 1911.

- [6] "An Impression of the Spring Academy of Nineteen Hundred and Eleven: Some Young Men Prize-Winners," The Craftsman 20 (May 1911): 146, 151.
- [7] H. Effa Webster, "19 Paintings of City Life," Chicago Examiner, Oct. 24, 1911.
- [8] Charles H. Morgan, George Bellows: Painter of America (New York, 1965), 132.
- [9] Sarah Newman, "Working Life: Pennsylvania Station Excavation, 1907–1909," in Charles Brock, et al., George Bellows (Washington, DC, 2012), 87.
- [10] Samuel Isham, The History of American Painting (New York, 1905), 500. For a discussion of this phenomenon, see H. Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bolger, and David Park Curry, American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885–1915 (New York, 1994), 180–199.

### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The medium-weight, plain-weave fabric support is unlined and remains mounted on its original stretcher, although the stretcher has numerous sets of tack holes and one-inch extensions made of wood on both top and bottom, suggesting that it was salvaged by the artist for use on this painting. The artist applied the oil paint thickly, in a complex system of layers, over a thin, commercially prepared, off-white ground. The artist used brushes of various sizes, often blending paint wet into wet and utilizing the end of the brush, or another hard, flat object, to push the paint into highly impastoed configurations. The impastos are well preserved. The painting has been cut from a larger image, evidenced by the continuation of the painted image into the top and left tacking margins.[1] The fact that the painted tacking margins are unvarnished suggests that the coating was applied after the dimensions were reduced. Visual inspection under raking light reveals areas where the impasto runs counter to the image. This indicates that the artist made alterations in the composition, especially in the buildings at the left. Infrared examination does not reveal any more information about these changes, nor does it show any underdrawing.[2] Neither do the x-radiographs show the artist's changes with any more clarity. Other than some minor paint losses in the lower right foreground, the painting is in good condition. The very discolored varnish described above as having been applied after restretching was removed and replaced with a clear synthetic resin varnish in 2008. Some small losses were also retouched at this time.

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### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

- At these two edges, paint covers the entire tacking margin, so it is not possible to tell how much the painting may have been cut along these edges. The bottom edge is also painted approximately half an inch into the tacking margin, but beyond that the primed fabric remains visible.
- [2] The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with a K astronomy filter.

### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1882-1925]; by inheritance to his wife, Emma S. Bellows [1884-1959]; her estate; purchased 1961 through (H.V. Allison & Co., New York) by Paul Mellon, Upperville, Virginia; gift 1986 to NGA.

## **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1911 Eighty-Sixth Annual Exhibition, National Academy of Design, New York, March-April 1911, no. 2.

1911 Special Exhibition and Sale of Oil Paintings by George Bellows, Marshall Field & Company, Chicago, October 1911, no. 9.

1912 A Catalogue of Paintings by George Bellows, Art Students League of Columbus, Public Library, Columbus, Ohio, November 1912, no. 17, repro.

1912 Paintings by George Bellows, N.A., Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, December 1912, no. 17.

1913 Gimbel Brothers, New York, 1913 [according to the artist's Record Book].

1913 Special Exhibition of Paintings by George Bellows, N.A., Detroit Museum of Art, 1913, no. 17.

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1915 A Catalogue of Paintings, Gallery of Fine Arts, Panama-California Exposition, San Diego, 1915, no. 47, repro.

1916 "Los Angeles Circuit", 1916 [according to the artist's Record Book].

1921 Paintings and Drawings by George Bellows, Montross Gallery, New York, 1921, no. 2.

1925 Memorial Exhibition of Paintings by George Wesley Bellows, Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, December 1925, no. 5 (travelled to six venues, including Denver, and probably Buffalo, listed separately under 1926 in this exhibition history).

1925 Memorial Exhibition of the Work of George Bellows, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, October-November 1925, no. 13, repro.

1926 Memorial Exhibition of the Work of George Bellows, 1882-1925, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, 1926, no. 5.

1948 Museum of the City of New York, Summer 1948.[1]

1962 Modern American Painting: 1915, The Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego, 1962-1963, no. 3, repro.

1986 Gifts to the Nation: Selected Acquisitions from the Collections of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1986, unnumbered checklist.

1992 The Paintings of George Bellows, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, 1992-1993, fig. 12.

1995 Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.; New-York Historical Society, 1995-1996, unnumbered catalogue, figs. 1 and 82, frontispiece (shown only in Washington).

1997 George Bellows: Love of Winter, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; The Newark Museum; Columbus Museum of Art, 1997-1998, no. 21, fig. 38.

1999 An Enduring Legacy: Masterpieces from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1999-2000, no catalogue.

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2005 Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film, 1880-1910, Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown; Reynolda House, Museum of American Art, Winston-Salem; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., 2005-2007, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 200.

2012 George Bellows, National Gallery of Art, Washington; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2012-2013, pl. 24.

2013 George Bellows and the American Experience, Columbus Museum of Art, 2013-2014, no catalogue.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY NOTES**

[1] This is according to the artist's Record Book. There are no details provided by the museum's records except that Mrs. Bellows is listed as a lender in the 1948 annual report.

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	1965: 129-130, 132, repro. 328

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- 1990 Kelly, Frankin. "George Bellows' Shore House." Studies in the History of Art 37 (1990): 131, repro. no. 20.
- 1992 American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1992: 30, repro.
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- 1997 Setford, David, and John Wilmerding. George Bellows: Love of Winter. Exh. cat. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; The Newark Museum, New Jersey; Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, 1997: fig. 3, no.
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- 2006 Zurier, Rebecca. Picture the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School. Bekeley, 2006: 32-33, 56, pl. 2.
- 2007 Haverstock, Mary Sayre. George Bellows: An Artist in Action. Columbus, Ohio, 2007: 70, color repro.
- 2012 Brock, Charles, et al. George Bellows. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2012-2013. Washington and New York, 2012: 9, 24, 26, 31, 40, 41, 87, 95, 111, pl. 24.
- 2013 McClew, Mason. "George Bellows and the American Experience (Columbus, Ohio)." American Art Review 25, no. 5 (September-October 2013): 133, color ill.
- 2013 Smith, Roberta. "The Listings: Jan. 25-31." New York Times 162, no. 56,027 (January 25, 2013): C-16, color repro.
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Alfred Stieglitz, Oscar Bluemner, 1913, platinum print, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection

# Bluemner, Oscar F.

Also known as Bluemner, Oscar Florianus American, 1867 - 1938

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Julius Oskar Blümner (Oscar Bluemner) was born June 21, 1867, in Prenzlau, Prussia (now Germany). His family moved due to his father's work as a master mason, so his early exposure to art occurred in various locales. Bluemner had his first formal training at age nine, soon after began sketching from nature, and by 1883 was an accomplished watercolorist. At age 18 he was given a solo exhibition at his secondary school, but he changed his major from art to architecture just before graduating.

From 1886 to 1892 Bluemner studied at Berlin's prestigious Königliche Technische Hochschule (Royal Technical Academy). After earning his architecture degree, he became dissatisfied with the conservative climate in Germany and what he perceived as the neglect of his work. He decided to forego the military draft and immigrate to America. He worked briefly in New York and then as a draftsman at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and continued to travel between the two cities periodically looking for work. Bluemner married Lina Schumm in Chicago in 1896, and the couple had their first of two children that year.

In 1900 Bluemner was once again in New York and still struggling to establish himself. Four years later his designs for the Bronx Borough Courthouse for architect Michael J. Garvin were approved. Garvin, however, did not honor his promise to split fees and credit, leading to multiple lawsuits that would not be

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settled until 1911. In 1907, a frustrated Bluemner resolved to design country houses—echoing his longtime interest in sketching freestanding buildings and the landscape—while preparing to shift his career to painting. He frequented New York's museums and galleries, studied art history, theory (particularly color theory), and painting techniques, and summarized his experiences in a journal titled "My Own Principles of Painting." He met the influential dealer Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946) and began rendering landscapes in a neoimpressionist style. In 1912, Bluemner, having arranged an exhibition of his oils and watercolors at a gallery in Berlin, embarked on an intensive seven-month trip to Europe. He absorbed the new trends in German art, particularly expressionism and futurism, through exhibitions and publications, while closely studying the old masters and sketching outdoors in Germany, Italy, France, the Netherlands, and England.

Upon his return to New York Bluemner began to publish articles and actively exhibit his work, most notably in the 1913 Armory Show, in a one-artist exhibition at Stieglitz's 291 gallery in 1915, and in the Forum Exhibition at Anderson Gallery in 1916. However, he continued to clash with dealers, preferring to promote his work himself. Sales were nonexistent, and for the next ten years he and his family relocated nearly every six months within New Jersey, unable to meet their rent. Despite these financial hardships, Bluemner remained productive and looked to Asian and Old Master art as new sources of inspiration.

When Bluemner's wife died in 1926, he and his daughter moved to South Braintree, Massachusetts, to live with his son. Grief-stricken, Bluemner explored the associations between emotions and color in a series of watercolors on board depicting suns and moons that were shown at Stieglitz's Intimate Gallery in 1928. Bluemner also continued to write prolifically—his passion for red and its many meanings led him to adopt the pseudonym of "The Vermillionaire" in 1929, the year he privately published "What and When is Painting? Today." Also that year he had a one-person show at the Whitney Studio Galleries, which strained his relationship with Stieglitz.

Bluemner's only critically acclaimed one-person exhibition took place in 1935 at the Marie Harriman Gallery in New York. With the country still in the midst of the Great Depression, it did not yield a single sale. In 1938, after becoming increasingly ill and losing his eyesight, the artist took his own life.

Sarah Cash

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- 2003 Favis, Roberta Smith. "Painting: 'The Red City': Oscar Bluemner's 'Jersey Silkmills.' American Art 17, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 33-41.
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Bluemner, Oscar F.

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Oscar F. Bluemner American, 1867 - 1938

# *Imagination*

1932

casein and watercolor on paper, mounted to paperboard

overall:  $79.38 \times 58.9 \text{ cm}$  (31 1/4 × 23 3/16 in.)

framed:  $95.25 \times 74.3 \times 6.03$  cm (37 1/2 × 29 1/4 × 2 3/8 in.)

Inscription: lower right, the Ü formed by L and left edge of M, the outer edge of B extending down and below BL then up through M to form N, the ER in monogram:

BLÜMNER; upper center right reverse: 'Imagination'

Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase through the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Myron L.

Cowen and the William A. Clark Fund) 2015.19.161

#### **ENTRY**

Oscar Bluemner was an innovative modernist painter who, along with Arthur Dove (American, 1880 - 1946), John Marin (American, 1870 - 1953), Georgia O'Keeffe (American, 1887 - 1986), and other artists of the Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946) circle, used a European-inspired vocabulary to infuse the American landscape with feeling, energy, and spirituality.[1] However, Bluemner's paintings fit less neatly into narratives of early modernism than those of his peers. He focused neither on the vitality of the American urban experience nor on the restorative qualities of the rural landscape but on an evocative combination of the two, as in this haunting painting of 1932, *Imagination*. His work's resistance to easy categorization, the artist's eccentric personality, and the copious theoretical and technical notes that he kept in his painting diaries lent an air of mystery to Bluemner's career and legacy that was not dispelled until long after his death.[2]

German thought and art were important sources for Bluemner's expressive use of color in paintings like *Imagination*. Following the lead of 18th-century author, philosopher, and artist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and 20th-century expressionist painters Wassily Kandinsky (Russian, 1866 - 1944) and Franz Marc (German, 1880 - 1916), Bluemner endowed color with the ability to express aspects of his inner consciousness and to communicate moods and emotions.[3] When he returned to the United States after a seven-month trip to Europe in 1912, five of his works were included in the historic International Exhibition of Modern Art (the

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Armory Show) in 1913. In 1916 Bluemner was one of 17 American painters chosen by Willard Huntington Wright, Robert Henri (American, 1865 - 1929), and Stieglitz to represent the American avant-garde at the Anderson Gallery's Forum Exhibition, also in New York. The organizers of the show wanted to redirect attention to American modernism in the wake of the Armory Show, which had generated commercial interest primarily in European artists.

In the 1920s Bluemner's work continued to garner support and encouragement from the art establishment, but the artist also encountered challenges, including the death of his wife in 1926, which precipitated his move to Braintree,

Massachusetts. Roberta Smith Favis has suggested that his early paintings have more political meaning than might be obvious at first sight and that anti-German sentiment in the war and interwar years may have had a negative impact on the reception and sale of his work.[4]

Bluemner's later works, including his series Compositions for Color Themes (of which *Imagination* is part) exhibited at the Marie Harriman Gallery in 1935, increasingly veered toward the mystical and abstract. (Bluemner created the colorful and whimsical cover of the Harriman Gallery exhibition catalog, depicting silhouetted patrons and their printed exclamations and featuring *Imagination* at the upper right [fig. 1]). The artist's continued obsession with red derived less from the color's socialist symbolism than from a wide range of idiosyncratic associations. Bluemner linked red to masculinity, vitality, life, struggle, imagination, and the self. He considered it the noblest color, identifying it as his alter ego and adopting the pseudonym "the Vermillionaire" in 1929.[5]

In *Imagination*, the red hues of the house and sky stand out so intensely against the green foliage and inky night that they assault the viewer's senses, as if the pigment were burning from within. The artist likened his use of color in this series to music's ability to elicit emotional states: "Look at my work in a way as you listen to music—look at the space filled with colors and try to feel; do not insist on understanding what seems strange."[6]

The dreamlike quality of *Imagination* invites the subjective interpretation that the artist advocated. Jeffrey Hayes has noted that Bluemner's late works best embody the artist's mature theories about art's purpose.[7] The startling juxtaposition of complementary colors and the tension between architectural and natural forms in *Imagination* illustrate ideas Bluemner put forth in a 1929 publication, *What and When Is Painting? Today*:

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Without imagination painting fails of its greatest power and beauty: intensity—the maximum inner tension of divergent experiences, emotions, conflicting moods as expressed by dramatic contrast of color and tone and lines. . . . Without intensity, there is no true painting, because painting does not, as poetry and music do, conduct us slowly towards a climax. It rather is the reality of a single isolated, emotional, ecstatic moment, into which it catapults us with an instantaneous and immediate bounce.[8]

That Bluemner writes about his painting in terms of movement —"catapult" and "bounce"—also speaks to the spatial tensions created by the artist's use of color. The heat of the central red form projects forward, while the cooler green and blue recede. This painting, thanks in part to Bluemner's tireless research into the permanence of different techniques and materials, has the same capacity to jolt viewers toward "a single . . . ecstatic moment" today as when it was first exhibited in 1935.[9]

Bluemner's 1935 Harriman Gallery exhibition was an overwhelming critical success. The art critic Emily Genauer wrote that, for Bluemner, "a landscape is . . . only a springboard from which he dives into a sea of color. Nor does he sink there. He emerges a veritable Neptune, king of the brilliant hues into which he has dipped." Despite the positive press, however, and the fact that the critic Henry McBride called the paintings "eminently buyable," the gallery did not sell a single picture, and Bluemner continued to struggle to make ends meet.[10] In 1938, after two years of increasingly serious illness and deterioration of his eyesight, the artist took his life. It was nearly half a century before Bluemner's vital role in early American modernism was rediscovered and his passion for color appreciated anew.

Jennifer Wingate

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Oscar Bluemner, catalog cover for the exhibition *Compositions for Color Themes* at the Marie Harriman Gallery, New York, January 2–26, 1935, Vera Bluemner Kouba Collection, Stetson University, DeLand, Florida

#### **NOTES**

- [1] This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in *Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011).
- [2] See Barbara Haskell, Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color (New York, 2005); Jeffrey R. Hayes, Oscar Bluemner (Cambridge, 1991); and Judith Zilczer, Oscar Bluemner: The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Collection (Washington, DC, 1979).
- [3] Barbara Haskell, Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color (New York, 2005), 98.
- [4] Roberta Smith Favis, "Painting 'The Red City': Oscar Bluemner's 'Jersey

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- Silkmills," American Art 17, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 33-41.
- [5] Barbara Haskell, Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color (New York, 2005), 98.
- [6] Oscar Bluemner, introduction to *Oscar Florianus Bluemner* (Minneapolis, 1939), n. p.
- [7] Jeffrey R. Hayes, Oscar Bluemner (Cambridge, 1991), 185.
- [8] Oscar Bluemner, What and When Is Painting? Today (South Braintree, MA, 1929), reprinted in Barbara Haskell, Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color (New York, 2005), 197–198.
- [9] Guided by a concern for longevity, Bluemner experimented extensively with paints, binders, and supports. He used casein as a binder for his watercolors because he believed it would make them more permanent and lightfast. Ulrich Birkmaier, "In Search of Permanence: Oscar Bluemner's Materials and Techniques," in Barbara Haskell, Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color (New York, 2005), 181–191.
- [10] Excerpts from Emily Genauer's review in the *New York World-Telegram*, Jan. 12, 1935, and Henry McBride's review in the *New York Sun*, Jan. 8, 1935, are reprinted in Oscar Bluemner, "What the Critics Say . . . ," in *Oscar Florianus Bluemner* (Minneapolis, 1939).

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a paperboard with what is probably Whatman paper adhered by the artist to the surface of the commercially prepared board. Bluemner applied a thin, opaque white ground over the paper that does not conceal the paper's rough surface texture. Beneath some lifting paint along the lower left edge of the gray shape it is possible to see a line of transparent gray wash on the white ground. This could be underdrawing. Bluemner is known to have gone over this drawing with an inklike liquid. The paint layer is thin but very opaque. Bluemner blended his paint so that there is little evidence of individual brushstrokes and there is no impasto, only slight ridges of paint at the outer edges of shapes. The artist appears to have drawn or underpainted the primary design elements on the white ground and then painted the black background around them. Other design elements were then painted over the black background. The red house was painted before the green grass, and both of these were painted before the gray tree. A darker red paint is apparent under the bright red paint of the house. Around the perimeter of the painting beneath the rabbet of the frame there are traces of dark blue paint added to the black. The black background is in sound condition,

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but other colors exhibit signs of insecure paint and cleavage in the form of extensive cupping in the islands of paint between the fine network of cracks. Before the painting was acquired by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, a natural resin varnish layer was removed and replaced with a synthetic one. Dare Hartwell, the conservator at the Corcoran, re-adhered lifting paint in 1988.[1]

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

Conservation report in NGA conservation files. Hartwell later prepared a comprehensive technical summary for Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011). A copy of this summary is also available in NGA conservation files.

#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1867-1938]; his estate. Robert C. Graham Jr., by 1969;[1] his son, Robin Graham; purchased November 1978 by (Barbara Mathes Gallery, New York); purchased 26 March 1979 by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; acquired 2015 by the National Gallery of Art.

[1] Graham is listed as the painting's owner in the catalogue for a 1969 exhibition, Oscar Bluemner: Paintings, Drawings, shown at the New York Cultural Center. Graham was president of the James Graham and Sons Gallery in New York; a Graham Gallery label is on the backing board.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1935 New Landscape Painting by Oscar F. Bluemner: Compositions for Color Themes, Marie Harriman Gallery, New York; Arts Club of Chicago, 2 January -March 1935, no. 23.

1939 Oscar Florianus Bluemner, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 2-28 March 1939, no. 11.

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1969 Oscar Bluemner: Paintings, Drawings, New York Cultural Center, 16 December 1969 - 8 March 1970, no. 71, repro.

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2005 Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 7 October 2005 - 12 February 2006, unnumbered catalogue.

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American Paintings, 1900-1945



Unknown artist, *Patrick Henry Bruce*, from William C. Agee and Barbara Rose, \_Patrick Henry Bruce: American Modernist (New York, 1979)

# Bruce, Patrick Henry

American, 1881 - 1936

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Patrick Henry Bruce was born in Long Island, Virginia. After studying in New York under William Merritt Chase (American, 1849 - 1916) and Robert Henri (American, 1865 - 1929), Bruce moved to Paris in 1903, where he remained until 1936.

In Paris, Bruce was a member of the avant-garde circles surrounding Henri Matisse (French, 1869 - 1954) and the prominent collectors Gertrude and Leo Stein. During the prewar period, he assimilated the influence of Matisse and Paul Cézanne (French, 1839 - 1906), combining the vivid colors of fauvism with the structure of cubism in his works. In 1912 Bruce met the modernist painters Robert Delaunay (French, 1885 - 1941) and Sonia Delaunay (French, 1885 - 1979), and he developed his large-scale, boldly hued abstract "Compositions" based on the Delaunays' orphic cubism. In 1917 Bruce began painting cubist-inspired geometric still lifes, depicting blocklike forms such as cylinders, cubes, and wedges in a palette of unmodulated blues, greens, lavenders, and reds. The "Forms," as Bruce called them, were regularly exhibited in Paris during his lifetime but were little known in the United States until 1965, when they were included in an exhibition on synchromism at Knoedler Gallery in New York.

Suffering from melancholy and a sense of isolation, Bruce destroyed most of his paintings in 1933, sending the surviving works to his longtime friend Henri-Pierre Roché. In July 1936 he moved to New York, living with his sister on East 68th

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Street. He committed suicide just four months later.

Emma Acker, Sarah Cash

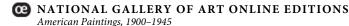
September 29, 2016

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Bruce, Patrick Henry © National Gallery of Art, Washington





Patrick Henry Bruce American, 1881 - 1936

## Peinture/Nature Morte

c. 1924

oil on canvas

overall:  $72.4 \times 91.4$  cm (28 1/2 × 36 in.)

framed:  $85.7 \times 104.5 \times 7$  cm (33 3/4 × 41 1/8 × 2 3/4 in.)

Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund) 2014.79.8

#### **ENTRY**

Peinture/Nature Morte is one of 25 related still-life paintings that Patrick Henry Bruce created in his Paris apartment from 1917 through 1930 [fig. 1].[1] In this series, Bruce synthesized geometric forms in a shallow but legible pictorial space. The artist abstracted the horizontal plane in the Gallery's painting from one of four antique tables he owned, only part of which is shown to suggest that it continues beyond the canvas. Although reduced to a balanced selection of geometric solids, the household objects depicted on the table are still recognizable: drinking glasses, mortars and pestles from the artist's collection of African art, drafting tools, and wooden moldings and magnets used to secure drawings to a table or wall.[2] All these objects are simplified to produce a composition in which specificity is irrelevant and formal relationships are emphasized. In this regard, Bruce's composition shares traits with the avant-garde movement known as purism, whose leaders, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) and Amédée Ozenfant, called for an art of synthesis in contrast to what they considered the disjointed, haphazard nature of analytic cubism.

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A Virginia-born descendant of the Revolutionary War hero Patrick Henry, Bruce trained in New York with William Merritt Chase (American, 1849 - 1916) in 1901 and Robert Henri (American, 1865 - 1929) in 1903. During this formative period, he also spent time with friends Edward Hopper (American, 1882 - 1967) and Guy Pène du Bois (American, 1884 - 1958). In 1903 he moved to Paris to continue his studies, returning briefly to the United States in 1905 to marry fellow artist and Chase student Helen Kibbey. The couple moved to Paris before the year's end, and Bruce remained there for more than 30 years.

Bruce's initial artistic explorations in Paris led him to the Musée du Louvre to study the old masters. Like his contemporaries who had studied with Chase, he honed his skills by copying portraits in the Louvre's galleries, and his first exhibited works in Paris were full-length portraits inspired by these studies.[3] He grew acquainted with the Paris school of modernists through Gertrude and Leo Stein, who introduced him to Henri Matisse (French, 1869 - 1954). Bruce partnered with Gertrude and Leo's sister-in-law Sarah Stein to organize the Matisse School, which opened in 1908. His involvement with the school brought him into daily contact with Matisse, who encouraged him to study the work of Paul Cézanne (French, 1839 - 1906) and Auguste Renoir (French, 1841 - 1919), two artists whose work remained extremely important to the American throughout his career. The palette of Peinture/Nature Morte-pinks, greens, pale yellow, purple, and blue-is testament to Bruce's exposure to Matisse, as well as to his reading about the law of simultaneous contrasts, developed by 19th-century French chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul, which states that if two colors are juxtaposed, each will be influenced by the complement of the other. After 1912, Bruce's work was exhibited and discussed in conjunction with that of the Orphic cubists Sonia Delaunay (French, 1885 - 1979) and Robert Delaunay (French, 1885 - 1941), who promoted the idea that movement and recession in space could be created solely through contrasts of color.

Although Bruce's career began with great promise and focus, his professional and personal stability unraveled over time. During the 1920s, when he painted *Peinture/Nature Morte*, he increasingly isolated himself. He wrote, "I am doing all my traveling in the apartment on ten canvases. One visits many unknown countries that way." [4] He did not have a dealer and was famously reticent. Bruce lost confidence in his abilities as he entered middle age and destroyed much of his work in 1933. His lack of direction was exacerbated by his struggle with failing health, financial difficulties, and a dissolving marriage. His only art world supporter

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of note was the French author Henri-Pierre Roché, who promoted Bruce and other avant-garde artists to American collectors (and to whom Bruce gave 21 still lifes from this late series, including this one, in 1933).[5]

The serial approach that Bruce used when making *Peinture/Nature Morte* and the related still lifes was part of a larger trend in modernist painting, but it likely also reveals a more private process of personal searching. Given the difficulties Bruce was facing when he painted *Peinture/Nature Morte*, perhaps the series indicates the influence of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors, including Cézanne and Claude Monet (French, 1840 - 1926), who used repetition to create meaning. Bruce's sustained work on this series—from 1917 to 1930—may also indicate his continued longing for control. *Peinture/Nature Morte* belongs to the fifth and most compositionally complex of six stylistically distinct groups in this still life series; within each group, Bruce progressively removed one or two elements to distill and simplify the composition. Dating to about 1924, the four paintings in this group are characterized by an inverted V above the table and a background of pronounced geometric architectural elements.[6] On a personal level, Bruce never achieved the sense of balance that these paintings worked toward; his life ended tragically in suicide when he was 55 years old.

**Dorothy Moss** 

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Photo of Patrick Henry Bruce's Paris apartment, c. 1917–1918. Courtesy of William Agee and B. F. Garber

### NOTES

- [1] This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011).
- [2] William C. Agee and Barbara Rose, *Patrick Henry Bruce, American Modernist: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York and Houston, 1979), 30.
- [3] William C. Agee, "Patrick Henry Bruce: A Major American Artist of Early Modernism," *Arts in Virginia* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 14.
- [4] Bruce to Henri-Pierre Roché, March 17, 1928, quoted in William C. Agee, "Patrick Henry Bruce: A Major American Artist of Early Modernism," *Arts in Virginia* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 26.
- [5] William C. Agee, "Patrick Henry Bruce: A Major American Artist of Early Modernism," *Arts in Virginia* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1977).
- [6] William C. Agee and Barbara Rose, *Patrick Henry Bruce, American Modernist: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York, 1979), 35–36.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

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The painting is executed on a plain-weave, medium-weight canvas. The original tacking margins have not been retained, but the pronounced cusping toward the edges of the canvas probably indicates that the painting is very close to its original dimensions. The ground is a thin, smooth white layer that was probably applied by the artist. Although this is not certain, the strong cusping on the left side and the fact that the ground has been abraded by the artist strongly support this conjecture. The deliberately abraded white ground remains visible in a number of areas. The colored zones that make up the composition show a mostly smooth but slightly ridged texture, as if they were slathered on thickly with a palette knife. Some areas—such as the lavender section in the bottom right and the darker purple cylinder at the bottom left—have a much bumpier texture, perhaps indicating that they contain dried pieces of paint or had begun to harden when they were worked with the palette knife. In general, the sharp edges and geometric precision of the thickly applied colored zones strongly hint that they were painted with the aid of stencils or masking tape.

Pencil lines are visible in many places and seem to have served two purposes. Some lines, such as the arcs in the small circle at the bottom left, appear to represent the artist working out his composition; these may be more visible than they once were. In their 1979 catalogue raisonné, William C. Agee and Barbara Rose reproduce an early photograph of this painting showing pencil lines that are no longer visible.[1] For example, in the lower center and at the top left there are lines that turned circles into the tops of cylinders. Agee and Rose (192-193) make a strong case that the latter pencil lines were added by the artist as part of his finished design, and were mistakenly removed in 1964-1965, before the painting was acquired by the Corcoran.[2] Other pencil lines that appear to reflect the artist working out his design are visible in the left-hand portion of the design. Infrared examination shows all of the pencil lines described above, as well as many additional lines that are hidden under the thick paint of the design elements [fig. 1].[3] At some point, almost certainly before the painting was acquired by the Corcoran, an auxiliary lining fabric was attached to the reverse of the original canvas using a glue/paste adhesive. In 1980 at the Corcoran Gallery, the old glue lining was removed and the canvas was relined with a new fabric using a wax-resin adhesive and remounted on a replacement stretcher. Also, the varnish (possibly shellac) was removed, a new surface coating of synthetic resin was applied, and losses were retouched.[4] In 2016, at the National Gallery of Art, this treatment was reversed: the lining and wax-resin adhesive were removed, the painting was striplined with Beva gel and linen, and the painting was stretched onto a new five-

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member, keyable stretcher.

Peinture/Nature Morte 159

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#### **TECHNICAL COMPARATIVE FIGURES**

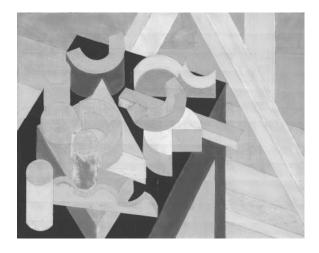


fig. 1 Infrared reflectogram, Patrick Henry Bruce, Peinture/Nature Morte, c. 1924, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund)

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

- [1] William C. Agee and Barbara Rose, *Patrick Henry Bruce, American Modernist: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York, 1979), 32.
- [2] William C. Agee and Barbara Rose, *Patrick Henry Bruce, American Modernist: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York, 1979), 192–193.
- [3] The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with a K astronomy filter.
- [4] Lance Mayer prepared a comprehensive technical summary for *Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011). A copy of this summary is available in NGA conservation files.

#### **PROVENANCE**

Collection of the artist 1881-1936], Paris; left 1933 by the artist in the possession of Henri-Pierre Roché [1879-1959], Paris; by inheritance to Mme Henri-Pierre Roché,

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Paris;[1] on consignment from March 1966 with (M. Knoedler & Co., New York); acquired 1967 by (Noah Goldowsky Gallery, New York);[2] purchased 23 January 1968 by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.

[1] Roché was married first to Germaine Bonnard, from 1927 to 1948, but the couple separated in 1933. His second wife, who inherited the painting, was Denise Renard, who Roché married in 1948.

[2] In a letter of 28 December 1967 from Noah Goldowsky to Hermann Warner Williams, Jr., Director of the Corcoran, in NGA curatorial files, the painting was described as "one of the group of fourteen paintings left in the possession of Henri Pierre Roché by Mr. Bruce. They were brought to America at the request of Madame Henri Pierre Roché to be sold for her." The early provenance for the painting is also delineated in William C. Agee and Barbara Rose, *Patrick Henry Bruce, American Modernist: A Catalogue Raisonné*, exh. cat. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond (Houston, 1979): 205.

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Unknown artist, Stuart Davis, 1957, photograph, Downtown Gallery records, 1824–1974, bulk 1926–1969, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

## Davis, Stuart American, 1892 - 1964

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Stuart Davis was born on December 7, 1892, to a family of artists. His mother, Helen Stuart Foulke, was a prominent sculptor who exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. His father, Edward Wyatt Davis, was a newspaper art editor who employed a number of future members of Robert Henri's anti-academy group The Eight as illustrators. Davis dropped out of high school in 1909 to study with Henri in New York City, and his early work was in a realist style. He became active in leftist politics, and in 1912 he began working as an illustrator for the socialist weekly The Masses. Davis was one of the youngest participants in the Armory Show in 1913, an event that inspired him to pursue modernism. Until the end of the decade, he experimented with various avant-garde styles, including fauvism and cubism. After spending the summer of 1914 in the modernist art colony in Provincetown, Rhode Island, Davis returned there almost annually until 1934.

By the early 1920s, Davis had abandoned realism and begun to paint landscapes, still lifes, and urban scenes (what he would later call "Color-Space Compositions"), using large, flat expanses of color to define spatial relationships. At about the same time, he began to introduce commercial products and advertising language into his compositions, which became a trademark of his work. In 1926 Davis was given a solo exhibition at the Whitney Studio Club; the next year, he joined Edith Gregor

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Halpert's Downtown Gallery and had a successful show there. In 1928 Juliana Force, director of the Whitney Studio Club, purchased two of his paintings, enabling him to travel to Paris, where he resided in the Montparnasse district and began to paint Paris street scenes.

Davis returned to New York on the eve of the Great Depression in 1929 and settled in Greenwich Village. In 1933 he joined the Public Works of Art Project (later incorporated into the Works Progress Administration [WPA] in 1935), and under its auspices he completed several murals, including the dynamic Swing Landscape (1938, Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington). Throughout the 1930s and 1940s he taught at the Art Students League and at the New School for Social Research. In 1938, six years after the tragic death of his first wife, Bessie Chosak, from an infection following an abortion, Davis married Roselle Springer. The couple had a son in 1952.

In 1948 Look magazine ranked Davis among the top ten living painters in the United States. Davis had a solo exhibition at the American Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1952, and his work was shown there again in 1956. After being elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1956, he was awarded the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum International Award in both 1958 and 1960. Davis died suddenly from a stroke on June 24, 1964, at the height of his fame.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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Stuart Davis American, 1892 - 1964

# Multiple Views

1918

oil on canvas

overall: 120.02 x 89.54 cm (47 1/4 x 35 1/4 in.)

framed:  $132.72 \times 102.87 \times 7.62$  cm (52  $1/4 \times 40$   $1/2 \times 3$  in.)

Inscription: lower right: STUART DAVIS 1918

Gift of Earl Davis 2008.124.1

#### **ENTRY**

Stuart Davis had been deeply impressed by the modern art he had seen at the Armory Show in 1913, and spent the remainder of the decade patiently investigating avant-garde styles, especially the high color and thick impasto common to both Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853 - 1890) and the fauves, but also certain kinds of geometric abstraction. Although he would not make explicitly cubist paintings until 1921–1922, he had certainly seen cubist works at the Armory Show, and the complex space and relatively subdued palette of *Multiple Views* may reflect that interest. Davis would come to consider cubism the most important of all modern styles.

In February 1918 Davis was one of 20 painters invited to participate in the *Exhibition of Indigenous Painting* at Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's (Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney) Whitney Studio Club at 8 West Eighth Street in Greenwich Village. The artists, including John Sloan (American, 1871 - 1951), George Benjamin Luks (American, 1866 - 1933), William Glackens (American, 1870 - 1938), Gifford Beal (American, 1879 - 1956), and Guy Pène du Bois (American, 1884 - 1958), were asked to draw lots for prepared and framed canvases and then to spend three days painting them on-site. Whitney provided art supplies, whiskey, tobacco, food, and gingham smocks. Davis's contribution to the raucous event was *Multiple Views*, an unusual composite of paintings and sketches that he had made while working in the historic fishing town of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and that he apparently managed to recall or consult while working on the painting.

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Gloucester played a significant role in Davis's career. He had first visited the town in 1915 at the recommendation of Sloan, and pronounced it "the place I had been looking for":

It had the brilliant light of Provincetown, but with the important additions of topographical severity and the architectural beauties of the Gloucester schooner.

The schooner is a very necessary element in coherent thinking about art. I do not refer to its own beauty of form, but to the fact that its masts define the often empty sky expanse. They function as a color-space coordinate between earth and sky. They make it possible for the novice landscape painter to evade the dangers of taking off into the void as soon as his eye hits the horizon. From the masts of schooners the artist eventually learns to invent his own coordinates when for some unavoidable reason they are not present. Another very important thing about the town at that time was that the pre-fabricated Main Street had not yet made its appearance. Also the fact that automobiles were very few and their numerous attendant evils were temporarily avoided.[1]

Davis returned to Gloucester almost annually until 1934.

In 1953 the artist recalled the unusual circumstances under which he had painted *Multiple Views* at the Whitney Studio Club, explaining that it was "made out of things I had been painting recently and had in my mind. . . . I had done that kind of composition before that time . . . composing things that you don't usually see at one time. I have drawings done in that manner."[2] John R. Lane has pointed out that combining vignettes to create a sense of simultaneity was a common technique in cartooning and that Davis had employed it in the drawing *Forty Inns on the Lincoln Highway No. 2.*[3]

Although the rules of the *Exhibition of Indigenous Painting* required artists to work entirely from memory, Davis may have secreted some previously executed sketches of Gloucester into the event. In short, *Multiple Views* was not an impromptu effort on his part.[4] Despite his self-professed aversion to automobiles, he incorporated a car and car-related imagery into the picture, imagery derived

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from two 1917 paintings: *Garage No. 1* [fig. 1] and *Garage No. 2* [fig. 2]. This method of using previous imagery in a new composition would become characteristic of Davis's later work.[5] A critic for the *New York Sun* noted of *Multiple Views*: "Stuart Davis has painted all of his past life into his picture besides a great deal of mere hearsay. He has fitted countless scenes into one picture, somewhat in the style of children's puzzle pictures, and painted them in with vigor. Mr. Davis's neighbor artists at the time of the competition must surely have been splattered with much paint."[6] However, if there was any paint splattering it would have come from the intoxicated Luks, whose efforts to add some strokes to *Multiple Views* had to be fended off by Davis.[7]

Multiple Views is an ambitious but awkward work that has stimulated much discussion among art historians. To quote Philip Rylands, "What appears to be a fairly straightforward realist work actually embodies modernist strategies of contradiction and ambiguity."[8] Jane Myers has observed that "its composition is not completely resolved; the discrepancy between illustrative space and abstract space is disturbing, and despite the artist's efforts to stress the physical reality of the whole painted surface, the various parts do not coalesce."[9] Perhaps the tension in Multiple Views arose from the fact that Davis had only a partial understanding of cubism at this point. John R. Lane has stated that the artist "developed a solution involving a montage of vignettes to the problem of infusing the dimension of time into painting that did not rely on the cubist vocabulary."[10] In Diane Kelder's opinion, Davis combined all the disparate images of Gloucester "in an effort to create an effect of simultaneity. The formal and procedural contradictions so evident in this painting resulted from a desire to impose a new conceptual order on the observed world, an order that Davis was beginning to identify with cubism but which he was not yet capable of expressing."[11]

Karen Wilkin recently wrote that although *Multiple Views* "seems timid and undistinguished," Davis "almost inadvertently explored essential cubist concepts of discontinuous space and shifting viewpoints, not by replicating the look of a cubist image but by juxtaposing a series of self-contained vignettes." She also noted, "Davis's pictures of this type, while problematic, embody, too, cubism's generating idea of 'collaging' together a range of perceptions. . . . Such works might be described as a kind of conceptual cubism, intellectually inventive but still wedded to naturalistic appearances."[12]

Brian O'Doherty, one of the best writers on Davis, sidesteps the nagging issue of cubism and the charges of irresolution. Instead he regards *Multiple Views* as

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"Davis's key early picture," one that reveals an additive compositional habit (the juxtaposition of distinct parts) that stayed with him throughout his career, whether those parts were words, objects, or words standing for objects. For O'Doherty, the result was a species of "concrete poetry" that foreshadowed the stenciled letters of Jasper Johns (American, born 1930) and the rebuses of Robert Rauschenberg (American, 1925 - 2008).[13]

Robert Torchia

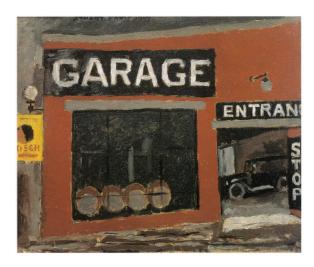
September 29, 2016

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American Paintings, 1900-1945

#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**





**fig. 2** Stuart Davis, *Garage No. 2*, 1918, oil on canvas, private collection

**fig. 1** Stuart Davis, *Garage No. 1*, 1917, oil on canvas, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Knoll International, 1980. Image: Cathy Carver

#### **NOTES**

- [1] Stuart Davis, "Autobiography" (1945), in *Stuart Davis*, ed. Diana Kelder (New York, 1971), 25.
- [2] Stuart Davis, "Recollections of the Whitney" (transcript of an interview by John I. H. Bauer and Herman More, for broadcast on WNYC, American Art Festival), Sept. 29, 1953, unpublished typescript, artists' files archives of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Quoted in Patricia Hills, Stuart Davis (New York, 1996), 46.
- [3] John R. Lane, Stuart Davis: Art and Theory (New York, 1978), 90.
- [4] Avis Berman, Rebels on Eighth Street: Juliana Force and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 1990), 151.

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[5] In 1952 he stated, "Work on an old picture is as valid as to make a wise statement and increase its mass in the image of experience." Stuart Davis Papers, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, Index, June 17, 1952, quoted in Jane Myers, ed., Stuart Davis: Graphic Work and Related Paintings with a Catalogue Raisonné of the Prints (Fort Worth, TX, 1986), 4.

- [6] "Mrs. Whitney Has an Art Marathon: Well-known Painters Turn Out Works in Rapid Fire Style," New York Sun, Feb. 5, 1918.
- [7] Avis Berman, Rebels on Eighth Street: Juliana Force and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 1990), 151.
- [8] Philip Rylands, Stuart Davis (Venice, 1997), 7.
- [9] Jane Myers, ed., Stuart Davis: Graphic Work and Related Paintings with a Catalogue Raisonné of the Prints (Fort Worth, TX, 1986), 4.
- [10] John R. Lane, Stuart Davis: Art and Theory (New York, 1978), 12.
- [11] Diane Kelder, Stuart Davis: Art and Theory, 1920–1931 (New York, 2002), 2.
- [12] William C. Agee and Karen Wilkin, *Stuart Davis: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 3 vols. (New Haven and London, 2007), 1:109.
- [13] Brian O'Doherty, *American Masters: The Voice and the Myth*, 2nd ed. New York, 1988, 51.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a plain-weave, lightweight canvas. The priming is presumed to be oil-based and ranges from yellow to slightly beige in color. It is lined with a heavy fabric using a wax adhesive that is stretched on a four-member, mortise-and-tenon, keyable stretcher that is probably original. The original tacking margins are intact, indicating that the painting retains its original dimensions. Infrared examination shows no underdrawing.[1] X-radiography shows no significant artist changes. The paint (thought to be oil) has been applied in multiple layers using brushes and a palette knife. The paint has been worked in a variety of techniques, including wet into wet and scumbling. The thickness of the paint layers varies throughout the composition. In some instances the ground can be easily detected through the thin, scumbled layers of paint, while in other sections the paint is extremely thick and heavily impastoed. The paint surface is generally cracked, with wider aperture craquelure found in the most thickly painted areas. There are only a few tiny losses scattered around the painting, most notably a concentration of small losses in the lower left corner. The painting was cleaned in

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2011 at the National Gallery of Art, when a heavily discolored varnish containing oil was removed and replaced with a fresh, thin layer of synthetic varnish. The small losses were inpainted during this treatment as well.

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with a K astronomy filter.

#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist's son, Earl Davis; gift 2008 to NGA.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1918 Exhibition of Indigenous Paintings, Gertrude Vanderbilt (Mrs. Harry Payne) Whitney's Studio Club, New York, 1918, pamphlet no. 10.

1973 Portrait of a Place: Some American Landscape Painters in Gloucester, Cape Ann Historical Association, Gloucester, 1973, no. 25, repro.

1978 Stuart Davis: Art and Art Theory, The Brooklyn Museum; Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1978, no. 4, repro.

1978 William Carlos Williams and the American Scene 1920-1940, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1978-1979, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 30.

1982 The Gloucester Years, Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York, 1982, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

1986 Stuart Davis: Provincetown and Gloucester Paintings and Drawings, Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York, 1986.

1990 Stuart Davis: Scapes, Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, Inc., New York, 1990, no. 34, repro.

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1991 Stuart Davis, American Painter, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Art, 1991-1992, no. 23, repro.

1995 Stuart Davis: Retrospective 1995, Koriyama City Museum of Art; The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga; Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum, 1995, no. 21, repro.

1999 Stuart Davis in Gloucester, Cape Ann Historical Museum, Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1999, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 4.

2002 Stuart Davis in Gloucester, Alpha Gallery, Boston, 2002, checklist no. 13.

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1962	Nordness, Lee, ed. Text by Allen S. Weller. Art USA Now. 2 vols.
	Lucerne, 1962: 1:opp. p. 70.
1965	Stuart Davis Memorial Exhibition. Exh. cat. National Collection of Fine
	Arts, Washington, D.C.; Art Institute of Chicago; Whitney Museum of
	American Art, New York; Art Galleries, University of California at Los
	Angeles. Washington, D.C., 1965: 17, as Gloucester Tour (Multiple
	Views).
1971	Kelder, Diane, ed. Stuart Davis. New York, Washington, and London,
	1971: 6, fig. 6.
1973	O'Doherty, Brian. American Masters: The Voice and the Myth. New York,
	1973: 51, 52, repro.
1979	Baigell, Matthew. Dictionary of American Art. New York, 1979: 88.
1979	Kelder, Diane. "Stuart Davis: Pragmatist of American Modernism." <i>Art</i>
	Journal 39, no. 1 (Fall 1979): 30, fig. 2, 35.
1984	Marks, Claude. World Artists 1950-1980. New York, 1984: 183.
1986	Myers, Jane, ed. Stuart Davis: Graphic Work and Related Paintings with
	a Catalogue Raisonné of the Prints. Exh. cat. Amon Carter Museum, Fort
	Worth, 1986: 3-4, 8, repro.
1987	Agee, Wililam C. Stuart Davis (1892-1964): The Breakthrough Years
	1922-1924. Exh. cat. Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, Inc., New York, 1987:
	n.p.
1987	Wilkin, Karen. <i>Stuart Davi</i> s. New York, 1987: 71 pl. 71.
1988	O'Doherty, Brian. American Masters: The Voice and the Myth. New York,
	1988: 51.
1990	Berman, Avis. Rebels on Eighth Street: Juliana Force and the Whitney

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	Museum of American Art. New York, 1990: 151.
1991	Polcari, Stephen. Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience.
	Cambridge, Massacusetts, 1991: 13 fig. 7, 14.
1996	Hills, Patricia. Stuart Davis. New York, 1996: 42, 46, 47 pl. 34, 49.
1997	Rylands, Philip. Stuart Davis. Exh. cat. Peggy Guggenheim Collection,
	Venice; Palazzo delle esposizione, Rome; Stedelijk Museum,
	Amsterdam; National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C. Milan,
	1997: 30 repro., 94.
2002	Kelder, Diane. Stuart Davis: Art and Theory, 1920-1931. Exh. cat. Pierpont
	Morgan Library, New York, 2002: 2-3, fig. 2.
2007	Boyajian, Ani, and Mark Rutkoski, eds. Stuart Davis: A Catalogue
	Raisonné. 3 vols. Essays by William C. Agee and Karen Wilkin. New
	Haven and London, 2007: 1:6, 76, 109, 130; 3:71-73, no. 1418, repro.

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Stuart Davis American, 1892 - 1964

# Study for "Swing Landscape"

1937-1938

oil on canvas

overall: 55.9 × 73 cm (22 × 28 3/4 in.)

framed:  $77.8 \times 94.6 \times 7$  cm (30 5/8 × 37 1/4 × 2 3/4 in.)

Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase and exchange through a gift given in memory of Edith Gregor Halpert by the

Halpert Foundation and the William A. Clark Fund) 2014.79.15

#### **ENTRY**

Swing Landscape [fig. 1] was the first of two commissions that Stuart Davis received from the Mural Division of the Federal Art Project (FAP), an agency of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), to make large-scale paintings for specific sites in New York. The other was Mural for Studio B, WNYC, Municipal Broadcasting Company [fig. 2].[1] The 1930s were a great era of mural painting in the United States, and Davis, along with such artists as Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889 - 1975), Arshile Gorky (American, born Armenia, 1904 - 1948), and Philip Guston (American, born Canada, 1913 - 1980), was an important participant.

In the fall of 1936, Burgoyne Diller (American, 1906 - 1965), the head of the Mural Division and a painter in his own right, convinced the New York Housing Authority to commission artists to decorate some basement social rooms in the Williamsburg Houses, a massive, new public housing project in Brooklyn. A dozen artists were chosen to submit work, and, while Davis's painting was never installed, it turned out to be a watershed in his development. The word "swing" in the title is surely a double reference to the ceaseless shifting of forms in the composition (there are

almost no true verticals to be found) and to the often loud, always pulsating jazz music that Davis loved. When the painting was shown in May 1938 at an exhibition of murals at the Federal Art Gallery in New York, the painter John Graham declared it (as Davis noted in his desk calendar) "the greatest American painting."[2]

According to the authors of Davis's catalogue raisonné, the present work must be the one-quarter-scale oil study that Davis finished in the spring of 1937 to serve as his proposal to the WPA in Washington. It was approved in June, and for the next 11 months Davis, with two assistants, transferred the design to a large canvas in the FAP studio on 42nd Street in New York. A black-and-white photograph of the oil sketch has been found in the FAP records. Comparison with the study reveals that Davis made changes to the study (most notably adding the yellow and white rigging to the mast at upper left) after it was returned to him, suggesting that he continued to use it as a working model. The finished mural closely follows the outlines of the study but is brighter and more complex; for Davis, a preliminary study was never more than an armature for the improvisational act of painting.

Davis at this time was in his mid-forties, an established figure in the New York art world with a long career behind him, and yet like so many artists during the Depression he lived in dire poverty. The small degree of commerical and critical success he had started to enjoy in the 1920s had evaporated, and, rather than continue to paint much after the stock market crash, he threw himself into political organizing on behalf of rights for his fellow artists, holding a series of increasingly responsible positions from 1933 to 1940 in the John Reed Club, the Artists Union, the Artists' Committee of Action, their magazine *Art Front*, and finally the American Artists' Congress. He was elected president of that body in December 1937 but resigned in protest in April 1940 along with several others when it endorsed the Soviet invasion of Finland that had taken place the previous winter.

This record of activity might suggest that Davis was a political artist. In fact, he kept his art and politics separate, consistently refusing to make propaganda on behalf of the pro-labor, antifascist causes that he embraced. It is true that his two murals preceding Swing Landscape—New York Mural and Mural (Radio City Men's Lounge: Men without Women), both from 1932—were full of legible references to urban life and issues. In Swing Landscape, Davis stepped back from the immediate spectacle of the contemporary world, and toward abstraction. Using one of his favorite subjects, the harbor of Gloucester, Massachusetts (where he had summered since 1915) with its largely bygone wind-powered fishing schooners, Davis jammed together fragments of many existing sketches and paintings to

create a work that is filled from end to end with jagged, jangling forms. Bricks, buoys, rigging, piers, ropes, smoke, water, and perhaps even a sunrise can be detected, and the whole is bracketed by two pale gray strips, one for the sky at the top and one representing the dock along the bottom. But between and across these bands Davis unleashes a great improvisation of color and rhythm—the large, bold, abstract, muscular forms that would increasingly characterize his work until his death in 1964.

For all his interest in jazz and the practice of improvisation, Davis was traditional in his reliance on sketches, studies, and previous work, both in general and especially as he approached this major commission. The catalogue raisonné lists almost 20 related works from 1931 to 1937, including five paintings, six gouaches, and seven sketchbook drawings. The painting *Landscape with Drying Sails* (1931–1932, Columbus Museum of Art) provided the basic composition and motifs for the left half of the mural, and another painting, *American Waterfront, Analogical Emblem* (1934, private collection, San Francisco), served the same function for the right half. The works on paper include one line drawing and three gouaches of the entire composition;[3] the rest are sketchbook pages from the early 1930s that he plundered for specific elements of the final work.

Comparison of our study to the finished mural reveals a great number of changes, not in the basic composition but in color choices and level of detail. For example, the buoy at lower left, which is simply a brown silhouette in the study, gains considerable detail and color (orange, brick red, yellow, blue, and black); the yellow house above it, a simple shape in the study, gains a black window with a purple lintel below it; and the chunky red puff of smoke emerging from the roof of the house gets defined in two different colors, suggesting depth and movement. Other added elements not present in the study include bricks, ripples, additional rigging, and pieces of rope (although to describe these representationally misses the fact that they are equally important as lively abstract elements). Interestingly, not all the additions to the study are bright and jazzy: the yellow and white rigging on the mast at left has become turquoise and ochre in the finished mural.

Why the finished work was never installed at its intended home remains a mystery. No relevant documentation has been found, but it is tempting to speculate. The works that were chosen for installation are quite different in character from *Swing Landscape*, whose packed forms, bright colors, and all-over composition bear little relation to their more delicate shapes, rendered in muted colors and floating in shallow space. The four artists whose works were chosen—llya Bolotowsky

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(American, 1907 - 1981), Paul Kelpe (American, 1902 - 1985), Balcomb Greene (American, 1904 - 1990), and Albert Swinden (American, born England, 1899 - 1961)—were all founding members of American Abstract Artists, a group that was devoted to the propagation and development of European styles coming variously out of the De Stijl, constructivism, and Bauhaus schools. Davis himself had worked through plenty of European modern art by that point, and he was intent on developing an original, American style.[4] This in itself does not fully explain the mystery since the works were to be installed in different buildings, so direct clashing would not have been an issue; but it does suggest that style and taste might have been factors in the decision not to install Swing Landscape.

A second mystery concerns the study, which appears to be missing about a third of the design on the right side. Indeed, inspection reveals that it was cut down, though when, by whom, and for what reason we do not know.[5] Perhaps the work suffered damage at some point, or perhaps the artist was unsatisfied with some of the passages. And yet the study does not seem to suffer aesthetically as a result of this cut. Davis was operating at the time on his theory of "serial centers"—his idea that a composition should not have a single focus of interest but rather several, much like the multiple masts that punctuate the horizontal frieze of *Swing Landscape*. This principle gives the painting its even-handed energy, its all-over distribution of forms, which foreshadows in uncanny fashion the paintings of Jackson Pollock, especially such horizontal compositions as his *Mural* (1943), executed for Peggy Guggenheim's apartment only six years after *Swing Landscape*. The success of *Study for Swing Lanscape* as a painting in its own right testifies both to the validity of Davis's theory and, perhaps more importantly, to the power of his forms to hold their own, no matter how reduced or truncated.

Harry Cooper

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Stuart Davis, *Swing Landscape*, 1938, oil on canvas, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ezkanazi Museum of Art



**fig. 2** Stuart Davis, *Mural for Studio B, WNYC, Municipal Broadcasting Company*, 1939, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Lent by the City of New York. © Estate of Stuart Davis / Licensed by VAGA, New York. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY

#### **NOTES**

- [1] The factual information presented here comes primarily from two sources: Ani Byajian and Mark Rutkowski, eds., Stuart Davis: A Catalogue Raisonné, 3 vols. (New Haven, 2007), 3:289–294; and Stuart Davis: In Full Swing (New York and Washington, DC, 2016), 181–183. The speculations and judgments are my own.
- [2] Davis's flip-style desktop calendars, in which he jotted notes and thoughts as well as appointments, are in the archives of the artist's estate.
- [3] Ani Byajian and Mark Rutkowski, eds., *Stuart Davis: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 3 vols. (New Haven, 2007), nos. 622 and 1222–1224, respectively.
- [4] For more information on the rediscovery and restoration of these four murals, see the website maintained by the Brooklyn Museum: https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/williamsburg\_murals.

  Together with a pamphlet, this website documents the museum's 1990 exhibition of the restored murals.
- [5] Examination report, August 10, 2015, National Gallery of Art conservation files.



#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a plain-weave, medium-weight, pre-primed canvas. The priming is a dark gray color. The canvas is lined with a linen fabric of similar weight with a wax adhesive, and the two are tacked with staples and stretched to a five-member, expansion bolt type stretcher that is not original. Wherever the painting has been pulled over the edge of the stretcher bar, both the ground and the paint are extensively broken. There is a good amount of original canvas with intact ground serving as the tacking edges on the top, bottom, and left sides, where it is apparent that the painting is stretched close to its original dimensions. However, on the right side the original tacking margin appears to be missing. There is only a quarter-inch-wide swath of original paint folded over the right edge to serve as a tacking margin. Because there are no tack holes, it does not appear that this originally served as the tacking margin and it seems likely that at one time the painting was wider and has been cut down on this side.

The paint is applied thickly with high impasto and brushwork that is evident in every area. This application follows a precise plan created by a pencil drawing that is visible to the naked eye at the edges of some design elements. For the most part, each design element is painted right up to the adjacent ones, rarely overlapping. This visual characterization is confirmed by the infrared examination. In addition to the pencil drawing, the infrared examination shows the structure of an additional, but later painted over, design element to the right of the ladderlike passage in the upper left.[1] The paint layer appears to be in excellent condition with a fine network of cracks running throughout. However, according to the conservation files of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the painting has been treated several times in the past three decades for extensive areas of flaking paint. In some of these treatments wax was used as a consolidant, and in others Beva-371 was used. Despite the flaking issues there are very few losses visible in ultraviolet light. There are only a few small losses seen in some of the design elements. However, there is extensive retouching along all four edges. There appears to be no varnish or only a light varnishing of synthetic resin applied to the paint layer. In general, the paint appears evenly matte. According to the Corcoran Gallery of Art conservation files, a spray coating of B-67 was applied to the surface in 1978, but then the painting was cleaned, lined, and inpainted in 1979. Presumably this B-67 layer would have been removed in this cleaning. According to the Corcoran files, a spray of B-72 varnish was applied in this second treatment, which is presumably

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still there because there is no additional treatment record that attests to its removal.

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

[1] The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with a K astronomy filter.

#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1892-1964], New York; his estate, until 1977-1978;[1] (Borgenicht Gallery, New York). private collection, New York. Mr. and Mrs. N. Richard Miller, New York, by 1979.[2] (Barbara Mathes Gallery, New York);[3] purchased 16 December 1981 by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington;[4] acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.

[1] Mrs. Stuart Davis lent the painting to the 1977 exhibition *New Deal for Art: The Government Art Projects of the 1930s with Examples from New York City & State.*The catalogue for the 1978 Biennale di Venezia stated that the picture belonged to a private collection in New York.

- [2] The Millers lent the painting to the 1979 exhibition *The Modern Art Society: The Center's Early Years, 1939-1954* held in Cincinnati.
- [3] The painting was featured in advertisements for the Barbara Mathes Gallery in April 1981: *Antiques* 119 (April 1981): 793, and *Art in America* 69 (April 1981): 7.
- [4] This painting was acquired in exchange for *Cafe, Place des Vosges* by the same artist, which the Corcoran had accessioned in 1975.

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#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1941 Marsden Hartley-Stuart Davis, Modern Art Society, Cincinnati, October-November 1941.

1976 Stuart Davis: Murals: An Exhibition of Related Studies, 1932-1957, Zabriskie Gallery, New York, 27 January - 14 February 1976, no. 7, as Study for a Mural.

1977 New Deal for Art: The Government Art Projects of the 1930's with Examples from New York City & State, Tyler Art Gallery, State University of New York College of Arts and Sciences, Oswego; Picker Gallery, Colgate University; Albany Institute of History and Art, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington; Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica; Fosdick-Nelson Gallery, New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University; Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University; Huntington Galleries, West Virginia, 25 January 1977 - 3 February 1978, no. 86.

1978 La Biennale di Venezia 1978: dalla natura all'arte, dall'arte alla natura, June - October 1978, no. 60, as Studio per murale con paesaggio ondulato.

1979 The Modern Art Society: The Center's Early Years, 1939-1954, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, 13 October - 25 November 1979, unnumbered catalogue.

1981 Loan to display with permanent collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1981.

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1985 Henri's Circle, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 20 April - 16 June 1985, unnumbered checklist.

2005 Encouraging American Genius: Master Paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Parrish Art Museum, Southampton; Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, 2005-2007, checklist no.92 (shown only in Washington).

2008 The American Evolution: A History through Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 2008, unpublished checklist.

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2009 American Paintings from the Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 6 June - 18 October 2009, unpublished checklist.

2013 American Journeys: Visions of Place, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 21 September 2013 - 28 September 2014, unpublished checklist.

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- 1988 Robinson, Malcolm. The American Vision: Landscape Paintings of the United States. London and New York, 1988: 122-124, repro.
- 1997 Rylands, Philip. Stuart Davis. Exh. cat. Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Palazzo delle esposizione, Rome; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C. Milan, 1997: 50 n. 15.
- 1999 Wilkin, Karen. Stuart Davis in Gloucester. Exh. cat. Cape Ann Historical Museum, Gloucester, Massachusetts; Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington; National Academy Museum, New York. West Stockbridge, Massachusetts, 1999: 74, pl. 43.
- 2000 Cash, Sarah, and Terrie Sultan. American Treasures of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. New York, 2000: 162-163, repro.
- 2002 Heartney, Eleanor, ed. A Capital Collection: Masterworks from the Corcoran Gallery of Art. London, 2002: 222-223, 225, repro.
- 2004 Duplaix, Sophie and Marcella Lista, Editors. Sons & Lumières: Une histoire du son dans l'art du XXe siècle Exh. cat. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris: 47, 49, repro.
- 2007 Boyajian, Ani, and Mark Rutkoski, eds. Stuart Davis: A Catalogue Raisonné. 3 vols. Essays by William C. Agee and Karen Wilkin. New Haven and London, 2007: 1: no. 1612, repro.
- 2008 Dietsch, Deborah K. "Corcoran Redux: Exhibit Reconfigures American Collection [exh. review]." Washington Times (15 March 2008): B:4.
- 2008 Miller, Angela et al. American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2008: 531, color fig. 16.12.

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2011 Cash, Sarah, ed. Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945.

Washington, 2011: 293, repro.

2016 National Gallery of Art. Highlights from the National Gallery of Art,

Washington. Washington, 2016: 304, repro.

