

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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June/July 1972





ART DÉCO

the last hurrah

PENELOPE HUNTER

Research Assistant
Western European Arts

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Frontispiece

A jar becomes a jewel by the glinting sparkle of its glaze – stoneware in the art déco style, discussed in the first article. This jar is by Henri Simmen, who journeyed to the Orient to study techniques of stoneware, but his orient-izing remained imbued with as much imagination as eighteenth-century French chinoiserie. Mme O'Kin, his Japanese wife, capped this piece with an ivory sea flower from the reefs of fantasy. Photographed against silk damask designed by André Mare, Compagnie des Arts Français. Purchase, Edward C. Moore, Jr., Gift, 29.127.5, 23.175.9

On the cover

An example of Asher Brown Durand's "green and gold vision," this is a detail of a painting by one of the leaders of the Hudson River School, discussed in the article beginning on page 272. Bequest of Mary Starr Van Winkle, 1970.58

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"Banzai! The present has arrived!" was the response in *The New Yorker's* "Sky Line" of March 9, 1929, to an exhibition of art déco. Contemporary acclaim was, however, a last hurrah for a dying tradition. The style brought to world attention by the Paris *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* of 1925 appeared startlingly new. Nevertheless, it was not the prologue to the present mechanized age, but a proud final chapter in the history of French decorative arts.

Since the reign of Louis XIV, the monarchs of France had systematically promoted the decorative arts to develop the nation's economy, and, most importantly, to further international prestige. Their success was undisputed, as every eighteenth-century princeling sought to ape the French king's manner of living, surrounded by furniture, silver, textiles, and ceramics, each example of which was a work of art. If luxury antedated the court of Versailles, it was there brought to its utmost refinement, and *chic* was a French creation. The various techniques of craftsmanship that made this possible were developed in royal workshops, and artisans were spurred on by royal commissions and the foreign orders that followed.

With the fading of dreams of national glory after the fall of Napoleon's Empire, French decorative arts settled into a period of pastiche and imitation, the French equivalent of the Victorian style. In the late years of the nineteenth century the artisans themselves rallied. Ever conscious of past achievements, they banded together forming societies and schools to reinstate standards of craftsmanship and innovative design. The fruit of this effort, born at the close of the century, was art nouveau.

When the exuberant imagination of art nouveau failed to gain acceptance with an essentially conservative bourgeois public, a conscious attempt was made to formulate a style tailored to this twentieth-century society. There continued to be widespread appreciation of the exquisite craftsmanship of the *ancien régime*, which artisans aspired to equal. For such standards to be met the products had to be luxury items, as decorative arts had always been. The adoption of new standards of hygiene in housekeeping along with the reduction of domestic staffs made easy care a consideration. It was publicized as an advantage of the new forms, which, though derived from a long-established vocabulary, were radically simplified and streamlined.

Artistes-décorateurs, decorator-designers who led the movement, integrated objects made by independent artisans with those produced in their own workshops to create interiors in the new style. Modernizing the homes of wealthy clients, they installed furniture and *objets d'art* as precious as the antiques they replaced. The impression of the updated rooms was one of deceptive simplicity. Into spacious areas were put sleek shapes of clean-cut outline. Glossy planes replaced intricacies of relief ornament. Decorative motifs were sparingly used, generally schematized, and large in scale. The most popular were stylized flowers in a garland or basket. Vivid color—provided by rugs, upholstery, and painted walls—gave impact to the style, but the objects themselves were usually somber in tone.

In the evolution from art nouveau to art déco, linear convolutions became modulated planes, contorted plant life became schematized flowers and animals, a turgid flight of fantasy became the distillation of tradition. Still, the transition was as natural a succession as the subsidence of Louis XV rococo into Louis XVI neoclassicism.

While evolution was taking place in France, revolution occurred in Germany. Between 1919 and 1933, the concept of living space was redefined and prototypes were created for mass machine production at the Bauhaus. In place of the sensual pleasure derived from a decorative object, the sole value

Pâte de verre, a hybrid between glass and ceramics, was the chosen medium of François-Emile Décorchement. The technique, developed in the late nineteenth century, was so difficult that it had few practitioners. Glass had to be ground to dust, mixed into a paste, applied to a mold, and fired in a kiln at a temperature just sufficient to fuse the particles. Each creation was unique since the mold, and all too often the object, was destroyed in the process. Décorchement used the unctuous substance with mottled color and molded sculptural interest to achieve a noble solidity not seen in glass since the early products of Egypt and Rome. An air of ancient mystery attends the snakes languorously uncoiling from the handles into the translucent green depths of his massive bowl.

Purchase, Edward C. Moore, Jr., Gift, 25.211

**a bowl in pâte de verre,
mystery of
translucent solidity**



Louis Süe and André Mare, heading the Compagnie des Arts Français, were among the most successful Parisian artistes-décorateurs. This illustration (right) of the Grand Salon in their pavilion at the 1925 Paris Exposition presents art déco at its most grandiose. The harmony of contour found in the painting by Dunoyer de Segonzac, the bronze figure by Aristide Maillol, and the bust by Despiau is carried out by Süe and Mare even to their shaping of the piano. The floral carpet and damask wall covering may appear to overburden the room, but the desk and chair, purchased by the Metropolitan Museum at the Exposition, represent indisputable accomplishment. The form of the desk is a streamlined version of a Louis XV writing table; its chair recalls a Louis XVI model. Both are veneered with gleaming ebony, and the legs of the desk are sheathed in gilt-bronze. Together they fulfill their creators' desire that "no matter what beautiful antique should be in one's home amidst our furniture, it should be received as an ancestor and not an intruder."

Desk and chair, 1925. Purchase, Edward C. Moore, Jr., Gift, 25.209.1,2

**art déco at its
most grandiose**



was to be fulfillment of function. Painstakingly fashioned furnishings, available only to the privileged, were condemned in favor of a standardized environment for universal application. In France, on the other hand, *artistes-décorateurs* – absorbed as they were in the effort to create another golden age for French decorative arts – ignored even the exponent of modernism in their midst, Le Corbusier.

