



Mary Cassatt and the
American Impressionists - 1976

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A Loan Exhibition

*Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary
of Mary Cassatt's Death and the
American Bicentennial Celebration*

July 4 - August 8, 1976

*Dixon Gallery and Gardens
Memphis, Tennessee*

INTRODUCTION

Fifty years ago, Mary Cassatt, a member of the French Impressionists, and the major figure of the American impressionistic movement, died in her summer home, Chateau Beaufresne at Mesnil-Theribus, Oise.

Born in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, on May 22, 1844, Mary Cassatt moved with her parents to Philadelphia in 1858. She enrolled as a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and studied there from 1861-1865. After finishing the Academy and disappointed with its methods of teaching, Mary Cassatt visited Europe in 1866-67, and again in 1868-70, to study the works in European museums, primarily in France.

At the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War she returned to America, 1870-71. The following year she left for Parma, Italy, to study Correggio and Parmigianino and also devoted considerable time to studying graphic techniques with Carlo Raimondi. Her painting, *On the Balcony During the Carnival*, 1872, was accepted at the Paris Salon in 1872 and the following year, *Torero and Young Girl*, was accepted by the Salon; these works were painted while she studied in Seville.

After successful participation at the three Paris Salon exhibitions for three successive years and persuaded by her family, Mary Cassatt entered the studio of Charles Chaplin but soon left because of inadequate and old fashioned teaching methods.

The year 1877 was a very important one for her because Degas invited her to join "The Independents" which marked her life-long association with Degas as friend, advisor and the most influential source in the development of her style.

Although she enjoyed a very successful artistic career in France, Cassatt did not abandon her American ties and she sent works to be exhibited in America, namely in 1874, to the National Academy of Design in New York and in 1879 to the Society of American Artists' exhibition. This year also marks her first participation in an Impressionist exhibition which was the Fourth Impressionist exhibition to be held. In 1880, Mary Cassatt began to paint the subjects which were to play an important role in her artistic *oeuvre*, namely studies of mother and child (Nos. 2-4, 6-7). This and the next decade were the periods when her most mature and successful work was produced.

In 1883, three Cassatt works were exhibited at Dowdeswell's in London in an exhibition of the Impressionists and three years later Durand-Ruel organized a very successful Impressionistic exhibition in New York also including three of Cassatt's works.

A great Japanese print exhibition was held in April of 1890, at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, which Mary Cassatt visited with Degas and several other friends. She was so impressed with the exhibition that she set up an etching press and worked on ten color aquatints which were exhibited the next year in a one-woman show at the Galerie Durand-Ruel in Paris.

A second one-woman exhibition in 1893, in Paris, was followed by her first solo exhibition in New York at the Durand-Ruel Gallery which included twenty-six oils, nine pastels, one gouache, and eighteen prints.

Cassatt's return to America, 1898-99, for the first time since her departure in 1872, brought her back to many relatives and friends, but close ties no longer existed due to the death of her parents and because she believed that the artist must "work in a fixed environment and not change it very often." Many charming portraits were executed during this short visit. After her return to Paris she diverted some of her attention from her work in the effort to locate some great works of art for her friends, Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, whom she traveled with, beginning in 1901, to Italy and Spain. She was successful in finding many fine works, particularly by Goya and El Greco.

In 1902, she rejected the Lippincott Prize awarded to her at the 73rd Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy, advising the awarding committee that "as a member of the 'Independents' who refused to be judged and awarded for their work, it is impossible for me to accept what has been flatteringly offered to me."

Another exhibition of her work at Durand-Ruel in New York, in 1903, was followed a year later by a short trip to America where she was guest of honor at the Art Institute of Chicago.

In 1908-09, Mary Cassatt visited America for the last time and upon her return to France she went with her brother, Gardner, and his family, on a trip to Egypt, where Gardner became seriously ill and died after the return to Paris in 1911. The result of this disaster was her nervous and physical breakdown which prevented her from working for over a year. Aside from depression, she suffered from diabetes and began to lose her eyesight. At this time she worked primarily in pastel and in 1914 produced her last works in this medium.

World War I forced her to move to Paris and Grasse on the Riviera and after the death of Degas in 1917, whose funeral she was able to attend, she became nearly blind. Cataract operations on both eyes were unable to save her eyesight. Mary Cassatt died at Chateau Beaufresne on June 14, 1926, leaving all of her belongings to her servant-companion, Mathilde, who had served her for over forty years.

The importance of Mary Cassatt in the history of American painting can hardly be overestimated. The new palette, with emphasis on the impressionistic approach, was a refreshing innovation but her allegiance to the figure was in the best American tradition. Her promotion of the French Impressionist artists was fundamental in building outstanding collections of that period in this country. Her assistance and advice to the Havemeyers resulted in their obtaining a magnificent collection which was bequested by Mrs. Havemeyer to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Mary Cassatt considered Courbet and Manet her "masters" but Degas was the one who had the most profound influence on her art, particularly since both of them emphasized figural compositions. Other American Impressionists, particularly members of The Ten American Painters, who are included in this exhibition, J. Alden Weir, John Henry Twachtman, Childe Hassam and later, William Merritt Chase, were influenced by Monet and other landscape painters of the French Impressionist movement.