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Carl van Vechten, Aaron Douglas, April 10, 1933, photograph, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

# Douglas, Aaron American, 1899 - 1979

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Aaron Douglas, widely acknowledged as one of the most accomplished and influential visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance, was born in Topeka, Kansas, on May 26, 1899. He attended a segregated primary school, McKinley Elementary, and Topeka High School, which was integrated.[1] Following graduation, Douglas worked in a glass factory and later in a steel foundry to earn money for college. In 1918 he enrolled at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and in 1922 earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts. The following year he accepted a teaching position at Lincoln High School in Kansas City, Missouri, where he served as instructor of art for two years. A serious reader from boyhood, Douglas kept abreast of the growing cultural movement in Harlem through the pages of two influential periodicals: The Crisis, published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and edited by W. E. B. Du Bois, and Opportunity, the monthly publication of the National Urban League edited by Charles S. Johnson. Word of Douglas's talent and ambition soon reached influential figures in Harlem, including Johnson, who was actively recruiting young African American writers, poets, and artists from across the country to come to New York. In 1924, Ethel Nance, Johnson's secretary, wrote to Douglas encouraging him to come east. Initially Douglas declined, but the following spring, at the conclusion of the school year, he resigned his teaching position and traveled to New York.

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Douglas arrived in Harlem shortly after the publication of what was immediately recognized as a landmark publication: the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic* titled, "Harlem: Mecca for the New Negro." This special issue included an introductory essay by Alain Locke, intellectual founder of the New Negro movement, with additional essays by other progressive African American leaders. When interviewed late in his career, Douglas declared that the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic* was the single most important factor in his decision to move to New York.

Welcomed by the leaders of the New Negro initiative, Douglas enjoyed the support of both Johnson, who arranged for him to study with German émigré artist Fritz Winold Reiss (American, 1888 - 1953), and Du Bois, who gave him a job in the mailroom of *The Crisis*. Encouraged by Locke, Reiss, Du Bois, and others to study African art as a rich source of cultural identity, Douglas also absorbed the lessons of European modernism as he forged his own visual language. Soon illustrations by Douglas began to appear in *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*. In the fall of 1925, an expanded edition of the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic* was published in book form. Titled *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, the anthology included illustrations by Reiss and his new student, Douglas.

In 1927 Du Bois invited Douglas to join the staff of *The Crisis* as their art critic. That same year James Weldon Johnson, poet and New Negro activist, asked the young artist to illustrate his forthcoming collection of poems, *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*. Critically praised, *God's Trombones* was Johnson's masterwork and a breakthrough publication for Douglas. In his illustrations for this publication, and later in paintings and murals, Douglas drew upon his study of African art and his understanding of the intersection of cubism and art deco to create a style that soon became the visual signature of the Harlem Renaissance.

Numerous commissions followed the publication of *God's Trombones*, including an invitation from Fisk University in Nashville to create a mural cycle for the new campus library. In September 1931 Douglas sailed for Paris, where he undertook additional formal training and met expatriate artist Henry Ossawa Tanner (American, 1859 - 1937). Following a year abroad, Douglas returned to New York, where he continued to receive commissions and, in 1933, mounted his first solo exhibition at Caz Delbo Gallery. In 1936 Douglas completed a four panel mural for the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas. Only two panels from this set survive. One of these, *Into Bondage*, is now in the collection of the National Gallery of Art.

During the 1930s Douglas returned intermittently to Fisk where he served as assistant professor of art education; in 1940 he accepted a full-time position in the art department. Although teaching in Nashville, Douglas and his wife, Alta, retained their apartment in Harlem, where they remained active in Harlem's cultural community—albeit now a community severely impacted by the Great Depression. In 1944 Douglas completed a master of arts degree at Teachers College, Columbia University. At Fisk he became chairman of the art department, where he mentored several generations of students before retiring in 1966. In 1970 Douglas returned to Topeka, his hometown, for the first retrospective exhibition of his work at the Mulvane Art Center. The following year he was honored with a second retrospective at Fisk. Douglas died in Nashville in 1979 at age 80.

[1] Biographical information from Stephanie Fox Knappe, "Chronology," in *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, ed. Susan Earle (New Haven, 2007).

Nancy Anderson

September 29, 2016

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  Museum, Washington; Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
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Douglas, Aaron 188

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- 2008 Ragar, Cheryl R. "Plunging into the Very Depths of the Souls of Our People: The Life and Art of Aaron Douglas." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, Lawrence, 2008.
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Aaron Douglas American, 1899 - 1979

# Into Bondage

1936

oil on canvas

overall: 153.4 × 153.7 cm (60 3/8 × 60 1/2 in.)

framed:  $169.2 \times 169.2 \times 7$  cm ( $66.5/8 \times 66.5/8 \times 2.3/4$  in.)

Inscription: lower right: AARON DOUGLAS

Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase and partial gift from Thurlow Evans Tibbs, Jr., The Evans-Tibbs Collection)

2014.79.17

#### **ENTRY**

The modernist painter and graphic artist Aaron Douglas heeded the call of Harlem Renaissance intellectuals by acknowledging African cultural traditions as a source of pride and inspiration.[1] He embraced a machine age aesthetic, but also integrated Egyptian and African motifs into cubist, precisionist, and art deco designs. Douglas's illustrations for *The New Negro*, the 1925 anthology of Harlem Renaissance writers compiled by the philosopher Alain Locke, was his first major commission after moving to New York City from Kansas City in 1924. This project established his reputation as a leading artist of the new negro movement. In 1926, the writer Langston Hughes commended Douglas for inspiring younger African American artists to express their "individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame."[2] A decade later, when the Harmon Foundation was looking for an artist to paint a series of murals for the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas, Douglas was an obvious choice for the commission.

The four large canvases that Douglas made for the lobby of the centennial's Hall of Negro Life welcomed more than 400,000 visitors [fig. 1].[3] Only two of the paintings, however, have been located: *Into Bondage* and *Aspiration* [fig. 2]. Along with *The Negro's Gift to America*, a large horizontal work that hung between *Into Bondage* and *Aspiration* in the lobby of the exhibition hall [fig. 3], these canvases depicted the journey of African Americans from their native land to the 20th-century North American metropolis. *Into Bondage* illustrates the enslavement of Africans bound for the Americas. *The Negro's Gift to America* featured an allegory of Labor as the holder of the key to a true understanding of Africans in the New World. *Aspiration* concluded the cycle by calling attention to the liberating promise of African American education and industry. A fourth canvas portrayed Estevanico, a Moroccan slave who accompanied the Spanish explorer Cabeza de Vaca on his expedition through Texas.[4]

Like Douglas's other murals of the same period, such as *Aspects of Negro Life* [fig. 4], created for the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library in 1934 (now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture), the Texas centennial canvases were unified by a subdued palette, silhouetted figures, and repeated motifs that held personal meaning for the artist. In the Gallery's painting, concentric circles Douglas frequently used to suggest sound—particularly African and African American songs—radiate from a point on the horizon where slave ships await their human cargo.[5] Warm earth tones accent a palette of cooler blues and greens, just as the composition's undeniable rhythm competes with an overall timelessness. Silhouetted figures move in a steady line to the distant boats, their rust-colored shackles creating a staccato rhythm echoed by the framing foliage. Patchy brushstrokes activate the surface, imbuing the painting with a texture and liveliness that belie the static precision of crisply delineated forms.

For the pose of the central male figure, whose head is turned in profile but whose square shoulders and torso face forward, Douglas looked to Egyptian art as a source of pan-African nationalism. Similarly, the slit-eye masks made by the Dan peoples of Liberia inspired the man's narrow slash of an eye.[6] Standing on a pedestal that foreshadows the auction block from which he will be sold, he is the only figure in the composition whose shoulders rise above the horizon. The man's elevated form and uplifted head, cut across by a ray of starlight, signal eventual freedom for his race. A woman who raises her face and shackled hands to the same star, her fingers grazing the horizon, also foretells a distant future without slavery. According to Douglas, the star and ray of light, which appear in a number

of his paintings, represent the North Star and the divine light of inspiration.[7]

Douglas, a member of the Communist Party USA, may also have included this motif
as a political symbol and to advocate socialism as a means of achieving equality for

African Americans.[8]

Regardless of its specific meaning, the star's message of hope is clear. Renée Ater has shown how the Texas Centennial's Hall of Negro Life offered African Americans the opportunity to "re-articulate their racial and national identities" and "reshape historical memory." Similarly, Douglas's murals, she writes, "set out to rethink and to develop alternative narratives of black history and contemporary life that were embedded in visual references to slavery."[9] By the 1920s, historical representation and cultural expression had become important signifiers of black progress in the public spaces of American fairs, serving as "a springboard from which to educate blacks about how their rich American and pan-African heritage would assist them in charting their future."[10] Douglas's forward-looking, modernist aesthetic that paid tribute to an African past was thus a fitting visual complement to the fair building's empowering themes.

On another level, the mere existence of the murals was indebted to ongoing African American struggle. When the Texas legislature originally neglected to allocate funds to allow African Americans to be included in the centennial, African American community leaders in Dallas took it upon themselves to apply for federal money to participate. Most Dallas press coverage was enthusiastic when the Hall of Negro Life opened in 1936 on June 19, or Juneteenth, an African American holiday commemorating the end of slavery. Consistently high attendance figures at the exhibition hall, however, did not succeed in dispelling deep-seated prejudices.[11] Douglas's paintings so impressed white fairgoers that they refused to believe that an African American artist had made them. To help persuade incredulous visitors, administrators posted a sign reading: "These murals were painted by Aaron Douglas, a Negro artist of New York City."[12]

For Douglas, the commemoration of slavery was critical to the rewriting of the history of Texas and to the acknowledgment of African American contributions to the progress of both state and nation. By doing so in a public mural, Douglas was able to reach hundreds of thousands of viewers and, at the same time, proclaim the centrality of African Americans within modern American visual traditions.

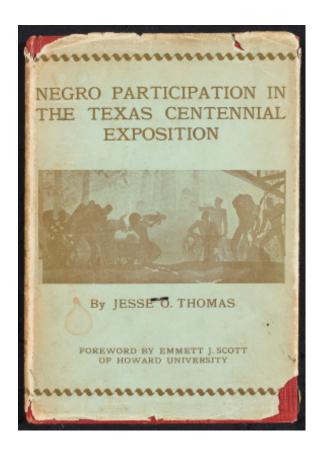
Jennifer Wingate

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



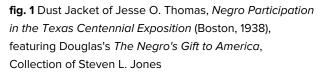




fig. 2 Aaron Douglas, Aspiration, 1936, oil on canvas, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco



**fig. 3** Texas Centennial Exhibit, Hall of Negro Life, 1936, photograph, US National Archives



fig. 4 Aaron Douglas, Aspects of Negro Life: The Negro in an African Setting, 1934, oil on canvas, The New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Art and Artifacts Division. © The New York Public Library

#### NOTES

- [1] This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in *Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011).
- [2] Langston Hughes, "The Negro and the Racial Mountain," *Nation* 122 (June 1926): 692–694.
- [3] Jesse O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition (Boston, 1938), 25.
- [4] Jesse O. Thomas, Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition (Boston, 1938), provides a description of all four canvases in the cycle, along with an interpretation by the Hall of Negro Life curator, Alonzo J. Aden. For a discussion of Aspiration, see Timothy Anglin Burgard, "Aspiration," in Masterworks of American Painting at the De Young, ed. Timothy Anglin Burgard (San Francisco, 2005), 342.
- [5] Renée Ater, "Creating a 'Usable Past' and a 'Future Perfect Society': Aaron Douglas's Murals for the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition," in *Aaron*

Douglas: African American Modernist, ed. Susan Earle (New Haven, 2007), 107. According to Susan Earle ("Harlem, Modernism and Beyond: Aaron Douglas and His Role in Art/History," in ibid., 31), the circles also contribute to a layered effect that recalls surrealist and art deco fragmentation of form, as well as double exposure photography from the interwar period. The art historian David Driskell has interpreted the circles as the global transmission of black culture by way of radio waves. Driskell, interview by Robert Farris Thompson, in Black Art: Ancestral Legacy; The African Impulse in African American Art (Dallas, 1989), 136.

- [6] Renée Ater, "Creating a 'Usable Past' and a 'Future Perfect Society': Aaron Douglas's Murals for the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition," in *Aaron* Douglas: African American Modernist, ed. Susan Earle (New Haven, 2007), 106.
- [7] Renée Ater, "Creating a 'Usable Past' and a 'Future Perfect Society': Aaron Douglas's Murals for the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition," in *Aaron* Douglas: African American Modernist, ed. Susan Earle (New Haven, 2007), 106–107.
- [8] See Amy Helene Kirschke, "The Depression Murals of Aaron Douglas: Radical Politics and African American Art," *International Review of African American Art* 12, no. 4 (1995): 26.
- [9] Renée Ater, "Creating a 'Usable Past' and a 'Future Perfect Society': Aaron Douglas's Murals for the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition," in *Aaron* Douglas: African American Modernist, ed. Susan Earle (New Haven, 2007), 95, 98.
- [10] Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley, 2012): 170, 188.
- [11] Though much newspaper coverage of the Hall of Negro Life was positive in a general way, both Ater and Burgard cite many examples of headlines that reflect the racial prejudices of the period. Timothy Anglin Burgard, "Aspiration," in *Masterworks of American Painting at the De Young*, ed. Timothy Anglin Burgard (San Francisco, 2005), 535 n. 9, also notes that the Hall of Negro Life was the only building destroyed before the fair reopened the following year as the Greater Texas and Pan American Exposition. Renée Ater, "Creating a 'Usable Past' and a 'Future Perfect Society': Aaron Douglas's Murals for the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition," in *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, ed. Susan Earle (New Haven, 2007), 104–5, 111; see also Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley, 2012):122.
- [12] Jesse O. Thomas, *Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial Exposition* (Boston, 1938), 27.



TECHNICAL SUMMARY

### The painting is executed on a plain-weave, lightweight fabric mounted on a modern replacement, expansion bolt stretcher with no crossbars. The oil type paint was applied over a pre-primed, smooth, opaque, cream-colored ground.[1] Graphite underdrawing is readily visible through the thin paint layer. It appears that Douglas fully outlined the design before painting using a straight edge and some sort of compass or template for the geometric shapes. Other design elements seem to be drawn freehand. Underdrawing is most visible in areas where Douglas did not follow his outline exactly when he applied the paint. The infrared examination confirms the extent of Douglas's underdrawing.[2] The x-radiograph shows no significant artist changes, which is to be expected considering the meticulous planning evidenced by the underdrawing. Douglas used a thin fluid paint that was sometimes so liquid that small downward drips occurred. There is no modeling of forms. Instead, Douglas created interest within the flat shapes by varying his paint application. Sometimes it was thin and transparent, sometimes it was applied with active brushstrokes showing areas of the ground beneath, and sometimes it was applied with textured impasto. There are many inclusions, such as fibers, brush hairs, and lint in the paint.

Renee Ater states that the painting was made on-site at the Texas Centennial hall for which it was commissioned, and this is supported by physical evidence.[3] Around the periphery of the painting there is a 7/8-inch-wide strip in which there are multiple nail holes and the design elements are a different color than in the rest of the painting. This probably indicates that the painting was executed on a fabric mounted directly to the wall, and then wooden strips were affixed over the edges to serve as a frame. The painting's first known conservation treatment was executed by Quentin Rankin in 1987.[4] According to his report, he received the painting stretched on a flimsy seven-member stretcher and the canvas had several tears in it. These tears were found in the proper left leg of the foreground male figure, just above the chain, above the inner tip of the lower palm frond at the lower right edge, on the bottom edge of the same palm frond and below it onto the blue background, at the lower left near the base of the wide frond that touches the foreground women's head and goes through the plant with smaller foliage as well, and at the top left in the dark purple brown foliage in the second leaf from the top. When the painting arrived in Rankin's studio it was also defaced with scratches,

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impact cracks, grime, and pencil graffiti. The conservator cleaned the grime layer from the painting, lined it onto an auxiliary support using Beva adhesive, and mounted the painting on its new stretcher at a slightly larger dimension. Finally, he filled and inpainted the tears and losses, including some of the graffiti, and varnished the painting with a synthetic resin, even though there was no indication that the artist had ever varnished the painting. In a recent treatment in 2016, Gallery conservator Jay Krueger removed this varnish and inpainting, applied new retouching, and left the painting unvarnished as had presumably been intended by Douglas.[5] In both treatments it was impossible to remove the pencil graffiti.

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

- [1] The priming extends over the intact tacking margins, indicating that the ground was commercially applied. The preserved tacking margins show that the current dimensions are very close to original.
- [2] The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with a J astronomy filter.
- [3] Susan Earle, ed., Aaron Douglas: African Modernist (New Haven, 2007), 105.
- [4] Quentin Rankin was a conservator for the Smithsonian Museums at that time; he also had a thriving private practice in Washington, DC. Conservation report in NGA conservation files. Later, Dare Hartwell prepared a comprehensive technical summary for Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011). A copy of this summary is also available in NGA conservation files.
- [5] Report in NGA conservation files.

#### **PROVENANCE**

Commissioned 1936 for the Hall of Negro Life, Texas Centennial Exposition, Dallas;[1] possibly Wiley College, Marshall, Texas.[2] Joseph Mack; sold to Thurlow Evans Tibbs, Jr. [1952-1997], Washington, by 1987;[3] by gift and partial purchase 1996 to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.

[1] A letter from Jesse O. Thomas and Alonzo J. Aden (General Manager and

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Curator of Exhibitions, respectively, of the Hall of Negro Life) to Aaron Douglas, dated 5 July 1936, hints that the Harmon Foundation gave financial support for the commission; copy in NGA curatorial files, and the Evans-Tibbs Collection, Vertical Files, NGA Library.

[2] According to Hilda Stewart Proctor, "The Aaron Douglasses Celebrate 25th Year," clipping from an unidentified newspaper, about 18 August 1951; copy in NGA curatorial files, and the Evans-Tibbs Collection, Vertical Files, NGA Library.

[3] In a Condition and Treatment Report for the painting, prepared by Quentin Rankin (3 April 1987, Corcoran conservation records, in NGA Painting Conservation Department), Thurlow Evans Tibbs Jr. is specified as the owner.

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1936 Texas Centennial Exposition, Lobby of the Hall of Negro Life, Dallas, 6 June - 29 November 1936, no catalogue.

1989 Black Art, Ancestral Legacy: The African Impulse in African-American Art, Dallas Museum of Art; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Milwaukee Art Museum; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, 3 December 1989 - 24 March 1991, unnumbered checklist.

1996 The Evans-Tibbs Collection: Prints, Drawings and Photographs by African-American Artistis, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 6 December 1996 - 6 January 1997, no catalogue.

1997 Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance, Hayward Gallery, London; Arnolfini, Bristol; Mead Gallery, University of Warwick, Coventry; M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 19 June 1997 - 14 February 1999, no. 19.

1999 Celebrating the Legacy: African American Art from the Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 30 July - 22 September 1999, no catalogue.

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2007 Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist, Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence; Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington; Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, 8 September 2007 - 30 November 2008, unnumbered catalogue.

2009 American Paintings from the Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 6 June - 18 October 2009, unpublished checklist.

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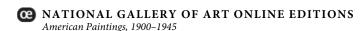
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Aaron Douglas American, 1899 - 1979

# The Judgment Day

1939

oil on tempered hardboard

overall:  $121.92 \times 91.44$  cm ( $48 \times 36$  in.) Inscription: lower right: A. Douglas '39

Patrons' Permanent Fund, The Avalon Fund 2014.135.1

#### **ENTRY**

Aaron Douglas spent his formative years in the Midwest. Born and raised in Topeka, Kansas, he attended a segregated elementary school and an integrated high school before entering the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In 1922 he graduated with a bachelor's degree in fine arts, and the following year he accepted a teaching position at Lincoln High School, an elite black institution in Kansas City. Word of Douglas's talent and ambition soon reached influential figures in New York including Charles Spurgeon Johnson (1893–1956), one of the founders of the New Negro movement.[1] Johnson instructed his secretary, Ethel Nance, to write to the young artist encouraging him to come east ("Better to be a dishwasher in New York than to be head of a high school in Kansas City").[2] In the spring of 1925, after two years of teaching, Douglas resigned his position and began the journey that would place him at the center of the burgeoning cultural movement later known as the Harlem Renaissance.[3]

Douglas arrived in New York three months after an important periodical, *Survey Graphic*, published a special issue titled *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro*.[4] A landmark publication, the issue included articles by key members of the New Negro movement: Charles S. Johnson, W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963), Alain Locke (1885–1954), and James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938). The special issue also included a number of illustrations by German émigré artist Fritz Winold Reiss (American, 1888 - 1953).[5] Introduced to Reiss by Charles S. Johnson shortly after his arrival, Douglas quickly found in him an artistic mentor. Reiss offered the young artist a two-year fellowship to study at his School of Art as well as weekly critiques of his work until the fall term began in September 1925.

Prompted by the overwhelmingly positive response to the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic*, editor Alain Locke published an expanded version several months later under a new title: *The New Negro: An Interpretation*.[6] Again, numerous illustrations by Reiss were included as well as several "drawings and decorative designs" by Douglas, Reiss's new student. Later described as the "bible" of the Harlem Renaissance, *The New Negro* was a breakthrough publication for Douglas. Commissions for book and journal illustrations soon followed. Within months of arriving in Harlem, Douglas had met the key figures of the New Negro movement, found an artistic mentor, contributed to a major publication, and begun to forge a signature style. It was a remarkable debut.

Among the most important of Douglas's new contacts was James Weldon Johnson, a prominent novelist, poet, lyricist, and political activist who contributed an essay ("The Making of Harlem") to the Harlem issue of Survey Graphic as well as a poem ("The Creation") to The New Negro.[7] Johnson had composed and published the poem several years earlier, but he would soon recast the piece as the introductory "sermon-poem" in his masterwork, God's Trombones: Seven Sermons in Verse, published in 1927. In a later autobiography, Johnson recounted the event that had inspired God's Trombones. In 1918, while traveling as field secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), he had been asked to speak during an evening service at a black church in Kansas City.[8] A celebrated black evangelist, famous for his oratorical skills, was the featured speaker. The hour was late and when the preacher began speaking from a formal text, his audience started drifting toward sleep. Aware that he was losing the congregation, the preacher "slammed the Bible shut, stepped out from behind the pulpit" and began to deliver, indeed to perform, a traditional Negro folk sermon. As Johnson recalled, "He was free, at ease, and the complete master of himself and his hearers. . . . He strode the pulpit up and down, and brought into play the full gamut of a voice that excited my envy. He intoned, he moaned, he pleaded—he blared, he crashed, he thundered."[9] Enormously impressed by what he had witnessed, Johnson made notes on the spot, but he did not translate the experience into a poem until later. "The Creation," the first of the sermon-poems Johnson would eventually compose, was written in 1918 and published independently as early as January 1920 in Freeman and later in The New Negro (1925). During the winter months of 1926–1927, Johnson completed the six additional poems and introductory prayer that would become God's Trombones [10].

Initially inspired by a gifted preacher's performance in Kansas City, Johnson also drew on his own memories of southern church services and on his skills as a songwriter to translate into verse not only the biblical parables that served as the subjects of the sermons, but also the passion with which they were delivered—the rhythm and cadence of the inspirational language. Identifying black preachers as God's instruments on earth (God's trombones) and their impassioned sermons as an art form, Johnson celebrated a key element of traditional black culture.[11] Upon publication, *God's Trombones* attracted considerable attention not only for Johnson's uniquely original verse, but also for the bold illustrations that Aaron Douglas created to accompany the poems.

Impressed by Aaron Douglas's early illustrations in *Opportunity*, the National Union League's monthly journal, Johnson invited the young artist to create visual counterparts for his sermon-poems. Douglas embraced the opportunity and produced eight strikingly modern compositions [fig. 1] [fig. 2] [fig. 3] [fig. 4] [fig. 5] [fig. 6] [fig. 7] [fig. 8] that were immediately recognized as the visual equivalent of equally important contemporary breakthroughs in African American literature, music, and theater. Reviewing *God's Trombones* for *The Crisis*, the monthly publication of the NAACP, editor W. E. B. Du Bois declared that it "blazes a new path toward the preservation of the Negro idiom in art." He concluded his review by praising Douglas's illustrations as "wild with beauty, unconventional, daringly and yet effectively done."[12]

Among the most dramatic of these illustrations was the image Douglas created for "The Judgment Day," the final poem in Johnson's series.[13] In a preliminary study in gouache [fig. 9], Douglas arranged the key compositional elements. At the center is God's messenger, a powerful black Gabriel, standing astride earth and sea. With the key to heaven in one hand and a trumpet in the other, the archangel summons the living and the dead to judgment. Concentric bands of color mimic the sound of Gabriel's horn.[14] A beam of light and a bolt of lightning direct the viewer's attention to silhouetted figures rising to Gabriel's call.[15]

Douglas's use of a flat, angular, and fractured style (echoing art deco and cubist innovations) reflects the counsel of both Alain Locke and Winold Reiss, who were acutely aware of works by European modernists inspired by African art. Eager to encourage the development of a new visual aesthetic for the New Negro, Locke and Reiss urged Douglas to study the ancestral roots of black America. African sculpture, for example, could be seen at the American Museum of Natural History,

the Brooklyn Museum, and in Merion, Pennsylvania, at the home of collector and art patron Albert C. Barnes.[16] In Barnes's home, the African/modernist link was physically reflected in the installation, with modernist paintings hung side by side with African objects.

As Douglas worked to forge both a personal style and one that would serve the aspirational mandate of his mentors, he drew inspiration from multiple sources. Among the most important of these was Egyptian art. Howard Carter's 1922 discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb had brought increased attention to the distinctive figural style of Egyptian wall painting. Douglas's incorporation of pictorial elements with Egyptian roots is clearly evident in the figure of Gabriel in *The Judgment Day*: the archangel's head is seen in profile, his torso from the front. Perhaps the key component of Douglas's emerging style was his adoption of the abstract and reductive graphic technique favored by Reiss, which included the abandonment of any illusion of three-dimensional space and the use of abstract, hard-edged pictorial elements. Douglas's embrace of Reiss's abstract geometry did not, however, preclude his use of narrative, whether historical, political, or biblical.

James Weldon Johnson was 56 and a distinguished author when he invited Douglas to illustrate *God's Trombones*. Douglas was 28 and still learning his craft. The collaboration resulted in Johnson's most celebrated publication and the emergence of Douglas's signature style. Deftly weaving elements drawn from his study of African sculptural objects, cubist and precisionist paintings, Egyptian wall paintings, art deco geometry, and abstract graphic design, Douglas created a distinctive visual vocabulary.

For reasons that remain unclear, and over a period of more than a decade, Douglas translated the small illustrations (approximately 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 6 inches) that he had created for *God's Trombones* into large easel paintings (approximately 48 x 36 inches). Not all the paintings are dated, but *The Judgment Day*, the last in the series, is inscribed '39.[17] Freed from the limited palette of the 1927 illustrations, Douglas employed a broad range of colors in the enlarged paintings. For *The Judgment Day*, he chose tonal variants of green, yellow, and lavender. The compositional elements of the original gouache (see comp fig), created more than a dozen years earlier, remain relatively unchanged. The expanded format and the addition of color, however, allowed Douglas to amplify a key element present in the original illustration but substantially enhanced in the larger painting: sound.

In his poems—his "sermons in verse"—James Weldon Johnson mimicked the rhythm and cadence of black preachers fully engaged in the dynamic call-and-response form of traditional folk sermons. This pattern is particularly evident in the "The Judgment Day." The narrative begins with God calling to Gabriel, charging him, in turn, to call the living and the dead to judgment by sounding his horn. When Gabriel asks how hard he should blow his horn, God responds, "Blow it calm and easy," establishing the call-and-response structure of the poem. As the poem progresses, the preacher assumes the role of questioner, asking the members of the congregation where they will stand on "that day." The aural quality of the poem is unmistakable. As the chosen illustrator of *God's Trombones*, Aaron Douglas was challenged with creating the visual equivalent of a poem filled with sound.

Even within the limited tonal range available in the 1927 publication, Douglas's illustration for "The Judgment Day" pulses with sound and energy. The full force of his design, however, is even more evident in the later painting, in which he enlarged the image and recast the composition elements in vibrant shades of green, yellow, and lavender. Sound—the sound of Gabriel's trumpet—is the stimulus that sets the composition in motion. Concentric circles of energized color simulate the waves of sound streaming from Gabriel's horn. The living and the dead rise to the call. Lightning strikes, thunder rolls—deafening dissonant sounds mark the end of the world.

In *The Judgment Day*, Douglas revisited an image he had created not long after arriving in Harlem in 1925. As a young artist, he had skillfully mixed disparate artistic influences with bold experimentation to create a distinctive personal style that also answered the call for a new visual aesthetic reflecting the ambitious cultural, social, and political aspirations of a generation of African Americans. Returning to the original image more than a decade later, Douglas enlarged the scale of the composition, added the dynamic interplay of color, and created an image as rhythmic and powerful as the sermons of the black preachers celebrated in *God's Trombones*.

Nancy Anderson

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**







fig. 2 Aaron Douglas, "The Creation," from James Weldon Johnson, God's Trombones (New York, 1927), 16, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington



**fig. 3** Aaron Douglas, "The Prodigal Son," from James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones* (New York, 1927), 20, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington



**fig. 4** Aaron Douglas, "Go Down Death: A Funeral Sermon," from James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones* (New York, 1927), 26, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington



**fig. 5** Aaron Douglas, "Noah Built the Ark," from James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones* (New York, 1927), 30, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington



**fig. 6** Aaron Douglas, "The Crucifixion," from James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones* (New York, 1927), 38, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington



**fig. 7** Aaron Douglas, "Let My People Go," from James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones* (New York, 1927), 44, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington



**fig. 8** Aaron Douglas, "The Judgment Day," from James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones* (New York, 1927), 52, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington



**fig. 9** Aaron Douglas, *The Judgment Day*, 1927, gouache on paper, Courtesy of the SCAD Museum of Art, Permanent Collection, Gift of Dr. Walter O. Evans and Mrs. Linda J. Evans

#### **NOTES**

- [1] The term "New Negro" dates from the late 1890s but gained wide currency during the first three decades of the 20th century, when Alain Locke and other progressive activists encouraged an assertive push for civil rights and a concerted effort to replace the stereotype of the shuffling, servile "Old Negro" with a self-confident and proud "New Negro" whose cultural and political achievements would signal a new era for African Americans. See Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Gene Andrew Jarrett, eds., *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture,* 1892–1938 (Princeton, NJ, 2007).
- [2] Quoted in David Levering Lewis, When Harlem Was in Vogue (New York,

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1979), 96–97. Ethel Nance worked as executive secretary for the Kansas City chapter of the National Urban League during the early 1920s. She moved to New York in 1924 to become Charles S. Johnson's executive secretary. Nance met Aaron Douglas while working in Kansas City and owned several examples of his work.

- [3] A detailed chronology compiled by Stephanie Fox Knappe documenting Aaron Douglas's life and career is included in Susan Earle, ed., *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist* (New Haven, 2007), 206–234. Valuable information and analysis may also be found in Amy Helene Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race, and the Harlem Renaissance* (Jackson, MS, 1995).
- [4] A facsimile of the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic* (March 1925) was published by Black Classic Press, Baltimore, Maryland, in 1980.
- [5] Winold Reiss trained as an artist and graphic designer in Germany before immigrating to America in 1913. A student of Franz von Stuck, one of the founders of the Munich Secession, Reiss arrived in America with an interest in documenting ethnic types—initially Native Americans in the far West. His illustrations for the Harlem issue of Survey Graphic reflect his later interest in African Americans. In 1916 he opened the Winold Reiss School of Art in New York.
- [6] A reprint of *The New Negro*, with an introduction by Arnold Rampersad, was published as a Touchstone book by Simon and Schuster in 1997.
- Johnson's essay was retitled "Harlem: The Culture Capital" in the 1997 reprint of The New Negro. James Weldon Johnson was born in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1871. Like Douglas, he had entered the teaching profession following college graduation. When a disastrous fire destroyed the school where he served as principal, Johnson and his brother, John Rosamond Johnson (1873–1954), traveled to New York, where they became a successful songwriting team. As collaborators, the Johnson brothers composed the lyrics and music for "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the song that later became known as the "Negro national anthem." Although successful as a songwriter and as a member of a vocal trio, Johnson grew weary of constant travel. When offered an opportunity to serve in the diplomatic corps, he gave up his life as an entertainer and accepted consular positions in Venezuela and Nicaragua. It was during this period that he finished writing The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man, a novel he had begun while living in New York. Published anonymously in 1912, the novel attracted little notice. Republished 15 years later, with Johnson identified as the author, the book garnered critical praise and brisk sales. In the interim, Johnson had become an influential leader of the NAACP and the editor of several important and well-received books: The Book of American Negro Poetry (1922), The Book of American Negro Spirituals (1925), and The

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Second Book of American Negro Spirituals (1926). The most celebrated of Johnson's publications, however, was the much smaller but enormously influential collection of his own poems God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse (1927).

- [8] Johnson served as national field secretary for the NAACP from 1916 until 1920 when he became executive secretary, a position he held until 1930.
- [9] Along This Way, Johnson's autobiography, was published in 1933. The full text is included in *James Weldon Johnson: Writings* (Library of America, 2004), 503–504.
- [10] James Weldon Johnson, Along This Way (Library of America), 554–555.
  Johnson titled the poems in God's Trombones "Listen, Lord—A Prayer,"
  "The Creation," "The Prodigal Son," "Go Down Death—A Funeral Sermon,"
  "Noah Built the Ark," "The Crucifixion," "Let My People Go," and "The Judgment Day."
- [11] In the preface to God's Trombones, Johnson notes that much had been written about "the folk creations of the American Negro" (music, dance, and stories born of slavery), but that the "folk sermons" Johnson viewed as equally creative and important had not received equal attention. Describing the "old-time Negro preacher" as an important cultural figure, Johnson wrote: "It was through him that the people of diverse languages and customs who were brought here from diverse parts of Africa and thrown into slavery were given their first sense of unity and solidarity. He was the first shepherd of this bewildered flock. His power for good or ill was very great. It was the old-time preacher who for generations was the mainspring of hope and inspiration for the Negro American." Later in the preface Johnson describes the trombone as "the instrument possessing above all others the power to express the wide and varied range of emotions encompassed by the human voice—and with greater amplitude." James Weldon Johnson: Writings (Library of America, 2004), 835, 838.
- [12] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Browsing Reader," The Crisis (July 1927): 159.
- [13] "The Judgment Day"

In that great day,

People, in that great day,

God's a-going to rain down fire.

God's a-going to sit in the middle of the air

To judge the quick and the dead.

Early one of these mornings,

God's a-going to call for Gabriel,

That tall, bright angel, Gabriel;

And God's a-going to say to him: Gabriel,

Blow your silver trumpet,

And wake the living nations.

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And Gabriel's going to ask him: Lord,

How loud must I blow it?

And God's a-going to tell him: Gabriel,

Blow it calm and easy.

Then putting one foot on the mountain top,

And the other in the middle of the sea,

Gabriel's going to stand and blow his horn,

To wake the living nations.

Then God's a-going to say to him: Gabriel,

Once more blow your silver trumpet,

And wake the nations underground.

And Gabriel's going to ask him: Lord

How loud must I blow it?

And God's a-going to tell him: Gabriel,

Like seven peals of thunder.

Then the tall, bright angel, Gabriel,

Will put one foot on the battlements of heaven

And the other on the steps of hell,

And blow that silver trumpet

Till he shakes old hell's foundations.

And I feel the Old Earth a-shuddering—

And I see the graves a-bursting—

And I hear a sound,

A blood-chilling sound.

What sound is that I hear?

It's the clicking together of the dry bones,

Bone to bone—the dry bones.

And I see coming out of the bursting graves,

And marching up from the valley of death,

The army of the dead.

And the living and the dead in the twinkling of an eye

Are caught up in the middle of the air,

Before God's judgment bar.

Oh-o-oh, sinner,

Where will you stand,

In that great day when God's a-going to rain down fire?

Oh, you gambling man—where will you stand?

Liars and backsliders—where will you stand,

In that great day when God's a-going to rain down fire?

And God will divide the sheep from the goats,

The one on the right, the other on the left.

And to them on the right God's a-going to say:

Enter into my kingdom.

And those who've come through great tribulations,

And washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb,

They will enter in—

Clothed in spotless white,

With starry crowns upon their heads,

And silver slippers on their feet,

And harps within their hands;--

And two by two they'll walk

Up and down the golden street,

Feasting on the milk and honey

Singing new songs of Zion,

Chattering with the angels

All around the Great White Throne.

And to them on the left God's a-going to say:

Depart from me into everlasting darkness,

Down into the bottomless pit.

And the wicked like lumps of lead will start to fall,

Headlong for seven days and nights they'll fall,

Plumb into the big, black, red-hot mouth of hell,

Belching out fire and brimstone.

And their cries like howling, yelping dogs,

Will go up with the fire and smoke from hell,

But God will stop his ears.

Too late, sinner! Too late!

Good-bye, sinner! Good-bye!

In hell, sinner! In hell!

Beyond the reach of the love of God.

And I hear a voice, crying, crying:

Time shall be no more!

Time shall be no more!

Time shall be no more!

And the sun will go out like a candle in the wind,

The moon will turn to dripping blood,

The stars will fall like cinders,

And the sea will burn like tar;

And the earth shall melt away and be dissolved,

And the sky will roll up like a scroll.

With a wave of his hand God will blot out time,

And start the wheel of eternity.

Sinner, oh, sinner,

Where will you stand

In that great day when God's a-going to rain down fire?

[14] The sermon-poems in *God's Trombones* include frequent references to traditional Negro spirituals. Three of these, "In Dat Great Getting'-up Mornin'," "Blow Gabe Blow," and "Blow Your Trumpet, Gabriel," are songs

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about Judgment Day and are echoed in Johnson's poem "The Judgment Day."

- [15] Douglas's illustration for "The Judgment Day" also served as the cover image for the book *God's Trombones: Seven Sermons in Verse.*
- [16] In 1928, Douglas received a fellowship to study Barnes's collection of modern and African art in Merion.
- [17] Other paintings in the series are Listen Lord—A Prayer and The Creation, owned by Howard University; Go Down Death—A Funeral Sermon in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art; Noah Built the Ark at Fisk University; The Crucifixion, privately owned; and Let My People Go, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Another of the large-scale paintings, The Prodigal Son, has not been located. A related work, also called The Prodigal Son, is in the collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on the textured side of a 1/4-inch-thick piece of tempered hardboard. The oil paint is layered on top of a brush-applied white priming layer. The priming remains intermittently visible along the edges of the painting support, indicating that it was probably applied by the artist. The painted design extends to the top and bottom edges of the support, but a full quarter inch on both the left and right sides is left unfinished; in these areas Douglas's paint application process can be discerned. Intermittent lines of chrome green applied against a straight edge are found in these unfinished areas and give the only visible evidence of a drawing. Infrared examination reveals that these same lines extend into the painting along with an extensive drawing that delineates all the major compositional elements. The x-radiograph shows no significant artist's changes, which comes as no surprise given the comprehensive planning exhibited by the drawing. The pastelike paint varies from smoothly applied passages of nominal thickness that don't conceal the texture of the panel to vigorous, low-relief impasto. A thick, discolored natural resin varnish and other disfiguring stains were removed in a 2015 conservation treatment and the painting was left unvarnished. Additionally, small areas of loss around the edges, along with a 2.5-inch-long scratch in the upper right corner, were filled and inpainted in the course of this treatment.

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#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1899-1979]. Grace Jones, Nashville, in 1976;[1] sold 1978 to Leonard and Paula Granoff, Providence; purchased 6 November 2014 by NGA.

[1] Jones is listed as lender of the painting in the catalogue for the exhibition Two Centuries of Black American Art, that travelled to four venues from 1976 to 1977.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1976 Two Centuries of Black American Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas; Brooklyn Museum, 1976-1977, no. 99, repro.

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Alfred Stieglitz, *Arthur Dove*, 1912, platinum print, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection

# Dove, Arthur Also known as Dove, Arthur Garfield American, 1880 - 1946

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Arthur Garfield Dove was born in Canandaigua in the Finger Lakes region of New York on August 2, 1880, and was raised in nearby Geneva. His father, a brickyard owner and building contractor, named him after the Republican presidential and vice presidential candidates in the election that year, James Garfield and Chester Arthur. He became interested in art at an early age, and was encouraged by a neighbor who was a naturalist and amateur painter. Dove's father wanted him to become a lawyer, but after graduating from Cornell University in 1903 he moved to New York City and worked as a freelance magazine illustrator. In 1904 he married Florence Dorsey, a woman from Geneva. Dove went on an extended trip to Europe from 1907 to 1909. In Paris he befriended Alfred H. Maurer (American, 1868 - 1932), who introduced him to prominent European modernists. Dove also exhibited impressionist and fauve works at the Salon d'Automne. He returned to New York in 1910 and began to experiment with abstraction, "extracting" his forms from the external world. Dove entered the circle of Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946) and in 1912 exhibited a series of nonobjective pastels at Stieglitz's 291 gallery, thus becoming the first 20th-century American artist to make purely abstract paintings, a practice he continued throughout his career.

Dove's innovative works baffled the American public and he struggled financially.

His attempt to run a farm in Westport, Connecticut, took up a considerable amount of his time. He exhibited at the Forum Gallery show in 1916 and at the Society of

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Independent Artists in 1917. Dove's marriage disintegrated in 1920, and after the death of his first wife in 1929, he married his longtime companion, the artist Helen "Reds" Torr, with whom he had lived for seven years on a 42-foot yawl sailing around Long Island Sound.

Dove produced meticulously crafted collages and assemblages made of various materials and found objects from 1924 to 1930. In 1926 he met the noted collector and champion of modernism Duncan Phillips, who became his main patron and supported him during the Great Depression. Dove inherited his father's debtridden estate in 1933 and moved to Geneva, where he tried to make a living as a farmer. In 1938, poor health forced him to move to Centerport, on Long Island Sound. The following year he suffered a heart attack complicated by a kidney disorder and spent the remainder of his life as a semi-invalid. Dove died of a second heart attack in Huntington, Long Island, on November 22, 1946.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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- 1984 Morgan, Ann Lee. *Arthur Dove: Life and Work, With a Catalogue Raisonné*, Newark, London, and Toronto, 1984.
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2016 DeLue, Rachael Ziady. *Arthur Dove: Always Connect* Chicago and London, 2016.

Dove, Arthur 223

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Arthur Dove American, 1880 - 1946

# Moon

1935

oil on canvas

overall: 88.9 x 63.5 cm (35 x 25 in.)

framed: 94.6 x 69.2 x 5.1 cm (37 1/4 x 27 1/4 x 2 in.)

Inscription: lower center: Dove

Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth 2000.39.1

#### **ENTRY**

In the summer of 1933, after much hesitation, Arthur Dove moved back to his family home in Geneva, New York.[1] Although he felt there was "something terrible about 'Up State,'" and described the prospect of returning to his hometown as "like walking on the bottom under water," he and his wife Helen "Reds" Torr had endured grinding poverty during the early years of the Great Depression, and he knew that the struggle to survive was sapping his ability to focus on his painting.[2] With his mother's death earlier in the year, in Geneva Dove and Reds could live for free on the family property, farm and forage for food, and hope that his paintings would at least pay for more materials.

Dove's years in Geneva from 1933 to 1938 would prove to be remarkably productive. Shortly before he returned, Duncan Phillips agreed to provide him with a monthly stipend in exchange for paintings.[3] Although the payments were modest and fluctuated, and the checks occasionally late, for the first time in many years Dove had a steady source of income. Gradually, as he came to see that he could perhaps survive in his old haunts, his spirits were restored and his confidence returned. By late 1934 he announced that his production was "two and a half months ahead of last year," and by the fall of 1935 he proudly told Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946) that he was feeling "better than in some years" and, judging from his watercolors made the previous summer, had "about 35 good prospects for paintings."[4]

Dove's move to Geneva also coincided with a renewed interest in painting.

Abandoning the extensive experimentation with collage that he had explored so

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fruitfully in the 1920s, he decided in February 1932 "to let go of everything and just try to make oil painting beautiful in itself with no further wish." [5] Once settled in Geneva, Dove continued these explorations by carefully examining his technique. He had always been fascinated with the materials of his art—he often ground his own pigments—and avidly read such books as Jacques Blockx's *Compendium of Painting* and Maximilian Toch's *Materials for Permanent Painting*. This interest was intensified in October 1935 when he read, as he told Stieglitz, "every inch" of Max Doerner's recently translated *Materials of the Artist*. [6] Dove was especially intrigued by Doerner's description of the use of resin oil color and resin oil color with wax, which, the author wrote, produced colors with "a misty, pleasingly dull and mat appearance, and great brightness and clarity." Dove immediately began his own experimentation with these materials. [7]

Along with *Autumn* [fig. 1], *Naples Yellow Morning* [fig. 2], and *October* [fig. 3], *Moon* was painted during the highly productive fall of 1935 and depicts a tree covering the glowing moon. Derived directly from the landscape and light of the Finger Lakes region, all four paintings are composed of earthy colors, with shades of brown, yellow, green, and red ranging in intensity from pale, muddy tones to rich, saturated hues. Like these other works from 1935, *Moon* incorporates some of the lessons Dove learned from Doerner. Painted with short, thin, almost translucent brushstrokes over underlying hues of different intensities, *Moon* has a surface that seems almost to throb with luminosity and energy. But this technique also creates the impression of an all-enveloping atmosphere—like "walking on the bottom under water," as Dove put it—where the air surrounding objects is as weighty, charged, and meaningful as the subjects themselves.

However, unlike *Autumn*, *Naples Yellow Morning*, or *October*, *Moon*, with its highly simplified composition, looks forward to works that Dove would create in Geneva in 1936 and 1937. During these years, spheres and columns, the sun, the moon, and tree trunks dominated his imagery as he sought to create a "definite rythmic [ *sic*] sense." He was not interested in "geometrical repetition," but, by using "the play or spread or swing of space [that] can only be felt through this kind of consciousness," he wanted to make his works "breathe as does the rest of nature."[8]

Like Georgia O'Keeffe (American, 1887 - 1986), Dove captured natural rhythms and explored shapes that are undeniably sexual, often phallic in form. Noting that Dove revealed "the animating forces of life," Elizabeth McCausland wrote that he "sees life as an epic drama, a great Nature myth, a fertile symbol."[9] However, like

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O'Keeffe, who greatly admired and collected his work, sexual allusions or fertility symbols were not Dove's intention. Instead, both Dove and O'Keeffe sought to construct independent aesthetic forms that were real unto themselves and would not only "breathe," as Dove wrote, but, more significantly, speak of the artists' experiences of nature. In the fall of 1935 these experiences for Dove were grounded in the glowing, exuberant, even euphoric feelings that enveloped him in the light, colors, atmosphere, and almost palpable energy of the Geneva landscape.

But Dove also strove for a more transcendent vision and to reveal the presence of the divine in the natural world. Moon, with its Redon-like, all-knowing eye and its tree that connects the terrestrial and celestial worlds, speaks both of his symbolist heritage and his then-current fascination with theosophy.[10] Yet, perhaps because of the diminutive scale of his paintings or their often charming forms, there is something homegrown about Dove's mysticism. As in Moon, while Dove's spirit strove to burst forth into the light of the heavens, his strength, nourishment, and indeed inspiration were firmly rooted in the ground.

Sarah Greenough

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Arthur Dove, *Autumn*, 1935, tempera on canvas, Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts / Art Resource, NY. © The Estate of Arthur G. Dove, courtesy Terry Dintenfass, Inc.



**fig. 2** Arthur Dove, *Naples Yellow Morning*, 1935, oil on linen, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, The Vivian O. and Meyer P. Potamkin Collection, Bequest of Vivian O. Potamkin



fig. 3 Arthur Dove, *October*, 1935, oil on canvas, Collection of the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Bebe and Crosby Kemper Collection, Gift of the R. C. Kemper Charitable Trust 1996.16. © The Estate of Arthur G. Dove, courtesy Terry Ditenfass, Inc. Image: Dan Wayne

#### **NOTES**

- [1] This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in Bruce Robertson et al., *Twentieth-Century American Art: The Ebsworth Collection* (Washington, DC, 1999).
- [2] Dove to Alfred Stieglitz, May 18, 1933, as quoted in Ann Lee Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz*, *Dear Dove* (Newark, DE, 1988), 271. See also Dove to Stieglitz, November 17, 1932 (Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz*, 253), when he wrote,

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acknowledging a check from Stieglitz: "'Whew'! That was a close shave that time. *Much!* obliged. Almost spoiled a painting yesterday, but think it will come right when I go at it a bit more cheerfully today. When you get down, your mind begins having dialogues with itself while you're working. Like trying to establish a new form. And the old form bobs out and takes a crack at you and you say—To hell with form, it is just a medium of exchange, like money,—go on painting—but you need some."

- [3] For a full discussion of the relationship between Dove and his patron Duncan Phillips, see *In the American Grain: Dove, Hartley, Marin, O'Keeffe, and Stieglitz* (Washington, DC, 1995).
- [4] Dove to Stieglitz, December 19, 1934, October 1, 1935, and October 24, 1935, in Ann Lee Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove* (Newark, DE, 1988), 322, 341, and 342.
- [5] Dove to Stieglitz, February 1, 1932, in Ann Lee Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove* (Newark, DE, 1988), 237.
- [6] Dove to Stieglitz, October 1, 1935, in Ann Lee Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove* (Newark, DE, 1988), 341. For further discussion of this issue, see ibid., 210, and Elizabeth Hutton Turner, "Going Home: Geneva, 1933–1938," in Debra Bricker Balken, *Arthur Dove: A Retrospective* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 103–105.
- [7] Elizabeth Hutton Turner, "Going Home: Geneva, 1933–1938," in Debra Bricker Balken, *Arthur Dove: A Retrospective* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 104.
- [8] Dove to Elizabeth McCausland, May 3 or 13, 1933, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Elizabeth McCausland Papers, reel 03848.
- [9] McCausland, as quoted in Arthur Dove: New and Old Paintings, 1912–1934 (New York, 1934), 2. Brochure published in conjuction with the exhibition of the same name, shown at An American Place.
- [10] See Sherrye Cohn, "Arthur Dove and Theosophy: Visions of a Transcendental Reality," *Arts* 58 (September 1983): 86–91.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The unlined painting is composed of what is estimated to be oil paint on a loosely woven fabric support.[1] The canvas was primed with a white ground after it was stretched, and the painting remains on its original four-member, key-type stretcher. The unprimed tacking margins and corner folds remain intact. Distinct cusping can be seen along all four edges, and pronounced horizontal curvature in the weave is seen in the upper third of the canvas. A palette knife or other flat tool was used to

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apply the ground. Although it is relatively smooth, ridges and tool marks are still evident in many places, and several long, arcing grooves, caused by pulling coarse particles through the soft ground, are a distinctive feature of the surface. A graphite or charcoal underdrawing is intermittently visible along the edges of the primary forms of the design. Infrared reflectography has revealed the extent of this underdrawing: two broadly concentric rings around the circular form [fig. 1] and lightly sketched lines along the edges of the brown form and the horizon. The brush-applied paint layers vary from passages of stiff, low-relief impasto to thin, translucent washes, and from medium rich to quite matte. Minute burst bubbles and reticulation in the green paint along the top edge of the painting may indicate the use of an emulsion paint that has been documented in other works by the artist. Ultraviolet examination has confirmed that the painting is unvarnished. The paint film is in excellent condition overall, with almost no cracking. There are a few retouched losses around the edges, and random lines of abrasion or burnishing are visible in several areas.

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#### **TECHNICAL COMPARATIVE FIGURES**

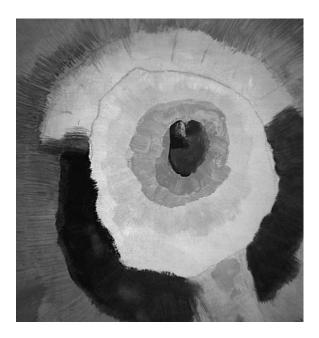


fig. 1 Detail of infrared reflectogram, Arthur Dove, Moon, 1935, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

Dove's materials can be difficult to identify because he often ground and prepared his own pigments.

#### **PROVENANCE**

Alfred Stieglitz [1864-1946], New York; (The Downtown Gallery, New York), by 1952;[1] Mr. and Mrs. Max Zurier, Los Angeles, by 1957;[2] (John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco); purchased July 1985 by Mr. and Mrs. Barney A. Ebsworth, St. Louis; gift 2000 to NGA.

[1] The Downtown Gallery lent the painting to an exhibition in Buffalo in 1952.

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[2] The Zuriers lent the painting to an exhibition in New York in 1957. They owned the painting until 1984, when it was included in an exhibition at the John Berggruen Gallery in San Francisco in which all the works exhibited were for sale.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1936 New Paintings by Arthur Dove, An American Place, New York, April-May 1936, checklist no. 16.

1936 Third Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November-December 1936, no. 11.

1941 Exhibition of New Arthur Dove Paintings, An American Place, New York, 1941, checklist no. 12.

1952 Arthur Dove, 1880-1946: Paintings, The Downtown Gallery, New York, April-May 1952, no. 9.

1952 Expressionism in American Painting, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, May-June 1952, no. 28, repro.

1954 Paintings and Watercolors by Arthur Dove, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 1954, no. 11.

1956 American Paintings in This Century, University of California at Los Angeles, November-December 1956.

1956 The American Scene, Los Angeles Municipal Gallery, April-May 1956.

1957 Ten Paintings Selected From "New Art in America," The Downtown Gallery, New York, 1957, unnumbered checklist.

1958 Arthur G. Dove Retrospective Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Phillips Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute (now McNay Art Museum), San Antonio; Art Galleries of the University of California at Los Angeles; La Jolla Art Center; San Francisco Museum of Moderm Art, 1958-1959, no. 52, repro.

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1963 Mr. and Mrs. Max Zurier Collection, Pasadena Art Museum, 1963, no. 23, repro. on cover.

1964 A View of the Century, Pasadena Art Museum, 1964, no. 47.

1974 Arthur Dove, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo; Saint Louis Art Museum; Art Institute of Chicago; Des Moines Art Center; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1974-1976, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

1976 Paintings from the Zurier Collection, La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, 1976, no catalogue.

1979 2 Jahrzehnte amerikanische Malerei 1920-1940, Städtische Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf; Kunsthaus, Zurich; Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, 1979, no. 59, repro.

1980 A Mirror of Creation: 150 Years of American Nature Painting, Braccio di Carlo Magno, The Vatican; Terra Museum of Art, Evanston, Illinois, 1980-1981, no. 43, repro.

1981 Amerikanische Malerei 1930-1980, Haus der Kunst, Munich, 1981-1982; no. 4, repro.

1984 The Zurier Collection: An Exhibition of 20th Century American and European Paintings and Works on Paper, John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, 1984, no. 12, repro.

1987 The Ebsworth Collection: American Modernism, 1911-1947, Saint Louis Art Museum; Honolulu Academy of Arts; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1987-1988, no. 21, repro.

1997 Arthur Dove: A Retrospective, Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1997-1998, no. 62, repro.

2000 Art for the Nation: Collecting for a New Century, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2000-2001, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

2000 Twentieth-Century American Art: The Ebsworth Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Seattle Art Museum, 2000, no. 17, repro.

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2009 Dove/O'Keeffe: Circles of Influence, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, 2009, pl. 58.

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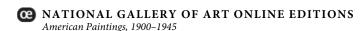
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	Century. New York, 1957: 80, repro.

- 1962 Baur, John. "Art in America: Four Centuries of Painting and Sculpture at the Galaxon New York World's Fair." *Art in America* 50, no. 3 (Fall 1962): 46, 59, repro.
- 1973 Metzger, Robert. "Biomorphism in American Painting." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1973: 62-63.
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   no. 5 (January 1984): 121-125, fig. 3.
- 1984 "Moon." Art in America 72, no. 4 (April 1984): 6, repro.
- 1984 Morgan, Ann Lee. *Arthur Dove: Life and Work, with a Catalogue Raisonné*. Newark, London, and Toronto, 1984: 57, 232-234, no. 36.8.
- 1985 Cohn, Sherrye. *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol.* Ann Arbor, 1985: 16, 35, 67-68, 76, 78, 113, 121, fig. 5, repro.
- 1997 Balken, Debra Bricker, in collaboration with William C. Agee and Elizabeth Hutton Turner. Arthur Dove: A Retrospective. Exh. cat. The Phillips Collection, Washington; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1997-1998. Andover and Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997: 29, 94, 95, 105, 119, no. 62, repro.
- 1998 Kimmelman, Michael. "Nature Stripped to Its Essence in Visionary Images." *The New York Times* (16 January 1998): E37.
- 1998 Updike, John. "Pioneer." *New York Review of Books* 45 (5 March 1998):
- 2000 Robertson, Bruce, et al. Twentieth-Century American Art: The Ebsworth Collection. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington; Seattle Art Museum. Washington, 2000: no. 17, repro.

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Balken, Debra Bricker. Dove/O'Keeffe: Circles of Influence. Exh. cat.
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Arthur Dove American, 1880 - 1946

# Space Divided by Line Motive

1943

oil on canvas

overall: 60.96 × 81.28 cm (24 × 32 in.)

framed:  $66.68 \times 86.68 \times 3.81$  cm ( $26.1/4 \times 34.1/8 \times 1.1/2$  in.)

Inscription: lower center: Dove; top center of frame reverse: ARTHUR G. DOVE / care of ALFRED SEIEGLITZ / 509 MADISON AVE., (Rm. 1710) New York; top of frame reverse in black crayon: 1944, SPACE DIVIDED BY LINE MOTIF Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase, William A. Clark Fund) 2014.136.105

#### **ENTRY**

Arthur Dove belonged to a pioneering group of artists whose increasingly abstract style radically changed the course of American art.[1] The son of a brick manufacturer, he received his first art instruction from an amateur painter near his family's home in Geneva, New York, before graduating from Cornell University, where he studied law and took an occasional art class. After working for four years in New York City as an illustrator for such popular periodicals as *Harper's Weekly* and *Scribner's Magazine*, Dove traveled to Europe, where his works were included in the progressive 1908 and 1909 Salon d'Automne exhibitions in Paris and where he studied the work of the impressionists and the fauves, notably Henri Matisse. When he returned to the United States in 1909, Dove supplemented his income through farming and fishing and often tied his images to the land and sea, calling them "extractions" from nature.[2] He became a protégé of the influential promoter of modern art Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946), who included Dove's work in a group show at his 291 gallery (named for its Fifth Avenue address) in 1910–1911 and gave the artist his first solo show in 1912.

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Space Divided by Line Motive is one of a group of paintings from the early 1940s that mark a transformation in Dove's work toward greater abstraction, a trend that continued until his death in 1946.[3] This shift followed major changes in the artist's life: in early 1938 he moved with his wife, Reds (the artist Helen Torr), to a home on Long Island Sound, and afterward he suffered debilitating health problems. Despite his impaired health, he continued to paint and embraced the broad move, by European and American artists alike, toward a universal language of abstraction that occurred in the late 1930s and early 1940s.[4] In fact, Dove was a pioneer of abstraction and has often been cited as the first artist of any nationality to make a nonrepresentational painting. As Debra Bricker Balken notes, "Dove's abstract paintings of 1910/11 and 1912 . . . seem to parallel if not predate by maybe a year the production of Kandinsky's Improvisations, generally touted as the first European paintings to dispense totally with figuration."[5]

In late 1942 Dove's work became consistently nonrepresentational, as the artist noted in a December diary entry: "Made abstract painting." [6] Created just 10 months later, Space Divided by Line Motive is characteristic of the artist's output from 1942 to 1944, when his lifelong experimentation with line, color, composition, and medium culminated in paintings devoid of representational subject matter and focused almost exclusively on formal concerns. Large, interlocking planes of opaque, saturated color-13 in total, ranging from bright red and blue to olive green, ocher, and brownish plum-animate and unite the composition. While most of the shapes are unmodulated, four are flecked with small dots of contrasting hues. The active design flows, in three triangular sections, from the lower left to the upper right; these sections, in turn, are cut by three shapes reaching from upper left to lower center. As Dove describes in his title—an unromantic, nonreferential moniker typical of this period—space is divided by lines that are by turns straight, slightly undulating, curvy, and jagged.[7] He references the painting's design in his diary entries, too, which evolve from "Division of Space . . . with motif lines" (October 10) to "space division" (October 12 and 13) to his proclamation that he had "Finished Space divided with line motif" (October 16).[8] The resulting image manifests Dove's increasing interest not only in abstraction but also in the specific idea of spatial planes and their interaction. The overall positive-negative effect of the design conveys a strong sense of movement across the canvas's surface, as if to suggest a seismic shifting of tectonic plates.[9] Other diary entries of this period also hint at this interest: on August 12, 1939, he wrote about painting "not static planes in space not form but formation. To set planes in motion."[10]

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The high-keyed palette Dove employed in *Space Divided by Line Motive* is also evidence of the change in his art during this pivotal period. It diverges from the more naturalistic and subtly modeled hues he had used earlier in his career and shows him to be a master colorist, a characterization also noted by contemporary critics, such as the *New York Sun*'s Henry McBride, who remarked that the artist was "the best colorist among American abstractionists."[11] Moreover, the artist's application of broad, clear planes of flat, opaque color in the Gallery's painting demonstrates his interest in the precise placement of specific colors at this time. In December 1942, Dove recorded his aim of "getting down one shape and one color at a time, as directly and clearly as possible," and wrote of being "[f ]ree from all motifs etc just put down one color after another."[12] The uniform intensity of the colors also has the effect of asserting the two-dimensionality of the picture plane; none appears to advance or recede. As the artist stated: "Pure painting has the tendency to make one feel the two-dimensionality of the canvas, a certain flatness which is so important in the balance of things and often so difficult to attain."[13]

When *Space Divided by Line Motive* was first exhibited in the artist's 1944 one-man show at Stieglitz's American Place gallery, it was not singled out for mention, although critics responded quite positively to the display and took note of the changes in Dove's art. A writer for *Art News* identified "a new strength," while a *New York Times* reviewer observed that the works in the exhibition, "[b]orrowing a phrase from the field of color, might [be called] primaries in thought," and asserted that the paintings, in which Dove "has carried simplification of forms and arrangements about as far as possible," are "big-boned compositions [with] impact."[14]

Despite the support he received from Stieglitz and important collectors, such as Paul Rosenfeld and Duncan Phillips, and his success in showing his work—he held one-man exhibitions annually and participated in a number of the major exhibitions of the period—Dove struggled for acceptance of his art. Even Stieglitz noted that some of his paintings were "above the heads of the people."[15] Nevertheless, Dove vigorously and steadfastly pursued his art, producing some of the most avant-garde paintings of the period. *Space Divided by Line Motive* remained unsold at his death and was purchased by the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1968 from the estate of his widow.