The Bauhaus was still little known when the French government, reawakened to interests of international prestige – not to mention continuing rivalry with Germany – sponsored the 1925 Paris *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs* presenting to the world the style we now call by derivation art déco. Its svelte luxury suited the frenzied frivolity of the years following World War I, but the Depression brought an abrupt close to the era and tolled the death

The ceramic achievement of art déco lay in stoneware. Made of a clay vitrified by firing, it had for centuries been relegated to the humblest usage while the attention of Europe focused on an effort to equal the fragile porcelains of China and Japan. Only at the end of the nineteenth century did the properties of stoneware awaken the interest of European potters. Its weight and bulk and solidity offered an ideal medium for the expression of an aesthetic of simplicity. Oriental prototypes figured as importantly in this late development of stoneware as they had in porcelain.

Emile Lenoble married the granddaughter of Ernest Chaplet, the great nineteenth-century innovator of ceramics. Taking over the studio, he honored Chaplet's work, but he found his own inspiration in Chinese stoneware. His works often resemble the robust Tz'u-chou wares of the Sung dynasty. An immense globular vase (near right) has a floral pattern cut away from the black-brown glaze in the Chinese manner. Lenoble's blossoms, however, are not of Oriental species – they are the schematized flora of art déco.

Emile Decoeur was apprenticed to a potter in 1890 at the age of fourteen. There were few experiments he had not made in ceramics by the 1920s. Yet his masterpieces of that decade are serenely simple forms enhanced by subtly colored glazes that recall the stoneware esteemed among the arts of the Sung dynasty (960-1279). Most treasured were green-glazed wares called celadon, which were exported to every corner of the Orient and penetrated Europe by the sixteenth century. Decoeur's low bowl (far right) covered with a finely crackled green glaze is born of this honorable ancestry.

**stoneware,
the serenity of
simple forms
with weight
and bulk**



Purchase, Edward C. Moore, Jr., Gift,
29.127.4, 25.210



*P*ierre Legrain was set the task of creating suitable bindings for the manuscripts and first editions of contemporary authors collected by the couturier Jacques Doucet. In doing so he initiated a revival releasing bookbinding from the historicizing formulas of the past century, while avoiding the obvious and often trite symbolism of art nouveau. An artiste-décorateur untutored in the techniques of the craft, he confided execution of his designs to master artisans. He sought to convey the spirit of each text using the cubist vocabulary to its full decorative potential. In his binding for Paul Valéry's *L'Ame et la Danse* (left), the movement of the glittering meander, as it descends the front between angular blocks, to reverse itself on the spine and climb the back, may be considered an oblique allusion to the subject. Leathers of rich brown with contrasting beige and black are tooled in gold and silver. Inside, endleaves of brown suede are followed by papers of marbled colors. Bound into this volume are a pencil sketch signed by Paul Landowsky illustrating one of Valéry's verses and the manuscript poem *Danse* by Anna de Noailles. In all, the book has been rendered an object of decorative art, as precious to look upon and touch as to read.

L'Ame et la Danse, by Paul Valéry (Paris: Javal et Bordeaux, 1926), binding 1928-1929. Gift of George and Florence Blumenthal, 32.133.2

**a book rendered an object
of decorative art, as precious
to look upon and touch
as to read**

knell for the decorative arts. The *artistes-décorateurs'* clientele was wiped out by the economic catastrophe, and a general aesthetic for a democratized industrial society was already in existence. The Bauhaus principle of the hegemony of architecture, to the exclusion of the decorative arts, was henceforth to characterize fine design. Those who could afford beautiful objects of valued materials crafted with masterly skill chose antique examples over contemporary works as safe investments.

In the early 1920s, Paris department stores had initiated the popularization of art déco with departments of modern interior decoration carrying modest, well-designed items. The successful 1925 *Exposition* precipitated an avalanche of imitations and loose derivations. In these copies the essence of art déco was ignored or misunderstood: the designs were not the result of conscientious refinement of form and the execution rarely involved craftsmanship. It remains only to sort out the finest objects of art made in France in the 1920s and place them beside those of earlier eras to see art déco as the culminating style in the great French tradition of decorative arts that spanned four centuries.



**a confection in green
patinated bronze**

As the protégé of Jeanne Lanvin, the day's leading couturière, Armand-Albert Rateau breathed the rarefied atmosphere of the Parisian haut monde. In the 1925 Exposition he did not exhibit with the other artistes-décorateurs, but rather provided the settings for the creations of a jeweler, furrier, and several couturiers in the aptly titled Pavillon d'Elégance. The Museum's dressing table is a copy of one Rateau designed for the bathroom of Mme Lanvin's Paris apartment and repeated for the Duchess of Alba in the Liria Palace, Madrid. It is a confection in green patinated bronze, its great weight resting on the tips of hair-pin legs. The stylized peacocks adorning the legs, mirror base, and hand mirror shown with it were motifs appropriate to the tables' owners. Rateau created the exotic furnishings of a fairy tale for the descendants of a long line of ladies, stretching back to Mme de Pompadour and Queen Marie Antoinette, who also liked their world that way.

Dressing table, Purchase, Edward C. Moore, Jr., Gift, 25.169; hand mirror, Gift of Armand-Albert Rateau, 25.170



**glass as "water stagnant or flowing,
ice that cracks or melts"**

On a visit to a glasshouse owned by a friend, Maurice Marinot, a fauvist painter, became enamored of the vitreous material. "Old French glass, of such simple perfection, which pretends neither to preciousness of material nor to virtuosity of execution" he found to "express perfectly, along with the qualities of glass, the qualities of the [French] race." More than the delicate intricacies of Venetian work or the engraved brilliance of Bohemian, he admired the modest product of the provincial French glassmaker. He labored to master the technique so that he too might blow thick-walled vessels, glorifying what centuries had deemed imperfections. By manipulating a molten mass to exploit trapped bubbles, or by plunging a red-hot vessel into water to dramatize its cooling, Marinot illustrated his vision of glass as "water stagnant or flowing, ice that cracks or melts."