M. M.

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

The Decker Gallery, The Maryland Institute, College of Art,
Baltimore, Maryland

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts

The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York

Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis, Tennessee

Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, Tennessee

M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., New York, New York

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York

Wildenstein & Co., Inc., New York, New York

The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio

Anonymous Lender

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Catalogue

1.

MARY CASSATT (1844-1926)

The Visitor (also called *Woman in Profile* and *Portrait de femme de profil*) c. 1880

Oil on canvas, 28x22¾ inches

Signed upper left: *Mary Cassatt*

Lent by the Dixon Gallery and Gardens

This painting was executed shortly after Degas invited Mary Cassatt to exhibit with the Impressionists in 1879, the year when the group dropped the word "Impressionists" and agreed to call themselves "Independent Artists."

The inspiration for this portrait, sitter unidentified, came from Degas and Renoir, particularly from Degas, whose influence played an important role in the development of Mary Cassatt's style. The prototype for this composition is quite an obvious one, the opera scene. The face in the portrait is in sharper focus than the remainder of the painting. The loose brushstrokes in these areas create the sensation of being out-of-focus and a flatness in space composition, but at the same time emphasize the Impressionists' objective statement and concern for color and light.

Collections: Dikran G. Kelekian, 1922; Private Collection, France; Durand-Ruel Inc., New York; Private Collection, France; Howard Young, U.S.A.; Arthur Tooth & Sons, Ltd., London, 1974.

Exhibitions: *Mary Cassatt* Exhibition, Wildenstein & Co., New York, October 29-December 6, 1947, no. 6.

References: Kelekian Sale (cat. 135); New York, January 31, 1922; M. & Ph. Rheims Sale, Paris, November 29, 1962; A. D. Breeskin, *Mary Cassatt—A Catalogue Raisonné of the Oils, Pastels, Watercolours and Drawings*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1970, p. 58, no. 83; M. Milkovich, *Paintings and Sculpture*, Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, Tennessee, 1976, no. 5.

M. M.



2.

MARY CASSATT (1844–1926)

Mother and Boy (also called *The Oval Mirror* and *The Florentine Madonna*), 1901

Oil on canvas, 32 $\frac{1}{8}$ x25 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches

Signed lower left: *Mary Cassatt*

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929

After the turn of the century, two changes appear in the work of Mary Cassatt: her paintings take on a softer quality, and the children used as models are generally older. Both changes are evident in *Mother and Boy*, a painting from 1901. Jules, the young boy in an almost classical stance, was used as a model in several of Cassatt's compositions. In this painting, he becomes part of one of Cassatt's most typical scenes—a mother caring for her child. When Degas first saw the painting, he praised it as "the greatest painting of the century." In a later reaction he added a note of criticism: "It has all your qualities and all your faults—it is the infant Jesus and his English nurse."

Though perhaps somewhat softened, the surface patterning of the painting reveals Cassatt's indebtedness to the Japanese print. She arranges forms to create an intimate setting into which the viewer is drawn. *Mother and Boy* reflects Cassatt's control over subject and composition, through which she achieves her uniquely personal style.

Collections: From the artist to Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, 1929.

Exhibitions: St. Botolph's Club, Boston, 1909 no. 17; M. Knoedler & Co., New York, *Masterpieces by Old and Modern Painters* no. 46, 1915; Art Institute of Chicago, 1926; Pennsylvania Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 1927 no. 20; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Havemeyer Collection* no. 2, 1930; Society of the Four Arts, Palm Beach, 1959; Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1965.

References: A. D. Breeskin, *Mary Cassatt, A Catalogue Raisonné of the Oils, Pastels, Watercolors and Drawings*, Washington, D. C., 1970, pp. 17, 145, no. 338; R. J. Boyle, *American Impressionism*, Boston, 1974, pp. 110–11.

S. D. C.



3.

MARY CASSATT (1844-1926)

Baby Bill in Cap and Shift, Held by His Nurse, c. 1890

Pastel on paper, 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ x15 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches

Signed lower left: *Mary Cassatt*

Lent anonymously

Mary Cassatt began her studies of mothers and children in 1880. She depicted the relationship between mother and child without undue sentimentality, with a directness no doubt influenced by the work and advice of Degas. In the works of upper class subjects, where the child was often taken care of by a nursemaid instead of by the mother, she did not hesitate to present a more detached relationship whereas when the subject was of a woman who cared for the child without servants, the rendering is expressive of the closer relationship.

In *Baby Bill in Cap and Shift, Held by His Nurse*, the tenderness of the nurse and trust of the child are depicted with straightforwardness. This vibrant work is in pastel, a medium revived by Degas, which retains its freshness with the passage of time. The skin tones of the baby are composed of various colors carefully blended to give the realistic appearance of flesh. This effect could have been obtained by blowing steam on the color after it was applied, changing the particles to paste form which could then be blended with various brushes. The skillful blending of the flesh tones of the baby's face provides an interesting contrast with the sketchiness of the face of the nurse and the clothing executed freely in diagonal and vertical strokes of unblended color.

Collections: Private Collection, Paris; Private Collection, U.S.A.