Sarah Cash



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#### **NOTES**

- [1] This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in *Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011).
- [2] "Notes by Arthur G. Dove," in *Dove Exhibition* (New York, 1929), n.p., quoted in William C. Agee, "New Directions: The Late Work, 1938–1946," in Debra Bricker Balken, in collaboration with William C. Agee and Elizabeth Hutton Turner, *Arthur Dove: A Retrospective* (Andover, MA and Cambridge, MA, 1997), 134.
- [3] The title was changed from U.S.A. to Space Divided by Line Motive in accordance with the Corcoran Gallery of Art's (CGA) American Paintings Catalogue policy, which restores titles to those under which a painting was first exhibited or published; see Arthur G. Dove: Paintings, 1944, An American Place, New York, 1944, cat. no. 6. Sarah Cash, Bechhoefer Curator of American Art, to Registrar, October 24, 2001, memorandum, CGA Curatorial Files.
- [4] For an excellent discussion of this shift, see William C. Agee, "New Directions: The Late Work, 1938–1946," in Debra Bricker Balken, in collaboration with William C. Agee and Elizabeth Hutton Turner, *Arthur Dove: A Retrospective* (Andover, MA and Cambridge, MA, 1997), 133–153, esp. 135–139. Agee notes (138) Dove's awareness of abstractionist trends in the work of his contemporaries, for example his perusal of the fully illustrated catalog of the Museum of Modern Art's important 1939 exhibition *Art of Our Time* and his awareness of the recent changes toward more geometric abstraction in the art of Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee.
- [5] See Debra Bricker Balken, "Continuities and Digressions in the Work of Arthur Dove from 1907 to 1933," in Debra Bricker Balken, in collaboration with William C. Agee and Elizabeth Hutton Turner, Arthur Dove: A Retrospective (Andover, MA and Cambridge, MA, 1997), 22.
- [6] Diary entry for December 8, 1942, Arthur and Helen Torr Dove Papers, 1904–1975, reel 725, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- [7] Titles such as Space Divided by Line Motive, like Structure, Parabola (both 1942), and Formation I (1943) signify a departure from Dove's earlier, nature-derived titles. For the last three works, see Ann Lee Morgan, Arthur Dove:

  Life and Work, with a Catalogue Raisonné (Newark, DE, London, and Toronto, 1984), cat. nos. 42.20, 42.13, and 43.6, respectively. On December

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17, 1942, Dove recorded in his diary "names for pure paintings: Design, arrangement, monochrome—polychrome—unochrome—duochrome trio-quatrosexo etc. Motif plan—venture adventure Formation"; quoted in William C. Agee, "New Directions: The Late Work, 1938–1946," in Debra Bricker Balken, in collaboration with William C. Agee and Elizabeth Hutton Turner, *Arthur Dove: A Retrospective* (Andover, MA and Cambridge, MA, 1997), 144–145.

- [8] Diary entries for October 10, 12–14, and 16, 1943, Arthur and Helen Torr Dove Papers, reel 725, frames 993–96, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- [9] William C. Agee, "New Directions: The Late Work, 1938–1946," in Debra Bricker Balken, in collaboration with William C. Agee and Elizabeth Hutton Turner, Arthur Dove: A Retrospective (Andover, MA and Cambridge, MA, 1997), 146, notes that this "sense of constant, shifting movement is almost cinematic, and raises the possibility that Dove had been touched by the compositions of Léopold Survage," which he may have known through the catalog Art of our Time (see n. 5 above).
- [10] William C. Agee, "New Directions: The Late Work, 1938–1946," in Debra Bricker Balken, in collaboration with William C. Agee and Elizabeth Hutton Turner, *Arthur Dove: A Retrospective* (Andover, MA and Cambridge, MA, 1997), 139. These notations recall Dove's 1913 description of his creative process, when he "remember[ed] certain sensations purely through their form and color . . . by certain shapes, planes, light, or character lines determined by the meeting of such planes." Quoted in Arthur Jerome Eddy, *Cubists and Post-Impressionism* (Chicago, 1919), 48.
- [11] McBride, quoted in Art News 42 (March 1–14, 1943): 23, in William C. Agee, "New Directions: The Late Work, 1938–1946," in Debra Bricker Balken, in collaboration with William C. Agee and Elizabeth Hutton Turner, Arthur Dove: A Retrospective (Andover, MA and Cambridge, MA, 1997), 140 and 152 n. 28.
- [12] December 5, 1942, diary entry paraphrased in William C. Agee, "New Directions: The Late Work, 1938–1946," in Debra Bricker Balken, in collaboration with William C. Agee and Elizabeth Hutton Turner, *Arthur Dove: A Retrospective* (Andover, MA and Cambridge, MA, 1997), 146; and December 30, 1942 diary entry, quoted in ibid., 145.
- [13] Barbara Haskell, Arthur Dove (Boston, 1974), 111.
- [14] "The Passing Shows," Art News 43, no. 6 (May 1–14, 1944): 19; and Howard Devree, "A Reviewer's Notes: Brief Comment on Some Recently Opened Shows—Dove and Marion Greenwood," New York Times, March 26, 1944, Arts sec., 7.
- [15] "Dove and His Father, 1919," Alfred Stieglitz, as dictated to Dorothy Norman,

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February 1937, cited in Suzanne M. Mullett, "Arthur G. Dove [1880–], a Study in Contemporary Art" (master's thesis, American University, 1944), 9, cited in Linda Ayres, Jane Myers, Mark Thistlethwaite, and Ron Tyler, *American Paintings: Selections from the Amon Carter Museum* (Fort Worth, TX, 1986), 84.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a plain-weave, medium-weight, pre-primed canvas and is lined with a heavier weight linen using a Beva 371 adhesive. The tacking margins are intact, indicating that the painting is very close to its original dimensions. The stretcher is a modern, five-member, expansion bolt replacement. The commercially prepared ground is a grayish off-white color. With the exception of the blue shape at the bottom center, which is more thinly and translucently painted, the paint application is generally flat and opaque. However, the artist's brushstrokes within the solid passages of color still create some texture. The shapes appear to have been initially blocked in on the canvas in a thin application of paint in a hue similar to that found in the final, uppermost layer. The one anomaly is the brown passage in the bottom left, which is underpainted in a bright red, perhaps an alizarin crimson color. Dove seems to have used only a few thinly applied layers in each colored passage to arrive at the finished work. Infrared examination shows that each shape is painted within a nervous, nuanced pencil outline that Dove drew on top of the ground to serve as a guide for his painting.[1] The x-radiograph shows no significant artist's changes.

There is an undated treatment report in the Downtown Gallery Records at the Archives of American Art (Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC) from Fine Arts Conservation Laboratories in New York City. It states that losses, abrasion, and scratches on the painting were filled and retouched, the painting was cleaned "superficially," and a thin spray application of synthetic resin varnish was applied. In 1982 the picture was treated at the Corcoran Gallery of Art after a large tear was made in the lower right corner of the canvas when the painting was accidentally hit from the front during an installation. The tear was mended, the painting was attached to an auxiliary lining fabric with Beva 371, and the painting was mounted on a replacement stretcher. Losses were filled and retouched, and the "surface was coated with paste wax to even the surface saturation." In 2004 the picture was treated again at the Corcoran for severe interlayer cleavage in the center yellow,

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center green, and upper blue passages of paint. Losses were filled and retouched, and the picture was surface-cleaned with water. Because of the synthetic resin spray varnish and "paste wax" coating of previous conservation treatments, the artist's intended juxtaposition of different surface textures within a single composition has been altered.[2]

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

- The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with an H astronomy filter.
- [2] Elizabeth Steele prepared a comprehensive technical summary for Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011). A copy of this summary is available in NGA conservation files.

#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1880-1946], Centerport, New York; by inheritance to his wife, Helen S. Torr Dove [1886-1967], Centerport; her estate;[1] (Downtown Gallery, New York); purchased April 1968 by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.

[1] Arthur Dove Artist Files, Downtown Gallery Records, 1824–1974, reel 5547, frames 869-871, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1944 Arthur G. Dove; Paintings - 1944, An American Place, New York, 21 March -21 May 1944, no. 6.

1947 Loan, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, perhaps between 1947 and 1963.[1]

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1947 Paintings by Arthur Dove, San Francisco Museum of Art, 22 April - 18 May 1947.

1963 Then and Now: Early and Mature Examples of the Work of Twenty-five Twentieth Century Artists, Guild Hall, East Hampton, New York, 21 July - 11 August 1963, unnumbered checklist.

1964 39th Anniversary Exhibition, Downtown Gallery, New York, 6-31 October 1964, unnumbered catalogue.

1965 Six Decades of American Art, Leicester Galleries, London, 14 July - 18 August 1965, no. 29.

1976 Corcoran [The American Genius], Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 24 January - 4 April 1976, catalogue with no checklist, as U.S.A.

1978 The William A. Clark Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 26 April - 16 July 1978, catalogue with no checklist.

2005 Encouraging American Genius: Master Paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY; Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, 27 August 2005 - 29 April 2007, checklist no. 95 (shown only in Washington).

2008 The American Evolution: A History Through Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 1 March - 27 July 2008, unpublished checklist.

2009 American Paintings from the Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 6 June - 18 October 2009, unpublished checklist.

2013 American Journeys: Visions of Place, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 21 September 2013 - 28 September 2014, unpublished checklist.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY NOTES**

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[1] An information sheet about the painting supplied to the Corcoran Gallery of Art by Downtown Gallery, dated 29 December 1967 and in NGA curatorial files, lists the University of North Carolina under "Exhibited" but provides no date. The listing appears after the January 1947 listing for Van Bark Studios and before the July 1963 listing for the Guild Hall exhibition. No details about this loan were found in the University of North Carolina Archives; see e-mails from November 2007 between Emily Shapiro of the Corcoran Gallery of Art and Carol Gillham, Assistant Curator of Collections, Ackland Museum, in NGA curatorial files.

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- 2002 Cash, Sarah. "Space Divided by Line Motive (U.S.A.)." In A Capital Collection: Masterworks from the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Edited by Eleanor Heartney. London, 2002: 256, 257, repro.
- 2011 Cash, Sarah. "Arthur Dove, Space Divided by Line Motive." In Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945. Edited by Sarah Cash. Washington, 2011: 252-253, 283, repro. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.:
  - Downtown Gallery Records 1824-1974, Arthur Dove Artist Notebooks, reel 5570, frames 349-350.

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Alfred Stieglitz, *Marsden Hartley*, 1916, platinum print, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection

# Hartley, Marsden American, 1877 - 1943

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Marsden Hartley was born on January 4, 1877, in Lewiston, Maine, to English immigrant parents. In 1893 he moved with his family to Ohio, where he studied at the Cleveland School of Art. Hartley took private lessons with John Semon, a Barbizon-style painter, and in 1898 he took a summer class with Cullen Yates, a local impressionist. Hartley excelled at the Cleveland School of Art, and a trustee provided him with financial backing to study in New York for five years. He moved to Manhattan in 1899 and attended *William Merritt Chase's* School of Art before transferring to the National Academy of Design. In 1902, after Hartley won the Academy's Suydam Silver Medal for still-life drawing, he spent the summer painting landscapes in Center Lovell, Maine.

During the summer of 1907 in Eliot, Maine, Hartley attended a retreat for mystics called Green Acre, where he immersed himself in the study of Eastern religions. In 1908 he went to Boston and met Maurice Brazil Prendergast (American, 1858 - 1924), whose neoimpressionist style influenced his Maine landscapes. A major turning point in the artist's career occurred in 1909, when Hartley was introduced to the photographer and art impresario Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946), who arranged a one-man exhibition at his 291 gallery.

With the financial support of Stieglitz and Arthur B. Davies (American, 1862 - 1928), Hartley traveled to Paris in 1912 and encountered the work of Paul Cézanne

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(French, 1839 - 1906), Henri Matisse (French, 1869 - 1954), and Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881 - 1973), along with other French modernists at the home of the prominent American collectors Gertrude and Leo Stein. In 1913 Hartley moved on to Berlin, Germany, and became associated with the expressionist artists Wassily Kandinsky (Russian, 1866 - 1944) and Franz Marc (German, 1880 - 1916), with whom he exhibited at the Herbstsalon, an important display of avant-garde German art. After returning for a time to the United States, Hartley was back in Berlin in 1914. Following the death in the early stages of World War I of a German officer friend with whom he may have had a romantic relationship, the grief-stricken Hartley commenced his famous War Motif series, in which symbols represent both the spiritual and physical aspects of his subjects.

The war forced Hartley to once again sail for New York in late 1915. Soon the peripatetic artist began wandering restlessly from place to place, a habit that would characterize the next two decades of his career. Beginning in 1916 Hartley worked in, among other places, Provincetown, Massachusetts; Bermuda; Ogunquit, Maine; Taos and Santa Fe, New Mexico; and California. In 1919 he briefly affiliated himself with the avant-garde art organization founded by the American modernist Katherine Sophie Dreier (American, 1877 - 1952), the Sociéte Anonyme. In 1921 Hartley traveled to Paris and once more to Berlin, where he lived for two years. In 1926 he traced Cézanne's footsteps in Provence, painting the iconic Mont Sainte-Victoire. Back in the United States in 1930, Hartley settled in Brooklyn Heights, and worked for a time in Sugar Hill, New Hampshire. In 1931 a Guggenheim travel grant enabled him to reside in Mexico for a year. Between 1931 and 1937 Hartley was active in Gloucester, Massachusetts; Bavaria, Germany; Bermuda; and Nova Scotia. In Nova Scotia Hartley suffered another profound personal loss when a local fishing family he was close to, the Masons, lost their two sons at sea.

In 1937, after years of financial hardship and perceived slights, Hartley finally broke with Stieglitz after another solo exhibition, this time at An American Place, failed to produce sales. That summer he retreated, as he had so often in his youth, to Maine where he worked in a number of places before settling in Bangor. There he commenced a series of paintings of Mount Katahdin that occupied him for the next three years. In 1940, in addition to his Maine landscapes, Hartley executed a series of figure paintings that were based on sunbathers and lobstermen, as well as a group of religious subjects inspired by his time with the Mason family in Nova Scotia. During the final years of his life Hartley was plagued by failing health, and died from terminal heart failure in Ellsworth, Maine, on September 2, 1943.

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A leading member of the Stieglitz group, Hartley was a pioneer American modernist whose knowledge of French avant-garde styles and close association with the innovative German painters known as Der Blaue Reiter led him to invent one of the most innovative painting styles of the early 20th century. Beginning with his return to the United States in 1915, Hartley moved away from his former abstract style and, forever moving from place to place, produced a remarkable variety of expressive landscapes, still life compositions, and unconventional portraits. His exceptionally fine late Mount Katahdin landscapes secured his legacy as one of the greatest of all American modernists.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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- 2005 Cassidy, Donna. *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation*. Durham and Hanover, 2005.
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   Art. Berlin, Los Angeles, and New York, 2014.

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Marsden Hartley American, 1877 - 1943

# The Aero

c. 1914

oil on canvas

overall: 100.3 x 81.2 cm (39 1/2 x 31 15/16 in.) framed: 106.7 x 87.7 cm (42 x 34 1/2 in.) Andrew W. Mellon Fund 1970.31.1

#### **ENTRY**

Marsden Hartley first visited Berlin for three weeks in January 1913, accompanied by German friends that he had met in Paris. He was enchanted by the city, which he considered "without question the finest modern city in Europe," [1] and resolved to move there as soon as possible. The artist lived in Berlin from May 1913 to December 1915, a period interrupted only by a four-month trip to New York from November 1913 to March 1914 to raise money to support himself. Fascinated by German militaristic culture in pre—World War I Berlin, Hartley began to produce a series of paintings incorporating imagery he observed in the almost daily flow of military parades, replete with emblems, flags, and pageantry.

After returning to Berlin from his New York interlude, he embarked on the Amerika series, a set of four paintings that incorporate Native American imagery. With the outbreak of the war in August 1914, Hartley reverted to painting festive German military subjects. The tragic battlefield death of his close friend, the Prussian officer Lieutenant Karl von Freyburg, on October 7, 1914, inspired him to begin the famous 12-painting War Motif series. Many of these works, such as the well-known *Portrait of a German Officer* [fig. 1] and the Gallery's *Berlin Abstraction*, allude to his fallen friend through a complex set of pictorial symbols. In general, the works Hartley produced during his two-and-a-half year stay in Berlin, particularly the War Motif series, are regarded as among the finest and most original of his career. Although they earned him a degree of critical acclaim in Germany, privations such as food shortages brought about by the war forced him to return to the United States in December 1915. When 40 of the German paintings were shown at Alfred Stieglitz's 291 gallery in April 1916, Hartley and Stieglitz downplayed the works' celebration of

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Germany's wartime pageantry to avoid the ire of a largely anti-German American public.[2]

Hartley is thought to have completed *The Aero* in 1914, sometime after his return from New York and before Freyburg's death. He mentioned such a subject as early as May 1913 in a long letter to Stieglitz. In the letter, Hartley describes how the "military life adds so much in the way of a sense of perpetual gaiety here in Berlin. It gives the stranger like myself the feeling that some great festival is being celebrated always." He avows his intention "to establish myself in the ultra modern scheme here and this is all possible now with Kandinsky and Marc and their group." Later in the same letter Hartley notes that he had been told: "I succeed in bringing mysticism and art together for the first time in modern art—that each canvas is a picture for itself and there the ideas present themselves after. This is my desire—to make a decorative harmony of color & form using only such color and such form as seems fitting to the subject in hand." The artist then refers to a painting that may well have been *The Aero*: "I have one canvas 'Extase d'Aéroplane' if it must have a title—it is my notion of the possible ecstasy or soul state of an aéroplane if it could have one."[3]

Hartley was a keen follower of recent advances in aviation, mentioning zeppelins in three letters to Stieglitz. On a postcard of June 1913 he wrote how the "Hansa or the Victoria Luise Luftschiffs pass overhead so majestically and so close that you see people waving their handkerchiefs." On October 18, 1913, Hartley mentioned the explosion of a naval zeppelin the previous day that had killed 27 people in Johannisthal, 10 miles outside Berlin. A year later, in a letter of June 1914, he remarked that "the Luftschiff L.V. has just passed over us here as I write—a fascinating thing which transports one somehow every time one sees any of them."[4]

Interpreting each of the various motifs in this colorful abstract composition is difficult considering Hartley's avowed intention to create "a decorative harmony of color & form as seems fitting to the subject in hand." Moreover, in part because he was worried about the way the largely anti-German public would receive them, Hartley discouraged viewers from speculating about the meaning of his Berlin abstractions by claiming that "the forms are only those which I have observed casually from day to day. There is no hidden symbolism whatsoever in them; there was no slight intention of that anywhere."[5] It is impossible to determine whether Hartley intended *The Aero* to evoke either an airplane or a zeppelin, or simply embodied the two in a single image. Gail R. Scott has interpreted *The Aero* as an

attempt to convey the "'soul state' of an airplane, symbolized by the red fireball of its engines and the aerial view of flags and banners signaling its flight."[6] Certainly the wavy motifs at the bottom center and left of the composition make one think of the artist's description of "people waving their handkerchiefs" as a zeppelin majestically flew by. The painting adeptly conveys a sense of the exhilaration and energy that Hartley felt as he watched a large and impressive airship sail overhead.

The Aero, like most of Hartley's Berlin paintings, reflects his close ties to the Der Blaue Reiter painters. These artists, Wassily Kandinsky (Russian, 1866 - 1944), Franz Marc (German, 1880 - 1916), Gabriele Münter (German, 1877 - 1962), Alfred Kubin (Austrian, 1877 - 1959), Paul Klee (Swiss, 1879 - 1940), and August Macke (German, 1887 - 1914) among them, all privileged art's ability to convey inner subjective feelings over depicting a literal reality. Hartley was in frequent contact with Marc and Kandinsky, and had studied the latter's book *On the Spiritual in Art* as well as *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*. The group's interest in the expressive decorative patterning of Bavarian folk painting probably informed Hartley's painted frame in *The Aero*.[7]

Although Der Bleue Reiter provided Hartley with the philosophical and technical means to pursue his own aesthetic desires, his fascination with aviation found its closest parallel in the French cubist Robert Delaunay (French, 1885 - 1941). Hartley saw three of Delaunay's most famous paintings, which all feature airplanes, around the time he was either planning *The Aero* or working on it. He described the huge *L'Equipe Cardiff* [fig. 2] to Stieglitz after viewing it at Delaunay's studio in March 1913 (calling it a "a perfect confession of egomania"),[8] and saw it again later in the year at the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon exhibition in Berlin, where it was accompanied by *Soleil, Tour, Aeroplane* [fig. 3]. En route back to Berlin in March 1914, he visited Paris and attended the Salon des Indépendants, where he admired Delaunay's *L'Hommage a Blériot* (Kunstmuseum, Basel), a tribute to the French aviator Louis Blériot, who had successfully flown across the English Channel in 1909.[9]

Gail Levin has speculated that *The Aero* was intended as an allusion to the German Imperial Navy Zeppelin L-2 that exploded during a test flight on October 17, 1913—an accident that Hartley specifically mentioned in a letter to Stieglitz.[10] A month earlier, another naval zeppelin, the L-1, had crashed into the North Sea 20 miles north of Helgoland Island. Both incidents were highly publicized setbacks to Germany's military aviation program. The most plausible interpretation of *The Aero* is Patricia McDonnell's suggestion that it alludes to one aspect of modern urban

life in Berlin by offering "a contemplation of one of modernization's more amazing inventions."[11] This idea fits well with Hartley's fascination with the German military reflected in other works executed in 1914, such as *Berlin Ante-War* [fig. 4], *Forms Abstracted, Berlin* [fig. 5], and *Himmel* [fig. 6]. After Count Zeppelin successfully flew 240 miles in one of his airships the German public was swept by "Zeppelin fever." Kaiser Wilhelm II personally supported the idea of enhancing imperial Germany's military prowess with the creation of an aerial fleet comprising airships and airplanes. The German military increasingly took notice of Zeppelin's exploits and acquired airships. German writers such as Rudolph Martin had already advocated air superiority in popular novels such as *Berlin-Bagdad* (1907). In France, the novelist Emile Driant, influenced by Jules Verne, wrote popular and prophetic novels like *L'Aviateur du Pacifique* (1909) and *Au-dessus du continent noir* (1911) about the military deployment of airplanes.[12]

One of the best-known novels of this genre was *The War in the Air* (1908) by H. G. Wells, who conjured up alarming visions of German airships destroying the American fleet in the North Atlantic and laying waste to New York City. We know Hartley was familiar with the author because, shortly after the outbreak of World War I, he discussed recent events in a letter to Stieglitz, commenting that "even H. G. Wells is a fair prophetic authority."[13] The development of the airplane and especially the zeppelin played an increasingly prominent part in both Germany's military preparations and popular culture, and Hartley was an eyewitness to this progress in Berlin. Painted on the eve of World War I, the exhilarating, jubilant, and colorful *Aero* presents an optimistic interpretation of one of the greatest inventions of the modern era. Like a number of Hartley's other prewar Berlin paintings that extol German military prowess, there is no indication of the imminent death and destruction that the flying machine would rain down on the cities and battlefields of Europe during World War I.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Marsden Hartley, Portrait of a German Officer, 1914, oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949

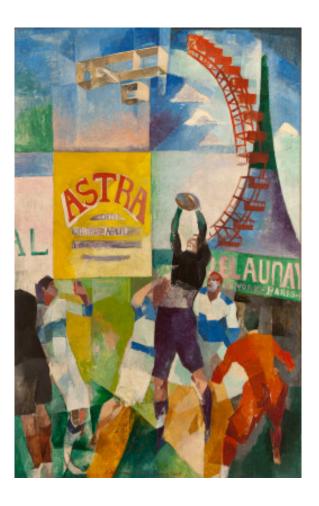


fig. 2 Robert Delaunay, L'Equipe Cardiff, 1912–1913, oil on canvas, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Image: Eric Emo / Parisienne de Photographie



**fig. 3** Robert Delaunay, *Soleil, tour, Aeroplane*, 1913, oil on canvas, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, A. Conger Goodyear Fund. Image: Albright-Knox Art Gallery / Art Resource, NY



**fig. 4** Marsden Hartley, *Berlin Ante-War*, 1914, oil on canvas, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Ferdinand Howald



**fig. 5** Marsden Hartley, *Forms Abstracted, Berlin*, 1913, oil on canvas with wood frame, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Hudson D. Walker and Exchange 52.37a–b



**fig. 6** Marsden Hartley, *Himmel*, c. 1914–1915, oil on canvas, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Gift of the Friends of Art 56-118. Image: Jamison Miller

### **NOTES**

- [1] Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, Feb. 1, 1913, quoted in James Timothy Voorhees, ed., My Dear Stieglitz: Letters of Mardsen Hartley and Alfred Stieglitz, 1912–1915 (Columbia, SC, 2002), 54.
- [2] On the 1916 exhibition at 291, see Bruce Robertson, "Letters to the Dead," in Modern Art in America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries, ed. Sarah Greenough (Washington, DC, 2001), 228–241.
- [3] All quotes in this paragraph come from Hartley to Stieglitz, week of May 18, 1913, quoted in James Timothy Voorhees, ed., My Dear Stieglitz: Letters of Mardsen Hartley and Alfred Stieglitz, 1912–1915 (Columbia, SC, 2002), 76–77.
- [4] Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, June 28, 1913, Oct. 18, 1913, and June 30, 1914,

quoted in James Timothy Voorhees, ed., *My Dear Stieglitz: Letters of Mardsen Hartley and Alfred Stieglitz, 1912–1915* (Columbia, SC, 2002), 87, 114, and 149. Both the LZ-11 Viktoria-Luise (named after Kaiser Wilhelm II's only daughter) and the LZ-13 Hansa were civilian passenger airships that flew for the Deutsche Luftschiffahrts-Aktiengesellschaft (DELAG), or German Airship Transportation Corporation Ltd., that was established in 1909 as an offshoot of the Zeppelin Company. Both were requisitioned by the military at the outbreak of World War I. The third zeppelin Hartley mentioned cannot be identified. Stephen Gregory, in an e-mail dated August 31, 2013, to Franklin Kelly at the National Gallery of Art, emphasized the October 1913 zeppelin disaster as the most likely source for the prominent red fireball in *The Aero*.

- [5] The text is from the artist's statement in the catalog for the exhibition of 40 of Hartley's Berlin paintings (including *The Aero*) at Stieglitz's 291 gallery that was held from April 4 to May 22, 1916. The catalog was reprinted as "Hartley's Exhibition," *Camera Work* 48 (Oct. 1916): 12, and is quoted in Gail Levin, "Hidden Symbolism in Marsden Hartley's Military Pictures," *Arts Magazine* 54 (Oct. 1979): 154. Of course it is now recognized that many of the War Motif series paintings do indeed contain symbols that allude to Freyburg.
- [6] Gail R. Scott, Marsden Hartley (New York, 1988), 49.
- [7] Gail Levin, "Marsden Hartley's 'Amerika': Between Native American and German Folk Art," *American Art Review* 5, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 122.
- [8] Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, March 13, 1913, quoted in James Timothy Voorhees, ed., *My Dear Stieglitz: Letters of Mardsen Hartley and Alfred Stieglitz, 1912–1915* (Columbia, SC, 2002), 65.
- [9] For a discussion of Hartley's relationships with Der Blaue Reiter artists and Delaunay, see Gail Levin, "Marsden Hartley and the European Avant-Garde," Arts 54 (Sept., 1979), 158–163.
- [10] Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, Oct. 18, 1913, quoted in James Timothy Voorhees, ed., My Dear Stieglitz: Letters of Mardsen Hartley and Alfred Stieglitz, 1912–1915 (Columbia, SC, 2002), 114. Gail Levin, "Hidden Symbolism in Marsden Hartley's Military Pictures," Arts Magazine 54 (Oct. 1979): 158.
- [11] Patricia McDonnell, "'Portrait of Berlin': Marsden Hartley and Urban Modernity in Expressionist Berlin," in *Marsden Hartley*, ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (Hartford, CT, 2002), 51.
- [12] Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination* 1908–1918 (New Haven, CT, 1994), 44–45, 71–72.
- [13] Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, Sept. 2, 1914, quoted in James Timothy Voorhees, ed., *My Dear Stieglitz: Letters of Mardsen Hartley and Alfred Stieglitz,* 1912–1915 (Columbia, SC, 2002), 157.



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### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a plain, coarse-weave, medium-weight fabric that has been lined with wax to a plain-weave, medium-weight, auxiliary fabric support. The painting has no ground, but the fabric has been primed with a moderately thick layer of light gray paint that forms the background of the design. The exposed areas of the background paint appear to have been mixed with white before drying, altering the initial priming color, which remains its original darker gray color beneath the design elements. The main elements of the composition are applied in fairly thick, heavily textured paint. Some areas, particularly the whites and light yellow, are characterized by lively brushwork and moderate impasto. A thin layer of charcoal or black paint may be observed scumbled at the edges of many design elements, indicating that the composition was drawn before the paint was applied. An artist-constructed frame consisting of a simple wooden liner painted with an extension of the composition is attached to the painting.

The initial examination report of 1987 indicates that the painting was in good condition with numerous small, filled, and retouched losses scattered throughout. However, in a conservation treatment of the painting in 2001 it was noted that many of the major design elements had been repainted by another hand long after the completion of the painting. During this 2001 treatment, the non-original overpaint was removed, revealing some abrasion that had occurred in a previous cleaning. Although the goal of the 2001 treatment was to return the painting to its original, unvarnished state, the retouching required to compensate for previous damage and some blanching that occurred as a result of the overpaint removal necessitated locally varnishing some areas with a nearly invisible synthetic varnish. The rest of the painting was left unvarnished.[1]

### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

Stephen Kornhauser and Ulrich Birkmaier, "Marsden Hartley's Materials and Working Methods," in Marsden Hartley, ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (Hartford, CT, 2002), 270.



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### **PROVENANCE**

The artist; (sale, Anderson Galleries, New York, 17 May 1921, probably no. 46, as *Pre-War Pageant*); Hamilton Easter Field [1873-1922], Brooklyn, and Ogunquit, Maine; by inheritance to Robert Laurent [1890-1970], Brooklyn and Ogunquit, Maine; his estate; purchased 15 October 1970 by NGA.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1916 [Marsden Hartley exhibition], 291 Gallery, New York, 1916.

1951 Marsden Hartley, John Herron Art Museum (now the Indianapolis Museum of Art), 1951, no. 1, as The Aero, Pre-War.

1965 The Collection of Robert and Mimi Laurent and the Field Foundation Collection, Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington; Colby College Art Museum, Waterville, Maine, 1965, no. 37.

1969 Marsden Hartley: A Retrospective Exhibition, Bernard Danenberg Galleries, Inc., New York, 1969, no. 6, repro.

1980 Marsden Hartley, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth; University Art Museum, Berkeley, 1980-1981, no. 22, pl. 80.

1995 Dictated by Life: Marsden Hartley's German Paintings and Robert Indiana's Hartley Elegies, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis; Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago; Art Museum at Florida International University, 1995, no. 2, repro. (shown only in Minneapolis).

1996 Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1996, no. 57, repro.

2001 Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2001, no. 69, repro.

2003 Marsden Hartley: American Modernist, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, 2003-2004, no. 15, repro.

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2014 Marsden Hartley: The German Paintings 1913-1915, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2014, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

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- 1981 Williams, William James. A Heritage of American Paintings from the National Gallery of Art. New York, 1981: 215, color repro. 217.
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- 1992 American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1992: 194, repro.
- 1997 Southgate, M. Therese. The Art of JAMA: One Hundred Covers and Essays from The Journal of the American Medical Association. St. Louis, 1997: 190-191, 215, color repro.
- 2000 Kirsh, Andrea, and Rustin S. Levenson. Seeing Through Paintings: Physical Examination in Art Historical Studies. Materials and Meaning in the Fine Arts 1. New Haven, 2000: 250-251, color fig. 261.
- 2000 Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2001: no. 69.
- 2002 Kornhauser, Elizabeth Mankin, et al. Marsden Hartley. Exh. cat.
  Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford; The Phillips Collection,
  Washington; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, 2002-2003.
  New Haven and London, 2002. no. 15, repro.
- 2004 Hand, John Oliver. National Gallery of Art: Master Paintings from the Collection. Washington and New York, 2004: 410-411, no. 343, color repro.
- Scholz, Dieter, ed. Marsden Hartley: The German Paintings 1913-1915
   Exh. cat. Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Berlin, Los Angeles, and New York, 2014: 95 repro., 205.
- 2016 National Gallery of Art. *Highlights from the National Gallery of Art, Washington*. Washington, 2016: 278, repro.





Marsden Hartley American, 1877 - 1943

# Berlin Abstraction

1914/1915

oil on canvas

overall: 80.8  $\times$  64.8 cm (31 13/16  $\times$  25 1/2 in.)

framed:  $101 \times 85.1 \times 5.7$  cm (39  $3/4 \times 33 1/2 \times 2 1/4$  in.)

Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund) 2014.79.21

### **ENTRY**

Berlin Abstraction numbers among the most innovative works in Marsden Hartley's oeuvre, and indeed in that of any artist in the first wave of the American avant-garde.[1] The canvas is one of a dozen deeply symbolic and personal paintings Hartley produced between November 1914 and the fall of 1915, during his second stay in Berlin. The name by which the group is best known today, the German Officer portraits, derives from the most discussed aspect of its content: the World War I soldiers to whom the paintings pay tribute, especially the artist's cherished friend Lieutenant Karl von Freyburg. Although their primary significance is elegiac, the War Motifs, as Hartley called them, are as rich with layers of meaning as they are vibrant and complex in appearance.[2]

Born in Lewiston, Maine, to working-class English immigrant parents, Hartley received some artistic training in Cleveland in the 1890s after his family relocated there. When he moved to New York in 1899, he studied at *William Merritt Chase's* School of Art and the National Academy of Design. This restlessness was to characterize Hartley's later life as well as his art: he traveled frequently in Europe, North America, and Mexico, painting landscapes, still lifes, and abstractions in many different styles. The location closest to his heart, however, was Berlin—he called it "without question the finest modern city in Europe."[3] His first two excursions there were financed by the photographer and art dealer Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946), who promoted Hartley's work in a one-man exhibition at his gallery 291 in 1909 and in a pioneering group show there the following year, *Younger American Painters*.[4]

In April 1914, reunited in Berlin with Freyburg and his cousin, the sculptor Arnold Rönnebeck, both of whom he had met during his first European trip in 19121913, Hartley resumed his enthusiastic embrace of the "movement and energy" of the fast-growing modern metropolis[5]—the brilliantly colored military uniforms, lively parades, and other pageantry of the imperial capital—and the city's gay subculture, which was closely intertwined with the German military at that time.[6]

Simultaneously, his friendship with Freyburg intensified, and the two likely became lovers.[7] In the fall of 1914, however, Hartley's exuberance was dashed by a series of tragedies: he learned that his father had died in August, the same month as the outbreak of World War I; on October 7 Freyburg was killed in battle on the western front; and soon thereafter Rönnebeck was seriously wounded and hospitalized. These events, above all Freyburg's death, led to Hartley's creation of the War Motifs. After a month of intense grieving, Hartley began the series to memorialize his friend and the many other war dead and to express his abhorrence of the war in general.[8]

As one Hartley scholar has written, despite this primary meaning, the artist's War Motifs are multivalent and represent a major synthesis of modernism's pictorial vocabulary. They contain heavily coded expressions of Hartley's life in Berlin's vibrant homosexual culture, the role of the German military in that culture, and an outpouring of the artist's thoughts about war.[9] Like the brightly colored, effusive Berlin canvases that predated Hartley's emotional downturn, Berlin Abstraction and other War Motif paintings were strongly influenced by the modernism to which he had been exposed on his first European trip. The juxtaposition of flat, geometric, black-outlined shapes continues the artist's espousal of synthetic cubism—he was the first American artist to fully adopt the style—which he saw when he met Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881 - 1973) at Gertrude and Leo Stein's famous salon in Paris in 1912. His loosely brushed, bright palette recalls the bold German expressionist work by Der Blaue Reiter members Wassily Kandinsky (Russian, 1866 - 1944) and Franz Marc (German, 1880 - 1916) with whom he became friendly in Berlin in 1913. The two not only strongly influenced his style but also led him to embrace the spiritual aspects of art.

Berlin Abstraction incorporates general allusions to German military pageantry found in the other War Motif paintings: the sleeve cuffs and epaulets of uniforms; a helmet cockade denoted by two concentric circles; and the blue-and-white, diamond-patterned Bavarian flag. Other symbols refer specifically to Freyburg: the red number four signifies the Fourth Regiment of the Kaiser's guards, in which he

fought, and the red-and-white checkerboard pattern recalls his love of chess. The central black cross on a white background circumscribed by a red and a white circle is likely an abstraction of the Iron Cross medal for bravery bestowed posthumously on Freyburg. The calligraphic red letter *E* refers to Elisabeth, queen of Greece, the patroness of Rönnebeck's regiment.[10]

The content and style of the War Motifs evolved from symbol-laden and hieratically, even anthropomorphically, composed paintings that refer specifically to Freyburg early in the series to increasingly patterned canvases that more generally evoke the vivid designs of German military uniforms.[11] *Portrait of a German Officer* [fig. 1], acknowledged to be the first painting in the sequence, incorporates explicit references to Freyburg—his initials (K.v.F.), his age when he died (24), and his regiment number (4)—into a composition of interlocking elements evocative of a human torso against a black background. In contrast, *Berlin Abstraction* is one of the three latest, most abstract paintings in the series. Along with *Painting Number 5* [fig. 2] and *Military* [fig. 3], it achieves a total absence of illusionistic space and a near erasure of recognizable subject matter, its more loosely arranged pictorial elements extending to the edge of the canvas and incorporating fewer symbols referring specifically to Freyburg.[12]

In the spring of 1916, 40 of the Berlin paintings, including the War Motifs series, were exhibited at Stieglitz's 291 gallery. *Berlin Abstraction* was likely included.[13] Although some critics wrote favorably about the Berlin paintings' formal qualities, others criticized them for their perceived pro-German messages. In 1916 Hartley issued a statement claiming that the group had no hidden meaning. He described their forms as "those which I have observed casually from day to day" and having "no symbolism whatsoever."[14] It was only after his death that the more private nature of these paintings was revealed.

Sarah Cash

September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Marsden Hartley, Portrait of a German Officer, 1914, oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949



fig. 2 Marsden Hartley, Painting Number 5, 1914–1915, oil on linen, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Gift of an Anonymous Donor 58.65



**fig. 3** Marsden Hartley, *Military*, 1914–1915, oil on canvas, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Professor Nelson Goodman. © The Cleveland Museum of Art

### **NOTES**

- [1] This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in *Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011).
- [2] "I am working out some war motifs which people praise highly," Hartley wrote to Alfred Stieglitz, Nov. 3, 1914, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, quoted in Patricia McDonnell, "'Portrait of Berlin': Marsden Hartley and Urban Modernism in Expressionist Berlin," in Marsden Hartley, ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (Hartford, CT, 2002), 53. McDonnell has written extensively on the multivalence of the War Motifs; in addition to the foregoing essay, see also her "Changes of Heart: Marsden Hartley's Ideas and Art," in Marsden Hartley: American Modern; Selections from the Ione and Hudson Walker Collection, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, ed. Patricia McDonnell (Minneapolis, 2006). Barbara

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- Haskell's *Marsden Hartley* (New York, 1980) is a pioneering study of these works.
- [3] Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, Feb. 1913, Yale Collection of American Literature, quoted in Patricia McDonnell, "'Portrait of Berlin': Marsden Hartley and Urban Modernism in Expressionist Berlin," in *Marsden Hartley*, ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (Hartford, CT, 2002), 39.
- [4] Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, "Marsden Hartley: 'Gaunt Eagle from the Hills of Maine," in *Marsden Hartley*, ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (Hartford, CT, 2002), 16.
- [5] Hartley to Stieglitz, May 1913, Yale Collection of American Literature, quoted in Patricia McDonnell, "Changes of Heart: Marsden Hartley's Ideas and Art," in Marsden Hartley: American Modern; Selections from the Ione and Hudson Walker Collection, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, ed. Patricia McDonnell (Minneapolis, 2006), 14.
- [6] Patricia McDonnell, "'Portrait of Berlin': Marsden Hartley and Urban Modernism in Expressionist Berlin," in *Marsden Hartley*, ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (Hartford, CT, 2002), 53.
- [7] Barbara Haskell, Marsden Hartley (New York, 1980), 43, discusses at length (and for the first time) Hartley's homosexuality, his lifelong obsession with masculine beauty, and his love for Freyburg, which, she notes, may or may not have been consummated. She extensively cites letters and writings by Hartley and Freyburg and discusses what they reveal of the pair's relationship.
- [8] Patricia McDonnell, "'Portrait of Berlin': Marsden Hartley and Urban Modernism in Expressionist Berlin," in Marsden Hartley, ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (Hartford, CT, 2002), 43; see also n. 113, which quotes Hartley's letter to Stieglitz of Oct. 23, 1914, Yale Collection of American Literature, in which Hartley writes of "sit[ting] alone much the spectator of the great tragedy of the heart & soul of mankind—I cannot set up and work."
- [9] Patricia McDonnell, "Changes of Heart: Marsden Hartley's Ideas and Art," in Marsden Hartley: American Modern; Selections from the Ione and Hudson Walker Collection, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, ed. Patricia McDonnell (Minneapolis, 2006), 15.
- [10] Many of the symbols that appear in Berlin Abstraction are referenced in a key to Portrait of a German Officer (fig. 1). See Dieter Scholz, ed., Marsden Hartley: The German Paintings 1913–1915 (Berlin and New York, 2014), 138, 139.
- [11] See Gail Levin, "Hidden Symbolism in Marsden Hartley's Military Pictures," Arts Magazine 54, no. 2 (Oct. 1979): 158; Barbara Haskell, Marsden Hartley (New York, 1980), 45; and Patricia McDonnell, "Portrait of Berlin': Marsden Hartley and Urban Modernism in Expressionist Berlin," in Marsden Hartley,

ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (Hartford, CT, 2002), 54.

- [12] Two other War Motif paintings in this more abstract vein are *Painting Number 46* (1914–1915, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY) and *The Iron Cross* (1914–1915, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Washington University, St. Louis), reproduced in Gail Levin, "Hidden Symbolism in Marsden Hartley's Military Pictures," *Arts Magazine* 54, no. 2 (Oct. 1979): 157. Unlike the three works mentioned in the main text, however, these two retain some of the black background from earlier paintings in the series.
- [13] Records of this exhibition's content are not extant, but this is a strong possibility. I am grateful to Charles Brock, associate curator, American and British paintings, National Gallery of Art, Washington, for discussing this with me.
- [14] Marsden Hartley, "Foreword," Camera Work 48 (Oct. 1916): 12, quoted in Patricia McDonnell, "Changes of Heart: Marsden Hartley's Ideas and Art," in Marsden Hartley: American Modern; Selections from the Ione and Hudson Walker Collection, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, ed. Patricia McDonnell (Minneapolis, 2006), 15.

### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a plain-weave, medium-weight, pre-primed canvas and is unlined.[1] On the reverse of the fabric, "27/15370" and "2171" (crossed out) are written in black crayon, probably not by the artist. The stretcher, a replacement, is a five-member, keyable model. The priming is a thin, smooth, ivory colored layer. The opaque paint was freely applied with some brushmarking and low to medium impasto. Most of the colors were mixed with varying amounts of white paint (except for the black and possibly red). The artist apparently did not use any glazes to modify his colors. Hartley began the painting by laying in a relatively smooth layer of black paint that mostly covered the light-colored ground. The composition of red, yellow, green, white, blue, and black shapes was painted on top of the already dry black layer. Most of the paint was applied thickly, with ridges, daubs, and prominent brushstrokes, but in some passages the paint was more thinly applied and was rubbed and intentionally abraded. The black underlayer plays an important role in the design, as it remains visible through the thin paint and was left exposed around the edges of many of the brightly colored shapes. The painting is in excellent condition with only some fine cracking in the thickest white passages and a little abrasion around the edges. At an unknown time it was coated with a heavy layer of discolored varnish that was not appropriate to the painting; this

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varnish was removed in 2015. To preserve the subtle discrepancies in gloss that had been part of Hartley's original execution, the painting was left unvarnished.[2]

### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

- [1] The ground was probably commercially applied, evidenced by its extension over the tacking margins, and dry at the time of original stretching.
- [2] Gay Myers prepared a comprehensive technical summary for *Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011). A copy of this summary is available in NGA conservation files.

**PROVENANCE** 

Probably collection of the artist [1877-1943], Maine;[1] probably Alfred Stieglitz [1864-1946], New York.[2] Paul L. Rosenfeld [1890-1946], New York;[3] bequest 1946 to Arthur Schwab and Edna Bryner Schwab [1886-1967], New York;[4] consigned 1946 to (Downtown Gallery, New York);[5] consigned to (sale, Kende Galleries at Gimbel Brothers, New York, 17-18 January 1947, 1st day, no. 65); purchased January 1947 by Ione [1915-1987] and Hudson [1907-1976] Walker, Minneapolis;[6] (Babcock Galleries, New York), February 1966;[7] purchased 30 January 1967 by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.

[1] There is no will on file for the artist. There are, however, documents in the Hancock County Probate Court, Ellsworth, Maine, related to Hartley's estate that list paintings in his collection; copies in NGA curatorial files. The list titled "Schedule of Personal Estate...Goods & Chattels" includes one painting (item no. 138) that could be *Berlin Abstraction*: "Painting #8," 25 1/2 x 31 1/2 in.

[2] Card files of Michael St. Clair, owner of Babcock Galleries from 1959 to 1989; see e-mail correspondence, 11 January 2007, Lisa Koonce, Babcock Galleries, to Emily Shapiro, assistant curator of American art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, in NGA curatorial files.

[3] Elizabeth McCausland Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington: reel D269, frames 551-555; reel D274, frame 68; copies in NGA curatorial files.

[4] Paul Rosenfeld will, dated 22 October 1937, proved 7 August 1946, Surrogate's Court, County of New York; copy in NGA curatorial files.

[5] Records of the Downtown Gallery, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington: Series I: Correspondence; letter of 13 November 1946, Edith G. Halpert, president, The Downtown Gallery, to Miss Edna Bryner and Mr. Arthur Schwab; reel 5498, frames 965 and 968; copy in NGA curatorial files.

[6] Elizabeth McCausland Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington: reel D269, frames 551-555; reel D274, frame 68; copies in NGA curatorial files.

[7] E-mail correspondence of 10 January 2007, Lisa Konce, Babcock Galleries, to Emily Shapiro, assistant curator of American art, Corcoran Gallery of Art; in NGA curatorial files.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1915 Probably Haas-Heye Galerie of the Münchener Graphik Verlag, Berlin, October 1915.

1916 Probably Paintings by Marsden Hartley, Photo-Secession Galleries, New York, 4 April - 22 May 1916, unnumbered catalogue.

1950 Loan to display with permanent collection, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1950s-1965.

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1960 Marsden Hartley, McNay Art Institute, San Antonio; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Amerika Haus, Berlin; Stadtische Galerie München in Verbindung mit dem Amerika Haus, Munich; Kunstmuseum der Stadt Amerika Düsseldorf in Verbindung mit dem Amerikanischen Generalkonsultat, Dusseldorf; American Embassy, London; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; City Art Museum, Saint Louis; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1 December 1960 - 31 January 1962, no. 16.

1980 Marsden Hartley, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago, 5 March - 3 August 1980, no. 107.

2004 Figuratively Speaking: The Human Form in American Art, 1770-1950, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 20 November 2004 - 7 August 2005, unpublished checklist.

2005 Encouraging American Genius: Master Paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Parrish Art Museum, Southampton; Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, 2005-2007, checklist no. 72.

2008 The American Evolution: A History through Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 1 March - 27 July 2008, unpublished checklist.

2009 American Paintings from the Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 6 June - 18 October 2009, unpublished checklist.

2012 Inventing Abstraction, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 23 December 2012 - 15 April 2013, no. 153.

2013 American Journeys: Visions of Place, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 21 September 2013 - 28 September 2014, unpublished checklist (removed early from this exhibition for loan to the 2014 exhibition in Berlin and Los Angeles).

2014 Marsden Hartley: The German Paintings, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2014, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

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- 1967 Hudson, Andrew. "Around the Galleries." The Washington Post and Times Herald (26 March 1967): H:7.
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- 1973 Phillips, Dorothy W. A Catalogue of the Collection of American Paintings in the Corcoran Gallery of Art. 2 vols. Washington, D.C., 1973: 2:98, repro., 99.
- 1979 Levin, Gail. "Hidden Symbolism in Marsden Hartley's Military Pictures." Arts Magazine 54 (October 1979): 157, fig. 13, 158.
- 1984 Corcoran Gallery of Art. American Painting: The Corcoran Gallery of Art. Washington, 1984: 34, repro., 35.
- Scott, Gail R. Marsden Hartley. New York, 1988: 53, 55, pl. 39. 1988
- 1995 McDonnell, Patricia. Dictated by Life: Marsden Hartley's German Paintings and Robert Indiana's Hartley Elegies. Exh. cat. Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1995: 31, 52, repro.
- 2000 Cash, Sarah, and Terrie Sultan. American Treasures of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. New York, 2000: 161, 172, repro.
- Heartney, Eleanor, ed. A Capital Collection: Masterworks from the 2002 Corcoran Gallery of Art. London, 2002: 18 (detail), 19, 38-39, repro.
- "Celebrating American Genius [exh. review]." New York Sun (6 July 2006 2006): 1, repro, 16.
- 2006 Patterson, Tom. "Just Visiting: Major American Works from the Corcoran Gallery are Ending the Year at Charlotte's Mint Museum [exh. review]." Winston-Salem Journal (3 December 2006): F:9
- 2006 Shinn, Susan. "Viewing Masters: 'Encountering American Genius: Master Paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art' Opens at the Mint [exh. review]." Salisbury Post (12 October 2006): D:7.
- 2007 Bennett, Lennie. "The Coming of Age of American Art [exh. review]." St. Petersburg Times (18 February 2007): 9L, repro.
- 2011 Cash, Sarah. "Marsden Hartley, Berlin Abstraction." In Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945. Edited by Sarah Cash. Washington, 2011: 210-211, 278-279, repro.
- 2014 Scholz, Dieter, ed. Marsden Hartley: The German Paintings 1913-1915 Exh. cat. Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Berlin, Los Angeles, and New York, 2014: 90 repro., 204.
- "The Corcoran Gallery of Art A New Beginning." American Art Review 2014 16, no. 2 (March-April 2014): 139, repro.



Marsden Hartley American, 1877 - 1943

# Maine Woods

1908

oil on canvas

overall: 74.9 x 74.9 cm (29 1/2 x 29 1/2 in.)

framed: 82.5 x 82.5 x 5.3 cm (32 1/2 x 32 1/2 x 2 1/16 in.)

Inscription: top center reverse: Marsden / Hartley

Gift of Bernard Brookman 1991.71.1

### **ENTRY**

During the autumn of 1906, Marsden Hartley began to abandon impressionism and paint in a more expressive neo-impressionist style. The catalyst for this change in technique was his introduction to the work of the little-known Italian divisionist artist Giovanni Segantini, whose paintings were featured in the January 1903 issue of the German magazine *Jugend*. The most notable characteristic of Segantini's alpine landscapes is his use of the "stitch" brushstroke, by which he built up an image out of short, interlocking lines of pure color. Hartley adapted this technique for his Maine mountain scenes, and by 1907 it had become the dominant feature of his work.[1]

On the recommendation of his friend, the Portland publisher Thomas Bird Mosher, Hartley obtained a job for the summer of 1907 at Green Acre, a retreat in Eliot, Maine. Founded by transcendentalist Sarah J. Farmer and named by the poet John Greenleaf Whittier, Green Acre was a utopian community where progressive intellectuals discussed Eastern religions, theosophy, the arts, science, and philosophy. In Eliot that August, the young Hartley had his first solo exhibition at

the home of Sara Chapman Thorp, a prominent supporter of Green Acre and widow of the famous Norwegian violinist Ole Bull.

After spending the winter of 1907 to 1908 in Boston, Hartley sought to brighten his palette, probably in response to encountering the work of Maurice Prendergast, an artist who would exert a significant influence on Hartley's emerging style and whose own style drew upon the postimpressionism of Paul Cézanne, Georges Seurat, and Paul Signac.[2] Hartley also sold a painting to a prominent local collector of French impressionist art, Desmond Fitzgerald, who encouraged him to return to Maine and paint. Buoyed by Fitzgerald's financial support, Hartley went to Maine in the fall of 1908 and settled on a farm in Stoneham Valley near North Lovell, where he remained until March 1909. Working at a feverish pace in isolation and enduring the severe winter conditions, he produced his first mature, neoimpressionist works, including Maine Woods. The majority of Hartley's paintings from this period are expressionist mountain landscapes with two-dimensional forms and high horizon lines. The earliest examples are brilliantly colored autumn scenes, such as Carnival of Autumn [fig. 1], but as winter progressed his palette darkened, as seen, for example, in The Ice Hole [fig. 2]. Jeanne Hokin has noted that, "although limned from his immediate experience in the untamed Maine woods, these paintings offer visual testimony to Hartley's mystical and spiritual intensity. Rendered in heavy impasto—at times almost a quarter of an inch thick—and stitches like heavy embroidery with elongated flecks of vibrant color, these works engender in the viewer a distinctly physical sensation."[3]

Maine Woods differs from the majority of Hartley's Stoneham Valley oils because it represents a dense forest interior that emphasizes the verticality of the white birch trees pressed up against the picture plane. A snow-covered mountain is barely distinguishable at the upper right. Hartley applied the pigment thickly and spontaneously, giving the painting a highly expressive character. It is very similar to the much smaller but more animated Landscape No. 16 [fig. 3], the reverse of which is inscribed with a poem by the artist that begins: "October Lies—Dying / The dead dance frantically!"—a fitting allusion to the end of autumn and the coming of winter depicted in Maine Woods as well.[4]

The Maine landscapes that Hartley executed in North Lovell proved critical to his career. In the spring of 1909 he showed them to Maurice and Charles Prendergast in Boston, and they were sufficiently taken with them to write him letters of introduction to influential New York painters Robert Henri and William Glackens, both founders of the Ashcan school. Glackens arranged for the young artist to

have a modest exhibition of the Maine views in his Washington Square studio. Arthur B. Davies (American, 1862 - 1928) became a strong early supporter of Hartley, but Everett Shinn (American, 1873 - 1953) and John Sloan (American, 1871 -1951) were not impressed, the latter commenting that they were "a little too much for me."[5] In April 1909, Hartley's friend, the poet Shaemas O'Sheel, introduced him to the photographer and avant-garde art impresario Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946), owner of the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession located at 291 Fifth Avenue, known familiarly as just "291." Stieglitz felt an immediate affinity for Hartley and offered him a solo exhibition at 291 of 33 Maine landscapes (15 of them from a series titled Songs of Autumn) that opened on May 8, 1909, and that very likely included Maine Woods. Esteemed critic Sadakichi Hartmann, in his review of the event in Stieglitz's journal Camera Work, described them as "examples of an extreme and up-to-date impressionism" that represent "winter scenes agitated by snow and wind, 'proud music of the storm'; wood interiors, strange entanglements of tree-trunks; and mountain slopes covered with autumn woods with some islanddotted river winding along their base." Noting the presence of the "Segantini stitch," Hartmann opined that as long as Hartley applied "his colors in a temperamental, self-taught manner, he is above the approach of imitation. I for my part believe that he has invented his method for himself, up there in Maine amidst the scenery of his fancy, and that only gradually he has learnt to reproduce nature in her most intense and luminous coloring."[6]

Other critics were not as generous. One commented that "of all the dreary fads we have been called upon to look over this season . . . this is the most dispiriting and sorrowful. And it is genuinely regretted that the little galleries of the Secession should be given over to this sort of foolishness. . . . Mr. Hartley about tries one's patience to the limit." This writer was also dismissive of Hartley's technique: "Putting the color on with a trowel to the thickness of half an inch or more, placing pure pigments side by side, serving himself bountifully of blues and reds, he obtains finally a result suggestive of a rug with all the charm of design left out."[7] The show was a financial failure.

By 1909 the difficult, complex pattern of Hartley's career had been largely established. Always a modernist outsider, Hartley would continually struggle to achieve critical acceptance and a modicum of economic stability in the midst of a peripatetic creative existence driven by restless experimentation and constant reinvention. Shortly before his death, Hartley's peregrinations seemed to come full circle when, once more in desperate financial straits, he returned to his home state

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and, in a last bid to create a more sustainable, commercially viable persona, declared himself the "painter of Maine." As he had done since his youth, Hartley, forever searching for answers, again turned to the mountain landscape for solace and enlightenment in a final series of paintings devoted to Mount Katahdin, Maine.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Marsden Hartley, Carnival of Autumn, 1908, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Hayden Collection–Charles Henry Hayden Fund. © 2016 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



fig. 2 Marsden Hartley, The Ice Hole, 1908, oil on canvas, The New Orleans Museum of Art, Museum Purchase through the Ella West Freeman Foundation Matching Fund 73.2



**fig. 3** Marsden Hartley, *Landscape No. 16*, 1908, oil on canvas, private collection. Image courtesy Gerald Peters Gallery

### **NOTES**

- [1] See Hartley's 1932 essay "On the Subject of the Mountain: Letter to Messieurs Segantini and Hodler," reprinted in Jeanne Hokin, *Pinnacles and Pyramids: The Art of Marsden Hartley* (Albuquerque, NM, 1993), 136.
- [2] For Prendergast's influence on Hartley, see Jeanne Hokin, *Pinnacles and Pyramids: The Art of Marsden Hartley* (Albuquerque, NM, 1993), 16. Barbara Haskell, *Marsden Hartley* (New York, 1980), 14–15, has suggested that Hartley was also influenced by the German neo-impressionist Richard Pietzsch, whose work had been discussed in a 1906 issue of *Jugend*.
- [3] Jeanne Hokin, *Pinnacles and Pyramids: The Art of Marsden Hartley* (Albuquerque, NM, 1993), 18.
- [4] Gail R. Scott, Marsden Hartley (New York, 1988), 18. A partial transcription of

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- the poem is in Elizabeth McCausland, Marsden Hartley (Minneapolis, MN, 1952), 14.
- [5] Bruce St. John, ed., John Sloan's New York Scene: From the Diaries, Notes, and Correspondence, 1906-1913 (New York, 1965), 303.
- [6] Sadakichi Hartmann, "Unphotographic Paint: The Texture of Impressionism," Camera Work 28 (October 1909): 20.
- New York Globe and Commercial Advertiser, May 14, 1909.

**TECHNICAL SUMMARY** 

The painting is executed on a medium-weight, plain-weave, cotton fabric that has been lined to heavy-weight linen using a wax/resin adhesive and stretched onto a five-member expansion bolt stretcher that is not original. All four tacking margins remain intact, although the corner folds have been removed. Although the painting is lined, the artist's signature is clearly visible on the reverse along the upper edge. A continuous layer of off-white priming coats the canvas and extends to the cut edges of the fabric.[1] The design layers are the result of direct applications of relatively pure colors worked wet into wet over this ground. The oil-like paint varies from low to moderately high impasto; the texture of the canvas remains visible in many areas. A fairly stiff, paste-like appearance characterizes the surface quality of the paint film. The painting is in excellent condition with only a few tiny, inpainted losses along the bottom edge. An inappropriately glossy varnish and a good deal of wax/resin stuck in the interstices of the canvas were removed in a 1993 treatment. The painting was left unvarnished after this treatment.

### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

The priming covers all of the tacking margins, indicating that the canvas was primed before painting. This usually indicates that the priming was commercially prepared rather than applied by the artist.

### **PROVENANCE**

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Purchased c. 1912/1914 by Harrie T. Lindeberg [1879-1959] for Herman S. Brookman [1891-1973], New York, and Portland, Oregon;[1] by inheritance to his son, Bernard Brookman [1912-2001], Watsonville, California; gift 1991 to NGA.

[1] Herman Brookman was a New York City architect who worked as a draftsman and designer for Harrie T. Lindeberg from 1909 until 1923, when he moved to Portland, Oregon, to start his own firm. One day, Lindeberg took Brookman to lunch and then to an exhibition of Hartley's work, where he offered to buy his employee any painting in the gallery. Brookman chose *Maine Woods*, and it remained in his family until 1991. The date of the purchase is unknown; Bernard Brookman suggested it might have occurred in 1920, when his father temporarily left Lindeberg's employ to study in Europe, while Philip Brookman, Bernard's son, suggested it was around 1912/1914. Herman Brookman specialized in residential architecture and designed the M. Lloyd Frank estate, now Lewis and Clark College, as well as the Temple Beth Israel and the Memorial Temple House in the Portland area. The provenance has been reconstructed through letters from Bernard Brookman, 2 February 1990, and his son Philip Brookman, 28 September 1989, both to NGA curator Nan Rosenthal, in NGA curatorial files. See also https://digital.lib.washington.edu/architect/architects/2221/.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1909 Probably Exhibition of Paintings in Oil by Mr. Marsden Hartley, of Maine, 291 Gallery, New York, 1909, probably one of the Songs of Autumn.