*Covered vase, Rogers Fund, 1970.198.1;
bottle, Purchase, Edward C. Moore, Jr.,
Gift, 24.131.6*







**a champagne cooler
of sensuous shape
and substance,
and a silver bowl of
intriguing concrete
geometry**

Thoroughly grounded in the traditions of French silverwork by apprenticeship under his father, Jean Puiforcat went on to interpret in silver his passion for mathematics and geometry. Only the initial years of his career belong to art déco.

His champagne cooler (left) was executed in 1925, three years after his first work. For all its stylish streamlining there is a rhythmic tension in the verticals deeply incised in the skin of the silver, the flattened nodules that punctuate the rims, and the jagged sweep of the two parts of the handles toward the carnelian knobs that prevent their joining. The cooler is stunning and sensuous in form and substance, and perfectly serviceable to a society well acquainted with the delights of champagne.

A bowl (above) executed in 1934, after

the demise of art déco, represents Puiforcat's mature style. It is an intellectual exercise in concrete geometry in the flaring arc of its silhouette, the acute angles of its moldings, and the division of its tubular circumference by sections of glass. It would have been truly modern if it had been an industrial design for production in chrome-plated metal instead of silver and with plastic in place of tinted glass. But Puiforcat clung to the technical standards and precious materials of his father, even when his designs might have succeeded equally well without them. He refused to concede that fine craftsmanship, essential to art déco, was irrelevant to the succeeding style.

Purchase, Edward C. Moore, Jr., Gift, 25.207, 34.105.1

***furniture, the distillation
of tradition***



The crowning glory of the decorative arts developed for French kings was furniture veneered in fine woods. Jacques-Emile Rublmann, hailed as the equal of the greatest cabinetmaker of the reign of Louis XVI, was called "the Riesener of the twentieth century." He designed complete interiors as settings for the pieces of furniture on which he lavished intense effort in design and meticulous supervision of execution. He employed only the finest and rarest of materials, such as ivory or sharkskin with Macassar ebony or Amboyna wood. The craftsmen of his workshop were the best and highest paid in Paris, that is to say, the world. For his products he charged outrageous prices, which French aristocrats and foreign millionaires proved eager to pay. The reason becomes clear on examining three of Rublmann's pieces: an oval night table (left) where the grain of the Macassar ebony veneer forms a radial pattern on the top and ivory bands frame the opening, a cabinet (above) veneered in honey-colored Amboyna that has thin strips of ivory running upward from the feet to accent the subtle contours, and the majestic piece shown at the right, on which marquetry of ivory and amaranth wood depicts a streamlined basket brimming over with the flowers of art déco.

Rublmann was acknowledged as the stellar figure of art déco by colleagues, public, and the press. The creator of objects of classic beauty, he stands as the representative of the final moment of a great tradition.

Rogers Fund, 1970.198.5,4, and Purchase, Edward C. Moore, Jr., Gift, 25.231.1

The objects discussed in this article are on exhibition in the Museum's galleries of Twentieth Century Art



WARRIOR'S DEFENSE, WEARER'S DELIGHT

An Introduction to Japanese Swordguards

by Ben Vincent
Clawson Mills Fellow, Arms and Armor

Even in ancient times most swords were fitted with guards to protect the user's hand from an opponent's blade. Unlike their Western counterparts, Japanese swords were deeply curved in shape and were wielded with a slashing rather than a thrusting motion. Their specially crafted guards, called *tsuba*, were removable and interchangeable, and developed from a purely utilitarian device into a subtle and sophisticated art form.

The earliest *tsuba*, dating from about the eleventh century to the fifteenth, were entirely functional, most frequently constructed of lacquered leather, which is surprisingly strong

and resilient. Beginning in the late 1500s, however, an evolution began to take place: *tsuba* started to become ornamental accessories as well as combat equipment — in both cases expertly fashioned by master craftsmen. Those made for fighting were of iron, the decorative ones of soft metals such as silver or copper. The protective effectiveness of the latter was virtually nonexistent against the steel edge of a good sword that, with a single stroke, could strike through many layers of soft metal, not to mention how many of flesh and bone! Like fine jewelry, wealthy Japanese owned attractive fittings for all occasions and

changed them accordingly: to mark the arrival of a new season, the anniversary of a historical event, or simply to suit personal taste.

The earliest functional iron guards can be grouped into two categories: those made by armorers and those forged by swordsmiths. They are easy to distinguish since the armor-makers' works have relatively elaborate openwork and a raised rim, and the swordsmiths' very little piercing and no raised rim. This difference in style is perhaps explained by the fact that the technical construction of armor required a great deal of piercing of metal. The armorer's guard pictured in Figure 1 is dominated by a design of four tea-flower buds, while only a small part of the rimless sword-maker's *tsuba* (Figure 2) is adorned with an openwork bird's-wing fan of the kind used for starting fires in tea ceremonies.

It was to the decorative rather than the more practical *tsuba* that artists and craftsmen devoted their talents beginning around the sixteenth century. Many of them worked in or near Kyoto, seat of the imperial court and of the civil government. They produced extremely fine works that were as prized as paintings or sculpture — in fact *tsuba* makers often were painters.

During the early sixteenth century a group of metalworkers in the Mino area near Kyoto experimented with applying techniques of elaborate inlaying, overlaying, and relief carving to the design of *tsuba*. Figures 3 and 4 are typical Mino *tsuba*. The deeply carved foliage is rather crude by later standards of refinement. The "stippled" background, composed of minute dots pounded into the metal, is an innovation of Mino craftsmen that was frequently used by later masters. Not substantial enough to ward off the blow of a sword, the Mino guards were probably used on ceremonial occasions.