References: A. D. Breeskin, *Mary Cassatt—A Catalogue Raisonné of the Oils, Pastels, Watercolors and Drawings*, Washington, D. C., 1970, p. 96, no. 182.

R. R.



4.

MARY CASSATT (1844-1926)

Maternal Caress, 1891

Color print with dry point, soft ground and aquatint, 14½x10-9/16 inches

Signed lower right: *To Mr. Lucas with my best compliments, Mary Cassatt. Proof printed by The Artist and Levy.*

Lent by The Lucas Collection on indefinite loan from The Maryland Institute of Art.

5.

MARY CASSATT (1844-1926)

The Parrot, 1891

Dry point, 6¾x4-11/16 inches

Signed lower right: *Mary Cassatt, The Parrot*

Lent by The Lucas Collection on indefinite loan from The Maryland Institute of Art.

In 1879, Edgar Degas planned to publish a journal entitled *Le Jour et La Nuit*, for which Mary Cassatt, Camille Pissarro and he were to produce a number of prints. Although the journal was never published, it served to stimulate an interest in graphics which resulted in Miss Cassatt's perfecting the various print processes. Her major objective in producing prints was to perfect her draftsmanship but in so doing she developed into an outstanding graphic artist.

The two color prints illustrated fall into the period A.D. Breeskin terms the full flowering of Miss Cassatt's mature work, 1889-1899. She had been interested in Japanese prints for some time and in 1890, she went with Degas to a Japanese exhibition held at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. She purchased a number of wood-block prints by the Japanese artist, Utamaro and his school and hung them in her Paris home and in her chateau at Mesnil-Theribus. That she studied and learned from these prints is evident in the ten color prints included in her 1891 exhibition at Durand-Ruel Galleries.

Among these color prints was *Maternal Caress* of 1891. This print, executed in dry point, soft-ground and aquatint, is indicative of the manner in which she incorporated elements characteristic of Japanese art into the depiction of subject matter which she well understood. Amusingly, the features of the baby's face in *Maternal Caress* are Japanese with the flat, little face and the very round, small head. The lines of the work, drawn directly on the copper plate in the dry point manner, indicate the sureness of Miss Cassatt's hand. The colors of brown, yellow, lavender and pale grey are used sparsely in the Japanese manner but are of Miss Cassatt's palette.

Also in the 1891 exhibition was the dry point of her maid, Mathilde, holding a parrot. This work from a group of twelve dry points, is one of six studies of young women, the others being works of mothers and children. Mathilde's face is given additional emphasis by the contrasting dark hair and blouse shaded with cross-hatching. The parrot is placed close to the woman's face and is of the same tone and subtle rendering of feature. As is characteristic of her dry point works, other elements in the work are suggested with a few lines, not to distract from the face of the woman and the parrot.

R. R.



6.

MARY CASSATT (1844-1926)

By the Pond, c. 1898

Color print with dry point, and aquatint, 12x16-15/16 inches

Signed lower right: *Mary Cassatt. To Mr. Lucas with sincerest regards.*

Lent by The Lucas Collection on indefinite loan from The Maryland Institute of Art.

7.

MARY CASSATT (1844-1926)

Jeannette and Her Mother Seated on a Sofa, 1901

Dry point, 16-15/16x12 7/8 inches

Signed lower right: *Mary Cassatt No. 30.*

Lent by Brooks Memorial Art Gallery

By the Pond was completed a short while before Miss Cassatt returned for the first time to America since she had left in 1868. The aquatint process has lent itself quite well to producing the various tones for the trees and water. The shading on the faces of the mother and child are quite delicate and the blonde, airy curls of the child in dry point contrast with the very dark, smoothly arranged hair of the mother. This was one of the last color prints Miss Cassatt produced although her dry point prints were of excellent quality until she ceased to work in the medium in 1911.

After 1900, Miss Cassatt used older children for models since they were able to hold a pose for longer periods of time. This was important due to the difficulty she was experiencing with her vision. Among these later works including older children is *Jeannette and Her Mother Seated on a Sofa*, executed in 1901. The mother's and child's faces are highly finished with strong contrasts between the dark hair and features and the sketchiness of the clothing with touches of darker contrasts in the shadowing in creases and on the sleeve of the child's dress. After the first decade of the 1900's, the glare from the metal plates affected her failing eyes so greatly that she was unable to complete any additional prints although she attempted some work. She had completed 220 plates during her lifetime and her graphic works stand among the greatest produced, attesting to her ability to accept the best elements from the works she studied and to incorporate them into a personal style depicting subjects she well understood.

Collections: Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis.

References: *Selections from the American Collections*, Compiled and Edited by J. A. Czestochowski, Memphis, 1975, illustrated (no page given).

R. R.



8.

WILLIAM MERRITT CHASE (1849-1916)

Near the Beach, Shinnecock, 1895

Oil on canvas, 30x48 inches

Signed lower left: Wm M. Chase

Lent by The Toledo Museum of Art

Few American painters have been as energetic as William Merritt Chase. In addition to being an extraordinarily prolific painter, he was also an insatiable traveler, a flamboyant Bohemian and one of our most influential teachers. In his art, what immediately impresses us is his fluent versatility within a wide range of moods, styles and subjects. He was able to paint still lifes, portraits, interiors, and landscapes all with the same verve and exuberance.