1974 Loan to display with permanent collection, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1974-before 1989.





Marsden Hartley American, 1877 - 1943

# Mount Katahdin, Maine

1942

oil on hardboard

overall:  $76 \times 101.9$  cm (29 15/16 x 40 1/8 in.) framed:  $101.6 \times 127 \times 5.7$  cm (40 x 50 x 2 1/4 in.)

Inscription: lower right: M.H. / 42 Gift of Mrs. Mellon Byers 1970.27.1

### **ENTRY**

Marsden Hartley was fascinated by mountains throughout his career. His habit of painting a series of views of the same site, as he would with Mount Katahdin, was inspired by *Paul Cézanne*'s famous paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire in Aix-en-Provence. After seeing a Cézanne exhibition at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris in 1926, Hartley had actually moved to Aix, where he lived from 1926 to 1928 and, following in Cézanne's footsteps, produced his own series. In a letter to a friend, Hartley referred to Mount Katahdin as a "magnificent savior" and commented: "I feel as if I shall be rivaling Hiroshige who published 80 views of Fujiyama,"[1] a reference to the famous 19th-century Japanese artist whose colorful woodblock prints were important precedents for both Cézanne's and Hartley's mountain vistas.

By the late 1930s the aging Hartley had experienced a number of personal and professional reversals that prompted him to consider returning to his native state to reinvent himself as a Maine artist. After his German Alpine landscapes exhibited at *Alfred Stieglitz*'s gallery An American Place in March 1936 elicited negative critical

Mount Katahdin, Maine

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reviews, he wrote to a friend proposing "a 100% Yankee show next year."[2] Later in 1936 he was devastated by the deaths at sea of three members of a fisherman's family with whom he had been living in Nova Scotia. After another exhibition at An American Place in April 1937 failed to produce sales or positive reviews, he broke with Stieglitz.

It is indicative of how fraught Hartley's relationship with Stieglitz had become that the catalog to his final exhibition at An American Place, while it did not include a single painting of Maine, was nevertheless accompanied by an essay titled "On the Subject of Nativeness—A Tribute to Maine," in which Hartley announced that the "quality of nativeness is coloured [sic] by heritage, birth, and environment, and it is therefore for this reason that I wish to declare myself the painter from Maine."[3] For many years Stieglitz had been directing Hartley, as he had Arthur Dove (American, 1880 - 1946), John Marin (American, 1870 - 1953), and Georgia O'Keeffe (American, 1887 - 1986), to forego European influences and instead to tie his artistic identity more directly to the distinctive qualities of the American landscape. Finally, in June 1937, plagued by financial problems and ill health, Hartley sought refuge in Georgetown, Maine. He wrote to a friend: "Maine is a strong silent country and so I being born there am able to express it in terms of itself with which I am familiar."[4]

After brief stays in Portland, Vinalhaven, and Brookville, Hartley settled in Bangor in September 1939, where he realized a long-standing objective to paint Mount Katahdin, Maine's highest mountain and the northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. Thanks largely to the efforts of the state's former governor Percival Baxter, the mountain and the land surrounding it had been designated a forest preserve called Baxter State Park during the early 1930s. The area's unspoiled, rugged beauty was heavily promoted as a tourist destination by state authorities, who noted that Native Americans had considered it a sacred site and that it had attracted such luminaries as Henry David Thoreau and Frederic Edwin Church. Donna M. Cassidy has convincingly demonstrated that Hartley was aware of the promotional literature concerning Mount Katahdin, and that his "journey to Katahdin, however brief, can be understood as part of his publicity campaign to promote himself as a Maine artist and market his Maine work."[5] In addition to the practical need to make marketable works, Hartley also responded to the regionalism that attracted so many American artists and intellectuals during the 1930s, and naturally turned to his native state for inspiration.[6]

In October 1939 Hartley made arrangements to have the district's fish and game warden, Caleb Warren Scribner, escort him to Mount Katahdin. After driving to the

base of the mountain, Scribner led the 62-year-old artist on an arduous four-mile trek to Cobb's Camp, a family-managed hunters' camp located on the shore of Lake Katahdin. During six of Hartley's eight days there the weather conditions allowed him to work outdoors on oil sketches and drawings that he would use as source material for the series of paintings of the mountain that he produced over the next three years.

The experience had a transformative effect on Hartley. Shortly after returning to Bangor, he informed a friend that "I know I have seen God now. The occult connection that is established when one loves nature was complete—and so I felt transported to a visible fourth dimension—and since heaven is inviolably a state of mind I have been there these past ten days." He felt "lifted out of a long siege of psychic languor and emotional lassitude,"[7] and was eager to begin painting the mountain. Using the Indian spelling for Katahdin (which Thoreau had also used), he informed another friend that "I have achieved the 'sacred' pilgrimage to Ktaadn. . . . I feel as if I had seen God for the first time—and find him so nonchalantly solemn."[8] Hartley had also been impressed by his guide Caleb Scribner, and honored him in a 1941 poem, "The Pilgrimage, and the Game Warden."[9]

From 1939 to 1942 Hartley produced at least 18 oil paintings of Katahdin from the same viewpoint and with nearly identical compositions. The work had a rejuvenating effect on him. By early February 1940, when he had completed six of the views, he informed a friend: "My work is getting stronger & stronger and more intense all the time which is most heartening at 63."[10] Painted in 1942, the Gallery's Mount Katahdin, Maine was one of Hartley's last versions of the subject. He probably painted it shortly after formalizing arrangements for an exhibition at the gallery of his new dealer Paul Rosenberg in New York. Like the others in the series, for example Mount Katahdin, Autumn No. 2 [fig. 1] and Mount Katahdin [fig. 2], the Gallery's painting was not intended to be a literal view of the mountain, but rather an evocation of its grandeur that captures a seasonal mood. Hartley exercised artistic license by centering Baxter Peak, the mountain's highest point, and bringing it closer to the foreground than it really appeared from his vantage point at Cobb's Camp.[11] The reductive composition consists of four horizontal zones: the lake, the foliage, the mountain, and the sky. In her study of Hartley's mountain paintings, Jeanne Hokin has noted that the artist used "a somewhat looser technique, softening his palette with rosy-violet hues that gradually darken above the vivid verdure of the autumn brush, culminating in the deep blue tones of the watery surface of the lake below. Here using large areas of primary colors,

Hartley simplifies the format by condensing the cloud motif into three discrete forms and positioning the truncated cone of the mountain lower and almost in the center of the composition."[12]

One of the most popular and aesthetically satisfying paintings among Hartley's views of the Maine landmark, Mount Katahdin, Maine raises the issue of how the series should be regarded within the context of his career. The conventional art historical view articulated by Barbara Haskell maintains that the work Hartley started producing in Berlin before World War I is "equal in achievement and sophistication to any work being done by the key figures of the European avantgarde." After returning to the United States in 1915, Hartley spent the next two decades restlessly traveling in Europe and America and experimenting with various styles. In doing so, he set himself apart from the three core members of the Stieglitz group, Dove, Marin, and O'Keeffe, who "remained in America after their initial introduction to modernist theory, and drew on their intuitive responses to natural landscape forms to express a distinctly American vision." It was only after Hartley returned to his native Maine, however, that he was able to create "a group of richly toned, expressive landscapes whose spiritual grandeur equals, if not surpasses, the intensity of his German military paintings."[13] This interpretation accords with Stieglitz's idea that artistic success arises from a special, spiritual affinity or connection to the land of one's birth.

Recently Heather Hole has persuasively challenged this view: "If we accept that his relationship to Maine was not one of simple native connection, inherently different from any other attempt to paint a place, but was rather the end result of a life of philosophical wrangling and negotiation with landscape itself, an important trend becomes visible in his entire body of work." For a visionary artist like Hartley, inner, boundless spiritual truths transcended physical realities. Having been born in Maine, Hartley never lost his spiritual connection to the state no matter where his travels took him. In that sense he had been and always would be "the painter from Maine." Consequently the Katahdin series becomes "the culmination of a lifetime's work, not simply a late return to authenticity after twenty-five years of misguided wandering and experimentation." [14]

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Marsden Hartley, *Mount Katahdin, Autumn No. 2*, 1939–1940, oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Edith and Milton Lowenthal Collection, Bequest of Edith Abrahamson Lowenthal, 1991. www.metmuseum.org



**fig. 2** Marsden Hartley, *Mount Katahdin*, 1941, oil on fiberboard, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966. Image: Cathy Carver

### NOTES

- [1] Hartley to Adelaide Kuntz, Oct. 24, 1939, quoted in Jeanne Hokin, *Pinnacles & Pyramids: The Art of Marsden Hartley* (Albuquerque, NM, 1993), 111; the letter is in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington.
- [2] Hartley to Adelaide Kuntz, possibly late May, 1936, quoted in Jeanne Hokin, Pinnacles & Pyramids: The Art of Marsden Hartley (Albuquerque, NM, 1993), 105, and also quoted in Townsend Ludington, Marsden Hartley: The Biography of an American Artist (Boston, 1992), 250, where he identifies it as dated April 28, 1936. The letter is in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington.
- [3] The essay is reprinted in Gail R. Scott, ed., *On Art by Marsden Hartley* (New York, 1982), 115.
- [4] Hartley to Rogers Bordley, 1939, Archives of American Art; quoted in Barbara Haskell, Marsden Hartley (New York, 1980), 111.
- [5] Donna M. Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation* (Lebanon, NH, 2005), 79.
- [6] See Donna M. Cassidy, "Localized Glory: Marsden Hartley as New England

Regionalist," in Marsden Hartley, ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (Hartford,

- CT, 2002), 175-192.
- Hartley to Elizabeth Sparhawk Jones, Oct. 23, 1939, quoted in Townsend Ludington, Marsden Hartley: The Biography of an American Artist (Boston, 1992), 270; the letter is in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.
- [8] Hartley to Adelaide Kuntz, Oct. 24, 1939, quoted in Jeanne Hokin, Pinnacles & Pyramids: The Art of Marsden Hartley (Albuquerque, NM, 1993), 111; the letter is in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington.
- [9] Marsden Hartley, The Collected Poems of Marsden Hartley, 1904–1943, ed. Gail R. Scott (Santa Rosa, CA, 1987).
- [10] Marsden Hartley to Adelaide Kuntz, Feb. 2, 1940, quoted in Townsend Ludington, Marsden Hartley: The Biography of an American Artist (Boston, 1992), 269.
- [11] Donna M. Cassidy, Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation (Lebanon, NH, 2005), 78, has noted that photographs taken from this same viewpoint were used in contemporary tourist brochures and magazines.
- [12] Jeanne Hokin, Pinnacles & Pyramids: The Art of Marsden Hartley (Albuquerque, NM, 1993), 114.
- [13] Barbara Haskell, Marsden Hartley (New York, 1980), 9.
- [14] Heather Hole, Marsden Hartley and the West: The Search for an American Modernism (Santa Fe, NM, 2007), 142.

### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on the smooth side of a 1/8-inch-thick, pressed, wood pulp board. There is no ground, but there appears to be a shellac size applied to the cardboard panel.[1] The paint is applied in thin, translucent glazes in the bottom layers, while broad, opaque masses painted wet into wet characterize the pictorial elements. The painting was probably executed with large brushes, as there are numerous two-inch brush hairs embedded in the surface. The palette is limited to only a few pigments. A thin layer of glossy, synthetic resin varnish coats the surface.[2]

The painting is in excellent condition. The support is structurally secure, displaying none of the flimsiness or decay often seen in wood pulp supports. The paint layer does not have any cracks or losses, with the exception of a little frame abrasion

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around the edges.

### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

- The bottom layer, which is thin enough to show wood pulp fibers through it, fluoresces a characteristic bright orange-red in ultraviolet light, suggesting the presence of a shellac sizing layer.
- [2] The milky white fluorescence of the surface coating in ultraviolet light suggests that it is a synthetic resin.

### **PROVENANCE**

Estate of the artist; (Paul Rosenberg & Co., New York, as Katahdin, Autumn Rain); purchased 1951 by Hudson D. [1907-1976] and Ione [1915-1987] Walker, Forest Hills, New York, and Provincetown; gift May 1970 to the American Federation of Arts, New York; (Babcock Galleries, New York); purchased 3 December 1970 by NGA with funds given by Mrs. Constance Mellon Byers.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1943 Marsden Hartley, Paul Rosenberg Gallery, New York, 1943, as Ktaadn--Autumn Rain.

1944 Marsden Hartley, Paul Rosenberg Gallery, New York, 1944.

1948 Paintings by Marsden Hartley, Paul Rosenberg Gallery, New York, 1948, no. 16, as Mt. Katahdin--Autumn Rain.

1951 Loan to display with permanent collection, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1951-1970 (during ownership by the Walkers, when not on loan to special exhibitions elsewhere).

1952 [Exhibition of paintings by Marsden Hartley and ceramics by Frances E. Upham], Tweed Gallery (now Tweed Museum of Art), University of Minnesota, Duluth, 1952, no catalogue.

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1955 In Memoriam, American Federation of Arts travelling exhibition, 1955-1956.

1957 The Painter and the Mountain, University of Nebraska Art Galleries, Lincoln, 1957, unpublished checklist.

1959 Photography in the Fine Arts, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, 1959, no catalogue.

1966 Late Works of Marsden Hartley, American Federation of Arts traveling exhibition, 9 venues, 1966-1967, no. 39.

1968 Marsden Hartley: Painter/Poet 1877-1943, University Galleries, University of Southern California, Los Angeles; Tucson Art Center; University Art Museum, University of Texas, Austin, 1968-1969, no. 49, repro.

1980 Marsden Hartley, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth; University Art Museum, Berkeley, 1980-81, no. 99, repro.

1999 Picturing Old New England: Image and Memory, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C., 1999, no. 200, repro.

2001 Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2001, no. 157, repro.

2003 Marsden Hartley: American Modernist, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, 2003-2004, no. 93, repro.

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	National Gallery of Art. New York, 1981: 216, repro. 226.
1984	Walker, John. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Rev. ed. New York,
	1984: 574, no. 880, color repro.
1988	Wilmerding, John. American Masterpieces from the National Gallery of
	Art. Rev. ed. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1988: 174, repro.
1990	Paulson, Ronald. Figure and Abstraction in Contemporary Painting. New
	Brunswick and London, 1990: repro. 69.
1992	American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue. National Gallery of Art,
	Washington, 1992: 194, repro.
1992	Ludington, Townsend. Marsden Hartley: The Biography of an American
	Artist. 1st ed. Boston, 1992: repro.
1993	Hokin, Jeanne. Pinnacles & Pyramids: The Art of Marsden Hartley.
	Albuquerque, 1993: cover, 114, color pl. 33.
1995	Robertson, Bruce. <i>Marsden Hartley</i> . New York, 1995: 123, color repro.
2000	Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries.
	Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2001: no. 157.
2007	Hole, Heather. Marsden Hartley and the West: The Search for an
	American Modernism. Exh. cat. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe.
	New Haven and Santa Fe, 2007: 142, pl. 127.
2009	Stavitsky, Gail, and Katherine Rothkopf. Cézanne and American
	Modernism. Exh. cat. Montclair Art Museum; Baltimore Museum of Art;
	Phoenix Art Museum. Montclair and Baltimore, 2009: 216, fig. 1.

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Peter A. Juley & Son, Robert Henri, c. 1908, photograph, 1913 Armory Show, 50th anniversary exhibition records, 1962-1963, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

## Henri, Robert

American, 1865 - 1929

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Robert Henri was born Robert Henry Cozad in Cincinnati, Ohio, on June 24, 1865, the son of a professional gambler and real estate developer. The family lived in Nebraska and Colorado, but fled east when the father shot and killed a rancher over a land dispute and was indicted for manslaughter. They changed their last name because of the ensuing scandal and eventually settled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, during the early 1880s.

In 1886 Henri enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, where he studied under Thomas Anshutz, Thomas Hovenden, and James B. Kelly. In 1888 he went to Paris and enrolled at the Académie Julian under William-Adolphe Bouguereau and Tony Robert-Fleury. During the summers he painted in Brittany and Barbizon, and he also visited Italy prior to being admitted to the École des Beaux-Arts in 1891. He returned to Philadelphia late that year, and in 1892 resumed studying at the academy. Henri initiated his long and influential career as an art teacher at the School of Design for Women, where he taught until 1895. During this period he met a group of young Philadelphia newspaper illustrators who, with Henri's encouragement, would pursue painting careers in New York: John Sloan (American, 1871 - 1951), William Glackens (American, 1870 -1938), George Benjamin Luks (American, 1866 - 1933), and Everett Shinn (American,

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1873 - 1953). He also made regular trips to Paris, where he was particularly influenced by the works of Edouard Manet (French, 1832 - 1883), Frans Hals (Dutch, c. 1582/1583 - 1666), and Diego Velázquez (Spanish, 1599 - 1660). In 1898 one of his paintings was purchased for the Musée Nationale du Luxembourg.

In 1900 Henri settled in New York. He taught at the New York School of Art (formerly the Chase School) from 1902 to 1908. He rejected both the genteel tradition of academic painting and impressionism, and instead created unconventional urban realist subjects executed in a bold, painterly style. Around 1902 he began to specialize in portraiture. In 1906 Henri was elected to the National Academy of Design, and that summer he taught in Spain. When the academy jury rejected works by Henri's friends and colleagues—Sloan, Glackens, Luks, and Shinn-for its 1907 annual show, he resolved to organize an independent exhibition. The result was the famous show of The Eight that was held at Macbeth Gallery in February 1908. In 1910 Henri organized the first Exhibition of Independent Artists, an egalitarian group modeled after the Salon des Independents in Paris and operating under the principle, "no jury, no prizes." Henri's influence began to wane with the gradual ascent of more radical modernist styles after the 1913 Armory Show. Nevertheless, he continued to win numerous awards and taught at the Art Students League from 1915 until a year before his death from cancer on July 12, 1929.

Although Henri was an important portraitist and figure painter who was admired for his straightforward, vital likenesses of unusual sitters, he is best remembered today as the influential, progressive, and charismatic founder of the so-called Ashcan school of urban realism. A champion of "art for life's sake," he was noted for his democratic approach to portraiture, and chose sitters from diverse racial groups and walks of life. In 1909 he was strongly influenced by the color theories of Hardesty Maratta, and his palette brightened considerably. Henri was a tremendously influential teacher, and his ideas on art were collected by former pupil Margery Ryerson and published as *The Art Spirit* (Philadelphia, 1923).

Robert Torchia

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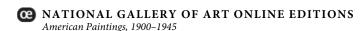
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Robert Henri American. 1865 - 1929

## Snow in New York

1902

oil on canvas

overall: 81.3 x 65.5 cm (32 x 25 13/16 in.)

framed:  $105.4 \times 89.2 \times 10.1$  cm (41 1/2 x 35 1/8 x 4 in.) Inscription: lower left: Robert Henri / Mar 5 1902

Chester Dale Collection 1954.4.3

#### **ENTRY**

In the summer of 1900, Robert Henri returned from a lengthy stay in Paris and rented a house in New York City on East 58th Street overlooking the East River. By June 1901 he had established a studio in the Sherwood Building on the corner of West 57th Street and Sixth Avenue, and in September he began to live there. At this point in his career, the artist occupied himself with painting cityscapes similar to those he had recently executed in Paris. In March 1902 the dealer William Macbeth encouraged him to paint New York street scenes to be included in a solo exhibition scheduled for the following month. Henri hoped to produce a painting for the occasion that would achieve a degree of critical acclaim comparable to that of *La Neige* [fig. 1], a snowy view of the rue de Sèvres in Paris that had been purchased for the Musée du Luxembourg in 1899.[1]

Henri alluded to *Snow in New York* in a diary entry of March 5, 1902: "Painted snow storm. street. high houses with well of sky between. gray looming sky. brownish houses near horizon. figures. red note electric street lamp. snow." He identified the exact subject in his Record Book: "N.Y. down E. on 55th St. from 6 Ave. Brown houses at 5 Ave. storm effect. snow. wagon to right."[2] Leslie Katz has aptly described the scene as representing "the dingy, overcast mood of one of New York's brownstone corridors, the street a thick slush of soiled and rutted snow, a sodden atmosphere animated and cheered by a lone horse-drawn wagon and two people (red splotches), under a patch of sky."[3] Henri's urban snowscape is fundamentally different from those by impressionist artists of the same period (see, for example, [fig. 2]): it depicts an unspectacular side street in the vicinity of his studio, rather than an imposing view of a major avenue; there is nothing

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narrative, anecdotal, or prettified about the image; the straightforward, one-point perspective composition is devoid of trivial details; the exceptionally daring, textured brushwork (especially noticeable in the center foreground) has more in common with a preparatory oil sketch, or *pochade*, than a finished oil painting; and the somber palette creates an oppressive atmosphere. Although more conventional artists exploited snow for its picturesque quality, Henri's snow is streaked with mud and gravel, a phenomenon that he emphasized in his thumbnail sketch of the painting in his Record Book. His fluid technique conveys a sense of energy and immediacy, and reflects an extensive firsthand knowledge, gained primarily through Henri's numerous excursions to Europe, of the art of Frans Hals (Dutch, c. 1582/1583 - 1666), Diego Velázquez (Spanish, 1599 - 1660), and Edouard Manet (French, 1832 - 1883).[4] The gloomy ambience, enlivened by only a few touches of red, is indicative of the artist's essentially realist proclivities.

Those who reviewed the 1902 Macbeth Gallery exhibition evidently did not single out *Snow in New York* for discussion, but they did react to Henri's bold technique. Arthur Hoeber complained that "not infrequently Mr. Henri leaves off where the real difficulties of picture-making begin."[5] The critic Charles FitzGerald wrote: "It is a curious thing that a certain mechanical polish is commonly associated with the idea of finish, and from a few remarks dropped by casual visitor's [*sic*] to Mr. Henri's exhibition, it is evident that his landscapes are regarded by many as sketches, or thoughts half-expressed." FitzGerald went on to defend the artist by noting that a couple of paintings in the show were "worth all the hands that ever niggled over a surface for the sake of explaining and polishing what from the first conception was meaningless and worthless."[6] Some critics deemed Henri "a skillful handler of the brush," and found his work "vital and strong."[7] Nevertheless, *Snow in New York* was one of only two pictures that sold (the second has not been identified).

Because of its literal objectivity, *Snow in New York* has traditionally been interpreted by art historians as exemplifying Henri's penchant for matter-of-fact reportage of urban subjects. Such a view is reflected in Milton W. Brown's characterization of it as "a paradigm of the new realism in American painting of the turn of the century that became known as the Ashcan school."[8] In his discussion of the closely related *Street Scene with Snow (57th Street, N.Y.C.)* [fig. 3], Bruce Chambers convincingly demonstrates that Henri's urban views are strongly influenced by the symbolist aesthetics to which he had been exposed in Paris.[9] Like the symbolists, Henri sought to capture a subject's intangible mood or essence—what he called the "effect"—rather than a literal transcription of nature,

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an objective he achieved during the creative process by relying on memory and mental imagery. Nevertheless, Snow in New York is a realist image that looks back to Alfred Stieglitz's 1893 photograph Winter-Fifth Avenue [fig. 4], and forward to George Bellows's Steaming Streets [fig. 5].

Discouraged by the fact that his New York cityscapes failed to sell and increasingly attracted to figurative art, Henri ceased to paint urban subjects and resolved to become a portraitist late in 1902. In retrospect, the expressive intensity and painterly fluency of Snow in New York qualify it as one of Henri's most accomplished works from this early period in his career. It exemplifies his advice that students should strive to capture "the romance of snow-filled atmosphere and the grimness of a house."[10] Such paintings give credence to John Sloan's opinion that Henri's landscapes and cityscapes are "too little known" and "among the finest things he did," and it is fitting that Sloan, William Glackens (American, 1870 - 1938), Everett Shinn (American, 1873 - 1953), and George Benjamin Luks (American, 1866 -1933) all became distinguished painters of a genre their teacher had abandoned.[11]

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Robert Henri, Snow (La Neige), 1899, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo by Gérard Blot



fig. 2 Camille Pissarro, The Boulevard Montmartre on a Winter Morning, 1897, oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Katrin S. Vletor, in loving memory of Ernest G. Vietor, 1960

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**fig. 3** Robert Henri, *Street Scene with Snow (57th Street, N.Y.C.)*, 1902, oil on canvas, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Mabel Brady Garvan Collection



**fig. 4** Alfred Stieglitz, *Winter—Fifth Avenue*, 1893, carbon print, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection

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**fig. 5** George Bellows, *Steaming Streets*, 1908, oil on canvas, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Sterling Morton for the Preston Morton Collection

### **NOTES**

- [1] Many of Henri's early New York cityscapes were snow scenes. Examples include *East River Embankment, Winter* (1900, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington), *East River, Snow* (1900, The Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas, Austin), and *Blackwell's Island, East River* (1901, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York).
- [2] Record Book "A," no. 54. A transcription of the text and copy of the artist's sketch of the painting from the Record Book were sent June 28, 1968, to E. John Bullard III of the National Gallery of Art by Robert Chapellier of Chapellier Galleries, New York (in NGA curatorial files). The original Record Books are owned privately.
- [3] Leslie Katz, "The World of the Eight," Arts Yearbook 1 (1957): 70.

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[4] For an interesting comparison, see Manet's Effect of Snow on Petit-Montrouge, 1870, oil on canvas, National Museum Cardiff.

- [5] Arthur Hoeber, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, April 4, 1902, quoted in Bennard B. Perlman, *Robert Henri: His Life and Art* (New York, 1991), 49.
- [6] Charles FitzGerald, "Mr. Robert Henri and Some 'Translators," New York Evening Sun, April 8, 1902, quoted in Bennard B. Perlman, Robert Henri: His Life and Art (New York, 1991), 49.
- [7] Samuel Swift, New York Mail & Express, April 8, 1902; the Brooklyn Eagle, April 4, 1902; both quoted in Bennard B. Perlman, Robert Henri: His Life and Art (New York, 1991), 49.
- [8] Milton W. Brown, One Hundred Masterpieces of American Painting from Public Collections in Washington, D.C. (Washington, DC, 1983), 124. John Walker, Paintings from America (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1951), 36, opined that Snow in New York was evidence that the Ashcan school painters were capable of "subtle tenderness" in addition to their reputation for painterly gusto and social protest, and noted its "mood of wistfulness, its nostalgia like that curious sadness which sometimes comes at twilight."
- [9] Bruce Chambers, "Robert Henri's Street Scene with Snow (57th Street, N.Y.C.): An Ideal of City 'in Snow Effect,'" Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin 39 (Winter 1986): 34–35. Henri listed and described Street Scene with Snow in his Record Book "A," number 222; an entry in his diary of Dec. 5, 1902 documents that he painted the picture that afternoon.
- [10] Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit*, comp. Margery Ryerson (New York, 1923), 259; quoted in Mahonri Sharp Young, *The Eight* (New York, 1973), 24.
- [11] Van Wyck Brooks, John Sloan: A Painter's Life (New York, 1955), 126.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The plain-weave, medium-weight canvas support was glue-lined to a similar fabric and remounted on a non-original stretcher in 1952. The original tacking edges were removed at that time. The thin ground is brown-black and remains exposed in several areas. The artist freely applied paint in a thick paste with high impasto in the whites and bright colors. In the dark areas, the paint was applied in a thin wash so that the fabric weave remains visible. There are numerous small losses in the high impasto areas, scattered small areas of retouching at the top right, in the center around the street lamp, and at the bottom in the center. The surface was inpainted and coated with a synthetic resin varnish in 1981, after it was cleaned of a yellowed varnish and severely discolored retouching.

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#### **PROVENANCE**

Sold 1902 to A.J. Crawford.[1] (Sale, James P. Silo, New York, 20-21 February 1925, no. 268); Chester Dale [1883-1962], New York; gift 1954 to NGA.

[1] The painting was possibly sold out of the 1902 exibition of Henri's work at Macbeth Gallery in New York. The sale date and reference to Crawford are in the artist's journal, as follows: "Sold to A.J. (?) Crawford (Annex Little Shop) 253 5th Ave.1902. In Mr. Crawford's house in London England 1906." The transcription of the journal entry was provided by Chapellier Galleries, New York, in a letter of 28 June 1968 to NGA curator E. John Bullard III; in NGA curatorial files.

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Soichi Sunami, *Edward Hopper*, c. 1928, Miscellaneous Photographs collection. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

# Hopper, Edward American, 1882 - 1967

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Edward Hopper was born in Nyack, New York, in 1882 to a middle-class family. After he graduated high school in 1899, his parents, though supportive of his artistic ambitions, encouraged him to pursue commercial illustration. He studied at the Correspondence School of Illustrating in New York City for a year before enrolling in classes at the New York School of Art in 1900, where he switched his focus to fine art. There, Hopper studied under William Merritt Chase (American, 1849 - 1916) and Robert Henri (American, 1865 - 1929), who encouraged their students to paint the everyday realities of the world around them. In 1906 he briefly worked part-time as an illustrator and then, over the next four years, made three extended trips to Paris and other European cities, where he was particularly influenced by the works of Edgar Degas (French, 1834 - 1917) and Edouard Manet (French, 1832 - 1883).

In 1910, Hopper moved to 3 Washington Square North in Greenwich Village, where he would live and work for the rest of his life (although from 1930 on he spent nearly every summer on Cape Cod and built a house in South Truro in 1934). For the next decade, as Hopper sought recognition from the art world, he continued to earn his living as an illustrator—work he disliked and would later attempt to conceal. During this period Hopper exhibited his paintings in a number of group shows in New York City, including the *Exhibition of Independent Artists* in 1910 and the 1913 Armory Show.

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Hopper took up printmaking in 1915, and although he continued to paint in oil, it was the artist's etchings that first achieved both critical and commercial success. It was also in this medium that Hopper developed a recognizable style in which ordinary places—motels, gas stations, restaurants—while realistically rendered, are pervaded with a sense of estrangement or loneliness. His human figures, if they appear at all, are solitary and pensive. In these etchings, and later paintings, mysterious moods are often reinforced through dramatic lighting, both natural and artificial. Both as a painter and a printmaker, Hopper used realism's contemporary subject matter and structured compositions to explore the alienation and anxieties of modern life.

In 1923 six of Hopper's watercolors were accepted to the Brooklyn Museum's International Watercolor Exhibition, from which the museum purchased *Mansard Roof* (1923) for \$100. The following year he gave up commercial work to paint full time and married Josephine "Jo" Verstille Nivison, a fellow pupil from Robert Henri's class and herself an accomplished painter. Jo would prove indispensible to Hopper's artistic success: not only did she pose for many of his female figures and encourage his work in watercolor, but she took over from her husband the task of keeping detailed records of his artistic production, including where works were shown and to whom they were sold, ultimately producing an impressive archive of Hopper's long career.

Hopper's success in both exhibiting and selling his work continued to grow. In 1927 his solo show of watercolors at the Frank K. Rehn Gallery in New York attracted favorable reviews and every work exhibited was sold (including one work to fellow artist George Bellows). During the '20s the artist also sold works to the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and to the collector Duncan Phillips. In 1930 his painting *House by the Railroad* (1925) was the first painting by any artist to enter the collection of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Three years later, MoMA's founding director, Alfred H. Barr Jr., organized a retrospective of the artist's work at that museum, though some critics did not find Hopper's realist style modern enough.

Throughout his career, Hopper was the subject of several more retrospective exhibitions and was chosen to represent the United States at the 1952 Venice Biennale. Though some critics at midcentury failed to see the abstract structures underlying Hopper's realism and dismissed his work as "illustrative," by the 1960s a new generation of artists working in pop art and photorealism claimed him as an

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important influence on their work. The artist and his wife both died in New York, only ten months apart.

September 29, 2016

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Edward Hopper American, 1882 - 1967

## Cape Cod Evening

1939

oil on canvas

overall: 76.2 x 101.6 cm (30 x 40 in.) framed: 106.7 x 132.1 cm (42 x 52 in.)

Inscription: lower right: Edward Hopper; lower right on reverse of frame: frame made for / Edward Hopper by / Carl

Sandelin framemaker / 133 E 60th St NYC. John Hay Whitney Collection 1982.76.6

### **ENTRY**

In the summer of 1930, Edward Hopper and his wife rented a cottage in South Truro on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Situated close to the art colony of Provincetown, Truro had been a thriving whaling village until its gradual decline after the Civil War. By the time the Hoppers arrived, it was a small, isolated village with a population of only 541 people, half of whom were of Portuguese descent. A 1937 travel guide notes that Truro had "attracted a colony of artists and writers who have found its quiet simplicity and freedom from crowds a congenial environment for creative work," and that "no other spot on the Cape is richer in folklore and piquant legend."[1] These qualities appealed to the Hoppers, who built a studio house there in July 1934, where they spent six months of almost every succeeding year.

Cape Cod Evening depicts an athletic man sitting at the front door of a Victorian house and unsuccessfully attempting to summon a collie standing in the exact center foreground of the composition, chest-deep in grass. The dog's attention is

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riveted to an unseen entity to its right, and it ignores its master. A woman stands behind the man with her arms folded across her chest, locked in a gesture that signifies withdrawal and defensiveness. She wears a tightly fitting dress that accentuates her stocky figure. Several aspects of the scene are disturbing: typical of the human protagonists of Hopper's paintings, the man and woman—presumably a couple—are self-absorbed and oblivious to each other's presence; the uncut grass and encroaching locust grove are out of character with the well-maintained house; the dog's alert stance seems a portent of some imminent danger; and the advancing darkness of evening imparts a melancholy mood.

Cape Cod Evening is one of the best known among Hopper's numerous Cape Cod subjects.[2] The genesis of the painting is exceptionally well documented. The artist's wife describes it in the record book of Hopper's works:

. design on glass door and house. ground glass. Foinet canvas,  $Block \times \& \ Winsor \& \ Newton \ colors, \ linseed \ oil, \ lead \ white. \ 1 \ month painting.$ 

] formation, creeping up on one with the dark. The Whipporwill is there out of sight. Painted in S. Truro studio. Dog sat in front seat of car parked at Truro P.O.[3]

Hopper's friend, printmaker Richard Lahey, has related how the collie came to be drawn and has provided additional details regarding the development of the composition:

Edward was getting the dog painted and he was pretty well along with the whole composition—one day he decided to go down to the Truro Library and check the physical [identification] in the encyclopedia so as not to be at fault—There seemed to be no actual collie dog in Truro—or at least none that had come to his attention. When he returned with meager information from the library—they parked the car and there was this small miracle—just the kind of dog that was wanted came out of the parked car ahead—with a child while the mother went into the nearby store to

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shop. Jo made friends with the children and dog—Edward got out his sketch book and pencil and while Jo held the dog with patting . . . Edward got his sketch. Speaking of the experiences of painting it Edward said "I made studies in pencil. Then take the canvas 36 1/2 x 50 1/4 out to the landscape when the light and time of day was about the same. I worked from nature and then painted (oils?) in the studio from memory—changing organizing composing—I remember how I would say to myself when I was working in the studio and going a little stale—How wonderful it would be to go back to nature again with the big canvas and get fresh suggestions of nature—and then after a few days working would declare—The accidents of nature are getting in my way—I want to get back to the studio again." So it went back and forth until he had landed it.[4]

Even the usually laconic Hopper offered some informative comments about the painting:

] or some evening sound."[5]

Although Hopper was noncommittal about the whip-poor-will, his wife's comments indicate that the bird was important, and that the painting was almost named after it. The widespread and nocturnal whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferus*), a species named after its distinctive vocalization, inhabits deciduous woodlands and forest edges, where it feeds on insects at dusk. Its implied presence here is thus appropriate because of the twilight ambience and setting at the edge of a grove of trees. Hopper, who often selected his imagery from popular culture, may well have been familiar with the opening line of the song "My Blue Heaven": "When whip-poor-wills call and evening is nigh." The 1928 performance of this song by the singer Gene Austin became one of the best-selling singles of all time.[6]

Like many of Hopper's paintings, *Cape Cod Evening* was not a preconceived composition, but the result of a long process of deliberation. Its evolution can be traced in the surviving preparatory drawings [fig. 1] [fig. 2] [fig. 3] [fig. 4] [fig. 5] [fig. 6] [fig. 7] [fig. 8] [fig. 9]. From the outset, Hopper had a basic sense of the composition's main components, with the grass field occupying the painting's lower half, the house set in the upper right quadrant, and the locust grove in the upper left quadrant. He experimented with a number of different positions for the

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figures before arriving at their final disposition in a sketch that was blocked out for transferal to the canvas. The only significant difference between the last sketch and the painting is the placement of the windows in the second story of the house. The "changing organizing composing" to which Lahey alluded must have involved less noticeable alterations, such as the length of the woman's dress, the window shade on the right, and the placement of the trees.

Hopper was an introverted individual who was notoriously secretive about the meaning of his paintings. *Cape Cod Evening* is a representative example of his mature work that features his most characteristic motifs and themes. Like many of his paintings, including other Cape Cod subjects,[7] the scene occurs at a specific time of day indicated both in the title and by his use of light. He was fascinated by architecture, and buildings play a major role in many of his paintings, either as subjects or as primary accessories. The psychological isolation that separates the male and female protagonists in *Cape Cod Evening* reflects Hopper's penchant for mysterious, quasi-narrative subjects that imply dysfunctional sexual relationships.[8] Also typical of Hopper, the painting's sinister ambience may have been influenced by contemporary film noir.[9]

Attempts by art historians to interpret this enigmatic composition range from the excessively speculative to the more or less plausible. Lloyd Goodrich was one of the few who confined himself to basics when he described the scene as representing "a Yankee couple and their dog outside their neat white house in the twilight, the woods growing dark, the whippoorwill [sic] beginning."[10] Noting the lack of communication between the "disenchanted couple" and the use of an evening ambience to convey a negative connotation, Gail Levin wrote that in this work dusk "alludes to the twilight of a relationship." She theorized that Hopper ignored the dog's traditional iconographic function as a symbol of fidelity and used it instead as a symbol of lasciviousness and gluttony "to make his own ironic comment on the couple's deteriorating relationship."[11] Levin later suggested that the scene alludes to Hopper's deteriorating relationship with his wife Jo: "The woman appears angry, her posture tense and forbidding—a stance that suggests the fury that Jo recurrently directed toward Edward."[12] Levin, followed by Heinz Liesbrock, opined that the mysterious evening ambience was inspired by Robert Frost, whose poetry Hopper admired.[13] Both Levin and Liesbrock saw a parallel in Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," particularly in the line: "The woods are lovely, dark, and deep."

Cape Cod Evening

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Rather than viewing the man and woman as estranged from each other, Robert C. Hobbs saw them as mutually alienated from their environment: "Cape Cod Evening is concerned with the loss of a viable rural America: it focuses on those people and places that have been left in the wake of progress."[14] That the Victorian house stands in a field of grass rather than an orderly lawn, along with its uncomfortable proximity to the grove of locust trees, indicates nature's reclamation of the land. The implied presence of the whip-poor-will "symbolizes the power of nature over culture." The woman "is a composite of misaligned signs" who "symbolizes nature overgrown and ill at ease with itself, nature corseted and wearing bobbed hair."[15] Hobbs concluded that Cape Cod Evening "constitutes a new paradigm in American landscape painting, for it emphasizes the passage of the agrarian age and the forlorn individuals who become idle caretakers of an anachronistic way of life."[16] For Mark Strand, "the fact that the man's coaxing is not answered suggests that it is only a matter of time before the dissolution of the family, momentarily bound by focused attention, will occur."[17] In 1995, the writer Ann Beattie published a short story inspired by the painting, in which she conjured the interactions between the Hoppers and fictional neighbors on Cape Cod during the summer of 1939, shortly before war broke out in Europe.[18]

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the painting is how Hopper achieved such a powerful evocation of sound through purely visual means. The collie's alert pointed ears indicate that it has heard something in the distance, while the inscrutable, self-absorbed human protagonists seem inattentive and oblivious as they focus on the ruminations of their own minds. During his trip to the Truro Library to research the collie, Hopper probably read that the breed is noted for being unusually obedient. One contemporary authority wrote that a collie, particularly of the Scottish, Welsh, or English variety, "obeys the voice or whistle of his master instantaneously."[19] Another writer declared that the collie was an excellent watchdog, whose "faithfulness and loyalty have been widely and justly publicized. He is usually reserved and distrustful of strangers but devoted to his master."[20] But in *Cape Cod Evening*, the collie, riveted by the sound of the whip-poor-will, ignores its master. It seems that the dog is momentarily neglecting its domestic allegiances for the call of the wild.

The theme of the natural world encroaching upon civilization predominates in *Cape Cod Evening*, with three-quarters of the composition devoted to the grass and trees. Hopper presents the viewer with an assemblage of carefully orchestrated dissonances that convey a generally pessimistic, skeptical attitude

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about humanity's relationship with nature and human nature itself. Although Hopper may have selected imagery from the world around him, he was only superficially a realist. Taking external visual reality as his starting point, he transformed his subjects into "mental impressions of things," reassembling them into deeply personal visions that lie beyond the reach of literal or psychological interpretations.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Edward Hopper, study for Cape Cod Evening, 1939, fabricated chalk on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.182. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art



fig. 2 Edward Hopper, study for Cape Cod Evening, 1939, graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.227. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art



fig. 3 Edward Hopper, study for Cape Cod Evening, 1939, fabricated chalk on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.183a. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art

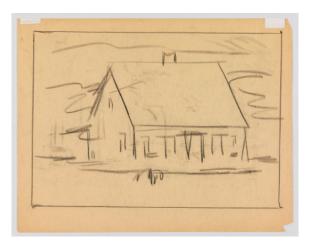


fig. 4 Edward Hopper, study for Cape Cod Evening, 1939, fabricated chalk on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.183b. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art

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**fig. 5** Edward Hopper, study for *Cape Cod Evening*, 1939, fabricated chalk on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.181. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art



**fig. 6** Edward Hopper, study for *Cape Cod Evening*, 1939, fabricated chalk on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.180. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art

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**fig. 7** Edward Hopper, study for *Cape Cod Evening*, 1939, graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.164. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art



**fig. 8** Edward Hopper, study for *Cape Cod Evening*, 1939, graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.163. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art

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**fig. 9** Edward Hopper, study for *Cape Cod Evening*, 1939, graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.338. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art

### **NOTES**

- [1] Massachusetts: A Guide to Its Places and People (New York, 1938), 505.
- [2] For a discussion of Hopper's relationship with Cape Cod, see Alexander Theroux, "Edward Hopper's Cape Cod," *Art & Antiques* (Jan. 1990): 57–66, 97–98.
- [3] Josephine Nivison Hopper, "Artist's Ledger, Book II," 1907–1962, 31, Whitney Museum of American Art; quoted in Gail Levin, Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné, 3 vols. (New York, 1995), 3:264; and reproduced in Deborah Lyons, Edward Hopper: A Journal of His Work (New York, 1997), 51.
- [4] Richard Lahey Papers, "Reminiscences: Artists I Have Known," Edward Hopper Papers, Archives of American Art, roll 378, frames 980, 982; quoted in Gail Levin, Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné, 3 vols. (New York, 1995), 3:264.
- [5] Edward Hopper, quoted in Grace Pagano, Contemporary American
  Painting: The Encyclopedia Britannica Collection (New York, 1945), 57.
- [6] Walter Donaldson wrote the music to "My Blue Heaven" and the lyrics were by George A. Whiting. Another well-known song featuring the whip-poor-will is Jerome Kern's "Whip-poor-will" (1920); for a discussion of that song see

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- Alec Wilder, *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators*, 1900–1950 (New York, 1972), 52–53.
- [7] Other examples are *Cape Cod Sunset* (1934, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York), *Cape Cod Afternoon* (1936, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA), and *Cape Cod Morning* (1950, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC). *Clamdigger* (1935, private collection) has the same basic composition as the Cape Cod paintings and contains many of the essential elements found in *Cape Cod Evening*, including the seated man, the dog, the grove of trees, and the house. However, as related by Gail Levin in *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* (New York, 1995), 305, Hopper considered *Clamdigger* an abysmal failure.
- [8] For a discussion of the pervasive and constant theme of alienation in Hopper's art, see Linda Nochlin, "Edward Hopper and the Imagery of Alienation," Art Journal 41 (Summer 1981): 136–141.
- [9] For the influence of film and photography on Hopper's work, see Gail Levin, "Edward Hopper: The Influence of Theater and Film," Arts Magazine 55 (Oct. 1980): 123–127; Erika Doss, "Edward Hopper, Nighthawks, and Film Noir," Postscript: Essays on Film and the Humanities 2 (Winter 1983): 14–36; Marc Holthof, "Die Hopper-Methode: Vom 'narrativen' zum 'abstrakten' Realismus," and Paul Levine, "Edward Hopper und die amerikanische Kultur," in Edward Hopper, 1882–1967 (Frankfurt, 1992), respectively, 19–27, 28–32.
- [10] Lloyd Goodrich, Edward Hopper (New York, 1964), 42.
- [11] Gail Levin, Edward Hopper (New York, 1984), 57.
- [12] Gail Levin, Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné, 3 vols. (New York, 1995), 3:314. Also see Gail Levin, Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography (New York, 1995), 313–314.
- [13] Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist* (New York, 1980), 62; Heinz Liesbrock, *Edward Hopper: Das Sichtbare und das Unsichtbare* (Stuttgart, Germany, 1992), 51–52
- [14] Robert C. Hobbs, Edward Hopper (Washington, DC, 1987), 109–110.
- [15] Robert C. Hobbs, Edward Hopper (Washington, DC, 1987), 109–110.
- [16] Robert C. Hobbs, Edward Hopper (Washington, DC, 1987), 109–110.
- [17] Mark Strand, Hopper (Hopewell, NJ, 1994), 22.
- [18] Ann Beattie, "Cape Cod Evening," in Deborah Lyons and Adam D. Weinberg, Edward Hopper and the American Imagination (New York, 1995), 9–14. Alexander Nemerov has also interpreted Hopper's Ground Swell, painted immediately after Cape Cod Evening, as an ominous harbinger of World War II. See "Ground Swell: Edward Hopper in 1939," American Art 22, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 50–71.

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- [19] Charles T. Inglee, Working Dogs: The Breeds as Recognized by the American Kennel Club (New York, 1935), 57–58.
- [20] Fredson Thayer Bowers, *The Dog Owner's Handbook* (Boston, 1936), 78–79.

### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The plain-weave, single-thread, medium-weight fabric support was wax-lined and remounted on a nonoriginal, six-member expansion bolt stretcher in 1964.[1] There is one crossbar in each direction. The tacking margins are intact, showing that the painting is still very near its original dimensions. The artist applied paint in layers, mostly wet over dry, on a commercially prepared white ground.[2] He left reserves around the figures and emphasized the halo effect by scraping away the ground and exposing the support's texture. Infrared examination reveals underdrawing in the dog and the man's hand.[3] Incised lines define the vertical edge of the far right window, and pencil marks delineate the ends of the horizontal lines of the clapboard. The pigment in the locust trees has faded from green to blue, probably because it contains a fugitive yellow component. Paint at the top edge, which was protected from light under the rabbet of the frame, retains the original green color. The painting's original appearance is preserved in a color photograph in Contemporary American Painting-Encyclopedia Brittanica Collection [fig. 1]. The painting is in good condition. The surface is coated with a thin layer of synthetic varnish.[4]

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### **TECHNICAL COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Edward Hopper, *Cape Cod Evening*, as reproduced in *Contemporary American Painting: Encyclopedia Brittanica Collection* (New York, 1946), pl. 59. ND205, showing the original color of the pigment in the locust trees

### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

- [1] The conservation files attribute this lining to Jean Volkmar in New York City. There is another treatment listed in the Whitney files that was done by Mme. Testut in 1957, but no details are given.
- [2] The priming covers all of the tacking margins, indicating that the canvas was primed before painting. This usually indicates that the priming was commercially prepared, rather than applied by the artist.
- [3] Infrared examination was conducted with the Kodak 310-21x, a platinum silicide camera with a 55 mm macro lens and a 1.5–2.0 micron filter.
- [4] The painting's frame is original and was chosen by Edward Hopper. His wife, Jo, objected to it: "A beautiful frame—but deadly on that picture." Jo Hopper diary entry, January 9, 1940, as quoted in Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* (New York, 1995), 321.

### **PROVENANCE**

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(Frank K.M. Rehn Gallery, New York), at least in 1943.[1] Encyclopaedia Britannica Collection, New York, by 1945;[2] purchased 1948 by William Benton, New York; purchased 14 September 1950 by John Hay Whitney [1904-1982], Manhasset, New York; deeded 1982 to the John Hay Whitney Charitable Trust, New York; gift 1982 to NGA.

[1] The painting was lent by the Rehn Gallery to a 1943 exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

[2] The painting is included in the 1945 catalogue of the Encyclopedia Britannica Collection.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1943 American Realists and Magic Realists, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1943, no. 18.

1950 Edward Hopper Retrospective Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Detroit Institute of Arts, 1950, no. 51, pl. 17.

1955 National Institute of Arts and Letters, New York, 1955.

1960 The John Hay Whitney Collection, Tate Gallery, London, 1960-1961, no. 34, repro.

1963 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1963.

1964 Edward Hopper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Detroit Institute of Arts; City Art Museum of St. Louis, 1964-1965, no. 35, repro.

1980 Edward Hopper: The Art and The Artist, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Hayward Gallery, London; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Stadtische Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf; Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1980-1982, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 418.

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1983 The John Hay Whitney Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1983, no. 70, repro.

1989 Edward Hopper, Musée Cantini, Marseille; Fundación Juan March, Madrid, 1989-1990, unnumbered catalogue and repro. (Marseille), no. 18 and repro. (Madrid).

1992 Edward Hopper 1882-1967, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1992-1993, no. 68, repro.

1992 Edward Hopper und die Fotografie, Museum Folkwang Essen, Germany, 1992, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

1995 Edward Hopper and the American Imagination, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1995, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 38.

1998 American Light: Selections from the National Gallery of Art, Art Museum of Western Virginia, Roanoke, May-August 1998, no catalogue.

1998 Gifts to the Nation from Mr. and Mrs. John Hay Whitney, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1998-1999, no catalogue.

1998 Treasures of Light: Paintings from the National Gallery of Art, Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, March-April 1998, no catalogue.

2004 Edward Hopper, Tate Modern, London; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2004-2005, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

2006 Full House: Views of the Whitney's Collection at 75, Whitney Museum of Art, New York, 2006.

2007 Edward Hopper, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Art Institute of Chicago, 2007-2008, no. 93, repro.

2012 Hopper, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid; Réunion des Musées Nationaux and Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 2012-2013, no. 51, repro.

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	Britannica Collection. New York, 1945: 57, color repro.
197 <sup>-</sup>	Goodrich, Lloyd. <i>Edward Hopper</i> . New York, 1971: 129, repro. 136.
198	4 Levin, Gail. <i>Edward Hopper</i> . New York, 1984: 57, color repro.
198	Walker, John. <i>National Gallery of Art, Washington</i> . Rev. ed. New York, 1984: 571, no. 870, color repro.
198	7 Hobbs, Robert C. Edward Hopper. Washington, D.C., 1987: 107-110, color repro.
198	8 Liesbrock, Heinz. Edward Hopper: Vierzig Meisterwerke. Munich,
	Germany, 1988: 25-26, color pl. 21.
198	8 Wilmerding, John. American Masterpieces from the National Gallery of
	Art. Rev. ed. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1988: 180, no. 67,
	color repro.
199	2 American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue. National Gallery of Art,
	Washington, 1992: 206, repro.
199	Liesbrock, Heinz. Edward Hopper: Das Sichtbare und das Unsichtbare.
	Stuttgart, Germany, 1992: 47-52, color repro.
199	National Gallery of Art, Washington. National Gallery of Art, Washington,
	1992: 251, repro.
199	Little, Carl. <i>Edward Hopper's New England</i> . San Francisco, 1993: xv,
	repro.
199	Strand, Mark. <i>Hopper</i> . Hopewell, New Jersey, 1994: 21-22, repro.
199	5 Kranzfelder, Ivo. <i>Edward Hopper, 1882-1967: Vision of Reality.</i> Cologne, 1995: 95, color repro. 96-97.
199	Levin, Gail. Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonne. 4 vols. New York,
	1995: 3:264, repro.
199	7 Lyons, Deborah. Edward Hopper: A Journal of His Work. New York,
	1997: 51, repro.
200	Kirsh, Andrea, and Rustin S. Levenson. Seeing Through Paintings:
	Physical Examination in Art Historical Studies. Materials and Meaning in
	the Fine Arts 1. New Haven, 2000: 164-165, color fig. 170.
200	Hand, John Oliver. National Gallery of Art: Master Paintings from the
	Collection. Washington and New York, 2004: 405, no. 336, color repro.
201	Little, Carl. Edward Hopper's New England. San Francisco, 2011: 18, 82-
	83, color plate 31.

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National Gallery of Art. Highlights from the National Gallery of Art,

Washington. Washington, 2016: 306, repro.

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fig. 20.

2012

2016

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Edward Hopper American, 1882 - 1967

## Ground Swell

1939

oil on canvas

overall:  $91.92 \times 127.16$  cm (36  $3/16 \times 50$  1/16 in.)

framed:  $127.3 \times 152.4$  cm (50  $1/8 \times 60$  in.)

Inscription: lower right: EDWARD HOPPER; on reverse of frame: frame made for / Edward Hopper by / Carl Sandelin

framemaker / 133 E 60th St NYC.

Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase, William A. Clark Fund) 2014.79.23

#### **ENTRY**

In a vast expanse of open sea, a catboat heels gently to starboard as it navigates a course that has brought it close to a bell buoy.[1] Under feathery cirrus clouds and a brilliant blue sky, the boat's three passengers and pilot gaze at, and presumably listen to, the buoy's bell, which tilts toward them as it crests one of a sequence of rolling waves. Although Edward Hopper is renowned for lonely urban scenes that have led his work to be understood as emblematic of the mood of the modern city and the isolation of its inhabitants, he was also a dedicated painter of nautical subjects.

Born in Nyack, New York, Hopper spent his formative years sketching the maritime industry of this bustling shipbuilding port on the Hudson River.[2] From 1930 onward, Hopper and his wife, Josephine "Jo" Nivison, whom he had met in art school, spent summers painting in Truro, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod. In 1934 they built a cottage in South Truro; *Ground Swell* was painted in the adjacent studio. Jo conveyed the anticipation surrounding Hopper's completion of *Ground* 

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Swell in a letter to his sister:

Ed. is doing a fine large canvas in studio—sail boat, boys nude to the waist, bodies all tanned, lots of sea and sky. It ought to be a beauty. Frank Rehn [Hopper's dealer] will be delighted. Everyone has wanted Ed to do sail boats. He has only 2 or 3 weeks to finish it—and it will need some fine weather with rolling seas to go look at. Dense fog today but scarcely any rain here either.[3]

Ground Swell numbers among a group of similar seafaring subjects Hopper executed during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Along with paintings such as *The Long Leg* [fig. 1] and *The "Martha McKeen" of Wellfleet* [fig. 2], *Ground Swell* has come to be seen as exemplary of the artist's recurring theme of escape.[4] It is a motif familiar from better-known paintings like *New York Movie* [fig. 3] and *Eleven A.M.* [fig. 4] that take as their focus liminal spaces: thresholds, windows, railroads, and so forth.[5] If Hopper's iconic *Nighthawks* [fig. 5] conveys the anxiety of the urban experience through the acidic hue and high contrast of its artificial illumination, *Ground Swell*'s cool palette and balanced, rhythmic composition would seem to illustrate the peaceful solace the artist, a notorious recluse, sought in his idyllic coastal retreat.[6]

Ground Swell's subject is not uncommon in American art. It recalls, for example, Thomas Eakins's Starting Out after Rail [fig. 6] and Winslow Homer's Breezing Up (A Fair Wind) [fig. 7], the sparkling vibrancy of which has been interpreted as corresponding to the nation's incipient optimism a decade after the Civil War.[7] Whereas Homer's sailors gaze intently at a clear horizon connoting future promise, Hopper's are transfixed by the bell buoy, which strikes a dark note, literally and figuratively, in the otherwise sunny scene.

The function of a bell buoy is to issue auditory warning of submerged dangers or channel boundaries. Hopper's bell clangs in response to the painting's titular ground swell, a heavy rolling of the sea caused by a distant storm or seismic disturbance. Unseen trouble may lurk beneath the surface or beyond the horizon of Hopper's otherwise serene painting. The visual rhyming of the ocean swells and the cirrus clouds in the upper register might reinforce such a portentous interpretation. Cirrus clouds are often harbingers of approaching weather, forming at the outer edges of hurricanes and thunderstorms.[8] Indeed, a hurricane had devastated much of the northeast coast in late August 1938, one year before

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Hopper completed Ground Swell.[9] The accuracy and specificity of Hopper's sky indicate, if nothing else, that it is one the artist had seen, rather than one born of imagination or synthesis [fig. 8] [fig. 9] [fig. 10] [fig. 11] [fig. 12] [fig. 13] [fig. 14] [fig. 15] [fig. 16] [fig. 17].[10]

Alexander Nemerov has noted that while Hopper worked on Ground Swell, from August to September 15, 1939, news of the eruption of World War II was broadcast on American radios. As radio waves brought news of distant conflict to US shores, the bell buoy in Ground Swell sonically registers the reverberations of some unspecified distant turmoil.[11] Hopper was famously resistant to explaining the meaning of his paintings, but he broached, obliquely, the relation between the war and his work in a 1940 letter to his friend, the artist Guy Pène du Bois. Explaining that Jo had wept in a grocery store when she learned of the fall of Paris, Hopper resignedly concluded: "Painting seems to be a good enough refuge from all this, if one can get one's dispersed mind together long enough to concentrate upon it."[12] The artist's canvas, like the catboat's white canvas sail, seemingly offered a means of escape.

The ramifications of the war were certainly felt in the North American art world. The minutes of an April 1943 meeting of the Corcoran Gallery of Art's board of trustees, for instance, testify to a debate regarding the suitability of holding the Eighteenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, "in view of the existing war situation."[13] The exhibition was mounted and later deemed "unusually successful." [14] Hopper was a juror and Ground Swell was included in the biennial, from which it was acquired by the Corcoran.[15]

Adam Greenhalgh

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Edward Hopper, The Long Leg, c. 1930, oil on canvas, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, Gift of the Virginia Steele Scott Foundation. © Huntington Art Collections, San Marino, California



fig. 2 Edward Hopper, The "Martha McKeen" of Wellfleet, 1944, oil on canvas, Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, on loan at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid. www.museothyssen.org



fig. 3 Edward Hopper, New York Movie, 1939, oil on canvas, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY



fig. 4 Edward Hopper, Eleven A.M., 1926, oil on canvas, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation, 1966. Image: Cathy Carver

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**fig. 5** Edward Hopper, *Nighthawks*, 1942, oil on canvas, The Art Institute of Chicago, Friends of American Art Collection 1942.51. Image no. 00000002-01, www.artic.edu



**fig. 6** Thomas Eakins, *Starting Out After Rail*, 1874, oil on canvas on Masonite, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Hayden Collection—Charles Henry Hayden Fund. © 2016, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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**fig. 7** Winslow Homer, *Breezing Up (A Fair Wind)*, 1873–1876, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the W. L. and May T. Mellon Foundation



**fig. 8** Edward Hopper, study for *Ground Swell*, 1939, fabricated chalk, charcoal, and graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.339. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art

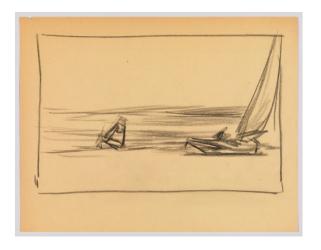


**fig. 9** Edward Hopper, study for *Ground Swell*, 1939, fabricated chalk, charcoal, and graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.859. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art



**fig. 10** Edward Hopper, study for *Ground Swell*, 1939, fabricated chalk, charcoal, and graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.860. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art

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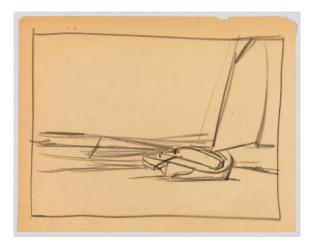
**fig. 11** Edward Hopper, study for *Ground Swell*, 1939, fabricated chalk, charcoal, and graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.861a. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art



**fig. 12** Edward Hopper, study for *Ground Swell*, 1939, fabricated chalk, charcoal, and graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.862. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art



**fig. 13** Edward Hopper, study for *Ground Swell*, 1939, fabricated chalk, charcoal, and graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.863a. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art



**fig. 14** Edward Hopper, study for *Ground Swell*, 1939, fabricated chalk, charcoal, and graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.864a. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art

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**fig. 15** Edward Hopper, study for *Ground Swell*, 1939, fabricated chalk, charcoal, and graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.865. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art



**fig. 16** Edward Hopper, study for *Ground Swell*, 1939, fabricated chalk, charcoal, and graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.866a. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art



fig. 17 Edward Hopper, study for *Ground Swell*, 1939, fabricated chalk, charcoal, and graphite pencil on paper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.868. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art

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#### **NOTES**

- This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011).
- [2] Hopper's earliest-known oil painting depicts a rowboat in a secluded cove; see Gail Levin, Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné, 3 vols. (New York, 1995), 3:1, no. 0-1. His first sale, furthermore, from the Armory Show of 1913, which showcased developments in avant-garde European and American modern art, was a marine subject, Sailing (1911). For Hopper's biography, see Gail Levin, Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography (New York, 2007).
- [3] Jo Hopper to Marion Hopper, Aug. 26, 1939, quoted in Gail Levin, Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné, 3 vols. (New York, 1995), 3:266. Hopper's entry in his Record Book (II, p. 33, Whitney Museum of Art) reads: "Ground Swell. Finished September 15, 1939. Bright light blue picture. Sail, boat, clouds, boy's slacks white. Mast boom, gaff, edge of hatch 1 & rim of boat yellow, pillar orange. Buoy dark, bluey green with brown seaweed on buoy. Boys very tanned. Red headkerchief & halter on girl & dark slacks. Sky & water blue, water darkest at horizon. Touch of green on water reflected by dark green waterline of boat. Winton canvas, Block x and Winsor & Newton colors, lead white, linseed oil, 1 month painting. Painted in South Truro studio."
- [4] Gail Levin, Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné, 3 vols. (New York, 1995),
- [5] Susan Alyson Stein, "Hopper: The Uncrossed Threshold," Arts Magazine 54 (March 1980): 156-160.
- [6] On the connection between Hopper's enthusiasm for nautical subjects and his "love of solitude," see Gail Levin, Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist (New York, 1980), 42.
- [7] Nicolai Cikovsky Jr., "Breezing Up (A Fair Wind)," in Franklin Kelly et al., American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century, part 1, The Collections of the National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue (Washington, DC, 1996), 314. On the comparison with Eakins, see John Wilmerding, A History of American Marine Paintings (Salem, MA, and Boston, 1968), 245.
- [8] The author thanks Stanley David Gedzelman, professor of earth and atmospheric sciences, City College of New York, for discussing Hopper's cloud formations. See Gedzelman, "Sky Paintings: Mirrors of the American Mind," Weatherwise 51 (Jan.-Feb. 1998): 65.
- [9] Alexander Nemerov, "Ground Swell: Edward Hopper in 1939," American Art 22, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 57.