Totally different from Mino *tsuba*, yet contemporary with them, are the openwork iron guards from Kyoto such as the one shown in Figure 5, which is obviously lacking in the kind of reinforcement required for combat



This print by the famous artist Suzuki Harunobu (1725-1770) clearly illustrates an openwork tsuba on the sword a samurai warrior is about to thrust through his sash. 11 x 8 1/8 inches. Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, The H. O. Havemeyer Collection, no. 1629



1 (left). The pierced floral design and raised rim of this tsuba are typical of an armormaker's guard. Diameter $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Bequest of Howard Mansfield, 36.120.187



2 (right). The austerity of this swordsmith's guard is broken only by the little fan carved out on the right. Diameter $3\frac{5}{16}$ inches. Bequest of Howard Mansfield, 36.120.186



3, 4. Early Mino soft-metal guards such as these two reveal how artists began to transform the functional tsuba into an intricately designed decorative object. Widths $2\frac{1}{16}$ inches, $2\frac{1}{16}$ inches. Bequest of Herman A. E. and Paul C. Jaehne, 43.120.486,942



5 (left). A chrysanthemum in full bloom fills the rim of this Kyoto guard. Diameter $3\frac{3}{16}$ inches. Gift of Mrs. Adrian H. Joline, 14.60.32



6 (right). A katydid creeps underneath a willow tree on this Akasaka guard. Width $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Bequest of Howard Mansfield, 36.120.134

tsuba. Note the delicate outlines of the chrysanthemum. The refined carving on this kind of guard reflects the somewhat effeminate, pacific nature of the court aristocracy whose aesthetic taste strongly influenced Kyoto's art.

By the middle of the sixteenth century masters of the Akasaka school, who also lived near Kyoto, produced magnificent tsuba that combined both aesthetic and functional qualities. Treasured by the samurai or warrior class, their excellent quality iron and carefully reinforced points of stress were hitherto unequalled. They were designed with bold thick lines that did not take away from the strength of the guard. One of the Metropolitan's outstanding Akasaka works (Figure 6) has a compact rendering of a katydid under a willow tree. It may not look as sturdy as it originally was, because the branch on the right has rusted away and no longer touches the tree trunk. Hard to see, too, are the tiny triangles of iron that fortify all points where the design connects with the guard.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, craftsmen began to sign their works. Among the first to do so were a group or school that called themselves "Nobuiye." They created strong iron guards of an unusual bluish steel with incised decorations of austere simplicity. The Museum's Nobuiye (Figure 7) has a tortoise-like creature (at the upper right, but almost invisible in the illustration) carved into a background patterned like a tortoise's shell. The artist's signature appears just to the left of the center opening.

Contemporary with the Nobuiye tsuba, but stylistically completely different from it, is one by an artist called Kaneiye (Figure 8). His pictorial designs in relief accented with soft-metal inlays and overlays are totally unlike anything seen before. The naïve charm of his tsuba make them appealing to collectors and,

unfortunately, to forgers who have exploited this artist's signature on countless occasions. The Kaneiye illustrated here is an irregularly shaped iron guard depicting a man guiding his boat past distant mountains. The man's face is overlaid with silver and his pole inlaid with gold. Comparing the pictorial, raised designs of Kaneiye with the simple, incised, abstract patterns of the Nobuiye master, it is interesting to see how two artists, both from the Kyoto area and both at work at the same time, originated such radically different approaches to tsuba decoration.

Also in the late sixteenth century Umetada Myoju, a talented sword carver, perfected the technique of inlaying alloys into tsuba. Flowing designs created with fine tapering lines are distinctive to his style, and for this innovation his guards are greatly esteemed. Good forgeries of his work are practically nonexistent, since his technical skill is almost impossible to duplicate. The Myoju tsuba pictured here (Figure 9) has a wisteria vine of a dark alloy set into a brass plate.

After the Tokugawa family fought its way to power in the early seventeenth century, most of Japan enjoyed a period of relative peace. From this time on, the majority of tsuba were created simply as fashionable ornaments rather than as utilitarian devices, although the influence of socio-economic status, geographical location, and individual taste produced a variety of styles.

Tsuba crafted by Hamano Shozui, for example, were bought by the noblemen of Kyoto, who prized them as status symbols and for their splendid ornament. Shozui placed great emphasis on pictorial design and on charm and mood, epitomized by the copper guard shown in Figure 10 on which bickering birds flutter against a background of abstract clouds.

Swordguards from the Higo area – in ex-

treme southern Japan, far from the court in Kyoto – reflect a style particular to the area, unaffected by courtly taste. The tsuba from Higo usually exhibit a certain amount of functionalism, probably because of the unsettled political conditions in that region. The Metropolitan's tsuba made by a member of the Jingo school of Higo (Figure 11) shows a stylized brass dragon on a roughly hewn iron plate, the intention being to produce a strong natural look rather than the slick finished appearance of contemporary Kyoto work.

Contact with Europeans resulted in a certain degree of Western influence on Japanese art. It was probably considered very avant-garde to own Western-inspired swordguards, although their low price also contributed to their popularity. Most of them are more or less copies of Western designs, such as the one illustrated in Figure 12, which is in the style of a seventeenth-century European court swordguard.

As years of peace continued into the eighteenth century, tsuba became more and more ornate. This is seen in the works of Mogarashi Soten, who produced intricately carved and detailed tsuba that usually depict battle scenes. In the Museum's piece (Figure 13), dated 1757, no less than fifteen warriors are crowded into its tiny rim!

Eventually this excessive decoration declined into a gaudiness that soon became tiresome. There resulted a radical change in taste, with artists returning to restrained, classic guards in the styles of earlier craftsmen. From this reaction arose the supreme master of simplification, Kano Natsuo. Illustrated here (Figure 14) is a sparsely adorned yet powerful dagger guard with two gold ants on a plate carved to resemble rotten wood. When Natsuo died in 1898, the long line of great tsuba artists came to an end.