Born in 1849 in Williamsburg, Indiana, the son of a grocer, Chase, like so many American artists, fled his prosaic origins to refine and develop his talent in Europe. He attended the Royal Academy in Munich, and quickly mastered the bravado brushwork, the dark tonalities and the painterly realism of that school. Later on he was to lighten his palette in response to the work of the Impressionists, but the technical virtuosity he learned in Munich was to remain with him throughout his career. Upon his return to the United States in 1878 Chase set up his famous Tenth Street studio in New York, a favorite gathering place for artists, whose decor included Japanese screens, statuary, stuffed flamingoes, a cockatoo, and a black servant in full Moorish costume. While in New York Chase organized the then radical Society of American Artists, taught at the Art Students' League, and became a member of the Ten American Painters, a society of American Impressionists whose members included Twachtman, Weir, Tarbell, and Hassam.

Chase was not exclusively, nor even primarily, an Impressionist painter. Yet, when he moved to Shinnecock, Long Island, he fell in love with the wide skies and golden moors of this area and began to produce a series of Impressionist landscapes which are as brilliant and skillful as the best of Sisley's. *Near the Beach* is one of the landscapes painted during this time. This sun-flooded vista of field and sky shows Chase at the height of his romance with Impressionism. His brushstrokes are lighter than usual, his colors more luminous, and his attention to light more careful. And yet, there is something about this landscape which is definitively American: it has a crisp clarity of vision which is in sharp contrast to the hazy, atmospheric quality of a Monet or a Renoir. This may be the influence of the continuing tradition of realism in American painting, but it may also be a matter of the quality of American light, which is stronger, clearer, and more consistent than European light.

Exhibitions: Chase Centennial Exhibition, John Herron Art Institute, Indianapolis, 1949, no. 36; William Merritt Chase, A Retrospective Exhibition, The Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, New York, 1957, p. 66, no. 50; *The Impressionist Mood in American Painting*, The American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, 1959, no. 33; *Art of the United States: 1670-1966*, Whitney Museum, New York, September 28-November 27, 1966, no. 46.

References: "A Chase Landscape," *Toledo Museum News*, No. 53, (n.d.), pp. 672-673; Pierson, W. H. Jr., and Davidson, M., Editors, *Arts of the United States: A Pictorial Survey*, New York, 1960, p. 301, no. 2563; Mastai, M. L. D. "Landscapists of the South Fork: 1," *Connoisseur*, V. 153, No. 618, August 1963, pp. 282-3; Rogers, M. F., "Painting the Particular Place," *Toledo Museum News*, New Series, Vol. 8, No. 2, Summer 1965, p. 30, (also published as handbook); Damigella, A. M., *L'Impressionismo fuori di Francia*, Milano, 1967, (col) Tav. XLI, p. 67; Young, M. S., "From howling wilderness to Queensborough Bridge," *Apollo*, Vol. 86, no. 70, December 1967, p. 501, no. 13; Hoopes, D., *The American Impressionists*, New York, 1972, pp. 44-45.

G. M.



9.

WILLIAM J. GLACKENS (1870-1938)

Woman in Oriental Costume, c. 1923

Oil on canvas, 31x25 inches

Lent by M. Knoedler & Co., Inc.

Aside from the fact that William Glackens was a native of Pennsylvania, as was Mary Cassatt, they also had in common the desire to establish quality collections of European art in America. Glackens, as advisor to Dr. Albert Barnes of Philadelphia, was greatly responsible for his friend's obtaining one of the most important collections of French Impressionist and Post-impressionist paintings in this country.