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- [10] Fourteen preparatory sketches for *Ground Swell* are extant. Four of these include roughly delineated cloud patterns, and one is a highly detailed cloud study (Whitney Museum of American Art, Josephine N. Hopper Bequest, acc. no. 70.856).
- [11] Alexander Nemerov, "Ground Swell: Edward Hopper in 1939," *American Art* 22, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 50–71.
- [12] Hopper to Pène du Bois, Aug. 11, 1940, Guy Pène du Bois Papers, reel 28, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- [13] Committee on Works of Art and the Art School, Report to the Board of Trustees," April 16, 1943, Corcoran Gallery Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes, Cor.RG01, Corcoran Gallery Board of Trustees records, 1884–2014, box 2008.006, Special Collections Research Center, George Washington University Libraries.
- [14] "Committee on Works of Art and the Art School, Report to the Board of Trustees," April 16, 1943, Corcoran Gallery Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes, Cor.RG01, Corcoran Gallery Board of Trustees records, 1884–2014, box 2008.006, Special Collections Research Center, George Washington University Libraries.
- [15] Hopper had won the first William A. Clark Prize of \$2,000 and a Gold Medal from the Fifteenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1937 for Cape Cod Afternoon (1936, Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh).

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a medium-weight, plain-weave fabric that is preprimed with a thin cream-colored layer that does not obscure the weave of the canvas.[1] It has a replacement stretcher, but all the original tacking margins are intact, indicating that the painting is very close to its original dimensions. Graphite squaring-off lines are visible in several places along the edges and very faintly through the sky near the right edge. This technique is usually an indication that the composition was either transferred from a smaller drawing or possibly from a photograph. The paint was brushed on in opaque but quite thin layers in many places, leaving ground showing through in the initial buildup of the color. The most heavily painted area is the water, which has been applied in many thick layers. It has a convoluted texture made by repeatedly applying and dragging the thick layers of paint with the brush. Traction crackle in the water reveals earlier layers of a darker blue, which probably wasn't fully dry when subsequent layers were

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added, hence the wide cracks. The sail was thickly painted with a palette knife. To add the rigging on the boat Hopper utilized graphite from a pencil, a somewhat unusual technique. Although the early treatment history of the painting is unknown, at some early point in its stay at the Corcoran Gallery of Art it was wax-lined and stretched onto a new support, possibly by Russell Quandt, one of the collection's early conservators. In 1980, Robert Wiles relined it with the same adhesive and restretched it on another new stretcher. He also cleaned the painting, removing grime, varnish, and staining, applied a new synthetic resin surface coating, and carried out minimal retouching.[2]

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

- [1] It is known that the ground was commercially pre-primed because it extends over all of the tacking margins.
- [2] Wiles's report is in NGA conservation files. In addition, Lance Mayer prepared a comprehensive technical summary for *Corcoran Gallery of Art:* American Paintings to 1945, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011). A copy of this summary is also available in NGA conservation files.

### **PROVENANCE**

(Frank K.M. Rehn Gallery, New York); purchased 1943 by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington;[1] acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.

[1] The painting was purchased from the Corcoran's 1943 *Eighteenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings*.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1940 Second Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Paintings, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, 9 March - 21 April 1940, no. 93, repro.

1940 Survey of American Painting, Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 24 October - 15 December 1940, no. 329, pl. 121.

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1940 The Cranbrook-Life Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Cranbrook Museum, Bloomfield, Michigan, 17 May - 2 June 1940, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

1943 Eighteenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 21 March - 2 May 1943, no. 98.

1944 Sport in American Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 10 October - 10 December 1944, no. 69, repro.

1947 Sports and Adventure in American Art, Milwaukee Art Institute, 15 February -30 March 1947, no catalogue.

1949 The Coast and the Sea, a Survey of American Marine Painting, Brooklyn Museum, 19 November 1948 - 16 January 1949, no. 64, repro.

1950 By the Sea [15-venue tour organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York], first 7 venues did not include Ground Swell; Washington Workshop, Washington, D.C.; Rhode Island League for Arts and Crafts, Providence; Pennsylvania College for Women, Pittsburgh; Quincy Art Club, Illinois; Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester; Hamline University, St. Paul; Albion College, Michigan; State Teachers College, Potsdam, New York, 14 September 1950 - 7 June 1951, no catalogue.[1]

1950 Edward Hopper Retrospective Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Detroit Institute of Arts, 11 February - 2 July 1950, no. 52, pl. 20.

1953 Judge the Jury, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, 13 February - 22 March 1953, no catalogue.[2]

1955 Sport in Art from American Collections Assembled for an Olympic Year, Time and Life Building Reception Hall, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; J.B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville; Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; Denver Art Museum; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco; Dayton Art Institute; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 31 October 1955 - 15 December 1956, no. 53, repro.

1964 Edward Hopper, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Detroit Institute of Arts; City Art Museum of St. Louis, 29 September 1964 - 9 May 1965, no. 36, repro.

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1980 Americans at Work and Play, 1845-1944, University Art Museum, University of Texas at Austin, 6-20 March 1980, no. 36, repro.

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1981 Of Time and Place: American Figurative Art from the Corcoran Gallery, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; Cincinnati Art Museum; San Diego Museum of Art; University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington; Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga; Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa; Portland Art Museum, Oregon; Des Moines Art Center; Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida, 23 September 1981 - 21 May 1983, no. 54, repro.

1985 Henri's Circle, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 20 April - 16 June 1985, unnumbered checklist.

1989 Edward Hopper, Musée Cantini, Marseille; Fondation March, Madrid, 23 June 1989 - 4 January 1990, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

1998 Forty-Fifth Biennial: The Corcoran Collects, 1907-1998, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 17 July - 29 September 1998, unnumbered checklist, repro.

2005 Encouraging American Genius: Master Paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Parrish Art Museum, Southampton; Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, 27 August 2005 - 29 April 2007, checklist no. 93.

2007 Edward Hopper, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; National Gallery of Art, Washington, 6 May 2007 - 11 May 2008, no. 74, repro.

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2012 Hopper, Museo Thyssen-Bornemizsa, Madrid, 12 June 2012 - 28 January 2013, no. 47, repro.

2013 American Journeys: Visions of Place, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 21 September 2013 - 28 September 2014, unpublished checklist.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY NOTES**

[1] A checklist and the itinerary of the exhibition tour are in the Archives of the Museum of Modern Art, New York: CEII.I/43/(2); copies in NGA curatorial files.

[2] Virginia Museum of Arts, Richmond: Official Record of Receipt, 21 January 1953; copy in NGA curatorial files.

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Unknown artist, *Rockwell Kent*, c. 1920, Rockwell Kent papers, [circa 1840]–1993, bulk 1935–1961, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

# Kent, Rockwell American, 1882 - 1971

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Rockwell Kent, though best known as an artist and illustrator, pursued many careers throughout his long life, including architect, carpenter, explorer, writer, dairy farmer, and political activist. Born in Tarrytown, New York, Kent was interested in art from a young age. These ambitions were encouraged by his aunt Jo Holgate, an accomplished ceramicist. Jo came to live with the family after Kent's father passed away in 1887 and took him to Europe as a teenager. Kent attended the Horace Mann School in New York City, where he excelled at mechanical drawing. His family's financial circumstances prevented him from pursuing career in the fine arts, however, and after graduating from Horace Mann in 1900, Kent decided to study architecture at Columbia University.

Before matriculating at Columbia, Kent spent the first of three consecutive summers studying painting at *William Merritt Chase's* art school in Shinnecock Hills, Long Island. There he found a community of mentors and fellow students who encouraged him to pursue his interest in art. At the end of Kent's third summer at Shinnecock, Chase offered him a full scholarship to the New York School of Art, where he was a teacher. Kent began taking night classes at the art school in addition to his architecture studies, but soon left Columbia to study painting full time. In addition to Chase, Kent took classes with Robert Henri (American, 1865 -

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1929) and Kenneth Hayes Miller (American, 1876 - 1952). His classmates included the artists George Bellows (American, 1882 - 1925) and Edward Hopper (American, 1882 - 1967).

Kent spent the summer of 1903 assisting the painter Abbott Handerson Thayer (American, 1849 - 1921) at his studio in Dublin, New Hampshire—a position he secured through the recommendation of his Aunt Jo. Thayer gave the young artist time to pursue his own work, and that summer Kent painted several views of the New Hampshire landscape, including Mount Monadnock. In 1905 Kent moved from New York to Monhegan Island in Maine, home to a summer art colony, where he continued to find inspiration in the natural world. Kent soon found success exhibiting and selling his paintings in New York and in 1907 was given his first solo show at Claussen Galleries. The following year he married his first wife, Kathleen Whiting (Thayer's niece), with whom he had five children. The couple divorced in 1924, and Kent married Frances Lee the following year. They in turn divorced after 15 years of marriage, and the artist then married Sally Johnstone.

For the next several decades, Kent lived a peripatetic lifestyle, settling in several locations in Connecticut, Maine, and New York. During this time he took a number of extended voyages to remote, often ice-filled, corners of the globe, including Newfoundland, Alaska, Tierra del Fuego, and Greenland, to which he made three separate trips. For Kent, exploration and artistic production were twinned endeavors, and his travels to these rugged, rural locales provided inspiration for both his visual art and his writings. He developed a stark, realist landscape style in his paintings and drawings that revealed both nature's harshness and its sublimity. Kent's human figures, which appear sparingly in his work, often signify mythic themes, such as heroism, loneliness, and individualism. Important exhibitions of works from these travels include the Knoedler Gallery's shows in 1919 and 1920, featuring Kent's Alaska drawings and paintings, and the Art Institute of Chicago's 1933 Paintings and Drawings of Greenland by Rockwell Kent. He wrote a number of illustrated memoirs about his adventures abroad, including Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska (1920) and N by E (1930). His autobiography, It's Me, O Lord, was published in 1955.

Around 1920 Kent took up wood engraving and quickly established himself as one of the preeminent graphic artists of his time. His striking illustrations for two editions of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*—simultaneously precise and abstract images that drew on his architect's eye for spatial relations and his years of maritime adventures—proved extremely popular and remain some of his best-

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known works. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Kent produced a range of print media, including advertisements, bookplates, and Christmas cards. Kent's satirical drawings, created under the pseudonym "Hogarth Jr.," were published in popular periodicals including *Vanity Fair*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *Life*. In 1937 the artist was commissioned by the Federal Public Works Administration to paint two murals for the New Post Office in Washington, DC.

By the onset of World War II, Kent had largely disengaged from the New York art world and instead focused his energies on a number of progressive political causes, including labor rights and preventing the spread of fascism in Europe. Though he never joined the communist party, his support of leftist causes made him a target of suspicion by the State Department, which revoked his passport after his first visit to Moscow in 1950 (though Kent successfully sued to have it reinstated). As his artistic reputation declined at home and his work fell out of favor, Kent found new popularity in the Soviet Union, where his works were exhibited frequently in the 1950s. In 1960 he donated 80 paintings and 800 prints and drawings to the people of the Soviet Union, and in 1967 he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize. Kent died of a heart attack in 1971 and was buried on the grounds of Asgard, his farm in New York's Adirondack Mountains.

September 29, 2016

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2000 Martin, Constance, with essays by Richard V. West. Distant Shore: The Odyssey of Rockwell Kent. Exh. cat. Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Chesterfield, Berkeley, and Stockbridge, 2000.

Wien, Jake. Rockwell Kent: The Mythic and the Modern. Exh. cat. Portland (Maine) Museum of Art. New York and Portland, 2005.

Kent, Rockwell 339

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Rockwell Kent American, 1882 - 1971

Citadel

1932-1933

oil on canvas mounted on plywood overall:  $86.36 \times 111.76$  cm ( $34 \times 44$  in.)

Inscription: lower right: Rockwell Kent; reverse, in black crayon: Landscape Snow Gift of Deborah and Edward Shein 2013.155.1

#### **ENTRY**

Unlike his talented contemporaries and classmates George Bellows (American, 1882 - 1925), Edward Hopper (American, 1882 - 1967), and Guy Pène du Bois (American, 1884 - 1958), who, following the lead of their charismatic teacher Robert Henri (American, 1865 - 1929), made the life of the city their chief subject, Rockwell Kent's primary obsession was always nature and wilderness. Throughout his long career, whether in Greenland, where *Citadel* was painted, or in Maine, Minnesota, Newfoundland, Alaska, Argentina, New York, Vermont, or Ireland, the peripatetic Kent was drawn again and again to a certain type of barren, isolated, and often cold and forbidding landscape. During the course of his far-flung travels, the motif of the mountain came to occupy an especially prominent place in the artist's imagination. As evidenced by the title of his 1909 painting of the Berkshire Mountains, *Men and Mountains*, as well as his 1959 publication of the same name, Kent was fond of quoting the British visionary poet William Blake: "Great things are done when men & mountains meet."[1]

Citadel was painted thinly over a white ground with the weave of the canvas still visible across its entire surface. The foreground of white snow and background of

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gray clouds are rendered with simple, fluid, and undifferentiated brushwork. By way of contrast the dark, jagged mountain is constructed using quick, abrupt, dynamic brushstrokes that register not so much as visual illusions, but as directly applied painted gestures in an almost expressionistic fashion. With its stark, bold, central pyramidal form dominating the canvas, *Citadel* ranks among the most iconic and abstract of all Kent's many Greenland subjects.[2]

Kent initially went to Greenland as part of the three-man crew of the cutter *Direction* that set sail from Baddeck, Nova Scotia, on June 17, 1929.[3] A month later, just after Kent and his companions reached port and anchored for the night near Karajak fjord, *Direction* sank during a storm. Kent managed to salvage his paint supplies, and over the next several months created his first images of Greenland before moving on to Copenhagen to complete his popular and lucrative illustrations for Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and to begin work on a new assignment, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Awed and inspired by what he had seen in Greenland, Kent was soon planning his return. Beginning in the summer of 1931, this second stay, backed in part by corporate sponsors, was a much more ambitious yearlong expedition, during which Kent built a home and immersed himself in the lives of the native Greenlanders.[4] Kent's final excursion, from September 1934 to March 1935, was primarily devoted to writing a lengthy memoir of this second trip, *Salamina* (1935), which took as its title the name of Kent's housekeeper and female companion, or *kifak*, in Greenland.

Kent later discussed his Greenland travels at some length in two popular autobiographical volumes, *This Is My Own* (1940) and *It's Me O Lord* (1955), and near the end of his life published his diary of the second journey as *Greenland Journal* (1962). Along with *Salamina* and Kent's numerous paintings, drawings, and photographs, this rich trove of sources illuminates the circumstances under which *Citadel* was made, as well as the philosophical and political meanings with which Kent invested his Greenland imagery.[5]

Karrat Island, the setting of *Citadel*, had caught Kent's attention on January 2, 1932, when he was riding north across the frozen sea on a dogsled from his base in Igdlorssuit to Nugatsiak.[6] Kent next returned to Nugatsiak on March 16, and the following day he drove out to the island after learning of a small house for rent there: "No sooner had I seen the cove where stood the house, and had one glimpse of its stupendous views, than it was settled in my mind to stay. . . . The

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cove, three sides surrounded by the steep hillsides and ledges of the foreland, lay beautifully sheltered from most winds. Its background was the donjon keep of Karrat. . . . One would breathe deep and fast who lived in such a place."[7]

Interspersed among Kent's writings are numerous passages that explain how he worked outdoors, along with several descriptions that relate to the imagery of *Citadel*. Kent first painted Karrat Island from a vantage point near the modest hut that he rented for his weeklong stay in March 1932:

look small in that immense environment.[8]

Alternately, Kent may have executed *Citadel* while passing by the island in early April: "I broke camp and drove out of the fiord. I stopped to paint Karrat Island from the south. The day was gray but clear: the fog seemed only to linger in the fiord. After painting Karrat from the south, I drove out and painted its fine mountain from the west." [9] On this occasion, Kent would have simply repurposed his sled as an outdoor studio [fig. 1]:

I would attach a large canvas to the stanchion of my sledge as upon an easel; I'd hang my bag of paints and brushes from the crossbar, lay my palette on the sledge. I'd catch my dogs and harness them. And then, after the mad stampede downhill and over the shore ice . . . I'd recline upon my reindeer skin with the indolence of a sultan and drive off. . . . Arrived, I'd halt my dogs . . . lay out my paints and brushes, get to work. To keep my brush hand warm I used a downstuffed thumbless mitten through a hole in which I would insert the brush, and hold it in my warm bare fingers. I found it sometimes cold work . . . my blood seemed not to circulate.[10]

Regarding his arctic painting methods, Kent even went so far as to make the rather implausible claim that "nowhere else in all my travels, nor at home, have I been enabled to get about with all my painter's paraphernalia with such ease, and paint in such comfort, as in Greenland."[11]

Kent identified the location of *Citadel* when he published a reproduction of the painting bearing the handwritten caption "Karrat Island" in 1933.[12] In a description of the island in *Salamina*, he also alluded to the painting's title: "about five miles

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from Nugatsiak is the island of Karrat, which, though one of the smaller islands of that archipelago, is an imposing landmark by reason of its comparative isolation and the noble architecture of its mountain mass. With towers and buttressed walls reared high upon a steep escarpment, it has the dignity of a great citadel."[13]

Notably, the sled with figures seen at the foot of the mountain in Citadel was missing from Kent's 1933 reproduction [fig. 2]. He must therefore have incorporated it sometime between 1933 and 1950, the year it was acquired by his major patron, J. J. Ryan. That this element was added at a later date is a reminder that, while Kent may have painted for long stretches outdoors, he also often worked on his Greenland oils, sometimes with the aid of photographs, in a more conventional indoor studio setting. More significantly, the addition suggests how the objective, documentary aspects of Kent's Greenland paintings, whether experienced directly or reconsidered in the studio, were always at the service of a much grander romantic, mythical, and philosophical vision of the area. Kent discussed the import of such seemingly incidental details: "And of the drama endlessly deployed there, the theme is the inconsequence of human life to God. Yet that, brought home by the unfeeling immensity of the scene, only deepens in men their sense of the vast consequence of man to man. Despite man's littleness out there, let him just be there, enter on that scene, and as far as eye can reach all eyes have found him. The speck is an event."[14]

Beyond the significance of small, visual motifs such as the sled, the vast mountainous terrain of Greenland held an even wider and more intense range of meanings for Kent. Seeing the natural world in spiritual terms as "God's countenance," not "all that rehash of man's experience which he terms art, but the eternal fountainhead of all that is beautiful in art and man, the virgin universe," Kent wondered: "Why don't men in a godless age go to worship mountains?"[15] Kent's time in Greenland also compelled him to reflect upon the shortcomings of American society. He wrote that life in Greenland "somehow came to have a bearing ... on life at home," where he believed Americans "yearn for freedom from the pretence [sic] that has come to dominate their lives."[16] The mountain for Kent was a particularly potent symbol of American ideals of liberty and independence: "If we accept the torch-bearing, star-tiaraed Statue of Liberty in New York harbor as a . . . symbol of democracy, we mountain dwellers may allow ourselves the starcrowned, eagle-nested mountain peak."[17] Just as Kent elevated his direct relationship with nature over his artistic production, he also believed that nature ultimately trumped national politics and culture, concluding that Greenland and "all

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solitudes, no matter how forlorn, are the only abiding-place on earth of liberty."[18] More than simply a spokesman for his country, Kent viewed himself, rather grandiosely at times, as "a spokesman for mankind," declaring that "it is as such a spokesman that I... defend the preservation for us all of mountains ... a symbol of immutability."[19]

Given its iconic qualities Citadel might finally be understood as a type of selfportrait. Like Karrat Mountain, Kent—painter, illustrator, adventurer, writer, builder, graphic designer, and activist—projected a roughhewn, complex, multifaceted surface toward the world that could be viewed multiple ways from multiple angles. Simultaneously, like a citadel or stronghold, Kent was a self-reliant and selfcontained man, a supreme egotist working in distant lands who steadfastly protected his own creative independence and whose inner core remained locked away and off limits. One measure of that independence is the difficulty of assigning a secure place to Kent in the canon of American modernism. Controversial and contradictory, Kent, like another lifelong painter of mountains, Marsden Hartley, was too elusive a personality and too talented an artist to be definitively categorized.

Charles Brock

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Rockwell Kent with sled dogs in Greenland, not before 1930, Rockwell Kent Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution



**fig. 2** Peter A. Juley & Son, photographer, photograph of *Citadel*, without sled, not before 1930, Rockwell Kent Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

#### **NOTES**

- [1] Rockwell Kent, *Men and Mountains*, 1909, oil on canvas, Columbus Museum of Art, 1931.190; Rockwell Kent, *Of Men and Mountains* (Ausable Forks, New York, 1959). Kent also used the phrase as the title for chapter 26 in Rockwell Kent, *This Is My Own* (New York, 1940).
- [2] Kent also used the same profile of Karrat Mountain as the chapter heading for chapter 33, "Ice," in Salamina (New York, 1935), 170. In this black-andwhite graphic design element, Kent depicts the mountain under a clear, starry night sky.
- [3] The details of the first trip to Greenland are recounted in Rockwell Kent, *It's Me O Lord* (New York, 1955), 439–444; and Rockwell Kent, *N by E* (New York, 1930).
- [4] In Salamina (New York, 1935), vi–vii, xi, Kent thanked the General Electric Company and Pan American Airways Corporation for supplying the expedition with cigarettes, a radio set, food, and "six dozen quarts of emasculated fruit juice," and also proposed naming ice caps after the companies, in mock tribute, on the hand drawn map published with his account.
- [5] Rockwell Kent, Salamina (New York, 1935), This is My Own (New York,

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1940), *It's Me O Lord* (New York, 1955), *Greenland Journal* (New York, 1962), and *Rockwell Kent Papers*, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

- [6] Rockwell Kent, Greenland Journal (New York, 1962), 133.
- [7] Rockwell Kent, *Greenland Journal* (New York, 1962), 216; Kent, *Salamina* (New York, 1935), 198–199.
- [8] Rockwell Kent, Salamina (New York, 1935), 200–201.
- [9] Rockwell Kent, Greenland Journal (New York, 1962), 251.
- [10] Rockwell Kent, Salamina (New York, 1935), 197.
- [11] Rockwell Kent, It's Me O Lord (New York, 1955), 459.
- [12] Rockwell Kent, Rockwellkentiana (New York, 1933), n.p.
- [13] Rockwell Kent, *Salamina* (New York, 1935), 198. In *Salamina*, 25, Kent also made an analogy to a medieval cathedral, when he referred to Karrat Island's "Gothic mass."
- [14] Rockwell Kent, Salamina (New York, 1935), 107.
- [15] Rockwell Kent, Salamina (New York, 1935), 305.
- [16] Rockwell Kent, This Is My Own (New York, 1940), 158–159; Kent, It's Me O Lord (New York, 1955), 475.
- [17] Rockwell Kent, This Is My Own (New York, 1940), 292.
- [18] Rockwell Kent, Salamina (New York, 1935), 22.
- [19] Rockwell Kent, This Is My Own (New York, 1935), 229.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a medium-weight, plain-weave fabric that was preprimed with a thick, off-white layer and is stretched over a piece of quarter-inchthick plywood, then tacked to the reverse. Infrared examination[1] revealed no underdrawing, but examination with low magnification shows thin lines of painted sketching that served as the guide. The x-radiograph shows no artist's changes. The paint was applied broadly. The brown and purple tones were painted in first, roughly following the aforementioned guide. Thick, white paint was added on top of these colors to depict snow in the mountain crevices. The sky and the foreground were then brushed in broadly, up to the contours of the already depicted mountain. In infrared light it is clear that on several occasions the artist applied his sky and foreground paint over the top of the mountain paint, slightly

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changing its contour. The dogs, sled, and people were painted last, after the rest of the paint had dried. The condition of the painting is excellent, with only tiny inpainted losses scattered around the edges and a thin, inpainted, diagonal scrape in the snow at the left. There is a thin, unevenly glossy coating of synthetic resin varnish over the whole surface.

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with an H astronomy filter.

### **PROVENANCE**

Purchased 1950 through (Macbeth Gallery, New York) by J.J. Ryan [d. 1970], Oak Ridge Estate, Arrington, Virginia;[1] his nephew, Peter H. Brady, Washington, D.C.; purchased 2008 by Edward and Deborah Shein, Seekonk, Massachusetts; gift 2013 to NGA.

[1] Joseph James Ryan was the grandson of Thomas Fortune Ryan (1851-1928), a wealthy businessman and art collector whose bust by Auguste Rodin is in the NGA collection (NGA 1974.29.1).

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1937 Greenland Paintings and Prints: Rockwell Kent, Gallery of Modern Masters, Washington, 1937, no. 13.

1940 Paintings, Lithographs, Wood Cuts by Rockwell Kent, Meinhard-Taylor Galleries, Houston, 1940, no. 7.

1940 [Rockwell Kent], Dayton Art Institute, 1940, unpublished checklist.

1969 Rockwell Kent: The Early Years, Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine, 1969, no. 55, repro., as Citadel, Greenland.

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1985 "An Enkindled Eye": The Paintings of Rockwell Kent, Santa Barbara Museum of Art; Columbus (Ohio) Museum of Art: Portland (Maine) Museum of Art; Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, 1985-1986, no. 61, repro., as Citadel, Greenland.

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	Many Pictures by R.K. and, by Carl Zigrosser, A Bibliography and List of
	Prints. New York, 1933: n.p., repro.
1955	Kent, Rockwell. It's Me O Lord. New York, 1955: color repro. 240.

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Roy Craven, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, n. d., photograph, Miscellaneous Photographs collection, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

## Kuniyoshi, Yasuo American, born Japan, 1889 - 1953

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Born in Okayama, Japan, Yasuo Kuniyoshi had no intention of becoming an artist when he emigrated alone to the United States at age 16. Encouraged by a high school teacher in Los Angeles, he attended that city's School of Art and Design for three years. In 1910 he departed for New York, where he first studied at the National Academy of Design and with Robert Henri (American, 1865 - 1929), and from 1914 to 1916 at the Independent School with Homer Boss (American, 1882 -1956).

Over the next four years, while studying painting with Kenneth Hayes Miller (American, 1876 - 1952) at the Art Students League, Kuniyoshi began to mature artistically, befriend other artists, and gain wider recognition. In 1917 he participated in the debut exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists, where his work was noticed by artist, critic, and patron Hamilton Easter Field (1873-1922). A collector of American folk, modern, and Japanese art—and a proponent of their interconnectedness—Field strongly influenced Kuniyoshi as he developed his distinctive style. Field also provided him with a summer studio in the art colony of Ogunquit, Maine—where he married Art Students League classmate Katherine Schmidt—and an apartment and studio in Brooklyn.

Despite continuing financial struggles, in the 1920s Kuniyoshi exhibited his work frequently and emerged as an esteemed modernist. In 1922 he had his first of

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many solo exhibitions at the Daniel Gallery. Trips to Europe in 1925 and 1928 inspired him to shift from imaginary to more realistic paintings of women and still lifes, which received critical praise. His work was included in the 1929 *Nineteen Living Americans* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and in most national shows of contemporary art thereafter, as well as in many solo shows at the Downtown Gallery in the 1930s. During his 1931 visit to Japan, Kuniyoshi had three exhibitions of his paintings and became an important link between the New York art world and contemporary Japanese art. The following year he received a commission to paint murals in the women's restrooms of Radio City Music Hall. In 1929 Kuniyoshi and Schmidt built a house in the artistic enclave of Woodstock, New York, where he summered for most of the rest of his life. (He and Schmidt divorced in 1932, and in 1935 he married actress Sara Mazo, whom he had met in Woodstock.)

During the tumultuous years leading up to and during World War II, Kuniyoshi became active in artists' and political organizations and visited the Southwest and Mexico in 1935 on a Guggenheim fellowship. He returned to the Southwest in 1941, but later that year his life took a dramatic turn. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he was classified by the United States government as an enemy alien. Prohibited from owning a camera or binoculars, the artist also had his bank account frozen and was subject to a curfew and travel prohibitions. During the war, he created drawings for the American propaganda effort.

Kuniyoshi's later years brought him significant distinction but also grave disappointments. In 1948 he was the first living artist to receive a retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and in 1952 was selected to represent the United States at the 26th Venice Biennale along with Alexander Calder (American, 1898 - 1976), Stuart Davis (American, 1892 - 1964), and Edward Hopper (American, 1882 - 1967). His lifelong desire to become an American citizen was not realized; he completed the application in 1952 but died the following year of cancer before it was approved.

Sarah Cash

September 29, 2016

Kuniyoshi, Yasuo 350

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	Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1948.

- 1991 Kuniyoshi, Yasuo, and Yoshio Ozawa. Yasuo Kuniyoshi: Neo, Amerikan, atisuto no kiseki. Okayama, Japan, 1991.
- 1996 Myers, Jane, and Tom Wolf. The Shores of a Dream: Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Early Work in America. Exh. cat. Amon Carter Museum of Art, Fort Worth; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art. Fort Worth, 1996.
- 2015 Wolf, Tom M. The Artistic Journey of Yasuo Kuniyoshi. Exh. cat. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, 2015.

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Yasuo Kuniyoshi American, born Japan, 1889 - 1953

## Cows in Pasture

1923

oil on canvas

overall: 51.12 × 76.52 cm (20 1/8 × 30 1/8 in.)

framed:  $24 \times 33.94 \times 2.19$  cm (9 7/16 × 13 3/8 × 7/8 in.)

Inscription: lower center right: Y.Kuniyoshi 23

Corcoran Collection (Gift of George Biddle) 2014.136.94

#### **ENTRY**

Yasuo Kuniyoshi's early paintings, prints, and drawings feature odd, humorous, and even disconcerting subjects: frightened-looking babies with animals and anthropomorphic vegetation, for example.[1] When he tackled more conventional motifs, such as still lifes, landscapes, or nudes, he depicted them in a quasisurrealistic style, from dizzying perspectives, or in odd arrangements with curious props. Cows in Pasture, ostensibly a straightforward view of a coastal New England dairy farm, is a prime example of Kuniyoshi's subtle "strangeness," as a critic characterized the artist's early work.[2]

Kuniyoshi's favorite early subject was the cow; the artist estimated he painted some 60 cow pictures during the mid-1920s.[3] His preoccupation with the animal and the gravity with which he treated it earned him the label of satirist, a charge he would later counter:

I wasn't trying to be funny but everyone thought I was. I was painting cows and cows at that time because somehow I felt very

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near to the cow. . . . You see, I was born, judging by the Japanese calendar, in a "cow year." According to legend I believed my fate to be guided, more or less, by the bovine kingdom.[4]

Kuniyoshi's association with a bovine guardian spirit prompts an autobiographical interpretation of *Cows in Pasture*. The young artist was enjoying a spell of good fortune at this time. He had been given his first solo exhibition in 1922 at the Daniel Gallery in New York, having recently found a patron in the respected painter, critic, and teacher Hamilton Easter Field. In 1919, Field invited Kuniyoshi to attend classes at his art colony in Ogunquit, Maine, a coastal village about 70 miles north of Boston, where Kuniyoshi married Katherine Schmidt, a classmate at the Art Students League.

Kuniyoshi cultivated his infatuation with the cow in Ogunquit. As he wrote to his friend the artist Reginald Marsh in 1922: "Things round here very quiet at present and . . . just [suits] . . . us[.] [W]e started working . . . last week and as usually [here] I begin with a cow[.]"[5] Maine's "severe landscape," which Kuniyoshi later reverently called his "God," provided the setting for *Cows in Pasture*.[6] Maine was also where Kuniyoshi and his Ogunquit compatriots mined American folk art for the stylistic inspiration evident in *Cows in Pasture*. "Most of the summer colony in Maine last year," wrote one observer in 1924, "went mad on the subject of American primitives, and . . . the Kuniyoshis stripped all the cupboards bare of primitives in the Maine antique shops."[7]

The large scale and flat profiles of Kuniyoshi's cattle in *Cows in Pasture* recall the kinds of folk art the Ogunquit artists admired, especially 18th- and 19th-century livestock portraits commissioned by proud farmers [fig. 1]. But the expressive eyes of Kuniyoshi's cows endow these animals with a sentience that is more reminiscent of the benign beasts in *Edward Hicks's* allegorical Peaceable Kingdom pictures (see, for example, [fig. 2]). Hicks's canvases depict the fulfillment of Isaiah's Old Testament prophecy, in which the calf and the lion live happily together.

Cows in Pasture, though, does not merely mimic a naïve style. Rather, the painting testifies to Kuniyoshi's attempt to reconcile a complex set of artistic traditions, cultural influences, and personal symbols. The disjunctive scale, peculiar geometries, unstable perspective, and oversize animal characters are reminiscent of recent developments in avant-garde European art. Following the 1913 Armory Show, Kuniyoshi admitted that he "tried . . . radical kind[s] of painting without

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understanding [and] imitated [the] worst side of Van Gogh, Cézanne, Gauguin."[8] *Paul Cézanne's* influence is apparent in the geometric emphasis in *Cows in Pasture*, particularly in the accordioned cliff faces, boxy farm buildings, and triangular cows.[9] The work of Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853 - 1890) and Paul Gauguin (French, 1848 - 1903) appears to have been even more compelling to Kuniyoshi; both artists borrowed their expressive line, flat areas of intense color, and dramatic asymmetry from the Japanese art that had surrounded Kuniyoshi when he was younger [fig. 3]. "My tendency," he said, "was two-dimensional. My inheritance was shape-painting, like *kakemonos* [scroll-painting]."[10]

Kuniyoshi's artistic circle saw evidence of modernism's native roots in the formal similarities between European modernism and American folk art and colonial art.[11] Americana was championed as a valid, indigenous source for modern art. This subtext might have resonated more significantly for the Japanese-born Kuniyoshi. Painting reassuring subjects with precedents in early American art enabled him to express his interest in recent European painterly innovations and traditional Japanese graphic techniques without fear of censure or judgment of foreignness. That Kuniyoshi was not completely successful was hinted at by the critic Henry McBride, who contended: "Those unacquainted with the art of Yasuo Kuniyoshi . . . will probably rub their eyes and wonder whether they are in Japan, Maine or Mars."[12]

Kuniyoshi eventually abandoned the barnyard subjects and what critics saw as the "mischievous humor" of his earlier paintings.[13] By the 1940s his "queer rectangular cows" were replaced with desolate landscapes and still lifes composed of wrecked objects, masks, and semilegible antiwar rhetoric [fig. 4].[14] It is quite possible that this shift occurred in response to the political and social developments of the intervening decades. As a Japanese immigrant, Kuniyoshi was the subject of intense suspicion following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. He was questioned by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and was briefly placed under house arrest, despite being outspokenly prodemocracy, anti-imperialist, and antifascist.[15] He articulated the dire situation in a letter to his friend and the first owner of Cows in Pasture, the artist George Biddle (American, 1885 - 1973), on December 11, 1941: "A few short days has changed my status in this country, although I have not changed at all."[16] It is not difficult to imagine that Kuniyoshi's "broken, worn, used up . . . rotting" subjects of the 1940s reflect the artist's personal difficulties, just as his talismanic cows of the 1920s were products of that earlier, happier time.[17] Kuniyoshi, after all, described his creative process as

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"feeling, imagination and intuition mingled with reality [that] creates more than actuality, evokes an inner meaning indicative of one's experience, time, circumstances and environment. This is reality."[18]

Adam Greenhalgh

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 H. Call, Prize Bull, 1876, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch, 1980.62.3



fig. 2 Edward Hicks, Peaceable Kingdom, c. 1834, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch, 1980.62.15



**fig. 3** Paul Gauguin, *Haystacks in Brittany*, 1890, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the W. Averell Harriman Foundation in Memory of Marie N. Harriman, 1972.9.11



**fig. 4** Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Headless Horse Who Wants to Jump*, 1945, oil on canvas, Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki, Japan

### NOTES

- [1] This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in *Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011).
- [2] "Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Development: Interesting Gathering of His Work Shown at the Daniel Gallery," *New York Sun*, Feb. 1928, Yasuo Kuniyoshi Papers, reel D176, frame 296, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,

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Washington, DC.

- [3] Lloyd Goodrich, Yasuo Kuniyoshi Retrospective Exhibition (New York, 1948), 13. A woodblock print of a kneeling heifer was emblazoned on the cover of Kuniyoshi's first solo exhibition catalog, Paintings and Drawings by Yasuo Kuniyoshi (New York, [1922]).
- [4] Yasuo Kuniyoshi, "East to West," Magazine of Art (Feb. 1940): 75–77.
- [5] Kuniyoshi to Marsh, June 14, 1922, Reginald Marsh Papers, reel D308, frame 38, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- [6] Yasuo Kuniyoshi, "Autobiographical Notes," Aug. 24, 1944, typescript, Kuniyoshi Papers, unmicrofilmed, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
- [7] "Show at Whitney Studio Galleries, 'Early American Art,'" New York Herald, Feb. 17, 1924.
- [8] Yasuo Kuniyoshi, "Autobiographical Notes," August 24, 1944, typescript, Kuniyoshi Papers, unmicrofilmed, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. See also Kuniyoshi, "East to West," *Magazine of Art* (Feb. 1940): 74.
- [9] Although Kuniyoshi claimed he "hadn't been influenced by him at all," his totemic bovines recall Marc Chagall's whimsical folkloric imagery. Cows in Pasture also brings to mind the simplified geometric style, intense palette, and zoological subjects of Franz Marc's symbolic paintings; Kuniyoshi admitted he was "greatly influenced by the German expressionist group," of which Marc would be considered a member. Lloyd Goodrich, "Notes on Conversation with Yasuo Kuniyoshi," Whitney Museum Papers, reel N670, frame 82, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- [10] Lloyd Goodrich, "Notes on Conversation with Yasuo Kuniyoshi," Whitney Museum Papers, reel N670, frame 68, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. On Kuniyoshi's incorporation of his Japanese heritage into his work, see Gail Levin, "Between Two Worlds: Folk Culture, Identity, and the American Art of Yasuo Kuniyoshi," Archives of American Art Journal 43, nos. 3–4 (2003): 2–17.
- [11] Doreen Bolger, "Hamilton Easter Field and His Contribution to American Modernism," *American Art Journal* 20, no. 2 (1988): 94.
- [12] Henry McBride, "Robust Art of Yasuo Kuniyoshi," *New York Herald*, Jan. 3, [1925], clipping, Kuniyoshi Papers, reel D176, frame 167, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- [13] "The World of Art," New York Times Book Review, Jan. 15, 1923.
- [14] "Art in Review: Kuniyoshi, in New One-Man Exhibit at Downtown Gallery, Shows Considerable Progress," *New York Times*, Feb. 8, 1933.

- [15] Sara Mazo Kuniyoshi, interview, in Tom Wolf, "The War Years," in *Yasuo Kuniyoshi* (New York, 1986), n.p. See also ShiPu Wang, "Japan against Japan: U.S. Propaganda and Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Identity Crisis," *American Art* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 28–51.
- [16] Kuniyoshi to Biddle, draft, Dec. 11, 1941, Kuniyoshi Papers, unmicrofilmed, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- [17] Yasuo Kuniyoshi, "Autobiographical Notes," Aug. 24, 1944, typescript, Kuniyoshi Papers, unmicrofilmed, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- [18] Yasuo Kuniyoshi, "Attitude towards Nature; Statement for Ray Berther's [Bethers's] Book, *How Paintings Happen* [published, New York, 1951]," Kuniyoshi Papers, unmicrofilmed, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a plain-weave, medium-weight, pre-primed canvas and is lined with a similar weight linen using a wax adhesive. The tacking margins are intact, indicating that the painting is very close to its original dimensions. The stretcher is a modern five-member, expansion bolt replacement. The commercially prepared ground is a grayish off-white.

In general, the paint has been applied as a thin, fluid paste that builds up the composition in a series of multiple layers. Delicate, flickering touches of a small brush are visible in many areas. Although the paint is mostly opaque, in some places, for example the red barn in the upper center, it is sufficiently thin and transparent that the glow of the light-colored ground is visible through the red paint. In some of the rocks and foliage the paint is applied more freely and thickly, with noticeable brushmarks and dabs of low impasto. There are a few places (as in the haystack at left and above and to the right of the red cow) where the artist appears to have deliberately abraded previously applied paint with a knife or other sharp tool and then continued painting.

In reflected light a large design element is visible that is now completely painted out. It appears to be a triangular shape surmounted by an oval in and above the area of the black cow. In infrared examination the painting appears to follow a dark outline probably made with a pencil.[1] There is a drawn shape to the left of the black cow's head that is not discernible, although it does have some foliage-like

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elements. This shape does not appear in the final painting. Although the shape visible in reflected light (described above) does not appear in infrared, in the x-radiograph it is clear that there was once a figure that seemed to be riding the black cow that is now painted out. In 1974 the picture was treated at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, where it was wax-lined and mounted to a new stretcher. Grime was also removed from the surface and the painting was varnished and retouched. At present, this synthetic varnish applied in 1974 has a somewhat glossy appearance with a slightly hazy surface. It appears that, prior to this varnish application, the painting had been left unvarnished by the artist.[2]

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

- [1] The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with a J astronomy filter.
- [2] Lance Mayer prepared a comprehensive technical summary for Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, DC, 2011). A copy of this summary is also available in NGA conservation files.

### **PROVENANCE**

The artist; consigned to (Downtown Gallery, New York); sold c. 1926 to George Biddle [1885-1973], Croton-on-Hudson, New York;[1] gift 23 June 1964, subject to life estate, to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washingon; acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.

[1] Biddle notes that he acquired the painting "from Kuniyoshi directly, who had it at the time with Downtown Gallery; I think about 1926-1928." See Whitney Museum of American Art Artists' Files and Records, 1914-1966, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington: "Kuniyoshi: Oils, 1917-1926 [1948]," reel N688, frames 215 (illus.), 216.

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### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1924 Exhibition of American Art, Galerie de la Chambre Syndicale des Beaux-Arts (under the Auspices of Art Patrons of America), Paris, 5 June - 5 July 1924, no. 103, repro.

1924 Exhibition of "Modern" Pictures Representing Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Expressionist, and Cubist Painters, Union League Club, 8-10 April 1924, no. 21.

1948 Yasuo Kuniyoshi Retrospective Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 27 March - 9 May 1948, no. 14.

1976 The American Genius, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 24 January - 4 April 1976, catalogue without checklist.

1978 The American Landscape Tradition, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 31 January - 31 August 1978, unpublished checklist.

1978 Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, 7 September - 1 October 1978, no. 2.

1981 Animals in American Art: 1880s-1990s, Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, Roslyn, New York, 4 October 1981 - 17 January 1982, no. 93.

1982 Japanese Artists Who Studied in the USA and the American Scene, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, 24 July - 11 November 1982, no. 3, repro.

1985 Henri's Circle, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 20 April - 16 June 1985, unnumbered checklist.

1996 The Shores of a Dream: Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Early Work in America, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art, 7 September 1996 - 30 March 1997, catalogue with no checklist, repro.

2005 Encouraging American Genius: Master Paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY; Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, 27 August 2005 - 29 April 2007, checklist no. 82.

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2008 Asian/American/Modern Art. Shifting Currents. 1900-1970, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; The Noquchi Museum, Long Island City, 25 October 2008 - 23 August 2009, no. 6, repro.

2008 The American Evolution: A History through Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 1 March - 27 July 2008, unpublished checklist.

2013 American Journeys: Visions of Place, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 21 September 2013 - 28 September 2014, unpublished checklist.

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- 1978 Zafran, Eric M. "Kuniyoshi Retrospective." Bulletin of the Chrysler Museum of Art 7, no. 9 (September 1978): n.p.
- 1991 Kuniyoshi, Yasuo, and Yoshio Ozawa. Yasuo Kuniyoshi: Neo, Amerikan, atisuto no kiseki. Okayama, Japan, 1991: n.p.
- 2000 Cash, Sarah, and Terrie Sultan. American Treasures of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. New York, 2000: 180, repro.
- 2007 Bennett, Lennie. "The Coming of Age of American Art [exh. review]." St. Petersburg Times (18 February 2007): 8L.
- 2009 Greenhalgh, Adam. "Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Cows in Pasture." Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture 9, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 15-21.
- 2011 Greenhalgh, Adam. "Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Cows in Pasture." In Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945. Edited by Sarah Cash. Washington, 2011: 232-233, 281, repro.



Alfred Stieglitz, *John Marin*, 1921, palladium print, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection

# Marin, John American, 1870 - 1953

### **BIOGRAPHY**

John Marin was born in Rutherford, New Jersey, the son of an accountant. His mother died shortly after he was born, and he was raised by his maternal grandparents and two aunts in Weehawken, directly across the Hudson River from New York City. He attended the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken for a year, and beginning in 1893 worked for six years as a professional architect before deciding to become an artist. From 1899 to 1901 he studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, where he initiated a lifelong friendship with the modernist painter Arthur Beecher Carles (American, 1882 - 1952), and then at the Art Students League in New York. In 1905 Marin traveled to Paris, studying briefly in the atelier of Auguste J. Delecluse and at the Académie Julian. He toured the continent before returning to New York late in 1909. During this period he was attracted to the work of Paul Cézanne (French, 1839 - 1906) and to the fauvism and cubism movements. He exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne, and produced a series of etchings that reflected the influence of James McNeill Whistler (American, 1834 - 1903). Another trip to Europe in the summer of 1910 resulted in a remarkable series of watercolors of the Austrian state of Tyrol.

A major event in Marin's career occurred in 1909, when Edward Steichen (American, 1879 - 1973), impressed by Marin's watercolors displayed at the Salon d'Automne, introduced him to the American photographer and art dealer Alfred

Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946) in Paris. This meeting led to Marin's first important exhibition at Stieglitz's The Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession at 291 Fifth Avenue, known as "291," in 1910. Stieglitz became Marin's friend and dedicated advocate, exhibiting his work more often than any artist other than Georgia O'Keeffe (American, 1887 - 1986).

By the early 1910s, Marin was based in New York, though he continued to travel widely in New York state and New England. He adapted the avant-garde ideas that had impressed him in Europe—Cézanne's spare but rich watercolor technique as well as futurism and *Robert Delaunay's* Orphic cubism—into a distinctive style, making bold, energetic watercolors of the city's skyscrapers and the Brooklyn Bridge. In 1912 Marin married Marie Hughes and they settled in Cliffside, New Jersey. He made his first of what would become regular annual trips to Maine in 1914, and shortly thereafter bought an island at Small Point. Marin was fascinated by the Maine seacoast and landscape, which became a major source of inspiration for the rest of his life.

Marin spent the summers of 1929 and 1930 in Taos, New Mexico, and produced 100 watercolors that were shown to great acclaim at Stieglitz's gallery An American Place in 1930 and 1931. Renowned as a watercolorist, in the 1930s he began to work more extensively in oils. In 1936 a retrospective exhibition of Marin's work was held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. By this time he was regarded as a major artist, and by the late 1940s he had achieved an extraordinary level of fame. In 1947 another major retrospective was held at the Institute of Modern Art in Boston, after which *Look* magazine pronounced him "America's Artist No. 1." In 1949 a major retrospective exhibition of his oils, watercolors, and etchings was held at the M. H. De Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco. In 1950 Yale University conferred upon Marin an honorary doctor of fine arts degree, as did the University of Maine.

Marin drew his imagery directly from nature, but always sought to capture its spirit and imagery rather than merely imitate it. Although he experimented with nonobjective compositions, he was uncomfortable with total abstraction.

Nevertheless, the energy and gestural quality of his work exerted an influence on abstract expressionism. Depressed after the deaths of his wife and Stieglitz, Marin died at his summer home in Addison, Maine, on October 2, 1953, shortly before his 83rd birthday. The many works given to the National Gallery of Art by Marin's son, John Marin Jr., and daughter-in-law, Norma B. Marin, have made the Gallery an important center for Marin studies.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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1970	Reich, Sheldon. <i>John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raisonné</i> . 2 vols. Tucson, 1970.
1990	Fine, Ruth E. <i>John Marin</i> . Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1990.
2008	Agee, William C. <i>John Marin: The Late Oils</i> . Exh. cat. Adelson Galleries, New York, 2008.
2010	Tedeschi, Martha, et al. <i>John Marin's Watercolours: A Medium for Modernism</i> . Art Institute of Chicago; High Museum of Art, Atlanta. Chicago and New Haven, 2011.

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2011 Balken, Debra Bricker. John Marin: Modernism and Midcentury. Exh. cat. Portland (Maine) Museum of Art; Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth; Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, 2011-2012. New Haven and Andover, 2011.

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American Paintings, 1900-1945



John Marin American, 1870 - 1953

# Grey Sea

1938

oil on canvas

overall: 55.9 x 71.1 x 1.9 cm (22 x 28 x 3/4 in.)

framed: 72.4 x 87.4 x 5.7 cm (28 1/2 x 34 7/16 x 2 1/4 in.)

Inscription: lower right: Marin 38

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Marin, Jr. 1987.19.1

### **ENTRY**

In 1933, John Marin spent his first summer on Cape Split in Addison, Maine. He experienced an immediate affinity for this remote, sparsely populated, and rugged area so far removed from tourist traffic. The following year, the Marins bought a house in South Addison that was built on a rocky promontory overlooking Pleasant Bay. Marin spent a considerable amount of time on his open front porch painting the sea, which was only about 25 feet away. In 1936, he informed Stieglitz: "Here the Sea is so damned insistent that houses and land things won't appear much in my pictures."[1] That same year he told an art critic: "I find my brush moving in the rhythm of wave or sail or rock."[2] Ruth Fine has described how the sea became one of the artist's major motifs: "Moment by moment, day by day, season by season, year by year, he continued to chart the changes that took place in the bay outside his house and throughout the surrounding area. Portraying the sea in all its moods—calm or violent, gray or filled with color, luminous or leaden—he created an extraordinary record of what must be one of the most beautiful places in the world."[3]

Grey Sea, one of Marin's most evocative marine images, is not rendered in watercolor, the predominant medium of his career, but rather oil, a medium he began to explore more extensively beginning in the late 1920s.[4] His exuberant, expressionistic brushwork has allowed him to achieve an astonishing variety of textures, ranging from thick twists of heavily applied paint seemingly squeezed directly from the tube, to short, straight brushstrokes, to smoothly flowing passages, and even, by way of contrast, to a reserved area of raw, untouched canvas at the bottom center of the picture offset by the swirling pigments around it—effects that could not have been achieved with watercolor. The vigorous technique conveys a vivid sense of a primal, elemental clash between sea, sky, and land. More specifically, Grey Sea is thought to have been painted in the aftermath of a serious hurricane that ravaged lower New England and Long Island for nearly two weeks in September 1938. This may explain the patch of bare canvas with its graphic spiral, which perhaps functions as the "eye of the storm" in Marin's painting.

Marin represented the ocean's waves as stylized, triangular configurations that assume their shape as they emerge from the sea, only to be broken into formless, churning whitewater after striking the rocks on the shore. In *Grey Sea*, small triangles are scattered along the bottom foreground, and a single large one appears in the center of the composition, leaning toward the shore. Imparting a rhythmic sense to the composition's surface, Marin derived these abstract forms from his observations of natural phenomena and his visceral connection to the dynamic, underlying forces of nature.

Marin had begun using geometric forms as part of his visual vocabulary in 1931, a tendency that would later reach one of its most extreme manifestations in *The Fog Lifts* [fig. 1]. These geometric motifs also play an especially prominent role in related oils from the late 1930s: *Wave on Rock* [fig. 2], *Off Cape Split, Maine* (1938, private collection, R. 38.25), and the watercolor *Breaking Sea, Cape Split, Maine* (1939, Sid Deutsch Gallery, New York, R. 39.7).

As early as 1917, Marin was enthusiastically describing the distinctive coastline of Maine to Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946): "Big shelving, wonderful rocks, hoary with enormous hanging beards of seaweed, carrying forests of evergreen on their backs. The big tides come in, swift, go out swift. And the winds bring in big waves, they pound the beaches and rocks."[5] Marin's enthusiasm would continue over the course of his long career, and in time his innovative paintings would take their place among those of the many other important American painters who

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depicted the state's uniquely American landscape, including the epochal seascapes of his illustrious predecessor, Winslow Homer (American, 1836 - 1910), as well as the iconic images of Mount Katahdin by his great contemporary in the Stieglitz group, Marsden Hartley (American, 1877 - 1943).[6] Marin's Maine seascapes have also more recently come to be understood, as they had been at the time of Marin's death, in the context of the works of the abstract expressionists. His emphasis on painterly, expressive gestures, and the churning, mercurial process of painting itself link him to the concerns of Willem de Kooning (American, born Netherlands, 1904 - 1997), Jackson Pollock (American, 1912 - 1956), and other midcentury artists.[7] In works like Grey Sea, Marin, like Pollock in Number 1, 1950 (Lavender Mist), collapses the distinction between the painter and subject. The vital identification in Marin's work between the artist and the sea demonstrates the credo espoused by Pollock, who, when asked by the influential painter and teacher Hans Hofmann (American, born Germany, 1880 - 1966) whether he painted from nature, famously responded: "I am nature."[8]

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** John Marin, *The Fog Lifts*, 1949, oil on canvas, Roland P. Murdock Collection, Wichita Art Museum



**fig. 2** John Marin, *Wave on Rock*, 1937, oil on canvas, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from Charles Simon and the Painting and Sculpture Committee 81.18

### **NOTES**

- [1] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, Sept. 10, 1936, quoted in Dorothy Norman, ed., *The Selected Writings of John Marin* (New York, 1949), 171.
- [2] Edwin Alden Jewell, "A Marin Retrospective," *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1936.
- [3] Ruth Fine, John Marin (Washington, DC, 1990), 237
- [4] On Marin's late oils, see William Agee, "John Marin's Greatness: The Late Oils & Post-1945 Art," in *John Marin: The Late Oils* (New York, 2008), 6–21.
- [5] John Marin to Alfred Stieglitz, July 31, 1917, quoted in Dorothy Norman, ed., The Selected Writings of John Marin (New York, 1949), 35.
- [6] For Homer's influence on Marin, see Bruce Robertson, *Reckoning with Winslow Homer: His Late Paintings and Their Influence* (Cleveland, OH, 1990), 149–153
- [7] At the Venice Biennale in the summer of 1950, John Marin was featured along with Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and others.
- [8] Lee Krasner, "Interview with Bruce Glaser," 1967, in Kirk Varnedoe and Pepe Karmel, eds., *Jackson Pollock: Interviews, Articles, and Reviews* (New York,



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1999), 28.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a coarsely woven, plain-weave fabric that has been wax-lined to a fiberglass fabric and stretched onto a nonoriginal stretcher. All the original tacking margins are preserved. The ground is a commercially prepared, thin, grey-white layer.[1] The ground is exposed in many areas and has been used by the artist as an integral part of the composition. The paint layer was quickly and directly applied with assorted sizes of square-tipped brushes, often painting wet into wet with the brushes heavily loaded with paint, forming high impasto. Throughout the painting, the artist has scraped away areas of paint with a brush end or a sharp tool, creating texture and repeated linear patterns. An area of exposed ground in the middle of the painting reveals a black swirl in diluted dark paint, which may be from an underdrawing or artist's sketch [fig. 1]. The painting is in good condition, although the impasto may be slightly flattened from the lining process. A clear layer of glossy varnish was removed in a 2002 treatment.

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### **TECHNICAL COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Detail, John Marin, Grey Sea, 1938, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Marin Jr.

### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

The priming covers all of the tacking margins, indicating that the canvas was primed before painting. This usually indicates that the priming was commercially prepared rather than applied by the artist.

### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1870-1953]; his estate; by inheritance to his son, John C. Marin, Jr. [1914-1988], Cape Split, Maine; gift 1987 to NGA.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

### œ NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS

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1938 John Marin: Paintings, An American Place, New York, 1938, as Grey and Green Sea.

1963 John Marin 1870-1953, The University of Arizona Art Gallery, Tucson, 1963, no. 94, as Gray Sea.

1965 John Marin, The Willard Gallery, New York, 1965, no. 12.

1967 American Masters: Art Students League, organized by the American Federation of the Arts, New York, circulated 1967-1968, no. 33, repro.

1985 John Marin in Maine, Portland Museum of Art, Maine, 1985, no. 58.

1990 Selections and Transformations: The Art of John Marin, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1990, pl. 220.

2001 Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2001, no. 132, repro.

2011 John Marin: Modernism at Midcentury, Portland (Maine) Museum of Art; Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth; Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, 2011-2012, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 5.

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- 1992 American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1992: 232, repro.
- 2016 National Gallery of Art. Highlights from the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Washington, 2016: 304, repro.



John Marin American, 1870 - 1953

## The Written Sea

1952

oil on canvas

overall: 55.88 x 71.12 cm (22 x 28 in.)

framed: 68.58 x 83.82 x 3.81 cm (27 x 33 x 1 1/2 in.)

Inscription: lower right: Marin 52

Gift of Deborah and Ed Shein 2009.12.1

#### **ENTRY**

"The oldest living American practitioner in oils and watercolor is still, apparently, the best." [1] The subject of this praise was the painter John Marin, and it was conveyed in a brief exhibition review by Henry McBride published in the February 1953 issue of *Artnews*. The review appeared shortly after Marin's final exhibition, held at Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery from December 30, 1952, through January 24, 1953. The checklist for the show documents 11 oils and 13 watercolors, all from 1952; it also carries Marin's overview of the exhibition in which he describes the show as "composed of movements related to Sea-Land and Circus." The term "movement" was essential to his discussions of his art, and it was often incorporated into his titles during his later years. Writing about this diverse array of paintings, McBride—always a Marin enthusiast—noted an "extra crispness" in the artist's paint strokes, a quality he attributed to Marin's emphatic calligraphy, which he further described as "streaked with the flowing lines that the best Chinese masters love to use."

The Written Sea was among the oils on view in the Downtown Gallery exhibition, and in its title Marin tacitly acknowledged the boldly calligraphic aspect of his project. Painted when the artist was in his eighties, The Written Sea is a pinnacle of Marin's late career, during which oil painting played a central role in his practice. William Agee has called The Written Sea "one of the most glorious bursts of oldage art in the 20th century, matched only by Picasso, Matisse, and Hofmann."[2] Some 40 years earlier, Sheldon Reich described the painting in his catalogue raisonné of the artist's oils and watercolors as "the culmination of [Marin's] urge to translate movement into line." This notion was echoed by a subheading, "Written Paint," in a 1971 Time magazine article about Marin's work by Robert Hughes.[3] The title of the article itself, "Fugues in Space," additionally alludes to music, and thus to the multiple associations with movement that musical terms inspire.

Marin made oil paintings throughout his working life, although in smaller numbers and less consistently than the watercolors that brought him his greatest fame. The earliest known oils date to 1907 and depict industrial mills in Meaux, France, painted during the artist's years in Europe (1905–1910), during which he also created approximately 100 etchings: spirited evocations of buildings, bridges, and waterways in France, Germany, Holland, and Italy that Marin drew on copper with a sharply pointed tool, bit with acid, inked, and printed.[4] This indirect and complicated process helped form the foundation for his lifelong exploration of an expansive range of linear elements (drawn, painted, and incised) that was essential to his subsequent work, regardless of media.

In general, Marin's canvases received less exposure and, consequently, less critical attention than his works on paper, both during his lifetime and posthumously.[5] Moreover, critical writing about the oils has generally been less positive than that about the watercolors.[6] This circumstance undoubtedly originated in *Alfred Stieglitz*'s lack of interest in Marin's work in the oil medium. Indeed, Marin's first exhibition composed solely of oils, *John Marin Oils: 1903–1950*, did not take place until his final show at An American Place, four years after Stieglitz died.[7] Among the works included in this exhibition were selections from the hundred or so small paintings known as the Weehawken Sequence, Marin's initial significant body of oil paintings (on canvas-covered boards). These Weehawken scenes have long been controversial in terms of their dates, with attributions ranging from 1903/1904, as reported by MacKinley Helm in 1949 (based on information provided by Marin), to as late as 1916, as cataloged by Reich.[8] Anomalous in terms of medium among Marin's early works, whenever they were done, the Weehawken Sequence as a

group presents a strong and coherent statement of the approach to art-making that remained critical to Marin: a commitment to a site seen, neither illustrated nor discarded, but documented as transformed—abstraction based on nature.

Apart from the Weehawken images, Marin worked in oil only occasionally until the early 1930s, about the time he began to spend summers at Cape Split, Nova Scotia. At that point his work on canvas blossomed, and the interplay among methods he employed in watercolor and in oil enhanced his achievements in both. Through the 1930s he often worked the watercolors more heavily than previously, with broadly painted layers of color modified by the sort of vigorous rubbing out that would more readily be expected with oil. Moving into the 1940s, this emphasis on weight shifted, and the important role paper plays in watercolor inserted itself into the oils, which often were marked by expanses of open canvas. (There was neither a sharp break in the artist's methodology, nor any consistent overall change; instead, new approaches were added to his array of processes.) During these years, Marin increasingly made use of an ink line in the watercolors, enhancing the drama of many compositions. This important linear component soon found its way into the oils as well.