7 (left). The artist who made this Nobuiye guard was one of the first to sign his work. His signature is discernible just left of the center opening. Width 3¼ inches. Gift of a trustee, 17.208.65



8 (right). This Kaneiye guard depicting a boatman and faraway mountains includes a miniature landscape. Width 37/16 inches. Bequest of Howard Mansfield, 36.120.43



9 (left). A branch of flowering wisteria hangs gracefully from the top of this guard by Umetada Myoju. Diameter 3 inches. Bequest of Howard Mansfield, 36.120.83



10 (right). Hamano Shozui has created a charming scene of billowing clouds and flying birds on this tsuba. Width $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Bequest of Herman A. E. and Paul C. Jaehne, 43.120.705



11 (left). A fierce dragon writhes around the edges of this Higo guard. Width $2\frac{7}{16}$ inches. Gift of Mary Larkin Joline, 14.60.11



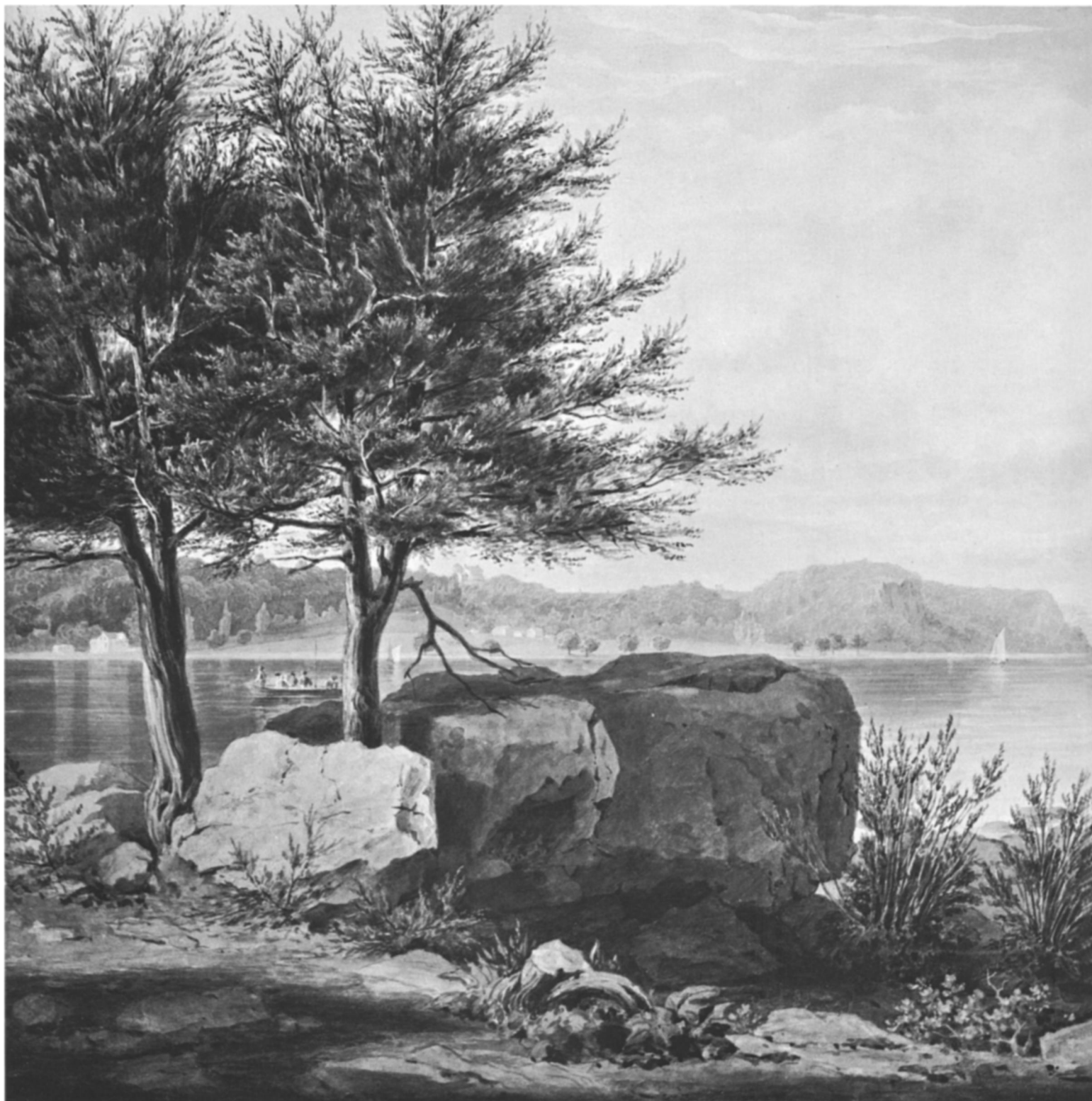
12 (right). This Western-style Japanese tsuba is inspired by swordguards of European craftsmen. Width $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Gift of a trustee, 17.207.11b



13 (left). A host of fighting warriors are crowded into this guard by Mogarashi Soten. Width $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Funds from various donors, 46.122.92