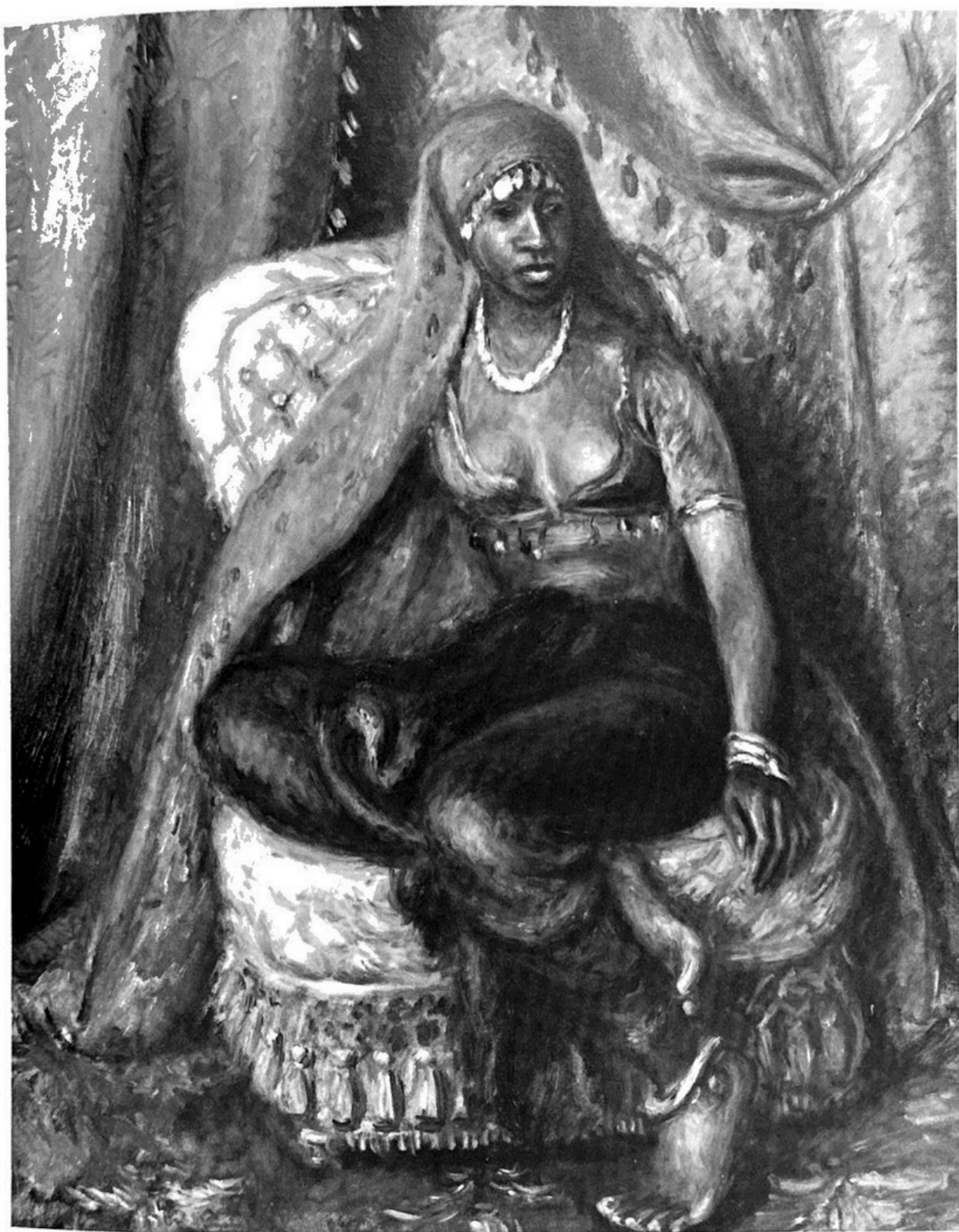
Glackens was born in Philadelphia in 1870 and served the *Philadelphia Record* and the *Press* as an illustrator while attending the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts until 1895. In that year he made his way to France and upon returning to the United States, settled in New York working again as an illustrator for such periodicals as the *New York Herald* and the *New York World*. He was an exhibitor with the "Ashcan" group and "The Eight" who were radical not in execution of their works but in subject matter, scenes from ordinary, urban life. They were referred to after their 1908 exhibit, at the Macbeth Galleries in New York, as the "apostles of ugliness" by members of the prestigious National Academy of Design. Glackens was one of the "Independents" exhibiting in 1910 and was an organizer of the well known Armory Show in 1913.

Glackens' first works reflect the dark tonalities used by his teacher, Robert Henri, but in 1906 he again made a trip to Paris and by 1910, the brighter palette of the Impressionists appeared in his works. As can be seen in *Woman in Oriental Costume*, Glackens was greatly influenced by the work of Renoir and utilized his manner of applying paint in small, feathery brushstrokes. The center of the work is composed of a triangular configuration formed by the draped head and right shoulder painted in hues of red with the bare, left arm forming the right side of the triangle. The red is further intensified by the use of its complimentary color, green, in the harem pants with the center area being softened by the inclusion of the pink, upholstered chair. The touches of yellow gold jewelry against the rich, brown skin, provide a glittering effect as the viewer's eye moves back to the soft folds of the tasseled drapery.

Collections: Estate of the artist; Mr. and Mrs. Ira Glackens (the artist's son and daughter-in-law); private collection, Dallas, Texas.

Exhibitions: *William Glackens in Retrospect*, City Art Museum of St. Louis, November 18-December 31, 1966, no. 59. This exhibition also shown in the National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., February 1-April 2, 1967; and at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, April 25-June 11, 1967; *Recent Acquisitions from the American Painting Department*, M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., New York, December 9, 1975-January 31, 1976; *The American Impressionists*, M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., New York, February 3-March 6, 1976.

R. R.



10.

CHILDE HASSAM (1859-1935)

Haystacks, c. 1883-86

Oil on canvas, 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ x18 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches

Signed lower left: *Childe Hassam*

Lent by Wildenstein & Co., Inc.

Childe Hassam, an American painter, illustrator and graphic artist, was born in 1859. While working for Little Brown and Company publishers as a commercial lithographer and illustrator, he took art lessons at the Boston Art Club and the Lowell Institute. After his first trip abroad, he returned to Europe in 1885 to study at the Academie Julian under Boulanger and Lefebvre. By the time he returned to America in 1889, light and color became his major interests. In 1898, Hassam, John Twachtman and J. Alden Weir withdrew from the Society of American Artists and formed "The Ten American Painters." While exhibiting with "The Ten," he continued to experiment with light, both indoors and out in the city and in his favorite summer retreats of Old Lyme, Conn., Gloucester, Mass. and the New Hampshire seacoast. After his death in 1935, he left his works to the American Academy of Arts and Letters to be gradually sold, the proceeds going towards the purchase of art for American and Canadian museums.