The complexity of Marin's approach is vividly exemplified in *The Written Sea*. The matte white of primed but otherwise unpainted canvas is highlighted by touches of brilliant white oil paint, thickly applied in abundant daubs and strokes. Similarly varied are the dancing marks of rich umber, deep blue, and bright red that create the registers of rocks, sea, and sky typical of Marin's Maine seascapes, seen previously in *Sunset*. Bracketing the horizon line in both works are suggestions of sailing vessels, likewise essential to Marin's Maine. The palette Marin employed in *The Written Sea* is more limited in its number of hues than is usual in the oils, as is its essentially out-of-the-tube nature. More commonly Marin's oil colors are subdued by intermixing. However, the limited palette references on a larger scale the lively color touches that play a crucial role in Marin's sketchbook pages, in particular those that feature the circus, a favored topic in Marin's later years [fig. 1].

The Circus sketchbooks offer clues not only to Marin's palette, but also to his compositional structures [fig. 2]. While his visual spaces are dynamic and engaged by movement at every stage of his career, over its course Marin's strategies for this activity shift considerably. Late works are dynamic in new ways that reflect the artist's growing attention to aerial trapeze artists slashing through space, creating eccentric shapes as they enclose segments of air. The energy relates, of course, to Marin's more geometrically boxed buildings and boats of three decades earlier. In

The Written Sea, for example, the trapeze is most clearly suggested by parallel black diagonals, left and right, that hover at the edges of the sky. But suggestions of a trapeze may also be found in busier areas of the canvas, at both the left and right lower corners.

Two years after purchasing his home at Cape Split, Marin wrote to Stieglitz that "here the sea is so damned insistent that houses and land things won't appear much in my pictures."[9] This declaration is borne out by canvases such as *The Written Sea*, in which, working from side to side and top to bottom, Marin laid in the pervasive calligraphy, using both black oil paint and black ink. At least some of the latter marks were applied with a medical syringe, an unconventional tool Marin added to his repertoire during a 1951 hospital stay, when he spent as much time as possible sketching views from the window of his room.[10]

While developing new ways of working, Marin also reflected on his life. In the 1950s he made oil paintings based on photographs by Stieglitz dating to decades earlier, for example of his mother and of himself with his parents. These subjects were reflective of past experience, yet Marin's thought processes required new methodology, a distillation of form not from nature but instead derived from flat photographic images that equally became a source for spatial "movements" on canvas.

The Written Sea pushes at the outer edges of Marin's late, highly experimental style, which is marked by a shift from his early work not only in method, but also in attitude. Clearly Marin was aware of the younger painters of the New York school, whose growing reputations would soon come to supplant his own. Most evident in The Written Sea is his awareness of the art of Jackson Pollock (American, 1912 - 1956). Preceding this canvas by three years, however, in 1950 the painter and critic Louis Finkelstein compared Marin's late oils to the paintings of Willem de Kooning, citing parallels in what he viewed as both men's painterly focus on intellectually structuring a canvas rather than deriving inspiration from a source in nature.[11] Marin, of course, never left his source, and what Finkelstein sees is a reordering of priorities rather than a new engagement. The abstraction of the late works mandates a viewer to consider the elements of a site-inspired composition (trees, rocks, sea) as secondary to the character of the visual situation (qualities of movement, light, rhythm).

A special aspect of *The Written Sea* is that it retains Marin's original hand-painted frame.[12] The artist's concern for the edges and enclosures of his work goes back

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to the etching and watercolor compositions of the 1910s. By the early 1920s Marin was using special mounts for watercolors, often including elaborate borders along the edges of both the painted sheets and/or their mounts, to dramatically frame his already dynamic images. He also had begun painting the wooden frames themselves.

In the early 1930s Marin occasionally painted complex borders around the edges of his oils on canvas, soon to be followed by wooden frames that he carved and painted, like the one seen here. One can only suspect that many paintings no longer so framed were presented that way originally. The frames would have been subsequently removed by their owners—unfortunately, as it is clear that the framing element was essential to Marin's concept of the work as a whole. In the case of The Written Sea, the frame is relatively spare compared to others of the period that enclose Maine mountain landscapes and New York cityscapes. It suggests the possibility of engaging in reflective and peaceful thought while looking out from the shoreline (only one of many ways to experience the sea), in contrast to the daily tumult of much of our worldly experience.

Some months after *The Written Sea* was completed, Marin discussed his art, and specifically his approach to the sea, with critic Emily Genauer:

The sea, for instance, wants to be horizontal, but then the horizontals begin to play, to move. Sympathetic lines turn up all over the canvas, a diagonal here, a patch of color there, all related to each other, all echoes of each other, all living together, all adding up to a total shape, but always adding up to life.[13]

Ruth Fine

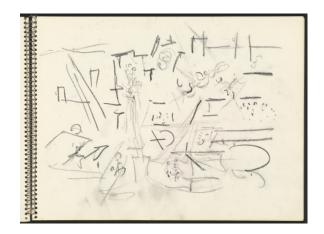
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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Sketchbook drawing, John Marin, *Circus Abstraction*, c. 1950, black chalk and graphite, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of John Marin Jr., 1986.54.163.m



**fig. 2** Sketchbook drawing, John Marin, *Circus Scene*, c. 1950, black chalk and watercolor, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of John Marin Jr., 1986.54.163.n

### **NOTES**

- [1] Henry McBride, "Ageless Marin," *Artnews* 51 (Feb. 1953): 58.

  This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in Charles Brock, Nancy Anderson, and Harry Cooper, *American Modernism: The Shein Collection* (Washington, DC, 2010).
- [2] William Agee, "John Marin's Greatness: The Late Oils & Post-1945 Art," in *John Marin: The Late Oils* (New York, 2008), 15.
- [3] Robert Hughes, "Art: Fugues in Space," Time (Feb. 22, 1971): 62.
- [4] The etchings are recorded in Carl Zigrosser, *The Complete Etchings of John Marin* (Philadelphia, 1969).
- [5] On Marin's oils see Klaus Kertess, *Marin in Oil* (Southampton, NY, 1987).
- [6] Unfortunately, this continues; see Karen Rosenberg, "Art in Review: John Marin," The New York Times (Dec. 19, 2008): C28. Writing about two Marin exhibitions in New York—one of watercolors at Meredith Ward Fine Art, the other of late oils at Adelson Galleries—Rosenberg concluded that the shows affirmed Marin "was a singularly talented water-colorist and a so-so oil painter."
- [7] With financial assistance from Dorothy Norman, Marin and O'Keeffe kept An American Place open for occasional exhibitions through 1950.

- [8] MacKinley Helm discussed the Weehawken Sequence in John Marin (New York, 1948), 9. Hilton Kramer agreed with this early date in his eponymous essay in John Marin: The Painted Frame (New York, 2000), 13, n. 3. In Sheldon Reich's two-volume John Marin: A Stylistic Analysis and Catalogue Raisonné (Tucson, AZ, 1970), the paintings are discussed extensively on pages 85–95. This writer's views are laid out in Ruth Fine, John Marin (Washington, DC, 1990), 119.
- [9] Letter from Marin to Stieglitz, Addison, Maine, Sept. 10, 1935, in Dorothy Norman, ed., *The Selected Writings of John Marin* (New York, 1949), 171
- [10] Filling sketchbooks and drawing on loose sheets of paper had been an essential part of Marin's image-development strategy dating back to his teens. Throughout his life, etchings, watercolors, and oils were developed from brief studies in graphite, ink, crayon, and watercolor, often in combination. Many drawings were torn from sketchbooks by the artist himself, and others have been dismantled. Eighteen books donated to the National Gallery of Art, either by John Marin Jr. or Norma Boom Marin, track the range of his subjects and styles. New York skyscrapers as well as populous city street scenes, the Maine landscape and water views, and the circus are all well represented. Sheets that are essentially painted in watercolor are not included in Reich, but an entire sketchbook from 1952 is reproduced in Ruth Fine, *John Marin* (Washington, DC, 1990), 272–275. It shows the range of Marin's approach during a limited period of time.
- [11] Louis Finkelstein, "Marin and de Kooning," *Magazine of Art* 43 (Oct. 1950): 202–206.
- [12] See *John Marin: The Painted Frame*, with an essay by Hilton Kramer (New York, 2000). *The Written Sea* serves as the frontispiece for Kramer's essay.
- [13] Quote in Emily Genauer, "Marin's Shorthand," *New York Herald Tribune, Sunday Magazine* (Dec. 28, 1952), Marin Family Papers, Clippings 1952–1953.

### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The painting is executed on a medium-weight, plain-weave canvas that was preprimed with a white ground. It is still on its original stretcher and therefore retains its original dimensions. The paint was applied directly, much like a colored drawing, leaving most of the ground visible in the final image. Infrared examination shows no additional underdrawing serving as a guide for the painting.[1] Given the linear nature of the painting, no x-radiograph was necessary as there were no changes that could not be detected visually. At the lower left edge in a localized

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area the red paint appears to have been wiped away with solvent. There are small vertical drips of black paint to the left of center. Based on the paint layer's overall thinness and extreme opacity, some of the glossier lines might have been executed in black ink rather than with the oil paint that seems to comprise the rest of the painting. There are a few areas where paint was applied on top of already dried paint, but in general the paint was applied wet over wet. The painting is unvarnished and in very good condition, although it is somewhat grimy.

### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

[1] The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with a J astronomy filter.

#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist's daughter-in-law, Norma B. Marin; (Meredith Ward Fine Art, New York); purchased 2006 by Deborah and Ed Shein, Providence; gift 2009 to NGA.

### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1952 John Marin Exhibition, The Downtown Gallery, New York, 1952-1953.

1954 John Marin, The Philadelphia Art Alliance, 1954, no. 44.

1955 John Marin, Art Galleries of the University of California, Los Angeles, 1955-1956, no. 36.

1956 John Marin, Arts Council Gallery, London, 1956, no. 29.

1970 John Marin, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1970, no. 154.

1987 Marin in Oil, The Parris Art Museum, Southampton, New York, 1987, no. 53.

1990 John Marin, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1990, no. 250, repro.

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2000 John Marin: The Painted Frame, Richard York Gallery, New York, 2000, no. 34.

2008 John Marin: The Late Oils, Adelson Galleries, New York, 2008, no. 12.

2010 American Modernism: The Shein Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2010-2011, no. 12, repro.

2011 John Marin: Modernism at Midcentury, Portland (Maine) Museum of Art; Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth; Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, 2011-2012, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 57.

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	America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries. Exh. cat. National
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2010	Brock, Charles, Nancy Anderson, and Harry Cooper. American
	Modernism: The Shein Collection. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art,
	Washington, D.C., 2010: no. 12, repro.



Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1918, platinum print, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection

# O'Keeffe, Georgia

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Georgia O'Keeffe was born on November 15, 1887, on a farm in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. She demonstrated an early aptitude for art and resolved to become an artist. After graduating from high school in 1905, O'Keeffe attended the Art Institute of Chicago from 1905 to 1906, and the Art Students League in New York from 1907 to 1908. Although O'Keeffe won the League's William Merritt Chase still-life prize in 1908 she became disillusioned with academic realism and ceased to paint. In 1912 she took a summer course for art teachers at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, with an instructor who introduced her to the progressive ideas of Arthur Wesley Dow (American, 1857 - 1922). O'Keeffe experimented with these concepts while teaching art in the public school system in Amarillo, Texas, from 1912 to 1914. She returned to New York and took courses at Columbia Teachers College for the academic year of 1914–1915, and began teaching art at Columbia College in South Carolina. She produced a series of innovative abstract charcoal drawings that attracted the attention of the photographer and art dealer Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946), who exhibited them at his 291 gallery in 1916. He gave O'Keeffe a solo exhibition the following year, and in 1918 provided financial support that enabled her to leave her position at West Texas State Normal College in Canyon and move to New York.

The relationship between Stieglitz and O'Keeffe profoundly affected the course of their professional and personal lives. In March 1924 Stieglitz arranged for major

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exhibitions of his photographs and O'Keeffe's paintings and works on paper to be shown simultaneously at the Anderson Galleries. Later that year Stieglitz divorced his wife Emmeline and soon after married O'Keeffe. They lived in New York City and summered at Oaklawn, his family estate on Lake George in upstate New York. Until his death in 1946, Stieglitz ardently promoted O'Keeffe and held annual exhibitions of her work at his galleries. By the late 1920s her representations of New York skyscrapers and large, close-up views of flowers earned her recognition as one of the most significant American artists of the time. Although O'Keeffe was not associated with any particular art movement other than her affiliation with Stieglitz's circle, her work can be related to cubism, surrealism, regionalism, and precisionism.

O'Keeffe first visited New Mexico during the summer of 1929 and was deeply inspired by its landscape, architecture, and the animal bones and other natural souvenirs she found in the desert, which figured prominently in her paintings. She moved there permanently in 1949, dividing her time between Ghost Ranch, which she had purchased in 1940, and an adobe house she bought in Abiquiú in 1945. O'Keeffe's fame continued to grow. A major retrospective of her work was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970, and her illustrated autobiography *Georgia O'Keeffe* (1976) was a best seller. In 1977 she received the Medal of Freedom from President Gerald Ford, and in 1985 the Medal of the Arts from President Ronald Reagan. In 1984 failing eyesight forced her into retirement. O'Keeffe died in Santa Fe on March 6, 1986, at the age of 98.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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2001	Peters, Sarah Whitaker. <i>Becoming O'Keeffe: The Early Years</i> . 2nd ed. New York, 2001.
2009	Haskell, Barbara, ed. <i>Georgia O'Keeffe and Abstraction</i> . Exh. cat. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Phillips Collection, Washington; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe. New Haven, 2009.
2011	O'Keeffe, Georgia. <i>My Faraway One: Selected Letters of Georgia</i> O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz. Selected, annotated, and edited by Sarah  Greenough. New Haven, 2011.
2014	Griffin, Randall C. Georgia O'Keeffe. London, 2014.
2015	Scott, Nancy J. George O'Keeffe. London, 2015.

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Georgia O'Keeffe American, 1887 - 1986

# Jack-in-Pulpit - No. 2

1930

oil on canvas

overall: 101.6 x 76.2 cm (40 x 30 in.)

framed: 105.3 x 80 x 4.4 cm (41 7/16 x 31 1/2 x 1 3/4 in.)

Inscription: upper left reverse: Jack in Pulpit-No 2-30 / signed within five-pointed

star: OK

Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe 1987.58.1

### **ENTRY**

This work is part of a series of six paintings depicting the jack-in-the-pulpit flower, five of which reside at the National Gallery of Art: this one, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3*, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV*, *Jack-in-Pulpit Abstraction - No. 5* and *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*. Georgia O'Keeffe painted the series in 1930, while staying at her husband Alfred Stieglitz's family estate in Lake George, New York.

The jack-in-the-pulpit is a common North American herbaceous flowering plant of the Arum family, *Arisaema triphyllum* (also called *A. atrorubens*), whose upright spadix, or jack, is enclosed within an elongated, striped spathe. It is closely related to the calla lily, another of O'Keeffe's early floral subjects. A favorite among wildflower enthusiasts, the plant's colloquial name is derived from the resemblance between its spathe arching over its spadix and early hooded church pulpits. It is also known as "Indian turnip" because Native Americans cooked and ate its bulbous roots, which they considered a delicacy. Joseph Harned, a botanist, noted that the "jack-in-the-pulpit has been a delight to American boys and girls ever since Columbus discovered America."[1]

O'Keeffe has related how her high school art teacher in Madison, Wisconsin, first introduced her to the subject:

Holding a jack-in-the-pulpit high, she pointed out the strange shapes and variations in color—from the deep, almost black earthy violet through all the greens, from the pale whitish green in the

flower through the heavy green of the leaves. She held up the purplish hood and showed us the jack inside. I had seen jacks before, but this was the first time I remember examining a flower. I was a little annoyed at being interested because I didn't like the teacher.[2]

The artist has also described the circumstances that led her to execute the sixpainting series at Lake George:

In the woods near two large spring houses, wild jack-in-the-pulpits grew—both the large dark ones and the small green ones. The year I painted them I had gone to the lake early in March. Remembering the art lessons of my high school days, I looked at the jacks with great interest. I did a set of six paintings of them. The first painting was very realistic. The last one had only the jack from the flower.[3]

Although the sequential numbering of the works' titles implies a serial progression of exploration and refinement that culminated in the sixth version, the actual order of execution is not clear. O'Keeffe and Doris Bry renumbered the series in 1970; the present third painting was originally the second, and the fourth was originally the sixth. Further complicating matters, there is no consistent use of Roman and Arabic numbers in the paintings' titles and the works vary in size.

The first three paintings in O'Keeffe and Bry's final arrangement are all relatively naturalistic views of a single flower's exterior. The forms are simplified, and the artist made no attempt to render minute botanical details. The bold colors are derived from the jack-in-the-pulpit's distinctive purple-striped spathe (a feature that botanists have identified as characteristic of the fertile plants), and emphasis is placed on the tip of the spadix that protrudes from the protective spathe. *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 1* [fig. 1] was the smallest painting in the series, measuring only twelve by nine inches. In the much larger *Jack-in-Pulpit - No. 2*, the plant is set against a pale mauve background, and all four corners of the composition are occupied by green foliage. *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3* is viewed from a slightly more distant vantage point, so there is more emphasis on the elongated, upright form of the striped spathe. The green foliage is arranged in a less symmetrical manner, and the mauve background has been replaced by a cloudy sky.

The last three paintings in the series are close-up, lateral views of the spathe's interior. In these works, the imagery borders on abstraction. Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV is a magnified view of the spadix set against the spathe's cavernous, dark purple interior. The composition is bifurcated by a narrow strip of white that emerges from the tip of the spadix. Green foliage and a hint of the cloudy sky are now confined to the upper right and left corners. Jack-in-Pulpit Abstraction - No. 5 is the largest painting in the series; its dimensions may have prompted an early critic to remark that some of the series "are on an almost gargantuan scale." [4] Individual plant forms have reached such a degree of abstraction that they are difficult to identify. The predominant purple color indicates the interior of the spathe, and the rounded tips of what are presumably three spadices appear on the left. A white stripe similar to that in the previous painting appears in the left center of the composition. The culminating painting in the series, Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI is a highly simplified view of the spadix, which is now reduced to an elegant, dark, linear configuration, whose form is echoed by an eerie white light. Echoing the author of a popular book on botany who had metaphorically described how the plant's "pulpit is erected beneath leafy cathedral arches,"[5] an art critic similarly described this image as "grand and luminous as a cathedral window." [6] The tall, narrow dimensions of the composition enhance the architectural analogy, and the arch-like configuration is reminiscent of the French cubist Robert Delaunay's series of paintings depicting the interior of the Parisian Gothic church Saint-Séverin, for example Saint-Séverin No. 3 [fig. 2].

The large magnified representations of flowers that O'Keeffe began to paint in 1923 are her most famous subjects, and the ones with which she is most often associated; as early as 1929 Miguel Covarrubias caricatured her in the *New Yorker* as "Our Lady of the Lily" [fig. 3].[7] Although her close-up, monumentalized views of flowers had antecedents in the photographs oflmogen Cunningham (American, 1883 - 1976), Paul Strand (American, 1890 - 1976), and Edward Steichen (American, 1879 - 1973), and were to some extent paralleled in the paintings of Charles Demuth (American, 1883 - 1935) andMarsden Hartley (American, 1877 - 1943), O'Keeffe rendered her subjects at an unprecedented scale and became more closely associated with flower imagery than her male peers.[8] From the mid-1920s to the present, numerous art critics and historians have offered eroticized interpretations of these floral still lifes by maintaining that they are visual metaphors for the female reproductive organs and thus have a sexual connotation. Lewis Mumford, for example, opined in an important essay that O'Keeffe "has beautified the sense of what it means to be a woman; she has revealed the

intimacies of love's juncture with the purity and absence of shame that lovers feel in their meeting; she has brought what was inarticulate and troubled and confused into the realm of conscious beauty."[9]

Some early critics, whose outlook was conditioned by the misogynistic symbolist equation between flowers and predatory female sensuality, found O'Keeffe's paintings enticing, sensual, and lewd.[10] Such notions, reinforced by the sinister associations of the plant's reproductive system, had become firmly embedded in popular culture by the 1920s. The author of a popular turn-of-the-century book on wildflowers called the jack-in-the-pulpit "a gay deceiver, a wolf in sheep's clothing, literally a 'brother to dragons,' an arrogant upstart, an ingrate, a murderer of innocent benefactors!"[11] The author proceeded to describe at length how insects attracted to the plant are often trapped and drowned after they fly into its spathe. These insects fertilize the small flowers at the base of the spadix (individual plants are generally staminate or pistillate, and thus incapable of self-fertilization), but at the expense of their lives. "Open a dozen of Jack's pulpits, and in several, at least, dead victims will be found—pathetic little corpses sacrificed to the imperfection of his executive system."[12] Unaccustomed to the new phenomenon of a modernist woman artist of extraordinary talent and stature, some critics ascribed O'Keeffe's imagery to uniquely feminine sensibilities and her supposed obsession with the female body. The issue is complicated by the fact that Stieglitz actively promulgated these theories in order to promote his wife's paintings on the commercial art market.[13]

For some early viewers, the jack-in-the-pulpit series was distinguished by its phallic imagery. As early as December 1930, Arthur Dove wrote to Stieglitz about *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, commenting that "the bursting of a phallic symbol into white light may be the thing we all need. Otherwise it would not bother them so."[14] Stieglitz's grandniece described the series as "the most frankly explicit" of all O'Keeffe's work, and opined that they were "a perfect subject for a love-note painting for Alfred."[15] *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV* is similar to Stieglitz's bluntly erotic photograph *Interpretation*, in which he juxtaposes a phallus-shaped plaster sculpture by O'Keeffe against the background of her painting *Music—Pink and Blue, I* (1919, The Barney Ebsworth Collection). More recently, Anne Middleton Wagner has speculated that this phallic imagery was a deliberately vulgar gesture on O'Keeffe's part that demonstrated "the will to exempt herself from the cultural implications of that gender status, [feminine] perhaps even to achieve a kind of androgyny," an "ironic effort to adopt and employ the key male signifier [that] still stands as the

most extreme of her efforts to adjust to the terms of her reception."[16] Some early critics had quite the opposite reaction and discerned a religious serenity in the series. Following the same line of thought as the critic who likened *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, considered by some to be the most phallic image in the series, to a cathedral, Henry McBride wrote, "Almost any one of them, if shown alone in a chapel... might be found to have mystic properties."[17]

O'Keeffe repeatedly denied that she had intended her flowers to have any overt or covert sexual content. She offered an alternative—and more practical—explanation of how she came to paint her "blown-up flowers":

In the twenties, huge buildings seemed to be going up overnight in New York. At that time I saw a painting by Fantin-Latour, a still life of flowers I found very beautiful, but I realized were I to paint the flowers so small, no one would look at them because I was unknown. So I thought I'll make them look big like the huge buildings going up. People will be startled; they'll have to look at them—and they did.[18]

On another occasion she offered a similar account of what led her to paint flowers, and directly refuted the critics: "Well—I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flower you hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower and you write about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower—and I don't."[19]

The imagery in O'Keeffe's floral subjects is indeed suggestive, and in the 1920s and 1930s—the era of Sigmund Freud, D. H. Lawrence, and Sherwood Anderson, and the height of the women's suffrage movement—they were likely to be interpreted as such. From the perspective of plant symbolism, the jack-in-the-pulpit, and other of O'Keeffe's floral subjects, had strong sexual connotations; one early 20th-century writer even commented: "Female botanizing classes pounce upon it as they would upon a pious young clergyman."[20] On the other hand, the artist's persistent denials that her flower paintings were intended as sexual metaphors cannot be ignored, and her repeated accounts of how she came to paint them are entirely plausible. As Charles Eldredge has aptly concluded, those who persist in a sexual interpretation of O'Keeffe's flowers "reduce them to one-dimensional Rorschach tests."[21] Her magnified views of flowers were an original and logical development in the history of still-life painting and need not be

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exclusively interpreted as sexual metaphors. The disparity of opinions voiced about Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI, running the improbable gamut from phallus to cathedral, indicates that O'Keeffe's flowers are complex, multilayered images that will continue to stimulate a debate that is impossible to resolve.

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Georgia O'Keeffe, Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 1, 1930, oil on canvas, private collection, Los Angeles. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

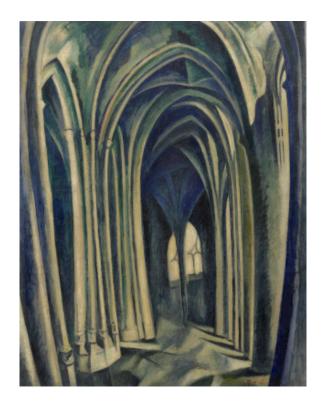


fig. 2 Robert Delaunay, Saint-Severin No. 3, 1909–1910, oil on canvas, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Founding Collection. Image: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation / Art Resource, NY



**fig. 3** Miguel Covarrubias, "Our Lady of the Lily," illustration from *New Yorker* (July 6, 1929): 21. © Condé Nast

#### **NOTES**

- [1] Joseph E. Harned, Wild Flowers of the Alleghenies (Oakland, MD, 1931), 94.
- [2] Georgia O'Keeffe, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1976), n. p.

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- [3] Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York, 1976), unpaginated text accompanying pl. 41.
- [4] Margaret Breuning, "Georgia O'Keeffe," New York Evening Post, Jan. 24, 1931.
- [5] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 367.
- [6] Edward Alden Jewell, "Georgia O'Keeffe in an Art Review," New York Times (Feb. 2, 1934). For the record, William Schack, "On Abstract Painting," Magazine of Art 27 (Sept. 1934): 470–475, reproduced and titled the painting "Number 8."
- [7] New Yorker, July 6, 1929.
- [8] For a discussion of some of some of these artists and their images of calla lilies, see Charles C. Eldredge, "Calla Moderna: 'Such a Strange Flower,'" in Barbara Buhler Lynes, Georgia O'Keeffe and the Calla Lily in American Art, 1860-1940 (Santa Fe, NM, 2002), 18–29.
- [9] Lewis Mumford, "O'Keefe [sic] and Matisse," New Republic 50 (March 2, 1927), reprinted in O'Keeffe Exhibition (New York, 1928), and Barbara Buhler Lynes, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–1929 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989), 265.
- [10] For a summary of these cultural influences, see Bram Dijkstra, "America and Georgia O'Keeffe," in *Georgia O'Keeffe: The New York Years*, ed. Doris Bry and Nicholas Callaway (New York, 1991), 125–126.
- [11] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 368.
- [12] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 368.
- [13] Various early critical responses to O'Keeffe's floral imagery are discussed in Barbara Buhler Lynes, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–1929 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989). Feminist, gender-based art historical literature has added another perspective to these issues. See, for example, Anna C. Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze," Art in America 78 (Jan. 1990): 114-125, 177, 179.
- [14] Quoted in Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women):*Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 70.
- [15] Sue Davidson Lowe, Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography (New York, 1983), 310.
- [16] Anne Middleton Wagner, Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 71.
- [17] Henry McBride, "The Georgia O'Keeffe Exhibition," New York Sun, Jan. 24,

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1931.

- [18] Katherine Kuh, The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists (New York, 1962), 190-191; quoted in Henry Geldzahler, American Painting in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1965), 131-132.
- [19] Georgia O'Keeffe, "About Myself," in Georgia O'Keeffe: Exhibition of Oils and Pastels (New York, 1939), n. p. The text is reproduced in Georgia O'Keeffe, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1976), n. p.
- [20] Neltje Blanchan, Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends (New York, 1904), 367. For a discussion of flower symbolism in O'Keeffe's paintings, see Charles C. Eldredge, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1991), 82-90.
- [21] Charles C. Eldredge, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1991), 90.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The unlined, plain-weave fabric support remains mounted on its original stretcher. The tacking margins are intact. The artist applied paint with great precision, both wet into wet and wet over dry, on a commercially prepared, smooth, white ground. The colors were mostly laid down next to one another rather than overlapped, and the edges of the forms are defined by impasto. There is no evidence of underdrawing. Other than scattered areas of traction crackle that were inpainted at the artist's request by Felrath Hines (American, 1913 - 1993) in 1967, the painting is in good condition.[1] The surface is coated with a layer of synthetic varnish.

### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

Felrath Hines was a conservator who worked in the Washington area both privately and for various Smithsonian museums. He also found some success as a painter. His work on Jack-in-Pulpit - No. 2 may have been facilitated by his friend Caroline Keck, a prominent conservator in New York, who was also a personal friend of Georgia O'Keeffe.

#### **PROVENANCE**

Jack-in-Pulpit - No. 2

395

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American Paintings, 1900-1945

The artist [1887-1986]; her estate; bequest 1987 to NGA.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1931 Georgia O'Keeffe, An American Place, New York, 1931, one of nos. 7-11.

1932 Possibly Exhibition of The American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, February 1932, no. 105, as Jack-in-the-Pulpit.

1932 Possibly Twenty-Seventh Annual Exhibition of Paintings by American Artists, City Art Museum, St. Louis, August-October 1932, no. 37 (this may also be NGA 1987.58.2).

1943 Georgia O'Keeffe, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1943, no. 37, repro.

1953 Possibly An Exhibition of Paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; The Mayo Hill Galleries, Delray Beach, Florida, 1953, no. 13, as Jack in the Pulpit.

1970 Georgia O'Keeffe Retrospective Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Art, 1970-1971, no. 66, repro.

1984 Reflections of Nature: Flowers in American Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1984, unnumbered catalogue, frontispiece, fig. 56.

2009 Dove/O'Keeffe: Circles of Influence, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, 2009, pl. 56.

2009 Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, 2009-2010, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 118.

2011 25th Year Anniversary Exhibition, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, 2011-2013, no catalogue.

2013 Modern Nature: Georgia O'Keeffe and Lake George, The Hyde Collection Art Museum, Glens Falls; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, de Young Museum, 2013-2014, no. 51, repro.

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2015 Collection Conversations: The Chrysler and the National Gallery, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, 2015-2016, no catalogue.

2016 O'Keeffe, Stettheimer, Torr, Zorach: Women Modernists in New York, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art, 2016, no. 59, fig. 8.

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- 1995 Benke, Britta. Georgia O'Keeffe 1887-1986: Flowers in the Desert. Cologne, 1995: 42, color repro.
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- 2016 Roberts, Ellen E. O'Keeffe, Stettheimer, Torr, Zorach: Women Modernists in New York. Exh. cat. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art. West Palm Beach, 2016: 123 fig. 8, 127-128, 150 no. 59.



Georgia O'Keeffe American, 1887 - 1986

# Jack-in-Pulpit Abstraction - No. 5

1930

oil on canvas

overall: 121.9 x 76.2 cm (48 x 30 in.)

framed: 125.6 x 79.9 x 4.3 cm (49 7/16 x 31 7/16 x 1 11/16 in.)

Inscription: across top reverse: Jack in the Pulpit Abstraction - 1930 / No.5 / signed

within five-pointed star: OK

Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe 1987.58.4

#### **ENTRY**

This work is part of a series of six paintings depicting the jack-in-the-pulpit flower, five of which reside at the National Gallery of Art: Jack-in-Pulpit - No. 2, Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3, Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV, this work, and Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI. Georgia O'Keeffe painted the series in 1930, while staying at her husband Alfred Stieglitz's family estate in Lake George, New York.

The jack-in-the-pulpit is a common North American herbaceous flowering plant of the Arum family, *Arisaema triphyllum* (also called *A. atrorubens*), whose upright spadix, or jack, is enclosed within an elongated, striped spathe. It is closely related to the calla lily, another of O'Keeffe's early floral subjects. A favorite among wildflower enthusiasts, the plant's colloquial name is derived from the resemblance between its spathe arching over its spadix and early hooded church pulpits. It is also known as "Indian turnip" because Native Americans cooked and ate its bulbous roots, which they considered a delicacy. Joseph Harned, a botanist, noted that the "jack-in-the-pulpit has been a delight to American boys and girls ever since Columbus discovered America."[1]

O'Keeffe has related how her high school art teacher in Madison, Wisconsin, first introduced her to the subject:

Holding a jack-in-the-pulpit high, she pointed out the strange shapes and variations in color—from the deep, almost black earthy violet through all the greens, from the pale whitish green in the flower through the heavy green of the leaves. She held up the purplish hood and showed us the jack inside. I had seen jacks before, but this was the first time I remember examining a flower. I was a little annoyed at being interested because I didn't like the teacher.[2]

The artist has also described the circumstances that led her to execute the sixpainting series at Lake George:

In the woods near two large spring houses, wild jack-in-the-pulpits grew—both the large dark ones and the small green ones. The year I painted them I had gone to the lake early in March. Remembering the art lessons of my high school days, I looked at the jacks with great interest. I did a set of six paintings of them. The first painting was very realistic. The last one had only the jack from the flower.[3]

Although the sequential numbering of the works' titles implies a serial progression of exploration and refinement that culminated in the sixth version, the actual order of execution is not clear. O'Keeffe and Doris Bry renumbered the series in 1970; the present third painting was originally the second, and the fourth was originally the sixth. Further complicating matters, there is no consistent use of Roman and Arabic numbers in the paintings' titles and the works vary in size.

The first three paintings in O'Keeffe and Bry's final arrangement are all relatively naturalistic views of a single flower's exterior. The forms are simplified, and the artist made no attempt to render minute botanical details. The bold colors are derived from the jack-in-the-pulpit's distinctive purple-striped spathe (a feature that botanists have identified as characteristic of the fertile plants), and emphasis is placed on the tip of the spadix that protrudes from the protective spathe. *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 1* [fig. 1] was the smallest painting in the series, measuring only twelve by nine inches. In the much larger *Jack-in-Pulpit - No. 2*, the plant is set against a pale mauve background, and all four corners of the composition are occupied by green foliage. *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3* is viewed from a slightly more distant vantage point, so there is more emphasis on the elongated, upright form of the

striped spathe. The green foliage is arranged in a less symmetrical manner, and the mauve background has been replaced by a cloudy sky.

The last three paintings in the series are close-up, lateral views of the spathe's interior. In these works, the imagery borders on abstraction. Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV is a magnified view of the spadix set against the spathe's cavernous, dark purple interior. The composition is bifurcated by a narrow strip of white that emerges from the tip of the spadix. Green foliage and a hint of the cloudy sky are now confined to the upper right and left corners. Jack-in-Pulpit Abstraction - No. 5 is the largest painting in the series; its dimensions may have prompted an early critic to remark that some of the series "are on an almost gargantuan scale." [4] Individual plant forms have reached such a degree of abstraction that they are difficult to identify. The predominant purple color indicates the interior of the spathe, and the rounded tips of what are presumably three spadices appear on the left. A white stripe similar to that in the previous painting appears in the left center of the composition. The culminating painting in the series, Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI is a highly simplified view of the spadix, which is now reduced to an elegant, dark, linear configuration, whose form is echoed by an eerie white light. Echoing the author of a popular book on botany who had metaphorically described how the plant's "pulpit is erected beneath leafy cathedral arches,"[5] an art critic similarly described this image as "grand and luminous as a cathedral window." [6] The tall, narrow dimensions of the composition enhance the architectural analogy, and the arch-like configuration is reminiscent of the French cubist Robert Delaunay's series of paintings depicting the interior of the Parisian Gothic church Saint-Séverin, for example Saint-Séverin No. 3 [fig. 2].

The large magnified representations of flowers that O'Keeffe began to paint in 1923 are her most famous subjects, and the ones with which she is most often associated; as early as 1929 Miguel Covarrubias caricatured her in the *New Yorker* as "Our Lady of the Lily" [fig. 3].[7] Although her close-up, monumentalized views of flowers had antecedents in the photographs of Imogen Cunningham (American, 1883 - 1976), Paul Strand (American, 1890 - 1976), and Edward Steichen (American, 1879 - 1973), and were to some extent paralleled in the paintings of Charles Demuth (American, 1883 - 1935) and Marsden Hartley (American, 1877 - 1943), O'Keeffe rendered her subjects at an unprecedented scale and became more closely associated with flower imagery than her male peers.[8] From the mid-1920s to the present, numerous art critics and historians have offered eroticized interpretations of these floral still lifes by maintaining that they are visual

metaphors for the female reproductive organs and thus have a sexual connotation. Lewis Mumford, for example, opined in an important essay that O'Keeffe "has beautified the sense of what it means to be a woman; she has revealed the intimacies of love's juncture with the purity and absence of shame that lovers feel in their meeting; she has brought what was inarticulate and troubled and confused into the realm of conscious beauty."[9]

Some early critics, whose outlook was conditioned by the misogynistic symbolist equation between flowers and predatory female sensuality, found O'Keeffe's paintings enticing, sensual, and lewd.[10] Such notions, reinforced by the sinister associations of the plant's reproductive system, had become firmly embedded in popular culture by the 1920s. The author of a popular turn-of-the-century book on wildflowers called the jack-in-the-pulpit "a gay deceiver, a wolf in sheep's clothing, literally a 'brother to dragons,' an arrogant upstart, an ingrate, a murderer of innocent benefactors!"[11] The author proceeded to describe at length how insects attracted to the plant are often trapped and drowned after they fly into its spathe. These insects fertilize the small flowers at the base of the spadix (individual plants are generally staminate or pistillate, and thus incapable of self-fertilization), but at the expense of their lives. "Open a dozen of Jack's pulpits, and in several, at least, dead victims will be found—pathetic little corpses sacrificed to the imperfection of his executive system."[12] Unaccustomed to the new phenomenon of a modernist woman artist of extraordinary talent and stature, some critics ascribed O'Keeffe's imagery to uniquely feminine sensibilities and her supposed obsession with the female body. The issue is complicated by the fact that Stieglitz actively promulgated these theories in order to promote his wife's paintings on the commercial art market.[13]

For some early viewers, the jack-in-the-pulpit series was distinguished by its phallic imagery. As early as December 1930, Arthur Dove wrote to Stieglitz about *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, commenting that "the bursting of a phallic symbol into white light may be the thing we all need. Otherwise it would not bother them so."[14] Stieglitz's grandniece described the series as "the most frankly explicit" of all O'Keeffe's work, and opined that they were "a perfect subject for a love-note painting for Alfred."[15] *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV* is similar to Stieglitz's bluntly erotic photograph *Interpretation*, in which he juxtaposes a phallus-shaped plaster sculpture by O'Keeffe against the background of her painting *Music—Pink and Blue, I* (1919, The Barney Ebsworth Collection). More recently, Anne Middleton Wagner has speculated that this phallic imagery was a deliberately vulgar gesture on O'Keeffe's

part that demonstrated "the will to exempt herself from the cultural implications of that gender status, [feminine] perhaps even to achieve a kind of androgyny," an "ironic effort to adopt and employ the key male signifier [that] still stands as the most extreme of her efforts to adjust to the terms of her reception."[16] Some early critics had quite the opposite reaction and discerned a religious serenity in the series. Following the same line of thought as the critic who likened *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, considered by some to be the most phallic image in the series, to a cathedral, Henry McBride wrote, "Almost any one of them, if shown alone in a chapel . . . might be found to have mystic properties."[17]

O'Keeffe repeatedly denied that she had intended her flowers to have any overt or covert sexual content. She offered an alternative—and more practical—explanation of how she came to paint her "blown-up flowers":

In the twenties, huge buildings seemed to be going up overnight in New York. At that time I saw a painting by Fantin-Latour, a still life of flowers I found very beautiful, but I realized were I to paint the flowers so small, no one would look at them because I was unknown. So I thought I'll make them look big like the huge buildings going up. People will be startled; they'll have to look at them—and they did.[18]

On another occasion she offered a similar account of what led her to paint flowers, and directly refuted the critics: "Well—I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flower you hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower and you write about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower—and I don't."[19]

The imagery in O'Keeffe's floral subjects is indeed suggestive, and in the 1920s and 1930s—the era of Sigmund Freud, D. H. Lawrence, and Sherwood Anderson, and the height of the women's suffrage movement—they were likely to be interpreted as such. From the perspective of plant symbolism, the jack-in-the-pulpit, and other of O'Keeffe's floral subjects, had strong sexual connotations; one early 20th-century writer even commented: "Female botanizing classes pounce upon it as they would upon a pious young clergyman."[20] On the other hand, the artist's persistent denials that her flower paintings were intended as sexual metaphors cannot be ignored, and her repeated accounts of how she came to paint them are entirely plausible. As Charles Eldredge has aptly concluded, those

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who persist in a sexual interpretation of O'Keeffe's flowers "reduce them to onedimensional Rorschach tests."[21] Her magnified views of flowers were an original and logical development in the history of still-life painting and need not be exclusively interpreted as sexual metaphors. The disparity of opinions voiced about Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI, running the improbable gamut from phallus to cathedral, indicates that O'Keeffe's flowers are complex, multilayered images that will continue to stimulate a debate that is impossible to resolve.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Georgia O'Keeffe, Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 1, 1930, oil on canvas, private collection, Los Angeles. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum



fig. 2 Robert Delaunay, Saint-Severin No. 3, 1909–1910, oil on canvas, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Founding Collection. Image: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation / Art Resource, NY



**fig. 3** Miguel Covarrubias, "Our Lady of the Lily," illustration from *New Yorker* (July 6, 1929): 21. © Condé Nast

#### **NOTES**

- [1] Joseph E. Harned, Wild Flowers of the Alleghenies (Oakland, MD, 1931), 94.
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- [21] Charles C. Eldredge, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1991), 90.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The medium-weight, plain-weave fabric support was wax-lined and remounted on a new stretcher by Felrath Hines (American, 1913 - 1993) in 1968.[1] The tacking margins are intact. The artist applied paint with great precision over a commercially applied bright white ground. The colors are mostly laid down next to one another rather than overlapped, and the edges of the forms are defined by low impasto. With the exception of the transparent dark reds and greens, the paint is opaque. Other than some areas of inpainted fine traction crackle, the painting is in good condition. The surface is coated with a synthetic resin varnish that has become slightly glossy. The frame is a replica of the silver gilt frames that George Of designed for O'Keeffe.

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

Felrath Hines was a conservator who worked in the Washington area both privately and for various Smithsonian museums. He also found some success as a painter. His work on Jack-in-Pulpit Abstraction - No. 5 may have been facilitated by his friend Caroline Keck, a prominent conservator in New York, who was also a personal friend of Georgia O'Keeffe.

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#### **PROVENANCE**

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1932 Possibly Exhibition of The American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1932, no. 105, as Jack-in-the-Pulpit.

1934 Georgia O'Keeffe at 'An American Place', 44 Selected Paintings 1915-1927, An American Place, New York, 1934 (checklist lost).

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1970 Georgia O'Keeffe Retrospective Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Art, 1970-1971, no. 69, repro.

1984 Reflections of Nature: Flowers in American Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1984, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 59.

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2016 O'Keeffe, Stettheimer, Torr, Zorach: Women Modernists in New York, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art, 2016, no. 62, fig. 11.

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- 1992 *American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1992: 251, repro.
- 1996 Wagner, Anne Middleton. Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe. Berkeley, 1996: 70-72, color pl. 12.
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- 2016 Roberts, Ellen E. O'Keeffe, Stettheimer, Torr, Zorach: Women Modernists in New York. Exh. cat. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art. West Palm Beach, 2016: 126 fig. 11, 127-128, 150 no. 62.



Georgia O'Keeffe American, 1887 - 1986

# Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3

1930

oil on canvas

overall: 101.6 x 76.2 cm (40 x 30 in.)

framed: 104.9 x 79.5 x 4.3 cm (41 5/16 x 31 5/16 x 1 11/16 in.)

Inscription: across center reverse: signed within five-pointed star: OK Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe 1987.58.2

#### **ENTRY**

This work is part of a series of six paintings depicting the jack-in-the-pulpit flower, five of which reside at the National Gallery of Art: *Jack-in-Pulpit - No. 2*, this painting, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV*, *Jack-in-Pulpit Abstraction - No. 5*, and *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*. Georgia O'Keeffe painted the series in 1930, while staying at her husband Alfred Stieglitz's family estate in Lake George, New York.

The jack-in-the-pulpit is a common North American herbaceous flowering plant of the Arum family, *Arisaema triphyllum* (also called *A. atrorubens*), whose upright spadix, or jack, is enclosed within an elongated, striped spathe. It is closely related to the calla lily, another of O'Keeffe's early floral subjects. A favorite among wildflower enthusiasts, the plant's colloquial name is derived from the resemblance between its spathe arching over its spadix and early hooded church pulpits. It is also known as "Indian turnip" because Native Americans cooked and ate its bulbous roots, which they considered a delicacy. Joseph Harned, a botanist, noted that the "jack-in-the-pulpit has been a delight to American boys and girls ever since Columbus discovered America."[1]

O'Keeffe has related how her high school art teacher in Madison, Wisconsin, first introduced her to the subject:

Holding a jack-in-the-pulpit high, she pointed out the strange shapes and variations in color—from the deep, almost black earthy violet through all the greens, from the pale whitish green in the flower through the heavy green of the leaves. She held up the

purplish hood and showed us the jack inside. I had seen jacks before, but this was the first time I remember examining a flower. I was a little annoyed at being interested because I didn't like the teacher.[2]

The artist has also described the circumstances that led her to execute the sixpainting series at Lake George:

In the woods near two large spring houses, wild jack-in-the-pulpits grew—both the large dark ones and the small green ones. The year I painted them I had gone to the lake early in March. Remembering the art lessons of my high school days, I looked at the jacks with great interest. I did a set of six paintings of them. The first painting was very realistic. The last one had only the jack from the flower.[3]

Although the sequential numbering of the works' titles implies a serial progression of exploration and refinement that culminated in the sixth version, the actual order of execution is not clear. O'Keeffe and Doris Bry renumbered the series in 1970; the present third painting was originally the second, and the fourth was originally the sixth. Further complicating matters, there is no consistent use of Roman and Arabic numbers in the paintings' titles and the works vary in size.

The first three paintings in O'Keeffe and Bry's final arrangement are all relatively naturalistic views of a single flower's exterior. The forms are simplified, and the artist made no attempt to render minute botanical details. The bold colors are derived from the jack-in-the-pulpit's distinctive purple-striped spathe (a feature that botanists have identified as characteristic of the fertile plants), and emphasis is placed on the tip of the spadix that protrudes from the protective spathe. *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 1* [fig. 1] was the smallest painting in the series, measuring only twelve by nine inches. In the much larger *Jack-in-Pulpit - No. 2*, the plant is set against a pale mauve background, and all four corners of the composition are occupied by green foliage. *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3* is viewed from a slightly more distant vantage point, so there is more emphasis on the elongated, upright form of the striped spathe. The green foliage is arranged in a less symmetrical manner, and the mauve background has been replaced by a cloudy sky.

The last three paintings in the series are close-up, lateral views of the spathe's interior. In these works, the imagery borders on abstraction. Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV is a magnified view of the spadix set against the spathe's cavernous, dark purple interior. The composition is bifurcated by a narrow strip of white that emerges from the tip of the spadix. Green foliage and a hint of the cloudy sky are now confined to the upper right and left corners. Jack-in-Pulpit Abstraction - No. 5 is the largest painting in the series; its dimensions may have prompted an early critic to remark that some of the series "are on an almost gargantuan scale." [4] Individual plant forms have reached such a degree of abstraction that they are difficult to identify. The predominant purple color indicates the interior of the spathe, and the rounded tips of what are presumably three spadices appear on the left. A white stripe similar to that in the previous painting appears in the left center of the composition. The culminating painting in the series, Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI is a highly simplified view of the spadix, which is now reduced to an elegant, dark, linear configuration, whose form is echoed by an eerie white light. Echoing the author of a popular book on botany who had metaphorically described how the plant's "pulpit is erected beneath leafy cathedral arches,"[5] an art critic similarly described this image as "grand and luminous as a cathedral window." [6] The tall, narrow dimensions of the composition enhance the architectural analogy, and the arch-like configuration is reminiscent of the French cubist Robert Delaunay's series of paintings depicting the interior of the Parisian Gothic church Saint-Séverin, for

The large magnified representations of flowers that O'Keeffe began to paint in 1923 are her most famous subjects, and the ones with which she is most often associated; as early as 1929 Miguel Covarrubias caricatured her in the *New Yorker* as "Our Lady of the Lily" [fig. 3].[7] Although her close-up, monumentalized views of flowers had antecedents in the photographs of Imogen Cunningham (American, 1883 - 1976), Paul Strand (American, 1890 - 1976), and Edward Steichen (American, 1879 - 1973), and were to some extent paralleled in the paintings of Charles Demuth (American, 1883 - 1935) and Marsden Hartley (American, 1877 - 1943), O'Keeffe rendered her subjects at an unprecedented scale and became more closely associated with flower imagery than her male peers.[8] From the mid-1920s to the present, numerous art critics and historians have offered eroticized interpretations of these floral still lifes by maintaining that they are visual metaphors for the female reproductive organs and thus have a sexual connotation. Lewis Mumford, for example, opined in an important essay that O'Keeffe "has beautified the sense of what it means to be a woman; she has revealed the

Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3

© National Gallery of Art, Washington

example Saint-Séverin No. 3 [fig. 2].

intimacies of love's juncture with the purity and absence of shame that lovers feel in their meeting; she has brought what was inarticulate and troubled and confused into the realm of conscious beauty."[9]

Some early critics, whose outlook was conditioned by the misogynistic symbolist equation between flowers and predatory female sensuality, found O'Keeffe's paintings enticing, sensual, and lewd.[10] Such notions, reinforced by the sinister associations of the plant's reproductive system, had become firmly embedded in popular culture by the 1920s. The author of a popular turn-of-the-century book on wildflowers called the jack-in-the-pulpit "a gay deceiver, a wolf in sheep's clothing, literally a 'brother to dragons,' an arrogant upstart, an ingrate, a murderer of innocent benefactors!"[11] The author proceeded to describe at length how insects attracted to the plant are often trapped and drowned after they fly into its spathe. These insects fertilize the small flowers at the base of the spadix (individual plants are generally staminate or pistillate, and thus incapable of self-fertilization), but at the expense of their lives. "Open a dozen of Jack's pulpits, and in several, at least, dead victims will be found—pathetic little corpses sacrificed to the imperfection of his executive system."[12] Unaccustomed to the new phenomenon of a modernist woman artist of extraordinary talent and stature, some critics ascribed O'Keeffe's imagery to uniquely feminine sensibilities and her supposed obsession with the female body. The issue is complicated by the fact that Stieglitz actively promulgated these theories in order to promote his wife's paintings on the commercial art market.[13]

For some early viewers, the jack-in-the-pulpit series was distinguished by its phallic imagery. As early as December 1930, Arthur Dove wrote to Stieglitz about *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, commenting that "the bursting of a phallic symbol into white light may be the thing we all need. Otherwise it would not bother them so."[14] Stieglitz's grandniece described the series as "the most frankly explicit" of all O'Keeffe's work, and opined that they were "a perfect subject for a love-note painting for Alfred." [15] *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV* is similar to Stieglitz's bluntly erotic photograph *Interpretation*, in which he juxtaposes a phallus-shaped plaster sculpture by O'Keeffe against the background of her painting *Music—Pink and Blue, I* (1919, The Barney Ebsworth Collection). More recently, Anne Middleton Wagner has speculated that this phallic imagery was a deliberately vulgar gesture on O'Keeffe's part that demonstrated "the will to exempt herself from the cultural implications of that gender status, [feminine] perhaps even to achieve a kind of androgyny," an "ironic effort to adopt and employ the key male signifier [that] still

stands as the most extreme of her efforts to adjust to the terms of her reception."[16] Some early critics had quite the opposite reaction and discerned a religious serenity in the series. Following the same line of thought as the critic who likened *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, considered by some to be the most phallic image in the series, to a cathedral, Henry McBride wrote, "Almost any one of them, if shown alone in a chapel . . . might be found to have mystic properties."[17]

O'Keeffe repeatedly denied that she had intended her flowers to have any overt or covert sexual content. She offered an alternative—and more practical—explanation of how she came to paint her "blown-up flowers":

In the twenties, huge buildings seemed to be going up overnight in New York. At that time I saw a painting by Fantin-Latour, a still life of flowers I found very beautiful, but I realized were I to paint the flowers so small, no one would look at them because I was unknown. So I thought I'll make them look big like the huge buildings going up. People will be startled; they'll have to look at them—and they did.[18]

On another occasion she offered a similar account of what led her to paint flowers, and directly refuted the critics: "Well—I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flower you hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower and you write about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower—and I don't."[19]

The imagery in O'Keeffe's floral subjects is indeed suggestive, and in the 1920s and 1930s—the era of Sigmund Freud, D. H. Lawrence, and Sherwood Anderson, and the height of the women's suffrage movement—they were likely to be interpreted as such. From the perspective of plant symbolism, the jack-in-the-pulpit, and other of O'Keeffe's floral subjects, had strong sexual connotations; one early 20th-century writer even commented: "Female botanizing classes pounce upon it as they would upon a pious young clergyman."[20] On the other hand, the artist's persistent denials that her flower paintings were intended as sexual metaphors cannot be ignored, and her repeated accounts of how she came to paint them are entirely plausible. As Charles Eldredge has aptly concluded, those who persist in a sexual interpretation of O'Keeffe's flowers "reduce them to one-dimensional Rorschach tests."[21] Her magnified views of flowers were an original and logical development in the history of still-life painting and need not be

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American Paintings, 1900-1945

exclusively interpreted as sexual metaphors. The disparity of opinions voiced about Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI, running the improbable gamut from phallus to cathedral, indicates that O'Keeffe's flowers are complex, multilayered images that will continue to stimulate a debate that is impossible to resolve.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3 415

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Georgia O'Keeffe, Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 1, 1930, oil on canvas, private collection, Los Angeles. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

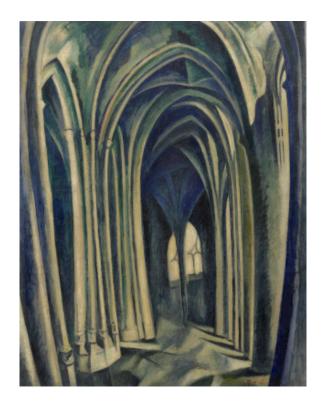


fig. 2 Robert Delaunay, Saint-Severin No. 3, 1909–1910, oil on canvas, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Founding Collection. Image: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation / Art Resource, NY



**fig. 3** Miguel Covarrubias, "Our Lady of the Lily," illustration from *New Yorker* (July 6, 1929): 21. © Condé Nast

#### **NOTES**

- [1] Joseph E. Harned, Wild Flowers of the Alleghenies (Oakland, MD, 1931), 94.
- [2] Georgia O'Keeffe, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1976), n. p.

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- [3] Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York, 1976), unpaginated text accompanying pl. 41.
- [4] Margaret Breuning, "Georgia O'Keeffe," New York Evening Post, Jan. 24, 1931.
- [5] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 367.
- [6] Edward Alden Jewell, "Georgia O'Keeffe in an Art Review," New York Times (Feb. 2, 1934). For the record, William Schack, "On Abstract Painting," Magazine of Art 27 (Sept. 1934): 470–475, reproduced and titled the painting "Number 8."
- [7] New Yorker, July 6, 1929.
- [8] For a discussion of some of some of these artists and their images of calla lilies, see Charles C. Eldredge, "Calla Moderna: 'Such a Strange Flower,'" in Barbara Buhler Lynes, Georgia O'Keeffe and the Calla Lily in American Art, 1860-1940 (Santa Fe, NM, 2002), 18–29.
- [9] Lewis Mumford, "O'Keefe [sic] and Matisse," New Republic 50 (March 2, 1927), reprinted in O'Keeffe Exhibition (New York, 1928), and Barbara Buhler Lynes, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–1929 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989), 265.
- [10] For a summary of these cultural influences, see Bram Dijkstra, "America and Georgia O'Keeffe," in *Georgia O'Keeffe: The New York Years*, ed. Doris Bry and Nicholas Callaway (New York, 1991), 125–126.
- [11] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 368.
- [12] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 368.
- [13] Various early critical responses to O'Keeffe's floral imagery are discussed in Barbara Buhler Lynes, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–1929 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989). Feminist, gender-based art historical literature has added another perspective to these issues. See, for example, Anna C. Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze," Art in America 78 (Jan. 1990): 114-125, 177, 179.
- [14] Quoted in Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women):*Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 70.
- [15] Sue Davidson Lowe, Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography (New York, 1983), 310.
- [16] Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe* (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 71.
- [17] Henry McBride, "The Georgia O'Keeffe Exhibition," New York Sun, Jan. 24,

Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3

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1931.

- [18] Katherine Kuh, The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists (New York, 1962), 190-191; quoted in Henry Geldzahler, American Painting in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1965), 131-132.
- [19] Georgia O'Keeffe, "About Myself," in Georgia O'Keeffe: Exhibition of Oils and Pastels (New York, 1939), n. p. The text is reproduced in Georgia O'Keeffe, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1976), n. p.
- [20] Neltje Blanchan, Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends (New York, 1904), 367. For a discussion of flower symbolism in O'Keeffe's paintings, see Charles C. Eldredge, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1991), 82-90.
- [21] Charles C. Eldredge, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1991), 90.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The unlined, plain-weave fabric support remains mounted on its original stretcher. The tacking margins are intact. The artist applied paint with great precision on a commercially prepared, thin, white ground. The colors are mostly laid down next to one another rather than overlapped, and the edges of the forms are defined by impasto. One small pentimento is visible near the lower left edge, where the green leaf was slightly indented. Other than scattered areas of traction crackle that were inpainted at the artist's request by Felrath Hines (American, 1913 - 1993) during conservation treatment in 1967, the painting is in good condition.[1] The surface is coated with several layers of synthetic resin varnish.

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

Felrath Hines was a conservator who worked in the Washington area both privately and for various Smithsonian museums. He also found some success as a painter. His work on Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3 may have been facilitated by his friend Caroline Keck, a prominent conservator in New York, who was also a personal friend of Georgia O'Keeffe.

#### **PROVENANCE**

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The artist [1887-1986]; her estate; bequest 1987 to NGA.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1931 Eleventh Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Painting, Cleveland Museum of Art, June-July 1931, unnumbered catalogue, as Jack in the Pulpit, No. 2.

1931 Georgia O'Keeffe, An American Place, New York, January-February 1931, one of nos. 7-11.

1932 Possibly Exhibition of The American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, February 1932, no. 105, as Jack-in-the-Pulpit.

1932 Possibly Twenty-Seventh Annual Exhibition of Paintings by American Artists, City Art Museum, St. Louis, 1932, no. 37 (this may also be NGA 1987.58.1).

1933 Opening Exhibition, Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts, 1933, no. 222, repro., as Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 2.

1943 Georgia O'Keeffe, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1943, no. 38.

1953 Possibly An Exhibition of Paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; The Mayo Hill Galleries, Delray Beach, Florida, 1953, no. 13, as Jack in the Pulpit.

1970 Georgia O'Keeffe Retrospective Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Art, 1970-1971, no. 67, repro.

1984 Reflections of Nature: Flowers in American Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1984, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 57.

1987 Georgia O'Keeffe: 1887-1986, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; The Art Institute of Chicago; Dallas Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1987-1989, no. 79, repro.

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1999 Georgia O'Keeffe: The Poetry of Things, Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Dallas Museum of Art; Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1999-2000, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 42 (shown only in Washington and Santa Fe).

2001 O'Keeffe's O'Keeffes: The Artist's Collection, Milwaukee Art Museum; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark, 2001-2002, no. 44, repro. (shown only in Milwaukee and Santa Fe).

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2007 Modernism and the Feminine Voice: O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; San Diego Museum of Art, 2007-2008, unnumbered catalogue.

2009 Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, 2009-2010, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 119.

2013 Modern Nature: Georgia O'Keeffe and Lake George, The Hyde Collection Art Museum, Glens Falls; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, de Young Museum, 2013-2014, no. 52, repro.

2015 Collection Conversations: The Chrysler and the National Gallery, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, 2015-2016, no catalogue.

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	Cologne, 1995: 43, color repro.
1996	Wagner, Anne Middleton. Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and
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2016 Roberts, Ellen E. O'Keeffe, Stettheimer, Torr, Zorach: Women Modernists in New York. Exh. cat. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art. West Palm Beach, 2016: 124 fig. 9, 127-

128, 150 no. 60.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3 422



Georgia O'Keeffe American, 1887 - 1986

# Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV

1930

oil on canvas

overall: 101.6 x 76.2 cm (40 x 30 in.)

framed: 104.8 x 79.7 x 4.3 cm (41 1/4 x 31 3/8 x 1 11/16 in.)