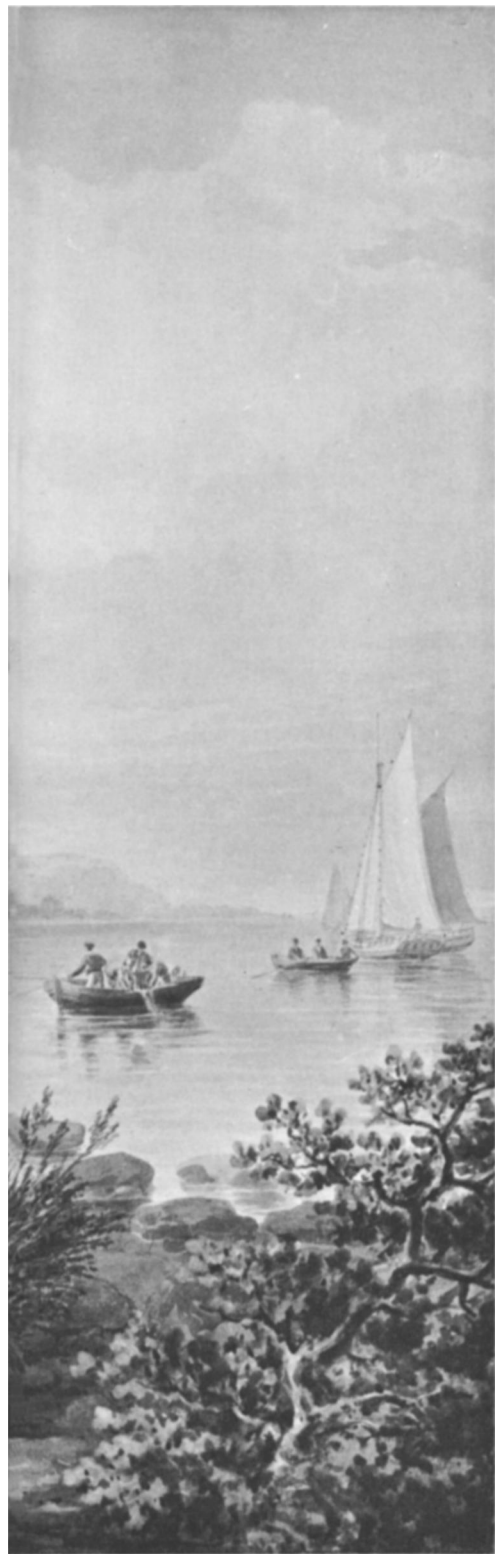


14 (right). This guard by Kano Natsuo shows how the last great tsuba master rejected the ornate compositions of his immediate predecessors and returned to the restrained simplicity of earlier artists. Width $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Bequest of Howard Mansfield, 36.120.99



THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL

John K. Howat
Curator of American
Paintings and Sculpture



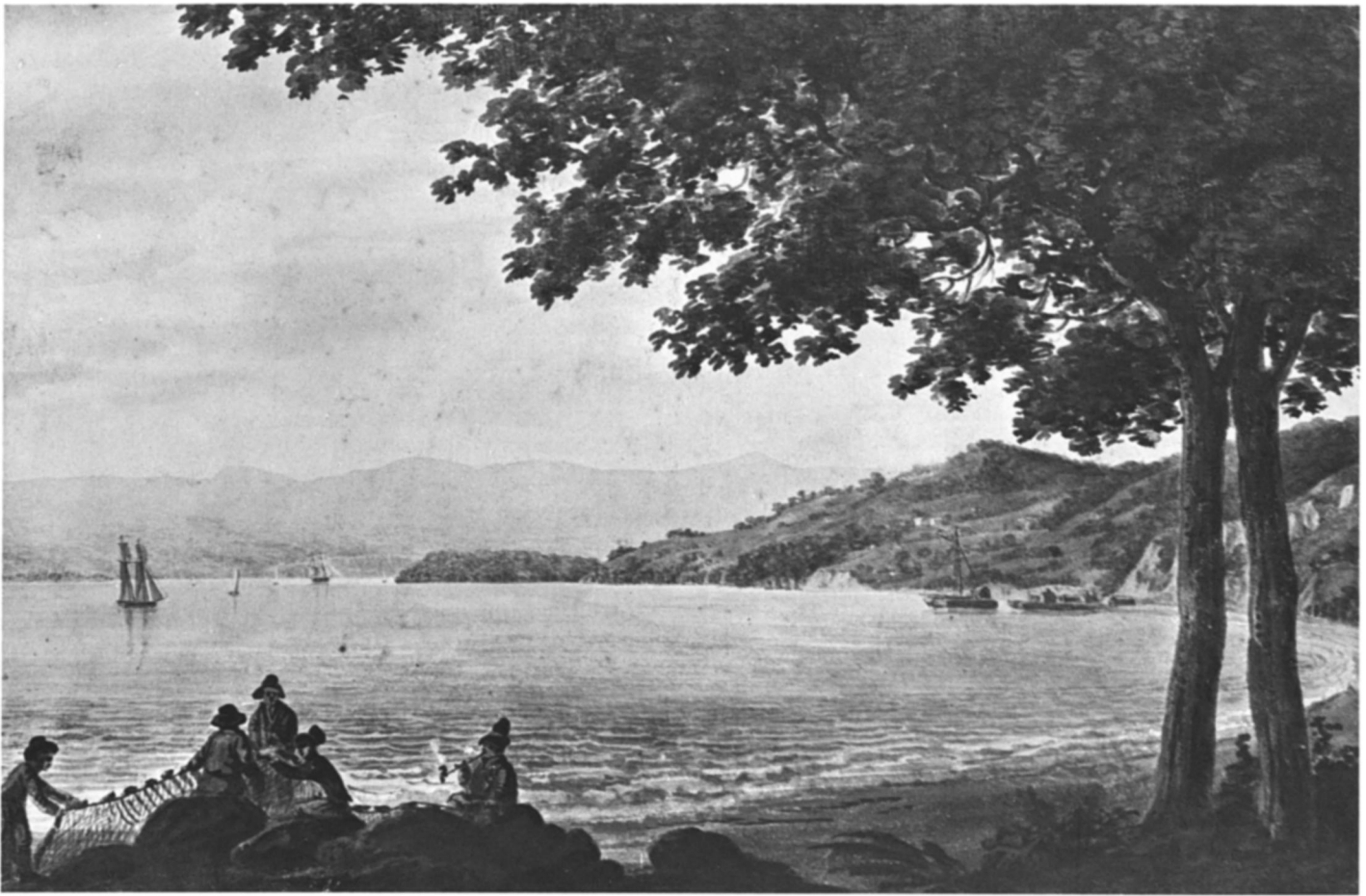
The Hudson River School, America's first homegrown, coherent, and sizable group of landscape artists, began in the 1820s. It grew rapidly, developed its own theories, and occupied the center of the national art stage until it faded in the 1870s and 1880s, thrust aside as an unfashionable, provincial, and tedious occurrence in our art history. The term "Hudson River School" is accepted today not for its accuracy, since its members traveled widely and painted an almost endless variety of locations, but for these artists' similarity of thought and style.