Dated between 1883-86, *Haystacks* was probably painted in Europe. Compared to his Boston period, paintings of the French countryside indicate the dual influences of his academic training and the Impressionists.

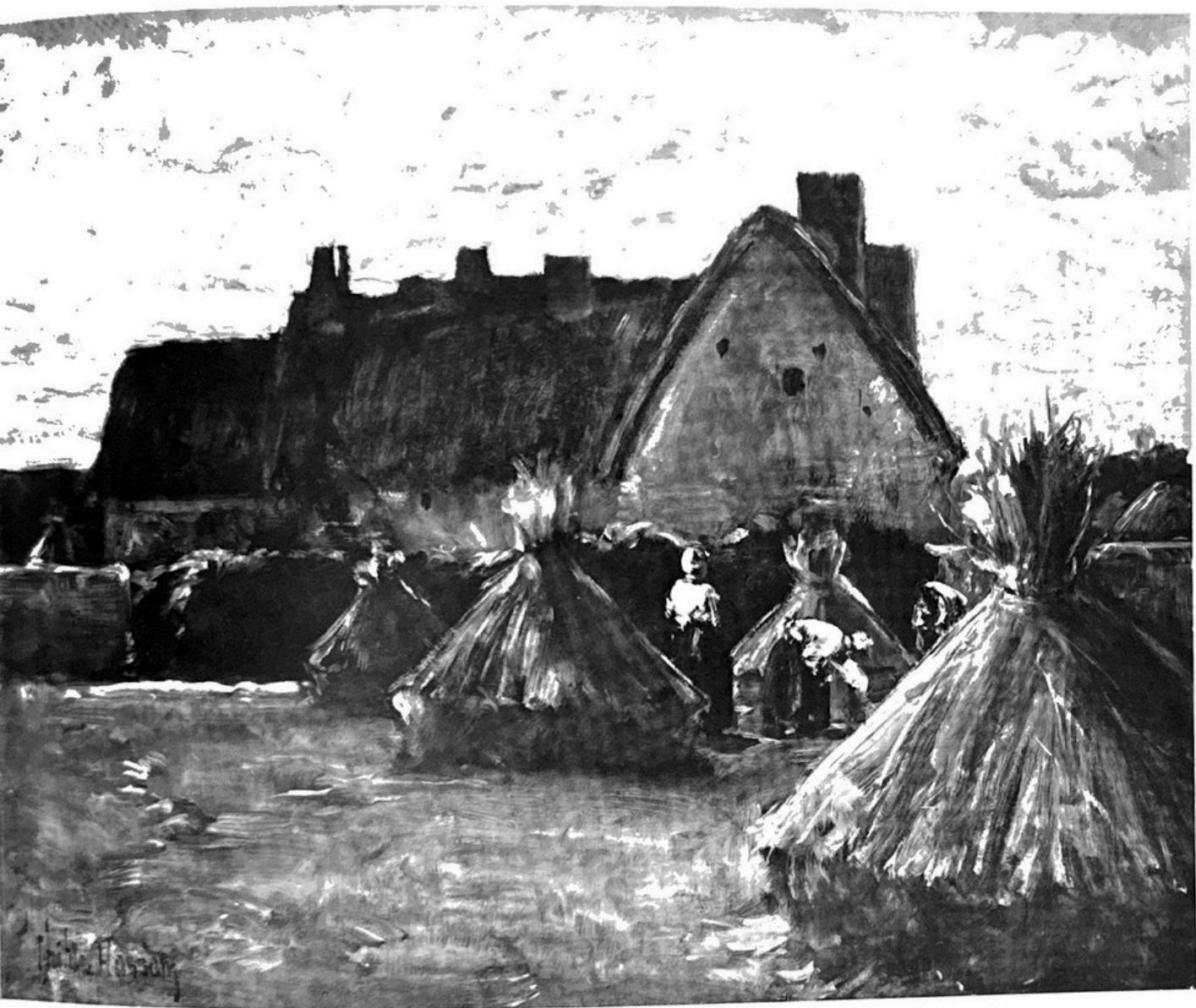
The haystacks theme is not a new one. The American luminist, Martin J. Heade, painted them in the 1860's and Monet was to paint his famous series during the 1890's. Hassam may have been influenced by the Japanese prints, particularly Hiroshige's *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido*, a collection of genre landscapes, which uses the haystack shape to represent the harvested rice.

The *plein air* subject matter indicates an illustrator's interest in a human event within a setting. Unlike Monet's concern for instantaneity, Hassam has incorporated the techniques of Impressionism without submitting to its full development. He rarely dissolves a scene completely in light, the loose but controlled brush revealing a firm drawing below the color strokes. The light is inextricable from the objects it illuminates. The juxtaposition of bright colors achieves a vivid expression of light, an interest that Hassam will develop fully during the next decade.

Collections: Mr. Faulkner, Boston; (willed to his daughters) Mrs. Anny Hayden and Miss Fanny Faulkner, Boston; (willed to) Madame Esther Hayden Stanton, Boston and Nice, France.