Inscription: across top of old back board, now taped to bottom half of back: No 6

Jack in Pulpit - 30 / signed within five-pointed star: OK

Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe 1987.58.3

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intimacies of love's juncture with the purity and absence of shame that lovers feel in their meeting; she has brought what was inarticulate and troubled and confused into the realm of conscious beauty."[9]

Some early critics, whose outlook was conditioned by the misogynistic symbolist equation between flowers and predatory female sensuality, found O'Keeffe's paintings enticing, sensual, and lewd.[10] Such notions, reinforced by the sinister associations of the plant's reproductive system, had become firmly embedded in popular culture by the 1920s. The author of a popular, turn-of-the-century book on wildflowers called the jack-in-the-pulpit "a gay deceiver, a wolf in sheep's clothing, literally a 'brother to dragons,' an arrogant upstart, an ingrate, a murderer of innocent benefactors!"[11] The author proceeded to describe at length how insects attracted to the plant are often trapped and drowned after they fly into its spathe. These insects fertilize the small flowers at the base of the spadix (individual plants are generally staminate or pistillate, and thus incapable of self-fertilization), but at the expense of their lives. "Open a dozen of Jack's pulpits, and in several, at least, dead victims will be found—pathetic little corpses sacrificed to the imperfection of his executive system."[12] Unaccustomed to the new phenomenon of a modernist woman artist of extraordinary talent and stature, some critics ascribed O'Keeffe's imagery to uniquely feminine sensibilities and her supposed obsession with the female body. The issue is complicated by the fact that Stieglitz actively promulgated these theories in order to promote his wife's paintings on the commercial art market.[13]

For some early viewers, the jack-in-the-pulpit series was distinguished by its phallic imagery. As early as December 1930, Arthur Dove wrote to Stieglitz about *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, commenting that "the bursting of a phallic symbol into white light may be the thing we all need. Otherwise it would not bother them so."[14] Stieglitz's grandniece described the series as "the most frankly explicit" of all O'Keeffe's work, and opined that they were "a perfect subject for a love-note painting for Alfred."[15] *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV* is similar to Stieglitz's bluntly erotic photograph *Interpretation*, in which he juxtaposes a phallus-shaped plaster sculpture by O'Keeffe against the background of her painting *Music—Pink and Blue, I* (1919, The Barney Ebsworth Collection). More recently, Anne Middleton Wagner has speculated that this phallic imagery was a deliberately vulgar gesture on O'Keeffe's part that demonstrated "the will to exempt herself from the cultural implications of that gender status, [feminine] perhaps even to achieve a kind of androgyny," an "ironic effort to adopt and employ the key male signifier [that] still stands as the

most extreme of her efforts to adjust to the terms of her reception."[16] Some early critics had quite the opposite reaction and discerned a religious serenity in the series. Following the same line of thought as the critic who likened *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, considered by some to be the most phallic image in the series, to a cathedral, Henry McBride wrote, "Almost any one of them, if shown alone in a chapel... might be found to have mystic properties."[17]

O'Keeffe repeatedly denied that she had intended her flowers to have any overt or covert sexual content. She offered an alternative—and more practical—explanation of how she came to paint her "blown-up flowers":

In the twenties, huge buildings seemed to be going up overnight in New York. At that time I saw a painting by Fantin-Latour, a still life of flowers I found very beautiful, but I realized were I to paint the flowers so small, no one would look at them because I was unknown. So I thought I'll make them look big like the huge buildings going up. People will be startled; they'll have to look at them—and they did.[18]

On another occasion she offered a similar account of what led her to paint flowers, and directly refuted the critics: "Well—I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flower you hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower and you write about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower—and I don't."[19]

The imagery in O'Keeffe's floral subjects is indeed suggestive, and in the 1920s and 1930s—the era of Sigmund Freud, D. H. Lawrence, and Sherwood Anderson, and the height of the women's suffrage movement—they were likely to be interpreted as such. From the perspective of plant symbolism, the jack-in-the-pulpit, and other of O'Keeffe's floral subjects, had strong sexual connotations; one early 20th-century writer even commented: "Female botanizing classes pounce upon it as they would upon a pious young clergyman."[20] On the other hand, the artist's persistent denials that her flower paintings were intended as sexual metaphors cannot be ignored, and her repeated accounts of how she came to paint them are entirely plausible. As Charles Eldredge has aptly concluded, those who persist in a sexual interpretation of O'Keeffe's flowers "reduce them to one-dimensional Rorschach tests."[21] Her magnified views of flowers were an original and logical development in the history of still-life painting and need not be

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exclusively interpreted as sexual metaphors. The disparity of opinions voiced about Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI, running the improbable gamut from phallus to cathedral, indicates that O'Keeffe's flowers are complex, multilayered images that will continue to stimulate a debate that is impossible to resolve.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

 $Jack-in-the-Pulpit\ No.\ IV$ © National Gallery of Art, Washington

American Paintings, 1900-1945

#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Georgia O'Keeffe, Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 1, 1930, oil on canvas, private collection, Los Angeles. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

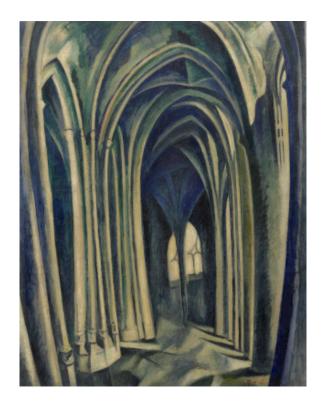


fig. 2 Robert Delaunay, Saint-Severin No. 3, 1909–1910, oil on canvas, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Founding Collection. Image: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation / Art Resource, NY



**fig. 3** Miguel Covarrubias, "Our Lady of the Lily," illustration from *New Yorker* (July 6, 1929): 21. © Condé Nast

#### **NOTES**

- [1] Joseph E. Harned, Wild Flowers of the Alleghenies (Oakland, MD, 1931), 94.
- [2] Georgia O'Keeffe, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1976), n. p.

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- [3] Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York, 1976), unpaginated text accompanying pl. 41.
- [4] Margaret Breuning, "Georgia O'Keeffe," New York Evening Post, Jan. 24, 1931
- [5] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 367.
- [6] Edward Alden Jewell, "Georgia O'Keeffe in an Art Review," New York Times (Feb. 2, 1934). For the record, William Schack, "On Abstract Painting," Magazine of Art 27 (Sept. 1934): 470–475, reproduced and titled the painting "Number 8."
- [7] New Yorker, July 6, 1929
- [8] For a discussion of some of some of these artists and their images of calla lilies, see Charles C. Eldredge, "Calla Moderna: 'Such a Strange Flower,'" in Barbara Buhler Lynes, Georgia O'Keeffe and the Calla Lily in American Art, 1860-1940 (Santa Fe, NM, 2002), 18–29.
- [9] Lewis Mumford, "O'Keefe [sic] and Matisse," New Republic 50 (March 2, 1927), reprinted in O'Keeffe Exhibition (New York, 1928), and Barbara Buhler Lynes, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–1929 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989), 265.
- [10] For a summary of these cultural influences, see Bram Dijkstra, "America and Georgia O'Keeffe," in *Georgia O'Keeffe: The New York Years*, ed. Doris Bry and Nicholas Callaway (New York, 1991), 125–126.
- [11] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 368.
- [12] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 368.
- [13] Various early critical responses to O'Keeffe's floral imagery are discussed in Barbara Buhler Lynes, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–1929 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989). Feminist, gender-based art historical literature has added another perspective to these issues. See, for example, Anna C. Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze," Art in America 78 (Jan. 1990): 114-125, 177, 179.
- [14] Quoted in Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women):*Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 70.
- [15] Sue Davidson Lowe, Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography (New York, 1983), 310.
- [16] Anne Middleton Wagner, Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 71.
- [17] Henry McBride, "The Georgia O'Keeffe Exhibition," New York Sun, Jan. 24,

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1931.

- [18] Katherine Kuh, *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York, 1962), 190–191; quoted in Henry Geldzahler, *American Painting in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1965), 131–132.
- [19] Georgia O'Keeffe, "About Myself," in Georgia O'Keeffe: Exhibition of Oils and Pastels (New York, 1939), n. p. The text is reproduced in Georgia O'Keeffe, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1976), n. p.
- [20] Neltje Blanchan, Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends (New York, 1904), 367. For a discussion of flower symbolism in O'Keeffe's paintings, see Charles C. Eldredge, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1991), 82–90.
- [21] Charles C. Eldredge, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1991), 90.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The twill-weave fabric support has been wax-lined and mounted on a Masonite panel with an aluminum honeycomb structure attached to it. The conservation treatment was performed at the artist's request by Jean Volkmer in 1974.[1]

O'Keeffe's pencil inscription is on the remaining half of the original backing board:
"No 6 Jack in Pulpit - 30 / OK" (the latter initials are written within a five-pointed star).[2] The tacking margins were cut to be flush with the edges of the Masonite panel. The artist applied paint with great precision on a commercially prepared, thin, white ground. The colors are mostly laid down next to one another rather than overlapped, and the edges of the forms are defined by low impasto. The painting is in good condition. The surface was spray-coated with glossy varnish that does not conform to the artist's aesthetic. The silver frame appears to be recent.

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

- [1] Jean Volkmar was a conservator on the staff of the Museum of Modern Art and must also have worked privately. She was a friend of Caroline Keck, a prominent conservator in New York, who was a personal friend of O'Keeffe.
- [2] This painting, now known as the fourth in the series, was originally the sixth. See Entry for a discussion of the series sequence.

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#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist; by exchange 1955 through (Downtown Gallery, New York) to Drs. Melvin [1920-1969] and Helen W. [1921-2009] Boigon, New York, until at least 1971;[1] sold 1972 through (Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc., New York) to private collection, Miami; (Kennedy Galleries, Inc., New York), in 1973; returned 1973 through Doris Bry, New York, to the artist [1887-1986];[2] her estate; bequest 1987 to NGA.

[1] The artist wrote to Edith Halpert, owner of the Downtown Gallery, on 3 January 1955: "The Boigons write me that they have exchanged the Antelope [Pedernal] for the "Jack In The Pulpit" -- and I don't know which one." Halpert responded on 8 January 1955: "Yes, the Boigons decided to exchange 'Antelope and Pedernal' for the large 'Jack-in-the-Pulpit #6' date 1930." (The letters are in the Downtown Gallery Records, 1824-1974, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington: Artist Files, A-Z: O'Keeffe, Georgia 1951-1955, Box 25, Reel 5550, Frames 1173-1175 and 1177-1178; copies in NGA curatorial files.) The artist and Doris Bry renumbered the Jack-in-the-Pulpit series in 1970; this painting, now the fourth, was originally the sixth.

[2] The provenance is from Barbara Buhler Lynes, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*, 2 vols., New Haven and London, 1999: 1:435, no. 718.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1931 Georgia O'Keeffe, An American Place, New York, 1931, one of nos. 7-11.

1932 Possibly Exhibition of The American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, February 1932, no. 105, as Jack-in-the-Pulpit.

1943 Georgia O'Keeffe, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1943, no. 39.

1953 Possibly An Exhibition of Paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; The Mayo Hill Galleries, Delray Beach, Florida, 1953, no. 13, as Jack in the Pulpit.

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1970 Georgia O'Keeffe Retrospective Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Art, 1970-1971, no. 68, repro.

1984 Reflections of Nature: Flowers in American Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1984, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 58.

1987 Georgia O'Keeffe: 1887-1986, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; The Art Institute of Chicago; Dallas Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1987-1989, no. 80, repro.

1999 Georgia O'Keeffe: The Poetry of Things, Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Dallas Museum of Art; Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1999-2000, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 21.

2001 Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2001, no. 177, repro.

2002 Georgia O'Keeffe: Naturalezas íntimas, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, 2002, no. 20, repro.

2009 Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, 2009-2010, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 120.

2011 Georgia O'Keeffe, Fondazione Roma Museo, Palazzo Cipolla, Rome; Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, Munich; Helsinki Art Museum Tennis Palace, 2011-2012, no. 41, repro. (Italian catalogue), no. 113, repro. (German and Finnish catalogues).

2013 Modern Nature: Georgia O'Keeffe and Lake George, The Hyde Collection Art Museum, Glens Falls; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, de Young Museum, 2013-2014, no. 53, repro.

2014 Loan to display with permanent collection, The Phillips Collection, Washington, 2014-2015, no catalogue.

2015 Collection Conversations: The Chrysler and the National Gallery, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, 2015-2016, no catalogue.

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2016 O'Keeffe, Stettheimer, Torr, Zorach: Women Modernists in New York, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art, 2016, no. 61, fig. 10.

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- 1992 *National Gallery of Art, Washington*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1992: 261, repro.
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- 1996 Wagner, Anne Middleton. Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe. Berkeley, 1996: 70-72, color pl.11.
- 1999 Lynes, Barbara Buhler. *Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné*. 2 vols. New Haven and London, 1999: 1:435, no. 718, color repro.
- 2000 Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries.Exh. cat. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2001: no. 177.
- Eldredge, Charles C. "Skunk Cabbages, Seasons and Cycles." In Joseph
   S. Czestochowski, ed., Georgia O'Keeffe: Vision of the Sublime.
   Memphis, 2004: 71-72, pl. 42.
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   Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, 2009: 62-63, fig.
   51.
- 2016 National Gallery of Art. *Highlights from the National Gallery of Art, Washington*. Washington, 2016: 296, repro.
- 2016 Roberts, Ellen E. O'Keeffe, Stettheimer, Torr, Zorach: Women Modernists in New York. Exh. cat. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art. West Palm Beach, 2016: 125 fig. 10, 127-128, 150 no. 61.



Georgia O'Keeffe American, 1887 - 1986

# Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI

1930

oil on canvas

overall: 91.4 x 45.7 cm (36 x 18 in.)

framed: 96.8 x 51.4 x 3.8 cm (38 1/8 x 20 1/4 x 1 1/2 in.)

Inscription: across top reverse: Jack in Pulpit-30 / signed within five-pointed star:

OK

Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe 1987.58.5

#### **ENTRY**

This work is part of a series of six paintings depicting the jack-in-the-pulpit flower, five of which reside at the National Gallery of Art: *Jack-in-Pulpit - No. 2*, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3*, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV*, *Jack-in-Pulpit Abstraction - No. 5*, and this painting. Georgia O'Keeffe painted the series in 1930, while staying at her husband Alfred Stieglitz's family estate in Lake George, New York.

The jack-in-the-pulpit is a common, North American, herbaceous flowering plant of the Arum family, *Arisaema triphyllum* (also called *A. atrorubens*), whose upright spadix, or jack, is enclosed within an elongated, striped spathe. It is closely related to the calla lily, another of O'Keeffe's early floral subjects. A favorite among wildflower enthusiasts, the plant's colloquial name is derived from the resemblance between its spathe arching over its spadix and early, hooded, church pulpits. It is also known as "Indian turnip" because Native Americans cooked and ate its bulbous roots, which they considered a delicacy. Joseph Harned, a botanist, noted that the "jack-in-the-pulpit has been a delight to American boys and girls ever since Columbus discovered America."[1]

O'Keeffe has related how her high school art teacher in Madison, Wisconsin, first introduced her to the subject:

Holding a jack-in-the-pulpit high, she pointed out the strange shapes and variations in color—from the deep, almost black earthy violet through all the greens, from the pale whitish green in the flower through the heavy green of the leaves. She held up the purplish hood and showed us the jack inside. I had seen jacks before, but this was the first time I remember examining a flower. I was a little annoyed at being interested because I didn't like the teacher.[2]

The artist has also described the circumstances that led her to execute the sixpainting series at Lake George:

In the woods near two large spring houses, wild jack-in-the-pulpits grew—both the large dark ones and the small green ones. The year I painted them I had gone to the lake early in March. Remembering the art lessons of my high school days, I looked at the jacks with great interest. I did a set of six paintings of them. The first painting was very realistic. The last one had only the jack from the flower.[3]

Although the sequential numbering of the works' titles implies a serial progression of exploration and refinement that culminated in the sixth version, the actual order of execution is not clear. O'Keeffe and Doris Bry renumbered the series in 1970; the present third painting was originally the second, and the fourth was originally the sixth. Further complicating matters, there is no consistent use of Roman and Arabic numbers in the paintings' titles and the works vary in size.

The first three paintings in O'Keeffe and Bry's final arrangement are all relatively naturalistic views of a single flower's exterior. The forms are simplified, and the artist made no attempt to render minute botanical details. The bold colors are derived from the jack-in-the-pulpit's distinctive, purple-striped spathe (a feature that botanists have identified as characteristic of the fertile plants), and emphasis is placed on the tip of the spadix that protrudes from the protective spathe. *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 1* [fig. 1] was the smallest painting in the series, measuring only twelve by nine inches. In the much larger *Jack-in-Pulpit - No. 2*, the plant is set against a pale mauve background, and all four corners of the composition are occupied by green foliage. *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 3* is viewed from a slightly more distant

vantage point, so there is more emphasis on the elongated, upright form of the striped spathe. The green foliage is arranged in a less symmetrical manner, and the mauve background has been replaced by a cloudy sky.

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Some early critics, whose outlook was conditioned by the misogynistic symbolist equation between flowers and predatory female sensuality, found O'Keeffe's paintings enticing, sensual, and lewd.[10] Such notions, reinforced by the sinister associations of the plant's reproductive system, had become firmly embedded in popular culture by the 1920s. The author of a popular, turn-of-the-century book on wildflowers called the jack-in-the-pulpit "a gay deceiver, a wolf in sheep's clothing, literally a 'brother to dragons,' an arrogant upstart, an ingrate, a murderer of innocent benefactors!"[11] The author proceeded to describe at length how insects attracted to the plant are often trapped and drowned after they fly into its spathe. These insects fertilize the small flowers at the base of the spadix (individual plants are generally staminate or pistillate, and thus incapable of self-fertilization), but at the expense of their lives. "Open a dozen of Jack's pulpits, and in several, at least, dead victims will be found-pathetic little corpses sacrificed to the imperfection of his executive system." [12] Unaccustomed to the new phenomenon of a modernist woman artist of extraordinary talent and stature, some critics ascribed O'Keeffe's imagery to uniquely feminine sensibilities and her supposed obsession with the female body. The issue is complicated by the fact that Stieglitz actively promulgated these theories in order to promote his wife's paintings on the commercial art market.[13]

For some early viewers, the jack-in-the-pulpit series was distinguished by its phallic imagery. As early as December 1930, Arthur Dove wrote to Stieglitz about *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, commenting that "the bursting of a phallic symbol into white light may be the thing we all need. Otherwise it would not bother them so."[14] Stieglitz's grandniece described the series as "the most frankly explicit" of all O'Keeffe's work, and opined that they were "a perfect subject for a love-note painting for Alfred."[15] *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV* is similar to Stieglitz's bluntly erotic photograph *Interpretation*, in which he juxtaposes a phallus-shaped plaster sculpture by O'Keeffe against the background of her painting *Music—Pink and Blue, I* (1919, The Barney Ebsworth Collection). More recently, Anne Middleton Wagner has

speculated that this phallic imagery was a deliberately vulgar gesture on O'Keeffe's part that demonstrated "the will to exempt herself from the cultural implications of that gender status, [feminine] perhaps even to achieve a kind of androgyny," an "ironic effort to adopt and employ the key male signifier [that] still stands as the most extreme of her efforts to adjust to the terms of her reception."[16] Some early critics had quite the opposite reaction and discerned a religious serenity in the series. Following the same line of thought as the critic who likened *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, considered by some to be the most phallic image in the series, to a cathedral, Henry McBride wrote, "Almost any one of them, if shown alone in a chapel . . . might be found to have mystic properties."[17]

O'Keeffe repeatedly denied that she had intended her flowers to have any overt or covert sexual content. She offered an alternative—and more practical—explanation of how she came to paint her "blown-up flowers":

In the twenties, huge buildings seemed to be going up overnight in New York. At that time I saw a painting by Fantin-Latour, a still life of flowers I found very beautiful, but I realized were I to paint the flowers so small, no one would look at them because I was unknown. So I thought I'll make them look big like the huge buildings going up. People will be startled; they'll have to look at them—and they did.[18]

On another occasion she offered a similar account of what led her to paint flowers, and directly refuted the critics: "Well—I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flower you hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower and you write about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower—and I don't."[19]

The imagery in O'Keeffe's floral subjects is indeed suggestive, and in the 1920s and 1930s—the era of Sigmund Freud, D. H. Lawrence, and Sherwood Anderson, and the height of the women's suffrage movement—they were likely to be interpreted as such. From the perspective of plant symbolism, the jack-in-the-pulpit, and other of O'Keeffe's floral subjects, had strong sexual connotations; one early 20th-century writer even commented: "Female botanizing classes pounce upon it as they would upon a pious young clergyman." [20] On the other hand, the artist's persistent denials that her flower paintings were intended as sexual metaphors cannot be ignored, and her repeated accounts of how she came to

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paint them are entirely plausible. As Charles Eldredge has aptly concluded, those who persist in a sexual interpretation of O'Keeffe's flowers "reduce them to onedimensional Rorschach tests."[21] Her magnified views of flowers were an original and logical development in the history of still-life painting and need not be exclusively interpreted as sexual metaphors. The disparity of opinions voiced about Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI, running the improbable gamut from phallus to cathedral, indicates that O'Keeffe's flowers are complex, multilayered images that will continue to stimulate a debate that is impossible to resolve.

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September 29, 2016

Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI © National Gallery of Art, Washington

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Georgia O'Keeffe, Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. 1, 1930, oil on canvas, private collection, Los Angeles. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum



fig. 2 Robert Delaunay, Saint-Severin No. 3, 1909–1910, oil on canvas, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Founding Collection. Image: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation / Art Resource, NY



**fig. 3** Miguel Covarrubias, "Our Lady of the Lily," illustration from *New Yorker* (July 6, 1929): 21. © Condé Nast

#### **NOTES**

- [1] Joseph E. Harned, Wild Flowers of the Alleghenies (Oakland, MD, 1931), 94.
- [2] Georgia O'Keeffe, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1976), n. p.

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- [3] Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York, 1976), unpaginated text accompanying pl. 41.
- [4] Margaret Breuning, "Georgia O'Keeffe," New York Evening Post, Jan. 24, 1931.
- [5] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 367.
- [6] Edward Alden Jewell, "Georgia O'Keeffe in an Art Review," New York Times (Feb. 2, 1934). For the record, William Schack, "On Abstract Painting," Magazine of Art 27 (Sept. 1934): 470–475, reproduced and titled the painting "Number 8."
- [7] New Yorker, July 6, 1929.
- [8] For a discussion of some of some of these artists and their images of calla lilies, see Charles C. Eldredge, "Calla Moderna: 'Such a Strange Flower,'" in Barbara Buhler Lynes, Georgia O'Keeffe and the Calla Lily in American Art, 1860-1940 (Santa Fe, NM, 2002), 18–29.
- [9] Lewis Mumford, "O'Keefe [sic] and Matisse," New Republic 50 (March 2, 1927), reprinted in O'Keeffe Exhibition (New York, 1928), and Barbara Buhler Lynes, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–1929 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989), 265.
- [10] For a summary of these cultural influences, see Bram Dijkstra, "America and Georgia O'Keeffe," in *Georgia O'Keeffe: The New York Years*, ed. Doris Bry and Nicholas Callaway (New York, 1991), 125–126.
- [11] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 368.
- [12] Neltje Blanchan, *Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends* (New York, 1904), 368.
- [13] Various early critical responses to O'Keeffe's floral imagery are discussed in Barbara Buhler Lynes, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–1929 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989). Feminist, gender-based art historical literature has added another perspective to these issues. See, for example, Anna C. Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze," Art in America 78 (Jan. 1990): 114-125, 177, 179.
- [14] Quoted in Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women):*Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 70.
- [15] Sue Davidson Lowe, Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography (New York, 1983), 310.
- [16] Anne Middleton Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe* (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 71.
- [17] Henry McBride, "The Georgia O'Keeffe Exhibition," New York Sun, Jan. 24,

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1931.

- [18] Katherine Kuh, The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists (New York, 1962), 190–191; quoted in Henry Geldzahler, American Painting in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1965), 131-132.
- [19] Georgia O'Keeffe, "About Myself," in Georgia O'Keeffe: Exhibition of Oils and Pastels (New York, 1939), n. p. The text is reproduced in Georgia O'Keeffe, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1976), n. p.
- [20] Neltje Blanchan, Nature's Garden: An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Friends (New York, 1904), 367. For a discussion of flower symbolism in O'Keeffe's paintings, see Charles C. Eldredge, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1991), 82-90.
- [21] Charles C. Eldredge, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1991), 90.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The fine, plain-weave fabric support is unlined and remains mounted on its original stretcher. The artist applied paint with great precision over a commercially prepared white ground. The colors are mostly laid down next to one another rather than overlapped, and the edges of the forms are defined by low impasto. The painting is in good condition. The surface is coated with two layers of synthetic resin varnish.

#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1887-1986]; her estate; bequest 1987 to NGA.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1931 Georgia O'Keeffe, An American Place, New York, 1931, one of nos. 7-11.

1932 Possibly Exhibition of The American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1932, no. 105, as Jack-inthe-Pulpit.

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1934 Possibly Georgia O'Keeffe, An American Place, New York, 1934, as Jack-inthe-Pulpit No. 7.

1943 Georgia O'Keeffe, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1943, no. 41.

1946 Georgia O'Keeffe: Retrospective Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1946, no. 39.

1953 Possibly An Exhibition of Paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; The Mayo Hill Galleries, Delray Beach, Florida, 1953, no. 13, as Jack in the Pulpit.

1970 Georgia O'Keeffe Retrospective Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Art, 1970-1971, no. 70, repro.

1984 Reflections of Nature: Flowers in American Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1984, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 60.

1987 Georgia O'Keeffe: 1887-1986, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; The Art Institute of Chicago; Dallas Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1987-1989, not in cat. (shown only in Los Angeles).

1997 Birth of the Cool. American Painting - from Georgia O'Keeffe to Christopher Wool, Deichtorhallen Hamburg; Kunsthaus Zürich, 1997, unnumbered catalogue.

1998 O'Keeffe and Texas, Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, 1998, no. 20, repro.

1999 Georgia O'Keeffe: The Poetry of Things, Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Dallas Museum of Art; Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1999-2000, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 22.

2001 O'Keeffe's O'Keeffes: The Artist's Collection, Milwaukee Art Museum; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark, 2001-2002, no. 45, repro.

2009 Dove/O'Keeffe: Circles of Influence, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, 2009, pl. 57.

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2009 Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, 2009-2010, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 122.

2013 Modern Nature: Georgia O'Keeffe and Lake George, The Hyde Collection Art Museum, Glens Falls; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, de Young Museum, 2013-2014, no. 55, repro.

2014 Loan to display with permanent collection, The Phillips Collection, Washington, 2014-2015, no catalogue.

2015 Collection Conversations: The Chrysler and the National Gallery, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, 2015-2016, no catalogue.

2016 O'Keeffe, Stettheimer, Torr, Zorach: Women Modernists in New York, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art, 2016, no. 63, fig. 12.

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- 1992 American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1992: 252, repro.
- 1995 Benke, Britta. Georgia O'Keeffe 1887-1986: Flowers in the Desert. Cologne, 1995: 45, color repro.
- 1996 Wagner, Anne Middleton. Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe. Berkeley, 1996: 70-72, color pl. 13.
- 1999 Lynes, Barbara Buhler. Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné. 2 vols. New Haven and London, 1999: 1:437, no. 720, color repro.
- 2016 Roberts, Ellen E. O'Keeffe, Stettheimer, Torr, Zorach: Women Modernists in New York. Exh. cat. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; Portland (Maine) Museum of Art. West Palm Beach, 2016: 127 fig. 12, 127-128, 150 no. 63.9





Georgia O'Keeffe American, 1887 - 1986

## Line and Curve

1927

oil on canvas

overall:  $81.2 \times 41.2$  cm (31 15/16 x 16 1/4 in.) framed:  $83.8 \times 43.2 \times 3.5$  cm (33 x 17 x 1 3/8 in.)

Inscription: across top reverse, in pencil: Line and Curve-27 / signed within five-

pointed star: OK

Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe 1987.58.6

#### **ENTRY**

During the mid-1920s, Georgia O'Keeffe and her husband, Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946), lived on the 30th floor of the Shelton Hotel on Lexington Avenue at 49th Street in New York City. Designed by the architect Arthur Loomis Harmon and opened in 1924, the 35-story residential skyscraper was considered the epitome of contemporary metropolitan living, and the *New York Times* proclaimed it a "stately, breath-taking building."[1] Her new home inspired O'Keeffe to paint a number of New York views ranging from the East River as seen from her window to specific skyscrapers in her midtown Manhattan neighborhood. While some of these urban paintings are more clearly representational, such as *The Shelton with Sunspots* [fig. 1], others more closely approach pure abstraction, for example *City Night* [fig. 2].

Executed in 1927, *Line and Curve* consists of a simple juxtaposition of a vertical line than runs down the center of the canvas intersected by a sweeping curve that extends through the upper right quadrant of the composition. The painting combines architectonic elements with hints of more natural, curving, organic forms. The mottled, gently undulating, white paint surface with evanescent violet hues and the shading of the vertical line suggest the shallow spatial recessions of New York's crowded spaces. The gray-white palette evokes a cloudy sky.

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Line and Curve is the last in a group of four highly abstract, predominantly white, narrow vertical compositions by O'Keeffe. The two initial works from 1926—

Abstraction [fig. 3] and White Abstraction (Madison Avenue) [fig. 4]—are more fragmented and complex. The 1927 pair—Abstraction White Rose [fig. 5] and Line and Curve—are concisely rendered and feature just a few, minimal elements.

O'Keeffe returned to this line of inquiry in 1930, when she produced Black and White (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Lynes no. 700) and the Gallery's Black White and Blue, two works that can also be linked to skyscraper motifs.[2]

All four of O'Keeffe's white paintings should be understood in the context of the ongoing, complex dialogue in her work between hard-edged urban and softer, curvilinear natural forms, and more broadly between objective representation and subjective abstraction. New York-Night, for instance, has been interpreted as an abstract rendering of the convergence of Madison Avenue and two side streets seen from an elevated vantage point in the Shelton Hotel or, alternately, as a view across the sky comparable to a series of cloud photographs by Stieglitz known as Equivalents.[3] An additional source for the imagery of Line and Curve and its related works has recently been suggested by Bruce Robertson: "The space of these pictures is shallow: folded, crumpled, or pleated are useful adjectives, all terms one might use to describe paper or fabric."[4] Shortly after completing Line and Curve, O'Keeffe painted Black Abstraction (1927, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Lynes no. 574), a work inspired by her recollection of a vision she had prior to succumbing to anesthesia before an operation. The various associations conjured by O'Keeffe's paintings from the 1920s—skyscrapers, clouds, crumpled paper, and anesthetic dreams—are reminders of how indebted the Stieglitz group was to the allusive, protosurrealist imagery favored by late 19thcentury symbolist poets and painters, such as Stéphane Mallarmé (French, 1842 -1898) and Odilon Redon (French, 1840 - 1916).

In 1976 at nearly 80 years old, O'Keeffe, echoing Stieglitz's strategy with his *Equivalents* series, offered one of her most articulate statements on the relationship between objective realism and nonobjective abstraction: "I long ago came to the conclusion that even if I could put down accurately certain things that I saw and enjoyed it would not give the observer the kind of feeling the object gave me. I had to create an equivalent for what I felt about what I was looking at—not copy it." She continued:

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It is surprising to me how many people separate the objects from the abstract. Objective painting is not good painting unless it is good in the abstract sense. A hill or tree cannot make a good painting just because it is a hill or tree. It is lines and colors put together so that they say something. For me that is the very basis of painting. The abstraction is often the most definite form for the intangible thing in myself that I can only clarify in paint.[5]

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Georgia O'Keeffe, The Shelton with Sunspots, N.Y., 1926, oil on canvas, The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Leigh B. Block 1985.206. Image no. 00000080-01, www.artic.edu.  $\odot$  2016 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



fig. 2 Georgia O'Keeffe, City Night, 1926, oil on canvas, Minneapolis Insitute of Arts, Gift of Funds from the Regis Corporation, Mr. and Mrs. W. John Driscoll, the Beim Foundation, the Larsen Fund, and by Public Subscription. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



**fig. 3** Georgia O'Keeffe, *Abstraction*, 1926, oil on canvas, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Purchase, with Funds from Georgia O'Keeffe and by Exchange 58.43



**fig. 4** Georgia O'Keeffe, *White Abstraction (Madison Avenue)*, 1926, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida, Gift of Charles and Margaret Stevenson Henderson in Memory of Hunt Henderson



**fig. 5** Georgia O'Keeffe, *Abstraction White Rose*, 1927, oil on canvas, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Gift of The Burnett Foundation and The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation 1997.04.002. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

#### **NOTES**

- [1] Helen Bullitt Lowry and William Carter Halbert, "The New Architecture and the Old," *New York Times*, May 4, 1924.
- [2] Because of its harsh angularity and monochromatic quality, Charles Eldredge has related *Black White and Blue* to O'Keeffe's Manhattan skyscraper subjects. Charles Eldredge, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York, 1991), 95.
- [3] Jennifer Hardin, *Georgia O'Keeffe: The Artist in Focus* (St. Petersburg, FL, 1998), 8.
- [4] Bruce Robertson, "Useable Form: O'Keeffe's Materials, Methods, and Motifs," in Barbara Haskell, ed., *Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction* (New Haven and London, 2009), 128.

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[5] Georgia O'Keeffe, Georgia O'Keeffe (New York, 1976), below pl. 62, and opp. pl. 86. O'Keeffe had already articulated identical ideas about abstraction in a letter to an unknown recipient of March 21, 1937, quoted in Charles Eldredge, Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern (Fort Worth, TX and Abiquiu, NM, 1993), 171.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The unlined plain weave fabric support remains mounted on its original stretcher. All the tacking margins are intact. The artist applied paint directly and thickly over a bright white paint layer that was placed on top of the commercially prepared graywhite ground. There is evidence of a rudimentary pencil underdrawing. The painting is in excellent condition. The surface has not been varnished.

#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1887-1986]; her estate; bequest 1987 to NGA.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1933 Georgia O'Keeffe: Paintings--New and Some Old, An American Place, New York, 1933, no. 23, as Abstraction, White, Grey and Violet.

1940 Some Marins, Some O'Keeffes, Some Doves, An American Place, New York, 1940, no. 14.

1941 Arthur G. Dove, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, Alfred Stieglitz, An American Place, New York, 1941, no. 10.

1946 Georgia O'Keeffe: Retrospective Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1946, no. 26.

1947 Alfred Stieglitz Exhibition: His Collection, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1947, no. 79 (circulated to Art Institute of Chicago in 1948; see next citation).

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1948 Alfred Stieglitz: His Photographs and His Collection, Art Institute of Chicago, 1948.

1966 Georgia O'Keeffe: An Exhibition of the Work of the Artist from 1915 to 1966, Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, March-July 1966, unnumbered catalogue.

1966 Georgia O'Keeffe, The Art Museum, The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, September-October 1966, unnumbered catalogue.

1986 Georgia O'Keeffe: Paintings, Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, 1986-1987, unnumbered catalogue.

1993 Georgia O'Keeffe: American and Modern, The Hayward Gallery, London; Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City; Yokohama Museum of Art, Japan, 1993-1994, no. 40, repro.

2009 Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, 2009-2010, unnumbered catalogue, pl. 94.

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- 1999 Lynes, Barbara Buhler. Georgia O'Keeffe: Catalogue Raisonné. 2 vols. New Haven and London, 1999: 1:328, no. 572, color repro.
- 2000 Kirsh, Andrea, and Rustin S. Levenson. Seeing Through Paintings: Physical Examination in Art Historical Studies. Materials and Meaning in the Fine Arts 1. New Haven, 2000: 264.

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Carl van Vechten, Horace Pippin, 1940, photograph, Downtown Gallery records, 1824–1974, bulk 1926–1969, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

# Pippin, Horace American, 1888 - 1946

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Horace Pippin was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, on February 22, 1888, to Horace and Harriet Johnson Pippin; his grandparents had been slaves. When he was two years old, his family moved to Goshen, New York. Pippin began to draw at an early age and in 1898 won a box of crayons in a contest sponsored by an art supplier. The following year the family moved to Middletown, New York, where Pippin's mother took a position as a domestic. After completing the eighth grade in 1902, he moved to New Jersey and eventually found steady work as a hotel porter, a storage company mover, and an iron molder. In 1917 Pippin enlisted in the 15th regiment of the New York National Guard (later known as the Army's 369th infantry regiment), an all-black unit that saw active duty in France. A sniper shot Pippin in the right shoulder, permanently disabling his arm. Shortly after his return to the United States in January 1919, he received an honorable discharge and a disability pension. In 1920 he married a laundress named Jennie Ora Fetherstone Wade Giles, and moved to her home in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Unable to perform manual labor, Pippin worked at odd jobs to supplement his pension and began to paint cigar boxes. In 1925 he began to experiment with pyrography, burning imagery into wood panels with a heated metallic point. He executed his first oil painting in 1928, and over the next decade produced one to four paintings a year. Pippin attracted the attention of N. C. Wyeth and Christian

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Brinton, who arranged for him to have his first solo exhibition at the West Chester Community Center in 1937. He attracted national attention in 1938 when four of his paintings were included in the traveling exhibition *Masters of Popular Painting* organized by the Museum of Modern Art. Late in 1939 he met Robert Carlen, owner of Robert Carlen Galleries in Philadelphia, who became his dealer. Carlen introduced Pippin to the noted collector *Albert Coombs Barnes*, who bought a number of his paintings. After a very successful exhibition at the Carlen Galleries in 1940, Pippin began to produce about 15 paintings a year. For the next six years his work was widely exhibited throughout the country, and acquired by important museums and collectors. Pippin died of a stroke on July 6, 1946.

Pippin's rise to fame directly paralleled the folk art revival of the 1930s. Entirely self-taught, he painted in a nonacademic, linear style that was characterized by a powerful sense of design and expressive use of color. His works are decorative and highly stylized. He painted a wide range of subjects, from African American genre scenes, portraits, and biblical scenes, to politically charged historical paintings such as *John Brown Going to His Hanging* (1942, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts) and allegories such as *Prejudice* (1943, Philadelphia Museum of Art). Pippin drew his imagery from such diverse sources as films, *Currier and Ives* prints, and paintings by Edward Hicks (American, 1780 - 1849) and Winslow Homer (American, 1836 - 1910), as well as from his own experiences. His modern folk art style defies classification.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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2015 Bernier, Celeste-Marie. Suffering and Sunset: World War I in the Art and Life of Horace Pippin. Philadelphia, 2015.

2015 Lewis, Audrey M., ed. Horace Pippin: The Way I See It. Exh. cat. Brandywine River Museum of Art, Chadds Ford. New York, 2015.

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Horace Pippin American, 1888 - 1946

## Interior

1944

oil on canvas

overall: 61.2 x 76.6 cm, 0.2 cm (24 1/8 x 30 3/16 in., 1/16 in.)

framed: 81.3 x 97.8 x 6.7 cm (32 x 38 1/2 x 2 5/8 in.)

Inscription: lower right: H.PIPPIN,

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Meyer P. Potamkin, in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art 1991.42.1

#### **ENTRY**

Interior represents a mother and her two children on a winter evening. The room is sparsely furnished. Frozen snow has accumulated at the window in the center background, and the alarm clock to the right indicates that it is six o'clock. The mother sits in front of a stove and smokes a pipe as steam rises from a kettle in front of her. Her profile pose and self-absorbed attitude recall James McNeill Whistler's iconic Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter's Mother (best known as "Whistler's Mother," 1871, Musée d'Orsay, Paris). A girl sits on a quilt in the center foreground, and cradles a doll. To the left, a boy stands at a table, presumably reading a book by the light of the candle.

This painting belongs to series of semi-autobiographical domestic interiors that Pippin painted from 1941 until his death in 1946, the best known among them being *Domino Players* [fig. 1]. Recalling aspects of Pippin's childhood, most of these scenes represent members of African American families pursuing a variety of household activities in a single multipurpose room. The paintings all have the same quiet, peaceful ambience and feature many of the same common household items,

such as rag rugs, quilts, a stove, and an alarm clock. What distinguishes *Interior* and gives added significance to the work's title is the way the three figures, instead of interacting, have turned their backs to each other and seem lost in their own inner worlds. The mother, self-contained and detached from her children, contrasts with the young girl tenderly embracing her doll. The sparse interior further intensifies the austerity and loneliness of the scene, while the vibrant patterns of the three rag rugs, as well as the girl's quilt and the checkerboard tablecloth, enliven the composition. The textures of the wooden floorboards and dilapidated plaster wall are vividly rendered; the treatment of the former is reminiscent of Pippin's earlier pyrographic technique, in which he burned his forms with a metal stylus directly into wooden panels.

The most striking and paradoxical aspect of *Interior* is the incongruence between the impenetrable black night outside and its inexplicably bright, uniformly lit room. Many of Pippin's other nocturnal scenes, such as *Abe Lincoln, The Great Emancipator* (1942, Museum of Modern Art) or *Saying Prayers* [fig. 2], amply demonstrate his ability to render the shadow play of interiors at night in more realistic ways. Nothing can logically explain the presence of the red flames of the candle and the oil lamp in the shining room or the lack of true shadows in the composition of *Interior*. Pippin instead deliberately calls into question the distinction between day and night, inside and outside, depth and flatness, reality and abstraction. The diverse and, at times, contradictory qualities of works like *Interior* led the leading writer and intellectual of the Harlem Renaissance Alain Locke to comment in 1947, shortly after the artist's death, that Pippin was "a real and rare genius, combining folk quality with artistic maturity so uniquely as almost to defy classification."[1]

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#### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



**fig. 1** Horace Pippin, *Domino Players*, 1943, oil on canvas on board, The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC



**fig. 2** Horace Pippin, *Saying Prayers*, 1943, oil on canvas, Brandywine River Museum of Art, Museum Purchase, The Betsy James Wyeth Fund, 1980

#### **NOTES**

[1] Alain Locke, "Horace Pippin," in *Horace Pippin Memorial Exhibition* (Philadelphia, PA, 1947), n. p.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The lightweight, plain-weave fabric support is unlined, and remains mounted on its original stretcher. The tacking margins are intact. An additional ground may have been applied over large areas of crackle in the commercially prepared white ground layer. As was his practice during this period, the artist left an approximately 1/4-inch border of exposed ground on all four edges of the painting, probably to ensure that the design would not be cropped by the frame's lip.[1] He outlined each of the forms in black paint, and then proceeded to apply paint wet into wet, using both opaque and translucent pigments. Brushwork is evident throughout, especially in the white impastos. Two minor pentimenti that show alterations to the painting by the artist are visible to the naked eye. First, a pot originally appeared on a table at the right, and although both pot and table were painted out, the black

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shape of the pot is still discernible through the paint on the wall at the far right. Second, in the left center, a pentimento of black paint to the right of the chair beneath the hanging coat suggests that the chair was formerly in a different position. Other than the extensive network of drying crackle, and some wrinkling in the black paint throughout, the painting is in excellent condition. The surface is coated with a layer of varnish.

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

[1] Mark F. Bockrath and Barbara A. Buckley, "Materials and Techniques," in Judith Stein, *I Tell My Heart: The Art of Horace Pippin* (Philadelphia, PA, 1993), 168.

#### **PROVENANCE**

(Robert Carlen Galleries, Philadelphia); Mr. [1891-1973] and Mrs. [1893-1968] R. Sturgis Ingersoll, Esq., Philadelphia; Mr. and Mrs. Irving H. Vogel, Philadelphia; Mrs. A. Lewis Spitzer; (ACA Galleries, New York);[1] purchased 1972 by Meyer P. [1909-2001] and Vivian O. [1915-2002] Potamkin, Philadelphia; gift 1991 to the NGA.

[1] Provenance according to *Horace Pippin*, exh. cat. The Phillips Collection, Washington; Terry Dintenfass Gallery, New York; Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, Washington, 1976: no. 39.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1947 Horace Pippin Memorial Exhibition, The Art Alliance, Philadelphia, 1947, no. 36, as Interior of Cabin.

1972 Four American Primitives: Edward Hicks, John Kane, Anna Mary Robertson Moses, Horace Pippin, ACA Galleries, New York, 1972, no. 64, repro.

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1977 Horace Pippin, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Terry Dintenfass Gallery, New York; Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, 1977, no. 39, repro.

1991 Art for the Nation: Gifts in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1991, unnumbered catalogue, color repro.

1994 I Tell My Heart: The Art of Horace Pippin, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; Art Institute of Chicago; Cincinnati Art Museum; Baltimore Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1994-1995, fig. 146.

2003 All the Art in Me: In Search of Horace Pippin, Reading Public Museum, Pennsylvania, 2003, no catalogue.

2015 Horace Pippin: The Way I see It, Brandywine River Museum of Art, Chadds Ford, 2015, pl. 51.

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- 2015 Lewis, Audrey M., ed. Horace Pippin: The Way I See It. Exh. cat. Brandywine River Museum of Art, Chadds Ford. New York, 2015: 9, 77, 142, repro.

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Unknown artist, Charles Sheeler. c. 1958, Downtown Gallery records, 1824-1974, bulk 1926–1969, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

# Sheeler, Charles

American, 1883 - 1965

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Born in Philadelphia, Charles Sheeler studied at the Philadelphia School of Industrial Art from 1900 to 1903 and for the following three years at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, primarily under William Merritt Chase (American, 1849 - 1916). Between 1904 and 1909, Sheeler traveled to Europe a number of times and his exposure to the work of European modernists—particularly the compositional strategies of Paul Cézanne (French, 1839 - 1906) and the cubists—proved extremely influential on his early work.

Around 1910, Sheeler bought a camera and began working as a commercial photographer in Philadelphia. At the same time, he and his friend and fellow artist Morton Livingston Schamberg (American, 1881 - 1918) rented an 18th-century fieldstone house in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, as a weekend home. There Sheeler pursued both painting and noncommercial photography, often using the Doylestown house and other nearby examples of rural architecture as his subjects.

During this time, Sheeler traveled often to New York and began developing important relationships with dealers and collectors there and exhibiting in group shows, including the 1913 Armory Show. He was introduced to Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946), who admired his Doylestown photos and encouraged Sheeler to reevaluate his notions about photography and explore it as a valid artistic medium. He also met the art collectors Walter and Louise Arensberg, who introduced him to the artists and intellectuals in their circle, including Marcel Duchamp (American, born France, 1887 - 1968) and Man Ray (American, 1890 -1976). In 1919 Sheeler moved to New York. The following year he collaborated with

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the photographer Paul Strand (American, 1890 - 1976) on the short film *Manhatta*, an avant-garde project that sought to apply techniques of still photography to a motion picture.

Throughout the 1920s, Sheeler achieved both critical and financial success as a commercial photographer. In 1926 he was hired by Edward Steichen (American, 1879 - 1973) to work for Condé Nast publications, producing fashion and celebrity photographs for the magazines *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*. One of the turning points in Sheeler's career came the following year, when the Ford Motor Company hired him to photograph the company's River Rouge Plant in Detroit, Michigan. Sheeler's stark, stylized images of the factory complex won him critical acclaim and were widely reproduced as icons of American industry. That same year Sheeler and his wife Katharine moved to South Salem, a small town outside of New York.

In 1931, the dealer Edith Halpert offered Sheeler exclusive representation at her Downtown Gallery in New York. She encouraged him to curtail his work in photography and focus his artistic energies on painting instead. Following a solo show at the Downtown Gallery, Sheeler promptly resigned from Condé Nast and turned his artistic attention toward oil, conté crayon, and tempera.

Beginning in the late 1920s, Sheeler's paintings and drawings appeared in important exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Arts Club of Chicago, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among others. His work entered the collections of many of these institutions, as well as those of important collectors of American modernism, including the Arensbergs, Duncan Phillips, and Ferdinand Howland.

Sheeler's paintings from this time, many of which take inspiration from the artist's own photographs, use the imagery of America's rural past and industrialized present to explore modernist ideas of perception and representation. His carefully detailed and highly finished images of factories, farmhouses, and furniture were simultaneously geometric and abstract, alienated and historicized, mechanical and evocative. Central to this artistic practice was a continued intellectual and artistic exploration of the intersection between painting and photography and the influences the two mediums could have on each other.

This approach positioned Sheeler as a central figure in a group of American artists that came to be known as the precisionists (they were initially known as the "immaculates"). The precisionists, whose ranks included Georgia O'Keeffe

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(American, 1887 - 1986) and Charles Demuth (American, 1883 - 1935), shared a common aesthetic that sought to depict an American iconography using geometric forms and flat, structured compositions.

In the late 1940s, Sheeler's painting style underwent a significant change, moving away from photographic realism in favor of more abstract compositions that reflect the artist's interest in photomontage. In these late works, Sheeler layered different photographic negatives of a single subject (often architectural) and translated this image onto a canvas. In 1959 he suffered a stroke that left him unable to paint or take photographs. Sheeler died six years later in Dobbs Ferry, New York, from a second stroke.

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- 1975 Friedman, Martin. Charles Sheeler. New York, 1975.
- 1987 Troyen, Carol, and Erica E. Hirshler. Charles Sheeler, Paintings and Drawings. Exh. cat. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Dallas Museum of Art, 1987-1988. Boston, 1987.
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Charles Sheeler American, 1883 - 1965

# Classic Landscape

1931

oil on canvas

overall: 63.5 x 81.9 cm (25 x 32 1/4 in.)

framed: 72.9 x 91.1 x 7 cm (28 11/16 x 35 7/8 x 2 3/4 in.)

Inscription: lower right: Sheeler-1931.

Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth 2000.39.2

### **ENTRY**

Charles Sheeler was a master of both painting and photography, and his work in each medium influenced and shaped his work in the other.[1] But Sheeler also recognized that there was a fundamental difference in the creative processes of each activity. As he observed in 1937, "Photography is nature seen from the eyes outward, painting from the eyes inward. Photography records inalterably the single image while painting records a plurality of images willfully directed by the artist."[2]

In 1927, Sheeler went to the Ford Motor Company's River Rouge plant near Detroit on a photographic commission. The sprawling facility, covering more than 2,000 acres and employing more than 75,000 workers, was at the time the largest and most technically advanced industrial complex in existence.[3] The Detroit architect Albert Kahn, a pioneer of modern factory design, was responsible for most of the plant's structures. Virtually self-sufficient and self-contained, the Rouge brought together at one site all the operations necessary to assemble automobiles. It was there, beginning in 1927, that Ford produced its Model A, successor to the famed Model T, 15 million of which had been built since mass production had begun in

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1913. Ford's investment in the Model A and the Rouge plant was enormous, and, facing increasing competition from General Motors, the company undertook an aggressive advertising campaign in support of the new vehicle and its corporate image. N. W. Ayer & Son of Philadelphia handled the campaign and Vaughn Flannery, the firm's art director, convinced Ford to commission a series of photographs of the Rouge that would stand as a creative portrait of American industry.[4] It was Flannery who recommended Sheeler, already well known for his photographs of still lifes; New York buildings; Bucks County, Pennsylvania, interiors and exteriors; and fashion and portrait photography for *Voque* and *Vanity Fair*.[5]

Sheeler arrived at the River Rouge plant late in October 1927 and immediately declared the subject "incomparably the most thrilling I have had to work with."[6] The photographs that he would complete over the next six weeks are justly considered among his greatest achievements in the medium. But his experiences at the plant had another result, one that was slower in developing, but that ultimately had a greater and more profound effect on his art. As Sheeler explained: "I was out there on a mission of photography. Period. And when I got there, I took a chance on opening the other eye and so then I thought maybe some pictures could be pulled out. But I had to come home, and it was several years later that they had really digested and they started coming out."[7] The "other eye" Sheeler opened while working at the Rouge was that of the painter, and with that eye he was able to see the potential that the compositions he was framing photographically held for paintings. In 1928, he produced two small watercolors of Rouge subjects, River Rouge Industrial Plant [fig. 1], which reproduced the upper center of his photograph Salvage Ship-Ford Plant [fig. 2], and Classic Landscape [fig. 3], also presumably based on photographs, although none is known of this view today. Throughout his career, Sheeler made many fine works on paper, but his preferred media were pencil, conté crayon, gouache, or tempera rather than watercolor. If the two 1928 Rouge watercolors were based directly on photographs, perhaps the artist was experimenting with how best to "pull out" pictures from them. The following year, Sheeler used one of the photographs he shot in 1928 of the British ocean liner RMS Majestic as his "blueprint" in creating the oil Upper Deck (1929, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University).[8] At this point, he believed he had found the means of fusing precise visual realism with powerful formal abstraction. As he said: "This is what I have been getting ready for. I had come to feel that a picture could have incorporated in it the structural design implied in abstraction and be presented in a wholly realistic manner."[9]

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With this newly won mastery of process came a new sense of purpose, and Sheeler returned to his River Rouge photographs. From 1930 to 1936, he created a stunning series of oil paintings of the plant: *American Landscape* [fig. 4], *Classic Landscape* (this work), *River Rouge Plant* [fig. 5], and *City Interior* [fig. 6].[10] In the latter, which depicts a scene in the area of the plant's huge blast furnaces, Sheeler portrayed a dense concentration of structures and forms evocative, as the title suggests, of an urban area. *American Landscape* and *Classic Landscape* are more openly composed and expansive. The area in the complex they—and *River Rouge Plant*—depict is near the cement plant, with its distinctive landmarks, a single, tall smokestack, and cement storage silos [fig. 7]. Cement, a by-product of the car manufacturing process, was created using slag—impurities skimmed off the top of molten iron—that was cooled and then screened and crushed.[11]

Both versions of Classic Landscape show the cement plant from a vantage point on the High Line railroad track looking north. At the left and in the center distance are the large bins for storing coal, ore, and limestone. The multiroofed building at upper right is the slag screen house; beyond is the long, low roof of the cement plant, running across almost the entire background to its terminus at the boat slip (see fig. 5). In the center distance are the six stacks of powerhouse 3. Sheeler expanded the composition in all four directions for the oil painting, with significant results. In the watercolor, the right side of the slag screen house and the railroad tracks are cropped by the edge of the paper, the cement plant smokestack runs almost to the very top of the sheet, and the left side of the composition stops just before the stacks of the glass plant would be visible. In the oil, Sheeler moved the point of view back slightly, achieving a more spacious composition and diminishing the sense of photographic cropping evident in the watercolor. The watercolor seems a more literal record of a section of a specific place ("the single image," to use Sheeler's words), whereas the oil ("a plurality of images willfully directed by the artist") presents a self-contained and integral reality of its own, complete without any reference to the world outside its borders.

Although the enlargement of the composition was perhaps Sheeler's most significant alteration in translating the watercolor into the oil, the many other subtle changes, adjustments, and additions he made are evidence of a painstaking process. Among the additions are three rivet heads forming an inverted isosceles triangle on the second cross tie from the bottom; a board walkway extending from the bottom right corner; a second crossbar supporting the cables running parallel to the tracks; a loaded railcar stopped by the slag screen house; two small, cube-

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shaped structures at the bottom right of the silos; two support towers for the long projecting building in front of the silos; the two smokestacks of the glass plant; and additional windows at the top left of the silos and on the shadowed facade of the building at left center. In the painting's sky, Sheeler eliminated the smoke around the stacks of powerhouse 3, added a streaming cloud of smoke coming from the cement plant stack, and a great triangular wedge of billowing clouds. Sheeler also adjusted the shadows throughout the painting, changing the more rounded forms visible in the watercolor into crisply delineated straight edges.

Through these adjustments and changes, Sheeler tightened the already strong geometry evident in the watercolor into a world based on three simple shapes: triangle, rectangle, and cylinder. The only elements present that do not precisely conform to one of these shapes—the piles in the storage bins and the clouds in the sky—are organic rather than man-made. Yet they, too, are ultimately subsumed by geometry, for the group of bins in perspective and the swath of clouds form two great triangles that echo each other in reverse. In *Classic Landscape*, Sheeler created his most elegant proof of what he had asserted just two years earlier, "that a picture could have incorporated in it the structural design implied in abstraction and be presented in a wholly realistic manner."

Classic Landscape is, of course, more than simply an aesthetic demonstration piece, for its subject, the modern industrial landscape, embraced a number of meanings. Sheeler's photographs of the Rouge plant mainly centered on the manufacturing processes of the plant, on its functions and its purposes. That is hardly surprising given their origins in the commission from Ford. But in selecting subjects for paintings he was free to do as he wished, so it is significant that he chose not to depict scenes that had to do with the production of automobiles, the main purpose of the Rouge. Rather, he selected a more anonymous scene, not tied to a specific place or use, but representative generally of the landscape of industry. That, in part, explains his use in the painting's title of the word "classic," with its connotations of typical or standard. But "classic," of course, also evokes the culture of ancient Greece and Rome, and Sheeler surely intended that association as well. In that light, Classic Landscape, a world of clarity, precision, and order, could be seen as a modern equivalent of the highest achievements of the classical past. Indeed, as has often been pointed out, the silos of the cement plant suggest the forms of a Greek Doric temple.[12] In this juxtaposition of the modern and the ancient (if only by implication), Classic Landscape reminds one of the early "metaphysical" cityscapes of the Italian surrealist Giorgio De Chirico (Italian, 1888 -

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1978). Paintings by De Chirico like The Soothsayer's Recompense [fig. 8] and The Arrival (1912–1913, The Barnes Foundation), with their dramatically receding perspectives, stark shadows, sharply delineated forms, eerie emptiness, and smoking machines played off against classical buildings, may well have influenced Sheeler in the Rouge paintings.[13] But whereas De Chirico's fantasies are tinged with nostalgia for the past and uneasiness about the potential inadequacies of the present, Sheeler's real American scene implies a more harmonious accommodation of past and present.

Indeed, for Sheeler the issue was clearly not that the silos looked like an ancient temple, but that their appearance was the result of similar principles of design that were attuned to form and function rather than to superficial style. In a 1925 essay, he observed that the foundation of Greek art lay in its "perfect adjustment of concrete form to abstract thought. . . . as great purity of plastic expression may be achieved through the medium of objective forms as has been thought to be obtainable by some of our present day artists, by means of a purely abstract presentation of forms."[14]

Sheeler was not, of course, alone in such reasoning and in seeing its relevance to his own time. In 1927, Le Corbusier's Vers Une Architecture, first published in 1923 in French, appeared in an English edition as Towards a New Architecture. Sheeler very likely knew the book.[15] Moreover, it may well have been influential in leading Vaughn Flannery to commission the Rouge photographs, for Le Corbusier's book was full of praise for American industrial architecture.[16] Towards a New Architecture opens with a section entitled "The Engineer's Aesthetic and Architecture," in which Le Corbusier rejects the dominance of style in determining architectural form and stresses instead three essential principles: "MASS . . . the element by which our senses perceive and measure and are most fully affected. SURFACE . . . the envelope of the mass and which can diminish or enlarge the sensation the latter gives us. PLAN . . . the generator both of mass and surface and ... that by which the whole is irrevocably fixed."[17] He continued: "Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light. Our eyes are made to see forms in light; light and shade reveal these forms; cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders or pyramids are the great primary forms which light reveals to advantage; the image of these is distinct and tangible within us and without ambiguity. It is for that reason that these are beautiful forms, the most beautiful forms."[18] For Le Corbusier, history offered ample evidence to support his views: "Egyptian, Greek or Roman architecture is an architecture of prisms,

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cubes and cylinders, pyramids or spheres: the Pyramids, the Temple of Luxor, the Parthenon, the Coliseum, Hadrian's Villa."[19] But when he surveyed the buildings of his own time Le Corbusier found that engineers, not architects, were the ones who understood these principles:

Not in the pursuit of an architectural idea, but simply guided by the results of calculation (derived from the principles which govern our universe) and the conception of A LIVING ORGANISM, the ENGINEERS of to-day make use of the primary elements and, by coordinating them in accordance with the rules, provoke in us architectural emotions and thus make the work of man ring in unison with the universal order.

Thus we have the American grain elevators and factories, the magnificent FIRST-FRUITS of the new age. THE AMERICAN ENGINEERS OVERWHELM WITH THEIR CALCULATIONS OUR EXPIRING ARCHITECTURE.[20]

Le Corbusier's ideas were much influenced by the achievements of modernist painting in the first decades of the 20th century, and he recognized what he called "the vital change brought about by cubism and later researches."[21] His identification of architecture's fundamental forms brings to mind not only the works of Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881 - 1973) and Georges Braque (French, 1882 - 1963), but also recalls Paul Cézanne's advice to "treat nature by the means of the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, everything brought into proper perspective."[22] Cézanne, and later Picasso and Braque, were crucial catalysts for Sheeler as he moved away from the rather conventional manner of painting he learned from his teacher William Merritt Chase (American, 1849 - 1916), so Le Corbusier's thoughts must have had particular appeal for him. And it is likely, too, that Sheeler took special notice of the illustrations in Towards a New Architecture, several of which depicted structures remarkably similar to those he would paint in Classic Landscape [fig. 9]. This would suggest, then, that at the time he painted Classic Landscape Sheeler must have shared Le Corbusier's favorable and optimistic view of the potential such commercial structures held for inspiring the development of a new and more humane functional architecture. Sheeler also identified industrial scenes as the loci of a new kind of secular spirituality. As he said in an oft-quoted

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remark: "it may be true, as has been said, that our factories are our substitutes for religious expression."[23]

The iconic power and special importance of Classic Landscape were recognized from the time of its first exhibition at Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery in New York in 1931. The following year it was purchased by Edsel Ford, making it the only one of Sheeler's Rouge paintings to be owned by the Ford family.[24] As its exhibition record indicates, Classic Landscape in the years since has been one of the most widely shown of all American 20th-century paintings. It has also long been central to virtually every discussion of an American style known as precisionism, even though the definition and use of that term have been the subject of wide and continuous scholarly debate.[25] Like so many other art historical labels, including impressionism and cubism, precisionism functions best as an umbrella term under which a number of artists (for example, George Ault (American, 1891 - 1948), Francis Criss, Charles Demuth (American, 1883 - 1935), Preston Dickinson, and Miklos Suba, in addition to Sheeler) with similar aesthetic sensibilities may be grouped. Attempts to hone the definition to the point where it can be used consistently to identify what is or is not a precisionist painting or who was or was not a precisionist inevitably become uselessly hobbled by restrictions, exceptions, and complications. Moreover, many of Sheeler's and other American artists' works have affinities with, and were doubtless influenced by, works from abroad, whether the paintings of the German Neue Sachlichkeit artists, the French purists, or even the Russian constructivists.