The growth and development of the school were centered primarily in New York City around its patrons and promoters. The nation and New York had discovered themselves, following independence and renewed unity after the War of 1812, to be behindhand in providing the humane delights of art, literature, and music that made Europe such a discovery for Americans to visit and made most European travelers to these shores so condescending about the "New Man." Self-consciousness and proud reaction to criticism were not the least reasons why thoughtful leaders like Washington Allston, Samuel F. B. Morse, Thomas Cole, and Asher B. Durand among the artists, and Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper among the writers set out to establish the arts on a firm footing in this country. Few art or literary movements are begun by an interested group setting out specially to be a "movement" or a "school," but the Hudson River School came as close as any American art movement to being willed into existence as a concrete gesture and contribution to national life. The successful

WILLIAM G. WALL *The Irish-born Wall arrived in America in 1818, and by 1820 had published a large number of his watercolors in the Hudson River Portfolio, a renowned publication that contributed to the growing awareness of American landscape. The greater breadth and luminosity of this view on the Hudson (left) suggest a date later than watercolors painted for the Portfolio. Possibly it was executed while Wall was living in Newburgh, New York, during his second visit to America around 1856 to 1862. Here, three-dimensional forms emerge from Wall's sensitivity to light and shadows, heightened by the free use of washes and the beautifully rendered details. Watercolor, 14 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches*

WILLIAM HENRY BARTLETT *The Englishman Bartlett made four trips to America between 1836 and 1852, producing large numbers of sensitive topographical views in pencil and watercolor. His pictures served as illustrations for N.P. Willis's American Scenery, published about 1840, a widely circulated book that provided inspiration for numberless American artists. In this view of the bay and harbor of New York from Gowanus Heights, Manhattan extends across the background, lying north of Brooklyn. Watercolor, 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Both, Bequest of Edward W. C. Arnold, The Edward W. C. Arnold Collection of New York Prints, Maps, and Pictures, 54.90.107, 54.90.163*





PAVEL PETROVICH SVININ *A genre quality reflects this Russian artist's interest in all facets of American life that he observed during his two-year stay here, beginning in 1811. This view, with shad fishermen in the foreground, looks upstream from Crugers toward Verplanck's Point, an area steeped in historical significance. Lossing wrote, "It was off this point that Henry Hud-*

son first anchored the 'Half Moon' after leaving Yonkers. The highland Indians flocked to the vessel in great numbers. One of them was killed in an affray, and this circumstance planted the seed of hatred of the white man in the bosom of the Indians in that region." Watercolor, 10 x 15½ inches. Rogers Fund, 42.95.9

development of the school depended upon a number of factors, such as the new importance of New York following the opening of the Erie Canal, the urge of an expanding nation to record and celebrate its untapped natural wonders, the resumption of cultural and commercial ties with Europe, the increasing number of painters and engravers who relied upon the growing patronage of business and businessmen-collectors, the development of art schools and galleries where artists could learn their craft and display their works, and a felt need to promote a sense of our own history.

THOMAS COLE

The traditional and by now almost hallowed date for the beginning of the Hudson River School is 1825, when Thomas Cole was discovered by three of New York's leading artists, John Trumbull, William Dunlap, and Asher Durand. Two of the three

Hudson River views that Trumbull spied in a framemaker's shopwindow rapidly found their way into the collection of Philip Hone, then mayor of New York. Such recognition by the wealthy and most important collector of the city went far to establish Cole and the type of art he represented.

Cole, writing (in 1826) to his Baltimore patron Robert Gilmore, said

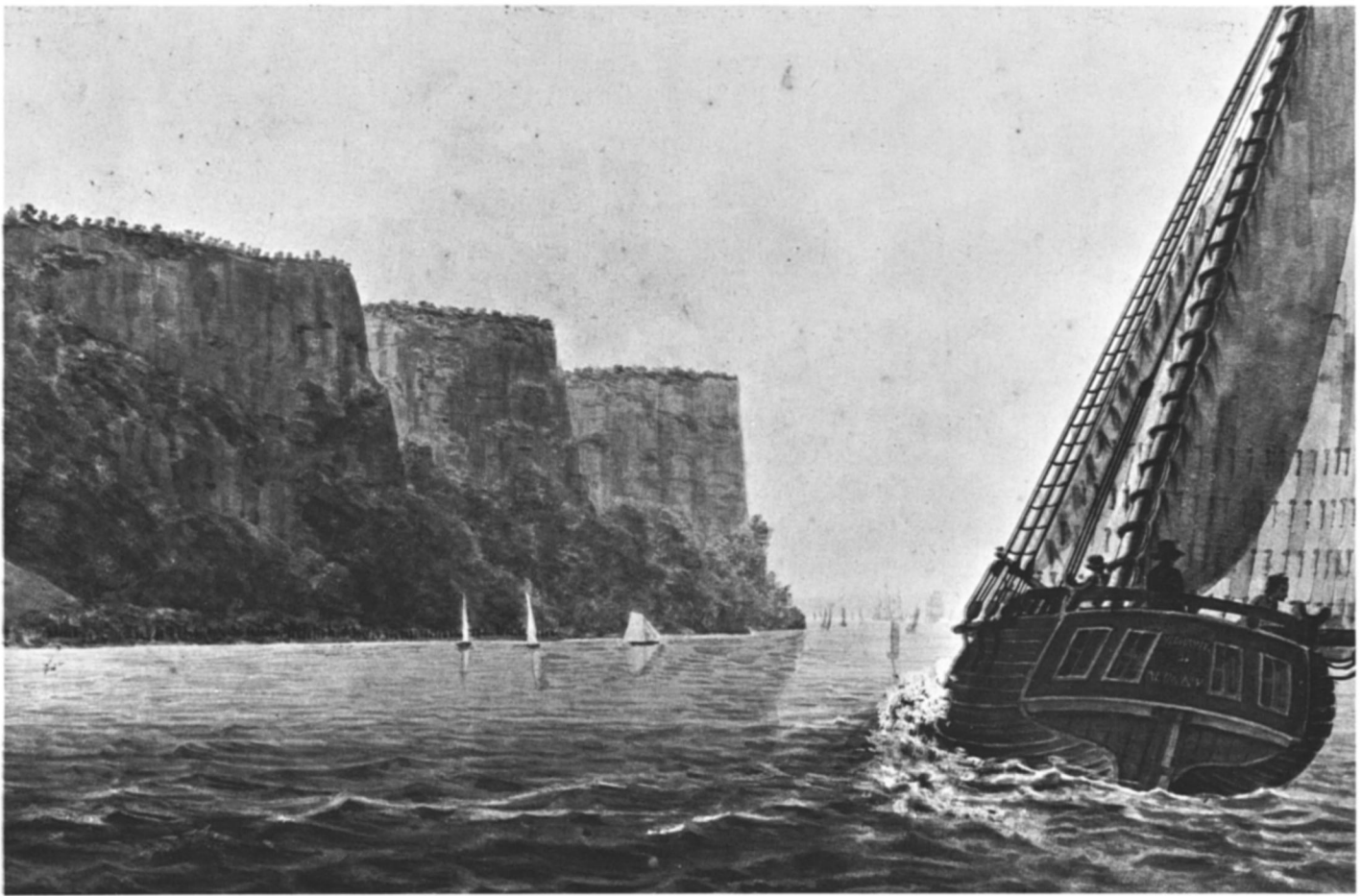
I believe with you that it is of the greatest importance for a painter always to have his mind upon Nature. . . . He who would paint compositions, and not be false, must sit down amidst his sketches, make selections, and combine them, and so have nature for every object that he paints. This is what I should endeavor to do: and I think you will agree with me that such a course embraces all the advantages obtained in painting actual views, without the objections. I think that a young painter ought not to indulge himself too much in painting scenes, yet the cultivation of his mind