Exhibitions: *Childe Hassam*, University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, February 5-March 5, 1972, p. 139, no. 21. This exhibition also held at Santa Barbara, Museum of Art, March 26-April 30, 1972, p. 60.

L. E. P.



11.

MAURICE BRAZIL PRENDERGAST (1859-1924)

The Inlet, 1918

Oil on canvas, 17½x21½ inches

Signed lower right: *Prendergast*

Lent by The Toledo Museum of Art

Maurice Prendergast is one of those fascinating anomalies in the history of American art. He was born in 1859 in St. John's, Newfoundland, but lived for most of his life in Boston. A loner, an idealist, and a thoroughly original painter, he remained virtually unrecognized by the art world until the Corcoran Gallery awarded him their Bronze Medal in 1923 when he was literally on his death bed. Because he so rarely sold a painting, he was forced to make his living building and selling picture frames in his brother's shop.

Prendergast's obscurity during his lifetime can be easily explained when we understand how very far removed he was from the mainstream of American art at the turn of the century. The lyrical Prendergast was never moved by the dark expressionistic realism of Luks, Sloan or Henri; and while he was closer to the Impressionists in mood and sensibility, and certainly borrowed from them his brilliant palette, he could not accept their notions of "optical veracity." Casting aside all attempts to represent reality as it appeared to the senses, Prendergast opted instead for an organization of the canvas into flat, decorative, almost abstract patterns of pure color. These patterns are achieved by laying on the paint in dabs and patches, one color against another, so that the effect is very like a tapestry or mosaic. Such techniques and artistic concerns were directly linked to developments taking place in the European avant-garde—notably those instigated by the Post-Impressionists and the Nabis—thus it is no wonder that Prendergast was ignored and misunderstood in his own country. He was America's first modernist painter.

But despite such aesthetic sophistication, Prendergast's paintings are gay, festive, and full of childlike innocence. He loved to paint parades, pageants, holiday outings, and picnics. *The Inlet* exemplifies such a scene of leisure and tranquil enjoyment of nature. The broken brushstrokes and lyrical harmonies of light and color in *The Inlet* leave us not with the "impression" of a summer's day but its memory.

Collections: Mrs. Charles Prendergast, Westport, Connecticut, to whom the painting was given by the artist (her brother-in-law).

Exhibitions: *The American Impressionists*, M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., New York, February 3-March 3, 1976.

G. M.



12.

JOHN SINGER SARGENT (1856-1925)

Dolce Far Niente, 1908

Oil on canvas, 16x29 inches

Signed lower right: *John S. Sargent*

Lent by The Brooklyn Museum

Although he was born in Florence of expatriate parentage, John Singer Sargent was to remain basically American in his outlook. His artistic talent was apparent from his childhood, and was encouraged by his mother, herself an amateur painter. In 1874, Sargent became a student of Carolus-Duran in Paris, with the Ecole des Beaux-Arts serving as an additional source of training. He first encountered the Impressionists as a student, though their influence was not immediate. In 1877, Sargent exhibited his work in the Paris Salon for the first time. Several years later, exhibition of his *Portrait of Madame X* at the Salon resulted in a scandal which significantly damaged Sargent's popularity in Paris. Because of a decline in portrait commissions, Sargent moved to London, where he established himself as a painter of Edwardian society. When he tired of portraiture, Sargent returned to landscape painting, in which an adaptation of Impressionist influences is most evident. By the 1880's, he had developed a generous following in the United States. A one-man show in Boston served as the culmination of Sargent's stay in the U. S. from 1887 to 1888, and signaled his greatest success to this point. By the turn of the century, he was established in Europe and the U. S. as one of the foremost portrait artists. Sargent later found that subject unsatisfactory, and in 1908, resolved never to paint another portrait. He turned, instead, to "landscapes and religious decorations." John Singer Sargent died in London on April 15, 1925, recognized as one of America's greatest expatriate artists.

Among Sargent's most Impressionistic paintings are the landscapes executed after his decision to end his career as a portrait artist. *Dolce Far Niente*, painted in 1908 at the Simplon Pass in Switzerland, is typical of his later work. In it, Sargent represents figures of his nieces and their friends dressed in oriental costumes, playing chess in the landscape setting.

The surface of *Dolce Far Niente* is patterned in thick slashes of paint, which give the painting a feeling of force and vitality. The quality of his paint, along with his ability to represent atmosphere and light, are among the most important aspects of Sargent's composition. He translates the play of light on the surface of objects into color, emphasizing highlights more now than in earlier work. *Dolce Far Niente* characterizes the liquidity of style in Sargent's late work, as well as his ability to capture the energy of nature on a painted surface.

Exhibitions: Munson, Williams, Proctor Institute, *Expatriate Exhibition of Whistler, Cassatt and Sargent* 1953, no. 34; Staten Island Museum, *Two Hundred Years of American Art* 1954, no. 17.

References: Brooklyn Museum Quarterly, XII, 3, 1925, p. 114; Ormond, R., *John Singer Sargent: Paintings, Drawings, Watercolors*, London, 1970, p. 75.

S. D. C.



13.