In the end, of course, the exceptional power and haunting beauty of *Classic Landscape* are due not to the sources and influences behind its creation or the meanings it may convey, important as all of those may be. Like so many truly great works of art it is perfect and complete in itself, requiring neither additions nor deletions, nor reference to anything but itself. And Sheeler knew perfectly well just how removed what he had created was from the actualities of the real world. This was art, not life. When asked why he had not included people in *Classic Landscape*, he tellingly replied: "Well, it's my illustration of what a beautiful world it would be if there were no people in it."[26] Sheeler's friend the poet William Carlos Williams also understood what he had achieved. *Classic Landscape*, in his words, was a "separate reality."[27]

Franklin Kelly

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Charles Sheeler, River Rouge Industrial Plant, 1928, graphite and watercolor, Carnegie Musem of Art, Pittsburgh, Gift of G. David Thompson. © 2016 Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh



fig. 2 Charles Sheeler, Salvage Ship-Ford Plant, 1927, gelatin silver print, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.  $\ensuremath{\mathbb{C}}$  The Lane Collection. Image courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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fig. 3 Charles Sheeler, Classic Landscape, 1928, watercolor, gouache, and graphite, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth



fig. 4 Charles Sheeler, American Landscape, 1930, oil on canvas, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY



fig. 5 Charles Sheeler, River Rouge Plant, 1932, oil and pencil on canvas, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Purchase 32.43



fig. 6 Charles Sheeler, City Interior, 1936, aqueous adhesive and oil on composition board (Masonite), Worcester Art Museum, Elizabeth M. Sawyer Fund in Memory of Jonathan and Elizabeth M. Sawyer.  $\ensuremath{\mathbb{O}}$ Worcester Art Museum

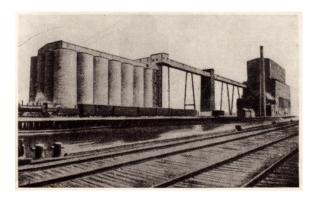
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**fig. 7** Charles Sheeler, *Ford Rouge Cement Plant*, 1945, photograph, Collections of The Henry Ford, copy and restrictions apply



**fig. 8** Giorgio de Chirico, *The Soothsayer's Recompense*, 1913, oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection. © 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome



**fig. 9** Photo from Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York, 1927), 29

#### **NOTES**

- [1] This entry is a revised version of text that was originally published in Bruce Robertson et al., *Twentieth-Century American Art: The Ebsworth Collection* (Washington, DC, 1999).
- [2] Carol Troyen and Erica E. Hirshler, Charles Sheeler: Paintings and Drawings

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(Boston, 1987), i.

- [3] Mary Jane Jacob and Linda Downs, preface to The Rouge: The Image of Industry in the Art of Charles Sheeler and Diego Rivera (Detroit, 1978), 7.
- [4] Mary Jane Jacob in *The Rouge: The Image of Industry in the Art of Charles Sheeler and Diego Rivera* (Detroit, 1978), 11.
- [5] See Carol Troyen and Erica E. Hirshler, Charles Sheeler: Paintings and Drawings (Boston, 1987).
- [6] Sheeler to Arensberg, Oct. 25, 1927, Arensberg Archives; quoted in Theodore E. Stebbins Jr. and Norman Keyes Jr., *Charles Sheeler: The Photographs* (Boston, 1987), 25.
- [7] Charles Sheeler interview with Bartlett Cowdrey, Dec. 9, 1958, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; quoted in Carol Troyen and Erica E. Hirshler, Charles Sheeler: Paintings and Drawings (Boston, 1987), 116.
- [8] The RMS Majestic was originally a German ship, the SS Bismarck. In 1920 she was given to the United Kingdom as reparation for the sinking of HMHS Brittanic and was rechristened the RMS Majestic. Charles Sheeler interview with Martin Friedman, June 18, 1959, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; quoted in Carol Troyen and Erica E. Hirshler, Charles Sheeler: Paintings and Drawings (Boston, 1987), 115.
- [9] Carol Troyen and Erica E. Hirshler, *Charles Sheeler: Paintings and Drawings* (Boston, 1987), 118.
- [10] During this same period, Sheeler also produced a number of superb conté crayon drawings based on his photographs of the plant. A fifth oil derived from a Rouge photograph, *Industrial Forms* (1947, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), was painted in the more abstract, simplified style Sheeler employed during the late 1940s.
- [11] The Rouge: The Image of Industry in the Art of Charles Sheeler and Diego Rivera (Detroit, 1978), 25, 32–34.
- [12] See, e.g., Susan Fillin Yeh, exhibition review of "The Rouge," *Arts Magazine* 53 (Nov. 1978): 8: "the industrial version of an ancient Greek temple"; and Karen Lucie, *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), 13: "suggesting an austere Doric temple." Sheeler himself observed: "the grain elevator [*sic*], well, it looked classic to me, naturally, that's the reason I called it that" (from interview with Bartlett Cowdrey, Dec. 9, 1958, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution).
- [13] According to Julia May Boddewyn, "The First American Collectors of de Chirico," in Giorgio de Chirico and America, ed. Emily Braun (New York, 1996), 49, 55, Sheeler's friends Louise and Walter Arensberg did not acquire The Soothsayer's Recompense until 1932. However, Sheeler could certainly have seen The Arrival, which Albert C. Barnes acquired in 1923, because

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the artist and Vaughn Flannery had visited the Barnes collection together several times; see Susan Fillin Yeh, "Charles Sheeler, Industry, Fashion, and the Vanguard," *Arts Magazine* 54 (Feb. 1980): 156. Moreover, De Chirico's works were reproduced in numerous art periodicals during the 1920s: see,

for example, Jacques Mauny, "Paris Letter," *The Arts* 12 (Aug. 1927): 106–108, which includes a reproduction of *The Departure of the Poet* (1913, private collection; also known as *Joys and Enigmas of a Strange Hour*), which is very similar to *The Soothsayer's Recompense*.

- [14] Charles Sheeler, "Notes on an Exhibition of Greek Art," *The Arts* 7 (March 1925): 153.
- [15] Susan Fillin Yeh, "Charles Sheeler's 'Upper Deck," Arts Magazine 53 (Jan. 1979): 93, notes Le Corbusier's discussion of ocean liners in the book as of likely influence on Sheeler's decision to paint Upper Deck (1929, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University).
- [16] A number of illustrations in the book, for example, 40,000 Kilowatt Turbine for Electricity (p. 249), Steel Construction (p. 253), and Ventilators (p. 261), are suggestively similar to some of the photographs Sheeler made at the Rouge plant.
- [17] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London, 1927), 21.
- [18] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London, 1927), 31
- [19] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London, 1927), 31.
- [20] Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture, trans. Frederick Etchells (London, 1927), 33
- [21] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London, 1927), 23.
- [22] Letter to Emile Bernard, April 15, 1904, reprinted in Paul Cézanne, Letters, ed. John Rewald (New York, 1976), 301. This well-known letter was first published in 1907: Emile Bernard, "Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne et lettres inédites," Mercure de France, Oct. 1 and 15, 1907; see Cézanne, Letters, 11.
- [23] Quoted in Constance Rourke, *Charles Sheeler, Artist in the American Tradition* (New York, 1938), 130.
- [24] Carol Troyen and Erica E. Hirshler, Charles Sheeler: Paintings and Drawings (Boston, 1987), 120, citing a letter from Halpert to Edmund Gurry, June 18, 1932.
- [25] For an overview of conflicting views of the term, see Rick Stewart, "Charles Sheeler, William Carlos Williams, and Precisionism: A Redefinition," *Arts Magazine* 58 (Nov. 1983): 100–114. Sheeler and his friend Williams,

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- according to Stewart (p. 108), avoided using the term, being averse to attaching names to anything.
- [26] Interview with Martin Friedman, June 18, 1959, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, quoted in Karen Lucie, Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine (Cambridge, MA, 1991), 107.
- [27] Quoted in Rick Stewart, "Charles Sheeler, William Carlos Williams, and Precisionism: A Redefinition," Arts Magazine 58 (Nov. 1983): 109, citing James Guimond, The Art of William Carlos Williams (Urbana, IL, 1968), 100.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The support consists of a fine, tightly woven fabric estimated to be linen that has been lined with a similar fabric of somewhat heftier weight using a heat-seal adhesive. The original canvas was prepared with a thin, continuous layer of white priming. The tacking margins were removed when the painting was lined, so it is not immediately apparent whether the priming was applied commercially or by the artist. The original stretcher has been replaced. A preparatory graphite drawing remains visible along the edges of many of the forms and through several of the more translucent passages. Recent examination of the painting in infrared reveals somewhat random gestural lines drawn in the mounds depicted in the foreground and middle ground and in areas of the sky.[1] The paint layers are characterized by moderately rich and fluid paint that is uniformly thin and varies from translucent in some areas to opaque scumbling in others. Subtle ridges of paint exist along the edges of many of the forms.

Because a thick, excessively glossy, synthetic resin varnish coated the painting and obscured subtle textural and gloss differences, it was removed in a 2006 conservation treatment. The conservator conducting this treatment noted that there were areas of the sky where mild abrasion was obscured by retouching. After the removal of the inappropriate varnish, the surface was reunified in a way that preserved the artist's intended gloss differences by spraying on thin layers of low molecular weight hydrocarbon resin with an airbrush.

### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

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The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with an H astronomy filter.

#### **PROVENANCE**

Acquired 1931 from the artist by (The Downtown Gallery, New York); purchased 1932 by Edsel B. Ford [d. 1943], Dearborn, Michigan; by inheritance to his wife, Mrs. Edsel B. Ford [d. 1976], Grosse Point Shores, Michigan; her estate; by transfer 1982 to the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House, Detroit; (sale, Sotheby's, New York, 2 June 1983, no. 210); (Hirshl & Adler Galleries, New York; Kennedy Gallery, New York; Long & Company Gallery, Houston); purchased 4 June 1984 by Mr. and Mrs. Barney A. Ebsworth, St. Louis; gift 2000 to NGA.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1931 Charles Sheeler, Exhibition of Recent Works, The Downtown Gallery, New York, 1931, checklist no. 4.

1932 American Contemporary Paintings and Sculpture, The Society of Arts and Crafts, Detroit, March-April 1932, no. 26.

1932 American Painting & Sculpture, 1862-1932, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1932-1933, no. 95, repro.

1932 Paintings and Drawings by Charles Sheeler, The Arts Club of Chicago, January-February 1932, no. 3.

1933 A Loan Exhibition of Retrospective American Painting, The Society of Arts and Crafts, Detroit, 1933, typewritten checklist, no. 13.

1934 Water Colours and Drawings by Sheeler, Hopper and Burchfield, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1934, no catalogue.

1935 An Exhibition of Paintings by Charles Burchfield and Charles Sheeler, The Society of Arts and Crafts, Detroit, 1935, no. 17.

1938 Americans at Home: 32 Painters and Sculptors, The Downtown Gallery, New York, October 1938, no. 25.

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1938 Trois Siècles d'Art au Etats-Unis, Musée de Jeu de Paume, Paris, May-July 1938, no. 154, fig. 35.

1939 Art in Our Time: An Exhibition to Celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the Museum of Modern Art and the Opening of its New Building, Museum of Modern Art, New York, April 1939, no. 140, repro.

1939 Charles Sheeler: Paintings, Drawings, and Photographs, Museum of Modern Art, New York, October-November 1939, no. 22, repro.

1946 American Painting from the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day, Tate Gallery, London, 1946, no. 192.

1953 An Exhibition of Contemporary Art Collected by American Business, Meta Mold Aluminium Company, Cedarburg, Wisconsin, 1953, no. 40, repro. (incorrectly listed as owned by Henry Ford II).

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1957 Painting in America: The Story of 450 Years, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1957, no. 164, fig. 161, as Modern Classic.

1958 The Iron Horse in Art: The Railroad as It Has Been Interpreted by Artists of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Fort Worth Art Center, 1958, no. 96, fig. 24.

1960 The Precisionist View in American Art, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Detroit Institute of Arts; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1960-1961, unnumbered catalogue.

1963 The Quest of Charles Sheeler, 83 Works Honoring His 80th Year, University of Iowa, Iowa City, 1963, no. 37, fig. 10.

1966 Art of the United States: 1670-1966, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1966, no. 255, repro.

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1968 Charles Sheeler, National Collection of Fine Arts (now National Museum of American Art), Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1968-1969, no. 63, repro.

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1976 Arts and Crafts in Detroit 1906-1976: The Movement, The Society, The School, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1976-1977, no. 239, repro. (incorrectly dated 1932).

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1977 The Modern Spirit: American Painting 1908-1935, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh; Hayward Gallery, London, 1977, no. 101, repro.

1978 The Rouge: The Image of Industry in the Art of Charles Sheeler and Diego Rivera, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1978, no. 27, repro.

1978 William Carlos Williams and the American Scene, 1920-1940, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1978-1979, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

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1980 Paris and the American Avant-Garde, 1900-1925, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Jesse Besser Museum, Alpena, Michigan; University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor; Krasl Art Center, St. Joseph, Michigan; Kresge Art Center Gallery, East Lansing; Ella Sharp Museum, Jackson, Michigan, 1980, no. 30.

1984 The Art of Collecting, Hirschl & Adler Galleries, New York, 1984, no. 44, repro.

1986 The Machine Age in America, 1918-1941, Brooklyn Museum; Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, 1986-1988, not in catalogue (shown only in Brooklyn and Pittsburgh).

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1987 The Ebsworth Collection: American Modernism, 1911-1947, Saint Louis Art Museum; Honolulu Academy of Arts; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1987-1988, no. 61, repro.

1991 The 1920s: Age of the Metropolis, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1991, no. 590, fig. 608.

1993 American Art in the 20th Century: Painting and Sculpture 1913-1993, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; Royal Academy of Arts, London, September-December 1993, no. 54, repro. (shown only in London).

1993 American Impressions: Masterworks from American Art Forum Collections, 1875-1935, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C., March-July 1993, no catalogue.

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Peter A. Juley & Son, John Sloan, c. 1930, photograph, Miscellaneous Photographs collection, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

## Sloan, John American, 1871 - 1951

### **BIOGRAPHY**

John Sloan was born in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, on August 2, 1871, the son of an amateur artist and occasional businessman. In 1876 he moved with his family to Philadelphia and in 1884 enrolled in Central High School, where William Glackens (American, 1870 - 1938) and Albert Coombs Barnes were among his classmates. In 1888 he began working for a bookseller and print dealer, and the following year he taught himself how to etch with the aid of Philip Gilbert Hamilton's The Etcher's Handbook. In 1891 Sloan attended drawing classes at the Spring Garden Institute and began to work as a freelance commercial artist. He joined the art department of the Philadelphia Inquirer in 1892, and studied drawing at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts under Thomas Pollock Anshutz. In 1893 he became one of the founders of the Charcoal Club, a group of young artists who broke away from the academy. From 1895 to 1903 he worked for the Philadelphia Press. Inspired by Robert Henri (American, 1865 - 1929), Sloan started to paint in the late 1890s, beginning with portraits and Philadelphia city scenes. He exhibited for the first time at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1900.

Sloan married Anna Maria Wall, known as Dolly, in 1901, and in 1904 they moved to New York City. He painted realistic scenes of Greenwich Village and the Tenderloin district and continued to work as a freelance illustrator. In 1908 he participated in the historic exhibition of The Eight at Macbeth Gallery. Sloan came

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to be regarded as a central figure in the Ashcan school and was noted for his painterly style and dark palette. In 1910 he helped organize the Exhibition of Independent Artists and also joined the Socialist Party. From 1912 to 1916 he was art director for the radical publication *The Masses*, and he remained committed to left-wing causes throughout his life. Sloan participated in the Armory Show in 1913, exhibiting two oils and five etchings. The postimpressionist and fauve works that he saw at the exhibition influenced his style and choice of subject matter, and while summering in Gloucester, Massachusetts, during the middle teens he painted colorful landscapes using a bright fauvist palette. Sloan professed admiration for Picasso and, while being careful to avoid imitating the new European styles, remained open to them.

Sloan began teaching at the Art Students League in 1914 and became a respected teacher; among his students were Alexander Calder (American, 1898 - 1976), David Smith (American, 1906 - 1965), *Reginald Marsh*, and Barnett Newman (American, 1905 - 1970). In 1918 he became president of the Society of Independent Artists. Beginning in 1919 he spent summers in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he encountered Native American art and the Mexican muralists Diego Rivera (Mexican, 1886 - 1957) and José Clemente Orozco (Mexican, 1883 - 1949). During the late 1920s he began painting nudes and portraits. In 1939 he published a book of his teachings titled *Gist of Art*. In 1944, after the death of his first wife, Sloan married his student Helen Farr. He died of cancer in Hanover, New Hampshire, on September 7, 1951.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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John Sloan American, 1871 - 1951

# The City from Greenwich Village

1922

oil on canvas

overall: 66 x 85.7 cm (26 x 33 3/4 in.) Inscription: lower left: John Sloan Gift of Helen Farr Sloan 1970.1.1

#### **ENTRY**

Painted in 1922, *The City from Greenwich Village* is closely related to a number of John Sloan's earlier paintings, and is the culmination of his many views of New York City. The painting's special significance to the artist is evidenced by the fact that there are more preparatory drawings associated with this work than any of his other pictures. Sloan's book, *Gist of Art*, provides a lengthy description of *The City from Greenwich Village*:

Looking south over lower Sixth Avenue from the roof of my
Washington Place studio, on a winter evening. The distant lights of
the great office buildings downtown are seen in the gathering
darkness. The triangular loft building on the right had contained my
studio for three years before. Although painted from memory it
seems thoroughly convincing in its handling of light and space. The
spot on which the spectator stands is now an imaginary point since
all the buildings as far as the turn of the elevated have been
removed, and Sixth Avenue has been extended straight down to

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the business district. The picture makes a record of the beauty of the older city which is giving way to the chopped-out towers of the modern New York.[1]

Unlike the majority of Sloan's earlier and more spontaneously executed realist paintings that represent episodes in the daily lives of New Yorkers, the subject of *The City from Greenwich Village* is the city itself. This panoramic aerial view from the roof of Sloan's studio apartment at 88 Washington Place, where he lived from 1915 to 1927, shows lower Sixth Avenue on a rainy evening as an elevated train turns the corner at Third Street and heads north. The viewer's eye is led over the picturesque rooftops to the distant upper left, where brilliantly illuminated skyscrapers are silhouetted on the horizon. The taller one, on the left, is the 60-story gothic revival Woolworth Building (completed in 1913, designed by Cass Gilbert, and the world's tallest building at that time), and at its right is the Singer Tower (1908).[2] The train boldly bisects the composition, separating the low, dormered structures on the left from the triangular loft building that rises up on the right, beyond the upper limit of the composition.

Sloan included the elevated train in a number of important early paintings, in which it serves as a backdrop for some aspect of human activity.[3] But here, only a few pedestrians have ventured forth into the inclement night, and two automobiles appear in the center foreground. *The City from Greenwich Village* is closely related to *Jefferson Market* [fig. 1], a view of the Sixth Avenue train seen from the north window of Sloan's fifth-story, Washington Place apartment. Additionally, the Varitype Building (a triangular structure in which Sloan had leased his first Greenwich Village studio in 1912) featured in the Gallery's painting is considerably smaller than the more famous but similarly shaped Flatiron Building, which Sloan included in his *Dust Storm, Fifth Avenue* (1906, The Metropolitan Museum of Art), and occupies a similar place in the composition.[4] Sloan also depicted the Varitype Building in *Cornelia Street* (1920, private collection).

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of *The City from Greenwich Village* is Sloan's skillful combination of natural and artificial light. The dim haze of the city is punctuated by numerous sources of electric light from the shop windows, a streetlight, and the headlights of the train and a car that are in turn reflected off the rainy surfaces of the street and buildings. The eminent historian of American art Lloyd Goodrich has noted that Sloan painted cityscapes "from a poetic viewpoint like that of the landscapist," and observed how, in this particular work, the artist

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has achieved "a subtler and deeper realization of night color than any of his early works, which seem almost monochromatic by comparison."[5] In addition to his nuanced portrayal of urban lighting, Sloan has also commented wittily on the artifice of the modern city by including the Moonshine advertisement on the façade of the building at the lower left. "Moonshine," a term meaning nonsense or foolish talk, was also used to describe the illicitly distilled and distributed liquor that became popular during Prohibition.[6] Just below the fictional brand name, a truncated image of the moon evokes what the city's artificial electric lighting so effectively obscures: natural moonlight.

In his article on *The City from Greenwich Village*, David W. Scott analyzes the five preparatory studies in the Gallery's collection and concludes that it is impossible to place them in chronological order and definitively trace the evolution of the composition [fig. 2] [fig. 3] [fig. 4] [fig. 5] [fig. 6].[7] None of the drawings completely accounts for the final image. For instance, in some of the sketches, Sloan has concentrated on the triangular Varitype Building and the train but omitted the distant view of lower Manhattan and its skyscrapers. Scott also discerned in Sloan's drawings the use of the Golden Section, a system of proportions that Sloan had advocated, in the dominant vertical plane in the composition's center.[8]

The detailed account of the painting that Sloan gives in *Gist of Art* implied that he wanted to illustrate how modernization, in the form of skyscrapers and public mass transportation systems such as elevated trains, had destroyed Greenwich Village's formerly intimate, 19th-century ambience. The artist had lived in the Village—New York's bohemian neighborhood—from 1912 to 1935, and during those years he had the opportunity to observe the changes wrought by urban renovation; many of the houses that he found "small and old fashioned"[9] in 1908 were demolished to make way for modern buildings. Sloan scholar Rowland Elzea cites a quote in which the artist recalled: "Automobiles fill the streets and Prohibition turned the night life of the city into a nightmare of clubs and commercial entertainment. The city was spoiled for me."[10] Over the last two decades of his career Sloan rarely depicted New York.

Although Sloan may not have extolled New York's transformation into a modern metropolis in *The City from Greenwich Village*, neither did he completely condemn it. Despite Sloan's negative description of new buildings as "chopped out towers," there is nothing particularly sinister in his depiction of lower Manhattan's skyscrapers. On the contrary, *The City from Greenwich Village* possesses a magical quality that has led John Loughery to equate it with the Emerald City of

## National Gallery of Art

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Oz.[11] Far from being a wholesale condemnation of modernization and progress, Sloan's painting, like Alfred Stieglitz's photograph Old and New New York, evokes the romanticism of the past while acknowledging contemporary realities in order to deftly capture a city in transition.[12]

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September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**

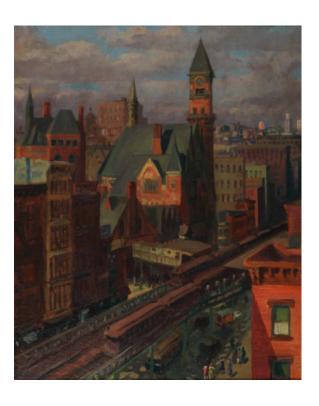


fig. 1 John Sloan, Jefferson Market, 1917, retouched 1922, oil on canvas, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Image courtesy Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Henry D. Gilpin Fund



fig. 2 John Sloan, The City from Greenwich Village, c. 1922, graphite on tracing paper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan, 1971.54.1

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**fig. 3** John Sloan, *The City from Greenwich Village*, c. 1922, graphite, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan, 1971.54.2



**fig. 4** John Sloan, *Study for "The City from Greenwich Village," I*, c. 1922, graphite on tracing paper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan, 1970.22.1

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**fig. 6** John Sloan, *Study for "The City from Greenwich Village," III*, c. 1922, red colored pencil with touches of graphite, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan, 1970.22.3

**fig. 5** John Sloan, *Study for "The City from Greenwich Village," II*, c. 1922, graphite, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan, 1970.22.2

### **NOTES**

- [1] John Sloan, The Gist of Art, 3rd ed. (New York, 1977), 267.
- [2] The Singer Tower had briefly been the world's tallest building until 1909, when a 700-foot tower was added to the Metropolitan Life Insurance Building on Madison Avenue between 23rd and 24th Streets.
- [3] Examples are Election Night in Herald Square (1907, Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, New York), Sixth Avenue and Thirtieth Street (1907, Philadelphia Museum of Art), and Six O'Clock, Winter (1912, The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC). The later Sixth Avenue Elevated at Third Street (1928, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York) shows the bend of the El from the south, looking north toward the Jefferson Market.
- [4] David W. Scott, "The City from Greenwich Village," Studies in the History of

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Art 4 (1971–1972), 108–111, has noted that this similarity is especially evident in the preparatory sketches, and has further observed that the rooftop vista devoid of human activity is characteristic of Sunset, West Twenty-Third Street (1906, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska), and Rainbow, New York City (1912, private collection).

- [5] Lloyd Goodrich, John Sloan (New York 1952), 54.
- [6] Rowland Elzea, John Sloan's Oil Paintings: A Catalogue Raisonné, 2 vols. (Newark, DE, 1991) 2:258, notes this double meaning.
- [7] The artist's wife, Helen Farr Sloan, donated the drawings to the National Gallery of Art in 1971 and 1972. E. John Bullard has suggested that one of them "may have been a preparatory study for an etching, which Sloan never did" (David W. Scott and E. John Bullard, *John Sloan 1871–1951* [Washington, DC, 1971], 169). David W. Scott, "*The City from Greenwich Village*," *Studies in the History of Art* 4 (1971–1972), 108 n. 3, has cited Helen Farr Sloan's opinion that her husband "sometimes prepared precise drawings for transfer to an etching plate, he remarked that too much detail was a deterrent to freedom, so he may have changed his mind about making an etching after working on the complex subject."
- [8] David W. Scott, "The City from Greenwich Village," Studies in the History of Art (1971–1972), 115 n. 14. Scott notes that the Golden Section is also used in another of Sloan's paintings capturing Greenwich Village's inimitable ambience: Bleecker Street, Saturday Night (1918, private collection).
- [9] Diary entry of July 8, 1908, quoted in David W. Scott, "The City from Greenwich Village," Studies in the History of Art (1971–1972), 115.
- [10] John Sloan, Notes (unpublished, recorded by Helen Farr Sloan), John Sloan Trust, Delaware Art Museum, 142. Quoted in Rowland Elzea, *John Sloan's Oil Paintings: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 2 vols. (Newark, DE, 1991) 2:257.
- [11] John Loughery, John Sloan: Painter and Rebel (New York, 1995), 261. Some skyscrapers were considered more aesthetically pleasing than others. For instance, Will Irwin, Highlights of Manhattan (New York, 1927), 16–17, noted that the Woolworth Building was widely admired as the "Cathedral of Commerce" and considered by many to be "the most beautiful new structure in Manhattan," while the Singer Tower was criticized for resembling "all too much one of those garish embroideries which Mr. Singer used to exhibit in the windows of his branch agencies to show what his machine could do."
- [12] Susan Danly Walther, The Railroad in the American Landscape: 1850–1950 (Wellesley, MA, 1981), 120, has pointed out that Stieglitz had dealt with a similar theme in his photogravure Old and New New York (1910, Metropolitan Museum of Art), which was illustrated in Camera Work 36 (Oct. 1911), plate VI.

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**TECHNICAL SUMMARY** 

The painting is executed on a medium-weight, plain-weave canvas that was primed with a white ground that is not thick enough to disguise the weave of the canvas. In 1970, National Gallery of Art conservator Frank Sullivan cut the painting from its stretcher, removing the original tacking margins in the process. It was then relined with an aqueous adhesive and stretched onto a new support.[1] The work was also cleaned and revarnished with a synthetic resin during this treatment. The paint layer is thickly applied with one layer painted over another, often with some moderate blending with the brush. For the most part, although the paint is thick the impasto and brush markings are not very pronounced. The paint layer is in good condition, with only a few small inpainted but not filled losses located in the upper

portion of the work.

**TECHNICAL NOTES** 

Because the conservator who lined the painting also trimmed its tacking margins, it is probably near its original dimensions.

**PROVENANCE** 

The artist [1871-1951]; his estate; [1] gift 1970 to NGA.

[1] The letter of 12 January 1970 from the artist's widow, Helen Farr Sloan, to John Bullard of the NGA (in NGA curatorial files), includes the following notes about the painting: "1923 - the picture is consigned to Kraushaar" and "1945 - Sloan gave the picture to HFS - it has been in the John Sloan Trust since Estate Period."

**EXHIBITION HISTORY** 

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1922 Sixth Annual Exhibition of The Society of Independent Artists, Waldorf Astoria, New York, March-April 1922, no. 701, as The City from Greenwich.

1922 Twenty-First Annual International Exhibition of Paintings, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, April-June 1922, no. 108, as The City, from Greenwich.

1923 Baltimore Charcoal Club, 1923.

1924 Tenth Annual Exhibition of Paintings by American Artists, Detroit Institute of Art, 1924, no. 30.

1925 First Pan-American Exhibition of Oil Paintings, Los Angeles Museum, 1925-1926.

1925 Thirty-Eighth Annual Exhibition of American Paintings and Sculpture, Art Institute of Chicago, 1925, no. 200, as New York from Greenwich Village.

1926 Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition: Paintings, Sculpture and Prints in the Department of Fine Arts, Philadelphia Museum of Art, June-December 1926, no. 280.

1926 The Tenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, April-May 1926, no. 259, as The City from Greenwich.

1932 Grand Central Gallery, New York, 1932.[1]

1934 John Sloan, Montross Gallery, New York, 1934, no. 14.

1938 John Sloan: Retrospective Exhibition, Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, 1938, no. 18, repro.

1939 46th Annual Exhibition, Nebraska Art Association, Lincoln, March-April 1939, no. 39.

1939 The Forty-Sixth Annual Exhibition of American Art, Cincinnati Art Museum, October-November 1939, no. 132.

1940 John Sloan, Art Department, University of Missouri, Columbia, 1940.

1940 Oil Paintings by John Sloan, Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire, January 1940.

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1941 Development of an American Style, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, May 1941.

1941 Fort Worth Art Association, March 1941.

1943 Living American Painters, John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis, February 1943, no. 53.

1943 Romantic Painting in America, Museum of Modern Art, New York, followed by other venues as a traveling exhibition, 1943-1945, no. 184, repro.

1945 Artists of the Philadelphia Press: William Glackens, George Luks, Everett Shinn, John Sloan, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1945, no. 63.

1946 John Sloan: Painting and Prints. Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Retrospective, Carpenter Galleries, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, 1946, no. 12.

1948 John Sloan Paintings, Dayton Art Institute, April 1948.

1948 John Sloan: Retrospective Exhibition, Kraushaar Galleries, New York, February 1948, no. 20, repro.

1949 The Turn of the Century: American Artists 1890-1920, Des Moines Art Center, 1949, unnumbered catalogue.

1952 John Sloan 1871-1951, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, 1952, no. 52, repro.

1961 Oil Paintings by John Sloan, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, November-December 1961, no. 7.

1961 The Life and Times of John Sloan, Delaware Art Center, Wilmington, September-October 1961, no. 29, repro.

1962 The Art of John Sloan 1871-1951, Walker Art Museum, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine, 1962, no. 46, repro.

1971 John Sloan 1871-1951, National Gallery of Art, Washington; Georgia Museum of Art, Athens; M.H. DeYoung Memorial Museum, San Francisco; City Art Museum of St. Louis; Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Ohio; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1971-1972, no. 135, repro.

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1981 John Sloan: Paintings, Prints, Drawings, traveling exhibition organized by Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, 6 venues, 1981-1983, no. 13, repro. (shown only in Hanover).

1981 The Railroad in the American Landscape: 1850-1950, Wellesley College Museum, Wellesley, Massachusetts, 1981, no. 53, repro.

1982 Japanese Artists Who Studied in [the] U.S.A. and The American Scene, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, 1982, no. 78, color repro.

1984 Museo de los Museos: arte universal a través de los tiempos, Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City, 1984, no. 42, repro.

1985 Night Lights: 19th and 20th Century American Nocturne Paintings, The Taft Museum, Cincinnati, 1985, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

1988 John Sloan: Spectator of Life, IBM Gallery of Science and Art, New York; Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington; Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, 1988, no. 97, repro.

2007 Seeing the City: Sloan's New York, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington; Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, Pennsylvania; David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago; Reynolda House, Museum of American Art, Winston-Salem, 2007-2009, unnumbered catalogue, fig. 52.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY NOTES**

[1] According to the artist's records, the painting was "briefly" exhibited at the Grand Central Gallery; see the letter of 12 January 1970 from the artist's widow, Helen Sloan, to John Bullard of the NGA, in NGA curatorial files.

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<sup>1980</sup> American Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue. National Gallery of Art,

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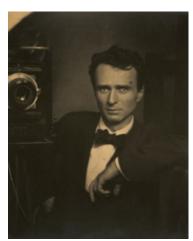
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Edward Steichen, Self-Portrait with Camera, c. 1917, photograph, The Art Institute of Chicago, 2008.243. Image no. 00070138-01, www.artic.edu. © 2016 The Estate of Edward Steichen / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

# Steichen, Edward

American, 1879 - 1973

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Born in Luxembourg, Steichen emigrated as a small child to the United States with his parents, eventually settling in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. At 15 he began a four-year apprenticeship at a lithography firm there and became interested in painting while studying at the newly established Milwaukee Art Students' League. In 1895 he acquired his first camera. Steichen's photographs from this time are soft-focused and atmospheric, reflecting his primary interest in painting and the influence of the impressionists, especially Claude Monet (French, 1840 - 1926), as well as the American pictorialist photographers such as Clarence H. White (American, 1871 - 1925).

In 1900 Steichen made a brief stopover in New York City en route to Paris, where he was planning to study painting at the Académie Julian. White had come across the young artist's photographs and was impressed enough to arrange for him to meet with Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946) at the Camera Club of New York. Stieglitz ended up purchasing three photographs from Steichen—a self portrait and two dreamy forest scenes—for the considerable price of five dollars apiece.

Once in Paris, Steichen soon gave up painting and began focusing exclusively on the medium of photography. His artistic education there was twofold: Steichen

Steichen, Edward 510

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both worked to improve his technical skills behind the camera and in the darkroom and also availed himself of the city's vast artistic resources. By the time he left Paris in 1902, he had established himself as a successful portraitist of writers, artists, and other high-profile clients.

Upon returning to New York in 1902, Steichen opened a professional portrait studio at 291 Fifth Avenue. The same year, he became a founder, along with Stieglitz, of the Photo-Secession group. This coincided with Stieglitz's establishment of the magazine *Camera Work*, in which Steichen's photographs frequently featured, including a "Special Steichen Supplement" in April 1906 and a monographic double issue in 1913. In 1905 the two artists repurposed Steichen's studio space for photography exhibitions; originally called The Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, the space became known simply as 291 after its Fifth Avenue address. Eleven of Steichen's photographs were featured in 291's inaugural exhibition and four solo shows of his work followed over the next few years. His studio portrait business continued to flourish, attracting celebrity clients such as banking magnate J. P. Morgan.

In 1906, feeling stifled by his portrait commissions and hoping to return to painting, Steichen moved back to Paris. Soon he was sending Stieglitz works of art for display at 291 by the European modernists he befriended there, including Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881 - 1973), Auguste Rodin (French, 1840 - 1917), and Henri Matisse (French, 1869 - 1954). For some of these artists, it was the first time American audiences had been introduced to their work.

The outbreak of World War I forced Steichen's return to New York. Though he continued to experiment with photography, especially complicated printing techniques, Steichen still identified himself as a painter. In 1915 an exhibition of his paintings was held at Knoedler Gallery, comprised of small works he had been able to take out of France as well as works already in the United States owned by friends and patrons. Also included were seven canvases listed in the catalog as "Mural Decorations Painted for Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Meyer, Jr. Motive: -- In Exaltation of Flowers," a commission Steichen had worked on from 1911 to 1914. Two years later Knoedler organized a second show of Steichen's paintings.

When the United States entered World War I, Steichen's attention turned to photojournalism. From 1917 to 1919 the artist served as the commander of the photographic division of the US Army Expeditionary Forces, overseeing the production of aerial photographs. This photographic turn caused a rift with

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Stieglitz, who had loftier ambitions for the medium. The two suffered a personal and professional schism when Steichen accepted a job with Condé Nast to produce fashion and celebrity portraits, a role which won him great acclaim. By that time, Steichen's commitment to the photographic medium was absolute. He had even taken the symbolic step of burning all of the paintings remaining in his studio in France sometime between 1920 and 1923.

During World War II the artist once again enlisted and was placed in charge of all naval combat photography. In 1947 Steichen gave up his artistic practice and became director of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), where in 1955 he organized the Family of Man exhibition. Featuring 503 photographs of the human experience from hundreds of photographers both professional and amateur from around the world, the show went on to travel the globe and was seen by over nine million people.

A retrospective of Steichen's work was held at MoMA in 1961; he retired the following year and the museum's photography department is named for him. President Lyndon Johnson presented Steichen with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963. In the last decade of his life Steichen spent much of his time on his farm in West Redding, Connecticut, where he grew prize-winning delphiniums and revisited his early interest in landscape photography. Steichen passed away at home the day before his 94th birthday.

September 29, 2016

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Edward Steichen American, 1879 - 1973

# Le Tournesol (The Sunflower)

c. 1920

tempera and oil on canvas

overall: 92.1 x 81.9 cm (36 1/4 x 32 1/4 in.)

framed: 95.9 x 85.9 x 2.4 cm (37 3/4 x 33 13/16 x 15/16 in.)

Inscription: on stretcher: Edward J. Steichen / Voulangis par Crécy-en-Brie S. et M.

/ (Agént Lucien Foinet 19 rue Vavin)

Gift of the Collectors Committee 1999.43.1

#### **ENTRY**

During the first half of his career, Edward Steichen was the leading exemplar of the painter/photographer in the group of artists who gathered around Alfred Stieglitz in New York. Steichen's early tonalist paintings correspond with the evocative pictorialist style of his photographs. Devoting himself to both disciplines, Steichen promoted photography as a fine art equal to painting at a time when photography's status as an art form was still questioned by many.

After pioneering the use of aerial photography for the army during World War I, Steichen suffered bouts of depression, endured a bitter divorce, and faced serious financial challenges. Seeking solace, he returned intermittently to his beloved house and garden in Voulangis, France. In 1923 Steichen burned his backlog of paintings there in a bonfire and abandoned the medium to pursue a lucrative career in commercial photography with Condé Nast. In doing so, Steichen distanced himself from his mentor Stieglitz, who continued to explore the relationship between painting and photography and to disdain popular, commercial art.

While the numerous accounts of Steichen's life during the 1920s provided by himself, by his great friend the poet Carl Sandburg, and by many other scholars and commentators vary somewhat, the sequence of events surrounding the making of Le Tournesol is quite well documented.[1] After his official discharge

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from the army on October 31, 1919, Steichen traveled to Paris, where he wrote to Stieglitz about the abysmal state of the contemporary art world there. By the spring of 1920, Steichen was ensconced in Voulangis and had set about putting the war behind him by energetically engaging in a number of interrelated activities. He tended his magnificent garden, cultivated, painted, and photographed sunflowers, and delved deeply into a variety of complex theories purporting to explain the universal rule of ratios and measurements known as the Golden Section or Golden Measure.

In the spring of 1921, Steichen's idyll was interrupted when he was summoned back to the United States in response to a lawsuit filed by his estranged wife, Clara. Relying on money he had earned in New York from portrait commissions, Steichen was again living in Voulangis that fall. A year later, soon after his divorce had been finalized and just as *Le Tournesol* went on view from November 1 to December 17, 1922, at the Salon d'Automne in Paris, Steichen, burdened by alimony payments and other debts, embarked for New York in search of more stable sources of income. In March 1923, Condé Nast hired him as chief photographer for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* at the then extraordinary sum of \$35,000 a year.

On assignment for *Vogue* in France in late 1923, Steichen made the fateful decision to destroy all his paintings in Voulangis. Back in New York, he soon slashed and threw out the paintings he had stored there as well. Fortunately, however, by that time Steichen had already given *Le Tournesol* to his friend, the noted artist and furniture and interior designer, François Jourdain. Executed in a startling, hard-edged modernist style, it is the only finished canvas of its kind to survive from this volatile period in Steichen's personal and creative life.

Steichen recalled his time in Voulangis following the trauma of the war as "three of the most productive years of my life."[2] The variety and depth of the interests that animate *Le Tournesol* confirm this. Exploring the sunflowers he grew in his garden with his camera and with his brush, Steichen, with "deep, earnest soul-searching," pursued "a feeling that, perhaps, in the field of art, there might be some way of making an affirmative contribution to life."[3] His goal was nothing less than understanding the relation of nature to art:

I set out to try to understand nature's discipline. I decided to make a study of the ratio of plant growth and structure. . . . I found some form of the spiral in the most succulent plants and in certain flowers,

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particularly in the seed pods of the sunflower, of which I had made so many photographic studies. I decided there must be a relationship between all these things and what had been known for a long time as the Golden Section, or Golden Measure: the proportion of the extreme and mean ratio.[4]

Perhaps the most vivid expression of Steichen's ambition to synthesize horticulture, photography, and painting is the circular burst of yellow in *Le Tournesol* that simultaneously evokes the sun, the sunflower, and flash photography.

In addition to Steichen's many photographs of sunflowers, there are at least three works, all in the National Gallery of Art collection, that are directly related to Le Tournesol: a pencil sketch [fig. 1], a tempera and oil study on canvas [fig. 2], and a small tempera on paperboard [fig. 3].[5]The pencil sketch shows Steichen exploring the shifting contours and the expanding and contracting volumes suggested to him by the essentially female vase form. The tempera-and-oil study contains recognizable leaves—the only explicit plant imagery found in any of the sunflower works. These are in turn set against a backdrop of rectangular forms that overlap and cut across each other in ambiguous ways. In this case, Steichen appears to have intentionally represented the iconic, swelling form of the vase not by modeling it in tempera, but instead by leaving the relevant portion of the ground of the painting untouched, allowing negative space to take on positive form.[6] Finally, the small tempera on paperboard, Rabbit, shares the two long-ear forms that protrude from the top of the circle in Study for Le Tournesol. However, in this instance its rectangles are more rationally divided and symmetrically arranged in contrast to the curving, stylized shapes of the vase and sunflower. The scale and medium of Rabbit, as well as its metamorphic qualities, are further related to Steichen's contemporary illustrations for an unrealized children's book about an imaginary land inhabited by fanciful creatures called Oochens. Like Le Tournesol, the Oochens' stark geometries were also inspired by the artist's fascination with the Golden Section.[7]

Le Tournesol's vibrant color, sharp lines, pristine forms, and carefully calibrated, dynamic design place Steichen among the vanguard of American artists, most notably Charles Sheeler (American, 1883 - 1965), Georgia O'Keeffe (American, 1887 - 1986), and Charles Demuth (American, 1883 - 1935), who practiced the modernist style of the 1920s that would come to be known as precisionism. Le Tournesol also

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reflects Steichen's firsthand knowledge of contemporary developments in European art and the emphasis on machine aesthetics in the work of painters such as Fernand Léger (French, 1881 - 1955)r and Francis Picabia (French, 1879 - 1953). Steichen was, moreover, personally and directly inspired by the sculptures of his close friend, the Romanian artist Constantin Brancusi (Romanian, 1876 - 1957). Steichen had acquired and installed Brancusi's magnificent bronze *Maiastra* [fig. 4] in his garden at Voulangis in 1913, the year before World War I erupted in Europe.[8] Perhaps in an attempt to resurrect the brighter outlook of the prewar era, in *Le Tournesol* Steichen has skillfully translated the language of sculpture into the idiom of painting with the golden patina, glowing polished surface, and ovoid body of Brancusi's bronze bird becoming the brilliant color, radiating light, and expanding shapes of Steichen's painted vase and sunflower.

Le Tournesol presents art historians with the unusual and puzzling case of a prominent painter creating what is arguably his most original and significant achievement at the very moment that he decided to forego painting for photography. Because Steichen destroyed so many of his canvases and stopped painting soon after completing Le Tournesol, this remarkable work, instead of clearly initiating a new path in Steichen's painting career, heralds its demise. Addressing this ambivalent ending, in 1929 Sandburg observed: "So now he could be surer of himself when saying, 'I'm through with painting'—though he knew the Oochuns [sic] might be laughing at him."[9]

Charles Brock

September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**





fig. 2 Edward Steichen, Study for "Le Tournesol (The Sunflower)", c. 1920, tempera and oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Joanna T. Steichen

fig. 1 Edward Steichen, Untitled (Preliminary Study for "Le Tournesol"), c. 1920, graphite on paper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Francesca Calderone-Steichen

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**fig. 3** Edward Steichen, *Rabbit (Le Tournesol)*, c. 1920, tempera, metallic paint, and graphite on paperboard, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Joanna T. Steichen



**fig. 4** Constantin Brancusi, *Maiastra*, 1911, bronze on limestone base, Tate Gallery, London. Image: Tate, London / Art Resource, NY

#### **NOTES**

[1] The most salient accounts are: Carl Sandburg, *Steichen: The Photographer* (New York, 1929), 36–45; Edward Steichen, *A Life in Photography* (New York, 1963), n. p.; Anne Cohen DePietro, "The Paintings of Eduard Steichen,"

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- [2] Edward Steichen, A Life in Photography (New York, 1963), n. p.
- [3] Edward Steichen, A Life in Photography (New York, 1963), n. p.
- [4] Edward Steichen, A Life in Photography (New York, 1963), n. p.
- [5] Among the series Sunflowers from Seed to Seed, executed by Steichen from 1920 to 1961, the work most directly related to Le Tournesol is Sunflower in a White Vase. The image is reproduced in Joanna Steichen, Steichen's Legacy: Photographs, 1895–1973 (New York, 2000), pl. 304.
- [6] Steichen's intent is not entirely clear. He may also have been holding the ground in reserve to apply metallic leaf or a metallic paint of some kind, media he had used in other works.
- [7] The fifteen Oochens are all owned by the National Gallery of Art: Mushton Shlushley, the Lyric Poet and Aestheticurean, The Pup-Who-Sacrificed-a-Piece-of-His-Head-So-He'd-Have-a-Tail-to-Wag, Madame X and Johnny Marine, The Pink-Faced Politician, Khor, the President of the Oochen Republic, Thinkrates, the Philosopher, Khor, in His House on Top of the World, The Colossal Deep Sea Ludicrocerous, The Cinnamon Bun B'Ar Stalking the Dish of Fruit Bush, The Radio Gull, The Lugubrious Mysterious Midnight Hour Phantom Green Cheese Moon, The Peeping Gagaboo, The Pie-Faced Squilk and Her Pink-Nosed Neighbor, The-Duck, and The Golden Meadowlark.
- [8] On the Brancusi *Maiastra* installed at Voulangis, see Ronald Alley, Catalogue of the Tate Gallery's Collection of Modern Art Other Than Works by British Artists (London, 1981), 71–73.
- [9] Carl Sandburg, Steichen: The Photographer (New York, 1929), 45.

### TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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The painting is executed on a plain-weave, light-weight, pre-primed linen that is still attached to the original six-member, keyable stretcher, and therefore the work is still at its original dimensions. A good amount of this canvas is wrapped around to the back of the stretcher and stapled. The support is unlined, but there are seven small, thin, linen patches glued to the reverse with animal glue to support small tears and punctures. The paint is applied in a geometric pattern laid out by a precise pencil drawing; the pencil lines are visible in some places at the edges of these shapes. Infrared examination shows the full extent of this drawing.[1] The paint within these lines is of a more or less uniform medium thickness that is very opaque. However, the artist's brushstrokes within the solid color passages still create some nuance, particularly in the alizarin shape in the lower left. The painting appears to be executed in both oil and tempera media, but no analysis has been done. According to the Gallery's conservation files, the painting was treated in 1985. The conservation report for this treatment states that distortions in the canvas were pressed out and tears were repaired. Because there was a considerable amount of very fragile lifting and flaking paint, the work was treated again in 2002. In this treatment, the flaking paint was consolidated, the painting was cleaned of a good deal of overpaint, and losses were filled and inpainted. The original strip frame applied by the artist received a similar treatment at this time. Although the painting was well conserved in this later treatment, some light scuffs and other marks are still visible on the surface. These are likely the result of the poor storage conditions that led to the distortions removed during the 1985 treatment. There is no varnish coating on the painting.

#### **TECHNICAL NOTES**

[1] The infrared examination was conducted using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera fitted with an H astronomy filter.

#### **PROVENANCE**

Gift c. 1920/1922 from the artist to François Jourdain [1876-1958], France; by descent in his family; acquired 1985 by (Robert Miller Gallery, New York);[1] purchased 18 May 1999 by NGA.

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[1] Provenance provided by Robert Miller.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1922 Salon d'Automne, Paris, 1922, no. 2163, as Tournesol.

1988 From Tonalism to Modernism: The Paintings of Eduard J. Steichen, Federal Reserve System, Washington, D.C., 1988, no. 34, repro., as Le Tournesol.

1999 The American Century: Art and Culture, 1900-2000. Part I, 1900-1950, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1999, not in catalogue.

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Kay Bell Reynal, *Max Weber*, 1952, photograph, [Photographs of artists taken by Kay Bell Reynal], 1952, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

# Weber, Max American, born Poland, 1881 - 1961

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Max Weber was born in Bialystok, Russia (now Poland), the son of a poor Jewish tailor. He emigrated to the United States with his family in 1891 and settled in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. After graduating from the Pratt Institute, where he had studied under Arthur Wesley Dow (American, 1857 - 1922), Weber taught art at public schools in Lynchburg, Virginia, and Duluth, Minnesota. In 1905 Weber went to Paris, where he first studied at traditional ateliers such as the Académie Julian, the Académie Colarossi, and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. He soon gravitated toward avant-garde circles, however, studying under Henri Matisse (French, 1869 - 1954) in 1907, and becoming a close friend of Henri Rousseau (French, 1844 - 1910). Weber was particularly impressed by the work of Paul Cézanne (French, 1839 - 1906) on view at the Salon d'Automne in 1906 and 1907 and by the nonwestern art that he saw in ethnographic collections. He associated with influential figures in the cubist movement such as Guillaume Apollinaire (French, 1880 - 1918), Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881 - 1973), and Robert Delaunay (French, 1885 - 1941).

Upon his return to New York in 1909, Weber conveyed his firsthand knowledge of the Parisian avant-garde to the burgeoning circle of American modernists gathering around Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864 - 1946). After exhibiting at Stieglitz's 291 gallery in 1910 and staging his first solo exhibition there in 1911,

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Weber and Stieglitz parted ways. A major exhibition of his work was held at the Newark Museum of Art, New Jersey, in 1913. Although he declined to participate in the 1913 Armory Show, he did have some works in the first exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917. Weber taught art history at the Clarence White School of Photography in New York from 1914 to 1918, and art at the Art Students League of New York from 1920 to 1921, and 1925 to 1927. In addition to painting, he experimented with abstract sculpture and was the author of *Cubist Poems* (1913), *Essays on Art* (1916), and *Primitives* (1926).

Around 1920 Weber abandoned cubist abstraction and began to paint in a more representational style that was influenced by German expressionism and fauvism. In 1924 the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris gave him a retrospective exhibition, and in 1929 he was included in *Paintings by Nineteen Living Americans* at the Museum of Modern Art, which also gave him a retrospective the following year. In the 1930s he painted mostly Old Testament subjects and scenes from Jewish life that harkened back to his upbringing in Bialystok. Solo shows of his work were held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1949, the Jewish Museum in 1956, and the Newark Museum of Art in 1959. He died in 1961 in Great Neck, New York, where he had lived since 1929.

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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Weber, Max 524





Max Weber American, born Poland, 1881 - 1961

# Rush Hour, New York

1915

oil on canvas

overall:  $92 \times 76.9$  cm ( $36 \cdot 1/4 \times 30 \cdot 1/4$  in.) framed: 111.7 x 95.9 cm ( $44 \times 37 \cdot 3/4$  in.) Inscription: lower right: MAX WEBER 1915 Gift of the Avalon Foundation 1970.6.1

#### **ENTRY**

Aptly described by Alfred Barr, the scholar and first director of the Museum of Modern Art, as a "kinetograph of the flickering shutters of speed through subways and under skyscrapers,"[1] Rush Hour, New York is arguably the most important of Max Weber's early modernist works. The painting combines the shallow, fragmented spaces of cubism with the rhythmic, rapid-fire forms of futurism to capture New York City's frenetic pace and dynamism.[2] New York's new mass transit systems, the elevated railways (or "els") and subways, were among the most visible products of the new urban age. Such a subject was ideally suited to the new visual languages of modernism that Weber learned about during his earlier encounters with Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881 - 1973) and the circle of artists who gathered around Gertrude Stein in Paris in the first decade of the 20th century.

Weber had previously dealt with the theme of urban transportation in *New York* [fig. 1], in which he employed undulating serpentine forms to indicate the paths of elevated trains through lower Manhattan's skyscrapers and over the Brooklyn Bridge. In 1915, in addition to *Rush Hour*, he also painted *Grand Central Terminal* [fig. 2], which has been interpreted as "rendering in non-representational terms a consciousness of the assault on the body and senses that the daily rush of the crowds has on the urban traveler."[3] The term "rush hour" was relatively new in 1915 and almost exclusively associated with New York City. According to historian of slang Irving Lewis Allen, it had been "coined by 1890 to denote the new urban phenomenon of several hundred thousand workers and shoppers crushing onto mass transit to go to and from the center each weekday morning and evening."[4] One of the expression's earliest appearances was in the caption to an illustration

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by T. de Thulstrup in *Harper's Weekly* on February 8, 1890 [fig. 3]: "A Station Scene in the 'Rush' Hour of the Manhattan Elevated Railroad." The els became an integral part of New York's cityscape and appear in many paintings of the period, such as *John Sloan's The City from Greenwich Village*.

According to Weber's early biographer Holger Cahill, the images that appear in the artist's New York paintings "are not simply fantasies, but are made up of many visual contacts with actual scenes."[5] That being said, Rush Hour more nearly approaches total abstraction than most contemporary European cubist paintings, and individual forms are extremely difficult to recognize. No trains are visible, and, unlike New York, there is no indication of their routes. The composition is devoid of human presence. It is uncertain whether the viewer is looking at the entrance to a subway station, the underground station itself, an elevated train, or some combination of all three. Given the similarity of the architectural forms in lower center of the painting to those in Grand Central Terminal, the first option is perhaps the most plausible. Regardless, Weber's primary aim was not to record objective details but rather to give form to the dynamism and velocity generated by a machine whose immense power had transformed and energized the urban setting. He dispensed with any indication of a specific time, so there is no sense of whether this is a morning or evening rush hour. Curvilinear forms, zigzags, jagged angles, and radiating force-lines explode and intersect in multiple directions, expressing both the subway's movements and its dematerializing effect on the environment. As one writer has described it, "The station explodes with the thunder of the passing machine."[6]

Art historians have unanimously praised the vividness with which Weber's *Rush Hour* captures the modern urban environment's essence. Lloyd Goodrich considered it the "most forceful" of the artist's New York City paintings, and noted that "the thrusting diagonals and energetic play of lines expressed the turmoil of rush hour, while the representation of elements suggested the city's mechanical, multitudinous character."[7] The art historian Robert Rosenblum has noted how "the spectator is thrust into the most frenetic confusion of the city's daily peaks of mechanical and human activity. Rolling wheels, skyscrapers, station platforms are fragmented and recomposed as the whining, metallic engine of a vast urban machine; and, in particular, the sensation of rushing motion in all directions is suggested by the repetitive sequences of spiky, angular patterns that appear to roar past the viewer like an express train."[8] Viewing *Rush Hour* as an image of

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urban transportation, the scholar Dominic Ricciotti called the painting "a paradigm of locomotion; in choosing the twice daily rush through the city, the artist dramatized those peak periods when the urban machine churned most forcefully. *Rush Hour* embodied the futurist principle of 'universal dynamism'—that the world is continually in a state of flux."[9]

Unlike John Marin (American, 1870 - 1953) and Joseph Stella (American, 1877 -1946), who had direct contact with futurist artists in Europe, Weber for the most part had to assimilate the style from secondhand sources, such as photographs, newspaper articles, and descriptions by other artists.[10] He was certainly familiar with Marcel Duchamp's mechanomorphic Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2 [fig. 4], but rather than strictly confining himself to representing physical motion, he sought a more comprehensive personification of the urban environment transformed by new modes of mass transportation. Whereas Duchamp's robotic figure possesses a somewhat sinister, enigmatic quality, Weber's attitude toward the machine is less troubling. His highly individualistic form of futurism lacks the more aggressive violence and anarchism characteristic of the movement's Italian progenitors. In this work, he provides us with an image of the early 20th-century New York rush hour as a dynamic, enthralling, and awe-inspiring experience. Rush Hour, New York is largely devoid of the petty annoyances and frustrations that continue to bedevil commuters in cities all over the world. As Allen put it, Weber "abstracts the human tumult and exposes a new dimension of its meaning."[11]

Robert Torchia

September 29, 2016

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### **COMPARATIVE FIGURES**



fig. 1 Max Weber, New York, 1913, oil on canvas, private collection. Image courtesy Guggenheim, Asher Associates



fig. 2 Max Weber, Grand Central Terminal, 1915, oil on canvas, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid. www.museothyssen.org

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**fig. 3** T. de Thulstrup, "A Station Scene in the 'Rush' House of the Manhattan Elevated Railroad," from *Harper's Weekly* 34, no. 1729 (February 8, 1890), Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts



**fig. 4** Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No.* 2, 1912, oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection 1950-134-59. © 2016 Succession Marcel Duchamp / ADAGP, Paris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### **NOTES**

- [1] Alfred H. Barr, *Max Weber Retrospective Exhibition, 1907–1930* (New York, 1930), 11.
- [2] The other paintings are *New York at Night* (The Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, The University of Texas at Austin), *New York Department Store*

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- (Detroit Institute of Arts), and Chinese Restaurant (Whitney Museum of American Art, NY).
- [3] Dominic Ricciotti, "The Revolution in Urban Transport: Max Weber and Italian Futurism," American Art Journal 16 (1984): 55.
- [4] Irving Lewis Allen, The City in Slang: New York Life and Popular Speech (New York, 1995), 91.
- [5] Holger Cahill, Max Weber (New York, 1930), 37. In this same vein, Lloyd Goodrich, Max Weber (New York, 1949), 30, noted: "although in certain works Weber like Delaunay and Kandinsky approached closer to pure abstraction than did the cubists, even his most abstract works were always related to specific themes. Never purely formal exercises in plastic values, they were primarily expressionistic."
- [6] Dominic Ricciotti, "City Railways/Modernist Visions," in Susan Danly and Leo Marx, The Railroad in American Art: Representations of Technological Change (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 132.
- [7] Lloyd Goodrich, Max Weber (New York, 1949), 28–30.
- [8] Robert Rosenblum, Cubism and Twentieth-Century Art (New York, 1960), 221-222; quoted in Alfred Werner, Max Weber (New York, 1975), 50.
- [9] Dominic Ricciotti, "City Railways/Modernist Visions," in Susan Danly and Leo Marx, The Railroad in American Art: Representations of Technological Change (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 132; quoted in Percy North, Max Weber: The Cubist Decade, 1910-1920 (Atlanta, GA, 1991), 37.
- [10] For a discussion of these sources, see John O. Hand, "Futurism in America," Art Journal 41 (Winter 1981): 337-342.
- [11] Irving Lewis Allen, The City in Slang: New York Life and Popular Speech (New York, 1995), 90.

#### **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The pre-primed, finely woven linen support remains unlined and mounted on its original stretcher. The smooth, white priming remains exposed in many areas, and thus functions as an integral part of the design. The artist applied oil paint rather thinly, and extensive charcoal underdrawing is visible through much of the translucent paint film. The painting is in very good condition. The surface is coated with a moderately thick layer of natural resin varnish that has discolored.

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#### **PROVENANCE**

The artist [1881-1961]; his estate; purchased 1970 through (Bernard Danenberg Galleries, Inc., New York) by NGA.

#### **EXHIBITION HISTORY**

1930 Max Weber Retrospective, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1930, no. 33.

1945 Max Weber, Paul Rosenberg Gallery, New York, 1945.

1949 Max Weber: Retrospective Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 1949, no. 18, repro.

1951 Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1951, no. 108, repro.

1959 Max Weber: Retrospective Exhibition, The Newark Museum, 1959, no. 20.

1965 Roots of Abstract Art in America, 1910-1930, National Collection of Fine Arts (now National Museum of American Art), Washington, D.C., 1965-1966, no. 187.

1965 Six decades of American Art, The Leicester Galleries, London, 1965, no. 91.

1970 The Cubist Epoch, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1970-1971, no. 320, pl. 197.

1973 City and Machine Between the Wars: 1914-1945, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida; Loch Haven Art Center, Orlando; Cummer Gallery of Art, Jacksonville, 1973-1974, no. 15.

1976 The Golden Door: Artist-Immigrants of America, 1876-1976, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., 1976, no. 3, repro.

1977 Paris - New York, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, 1977, unnumbered catalogue.

1980 La Pintura de Los Estados Unidos de Museos de la Ciudad de Washington, Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City, 1980-1981, no. 41, color repro.

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1981 Visions of New York City: American Paintings, Drawings and Prints of the 20th Century, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, 1981, no. 88, repro.

1982 American Masters of the Twentieth Century, Oklahoma Art Center, Oklahoma City; Terra Museum of American Art, Evanston, Illinois, 1982, no. 53, repro. (shown only in Oklahoma City).

1982 Max Weber: American Modern, Jewish Museum, New York; Norton Gallery and School of Art, West Palm Beach; McNay Art Institute, San Antonio; Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, 1982-1983, no. 44, repro. (shown only in West Palm Beach and Omaha in 1983).

1986 Futurismo e Futurismi, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 1986, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

1991 Max Weber: The Cubist Decade, 1910-1920, High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo; Brooklyn Museum, 1991-1993, no. 57, repro.

1996 To Be Modern: American Encounters with Cezanne and Company, Museum of American Art of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1996, unnumbered catalogue.

2000 Max Weber's Modern Vision: Selections from the National Gallery of Art and Related Collections, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2000, brochure.

2000 Tempus Fugit: Time Flies, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, 2000, fig. I.31.

2002 Debating American Modernism: Stieglitz, Duchamp, and the New York Avant-Garde, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; Des Moines Art Center; Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago, 2003, no. 15, repro.

2007 Art in America: 300 Years of Innovation, National Art Museum of China, Beijing; Shanghai Museum; The State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow; Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, 2007-2008, unnumbered catalogue, repro.

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*Identity*. Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2008: 458, 460, color fig. 14.12, color frontispiece.

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