JOHN TWACHTMAN (1853-1902)

Winter Landscape, c. 1890-1900

Oil on canvas, 12x18 inches

Signed lower right: *J. H. Twachtman*

Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Among the founders of "The Ten American Painters," John Twachtman is known as the landscapist. Born in Cincinnati in 1853, he began with evening drawing classes at the Ohio Mechanics Institute. Three years later he met Frank Duvenek at the McMicken School of Design. Twachtman accompanied Duvenek to Munich where he continued his studies at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts under Ludwig Loefftz. In 1877, Twachtman and Duvenek left for Venice where Twachtman met and was influenced by Whistler. He entered the Academie Julian in 1883 to study under Jules Lefebvre and Gustav Boulanger. He learned the *plein air* techniques of Bastien-Lepage and abandoned the bravura paint application of the Munich school for a more even application. Under the influence of the Impressionists he became more aware of tonal relationships but he did not adopt their palette for several years. He returned to America and settled in Greenwich, Conn. in 1888. The following year he began 13 years of teaching at the Art Students' League. Although his career advanced slowly, he was now at the height of his popularity. During the next decade he produced his famous snow and waterfall paintings, but these moody landscapes were not accepted by the public. Even though he won the Silver Medal at the World Columbian Exposition, his paintings did not sell. After the organization of "The Ten," he and several colleagues settled in Gloucester, Mass. in 1900. His paintings remained too advanced for the public, and he died in 1902 despondent over his lack of success.

Many of the Impressionists painted a series of paintings on a particular subject, but unlike Monet who strove for changing light, Twachtman strove for perfection in the color adjustments. During his stay in Greenwich, he painted many snowy landscapes and before his death achieved a reversal of Impressionism's scientific objectivity. Twachtman's landscapes are inward expressions where light creates the mood. He parallels Whistler in the arrangement of forms on the canvas and in the color harmonies based on a few hues or tones.

In a letter to Weir in 1885, Twachtman said that "modern realism consists too much in the representation of things." In *Winter Landscape* he minimizes the subject matter to concentrate on a mood, capturing the essence of the scene. This visual impression is forceful in its simplification, and expressive of the artist's state of mind.

Collections: The John Pickering Lyman Collection, gift of Theodora Lyman.

References: *American Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Boston, 1969, p. 274, no. 987.

L. E. P.



14.

JULIAN ALDEN WEIR (1852-1919)

Pussy Willows, 1910

Oil on canvas, 34x26 inches

Signed upper left: J. Alden Weir

Lent by M. Knoedler & Co., Inc.

While the sensuousness of Renoir's manner of depiction is reflected in Glackens' figurative painting, *Woman in Oriental Costume*, (cat. no. 9) Weir's painting, *Pussy Willows*, represents a delicate, ethereal approach to depicting the figure in an impressionistic manner. As is pointed out by Donelson F. Hoopes in *The American Impressionists*, Weir reserved his sensuous responses for landscape painting.

Weir's father taught drawing at the United States Military Academy at West Point and Weir was born there in 1852. His brother, John F. Weir, became the first director of the Yale School of Fine Arts and Weir was to become president of the National Academy of Design where he had been a student and classmate to Albert Ryder and William Merritt Chase. In 1873, he went to Paris and began studies with Gerôme at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts where he met Bastien-Lepage.

After returning to America in 1877, he taught first at Cooper Union and later at the Art Students' League while seeking portrait commissions. When commissioned by Irwin Davis of New York to purchase paintings in Europe in 1880 and again in 1881, for his collection, among Weir's selections were Manet's *Boy With a Sword* and *Woman With a Parrot*. Although Weir became an admirer of Manet, Ryder was the greater influence on his work.

Weir's tones remained dark until the late 1880's, his traditional background attributing to his gradual acceptance of the impressionistic technique in his work but in 1893, he exhibited with Twachtman, Manet and Albert Besnard and by 1898 he and Twachtman led a group called "Ten American Painters." They held exhibitions hoping to stimulate American buyers to purchase American rather than French Impressionist paintings. Following the successful exhibit by "The Independents" of 1910, the artists participating felt that a larger invitational show should be organized. In 1911, the "Association of American Painters and Sculptors" was organized with Weir, an established figure in American art, being asked to serve as the group's president. Weir declined after learning that the group's purpose was to exhibit non-academic art.

In many aspects of his work, Weir remained traditional, especially in portraiture. In *Pussy Willows*, although the figure is an impressionistic, flat rendering of the subject, he has not relinquished the tonal qualities of light against dark. The overall impression is one of softness received from the subject of a woman dressed in a white, pink-trimmed gown, engaged in the feminine activity of arranging flowers.

Collections: Levy Galleries, New York; Mr. and Mrs. James W. Finn, New York.

Exhibitions: Century Club, New York, Spring, 1910, p. 231; *Appreciation of the Life and Work of Julian Alden Weir*, Century Club, New York, 1921; Memorial Exhibition, Metropolitan Museum of New York, May 17-April 20, 1924; Oil study of this work exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition, American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, 1962; *The American Impressionists*, M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., New York, February 3-March 6, 1976.

References: Dorothy Weir Young, *Julian Alden Weir*, reprint by Kennedy Galleries, New York, mentioned p. 231.

R.R.