ought not to be neglected, it is the faculty that has given that superiority of the fine over mechanical arts.

Thus privately Cole articulated the basis for his work and the whole flourishing of the Hudson River School that followed his example in the production of both pure landscapes and imaginary compositions.

During the late summer of 1825, Cole took his first sketching trip up the Hudson. Three of the pictures resulting from the trip were the ones discovered by Trumbull, who complimented Cole: "You surprise me, at your age, to paint like this. You have already done what I, with all my years and experience, am yet unable to do."

Cole was an unusual combination of writer, poet, philosopher, observer, and painter. Two of his most interesting writings refer to Hudson River and Catskill Mountain scenes, which he painted as well, and reveal to what a great extent Cole was a poet-painter who saw significance in



PAVEL PETROVICH SVININ *This is another of the more than fifty watercolors in which Svinin captured the American scene, painting from life in his usual direct and precise manner. After the development of the steamboat, the sailing packet was used almost exclusively as a freight carrier. Here one named "Mohawk of Albany" dominates the composition, creating a pleasant diagonal*

movement that contrasts with the vertical Palisades, "a name given probably for the ribbed appearance of some parts of the cliff, which seem like rude basaltic columns, or huge trunks of old and decayed trees, placed close together in a perpendicular form for a barricade or defense," as J. S. Buckingham wrote. 9 7/8 x 15 3/8 inches. Rogers Fund, 42.95.8

details of nature and painted accordingly: Sunrise From the Catskill Mountains – The mists were resting on the vale of the Hudson like drifted snow: tops of distant mountains in the east were visible – things of another world. The sun rose from bars of pearly hue: above there were clouds light and warm, and the clear sky was of a cool grayish tinge. . . . Seen through the breaking mists, the fields were exquisitely fresh and green. . . . The Hudson, where it was uncovered to the sight, slept in deep shadow.

One of Cole's axioms, not surprisingly, was "To walk with nature as a poet is the necessary condition of a perfect artist." His landscapes have a freely developed, painterly quality and rich coloring that go well with the extremely dramatic arrangements of billowing clouds, massive gnarled trees, deep chasms, towering peaks, and golden light that are common in the pictures.

As early as 1826 Cole created allegorical and imaginary scenes as well as landscapes.

As the years passed before his early death in 1848, he became increasingly devoted to religious thought and to painting scenes that held an obvious word message. His most famous allegories include *The Course of Empire*, five canvases showing the rise and decay of a great ancient city, and *The Voyage of Life*, done in 1839 and 1840, showing life's religious stages from childhood to youth to manhood and finally old age. The final major series, *The Cross and the World*, was never completed. Today's taste for Cole's pure landscapes in preference to his allegorical scenes is understandable, but does not change the fact that most of the public Cole worked for preferred the allegories.

ASHER BROWN DURAND

Asher Brown Durand easily assumed the leading role among American landscape painters upon Cole's death, and while he occasionally attempted to rival Cole with

allegorical series such as *Morning and Evening*, he concentrated on painting the landscape as he saw it to be – verdant, shining, and welcoming. In 1855 Durand wrote a characteristic letter to the New York art magazine *The Crayon* from North Conway, New Hampshire, noting that in the White Mountains

passages of the sublime and the beautiful are not infrequent, and for those who have the physical strength and mental energy to confront the former among the deep chasms and frowning precipices, I doubt not it would be difficult to exaggerate. . . . But to one like myself, unqualified to penetrate the "untrodden ways" of the latter, the beautiful aspect of the White Mountain scenery is by far the predominant feature.

Durand reached his pre-eminence as a painter after a long career as America's most successful engraver. He played an important role in establishing the National Academy of Design and was, with Cole, an



JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT *Kensett's poetry was based upon carefully delineated forms and subtle handling of color. He executed detailed studies directly from nature, usually during his summer trips, then selected and combined them into large paintings during the winters. This view north toward Storm King from Fort*

Putnam (the ruins of which are shown in the extreme right foreground opposite Mount Taurus) was likely the result of studies made during an 1853 summer's trip touring West Point and upstate New York. Oil on canvas, 32 x 48 inches. Gift of H. D. Babcock, in memory of S. D. Babcock, 07.162

intimate of New York's cultural and intellectual leaders such as William Cullen Bryant and Gulian Verplanck.

With the founding of the National Academy, Durand began to paint, doing a few landscapes and religious scenes. In the 1830s he did considerably more painting and, in 1836 or before, gave up almost entirely the arduous work of engraving. His history and genre paintings were not unsuccessful, but they appeared then to the critics, as they do today, to be rather stiff and lifeless. Fortunately Durand, in love with landscape painting, produced an increasing number of country scenes in the late 1830s.

Durand, the master of detail and observation, wrote a famous series, "Letters on Landscape Painting," for *The Crayon* in 1855. In these eight letters, supposedly directed to an aspiring landscapist, he gave

at length his feeling about painting:

Yes! go first to Nature to learn to paint landscape, and when you shall have learnt to imitate her, you may then study the pictures of great artists with benefit. . . . True Art teaches the use of the embellishments which Nature herself furnishes, it never creates them.

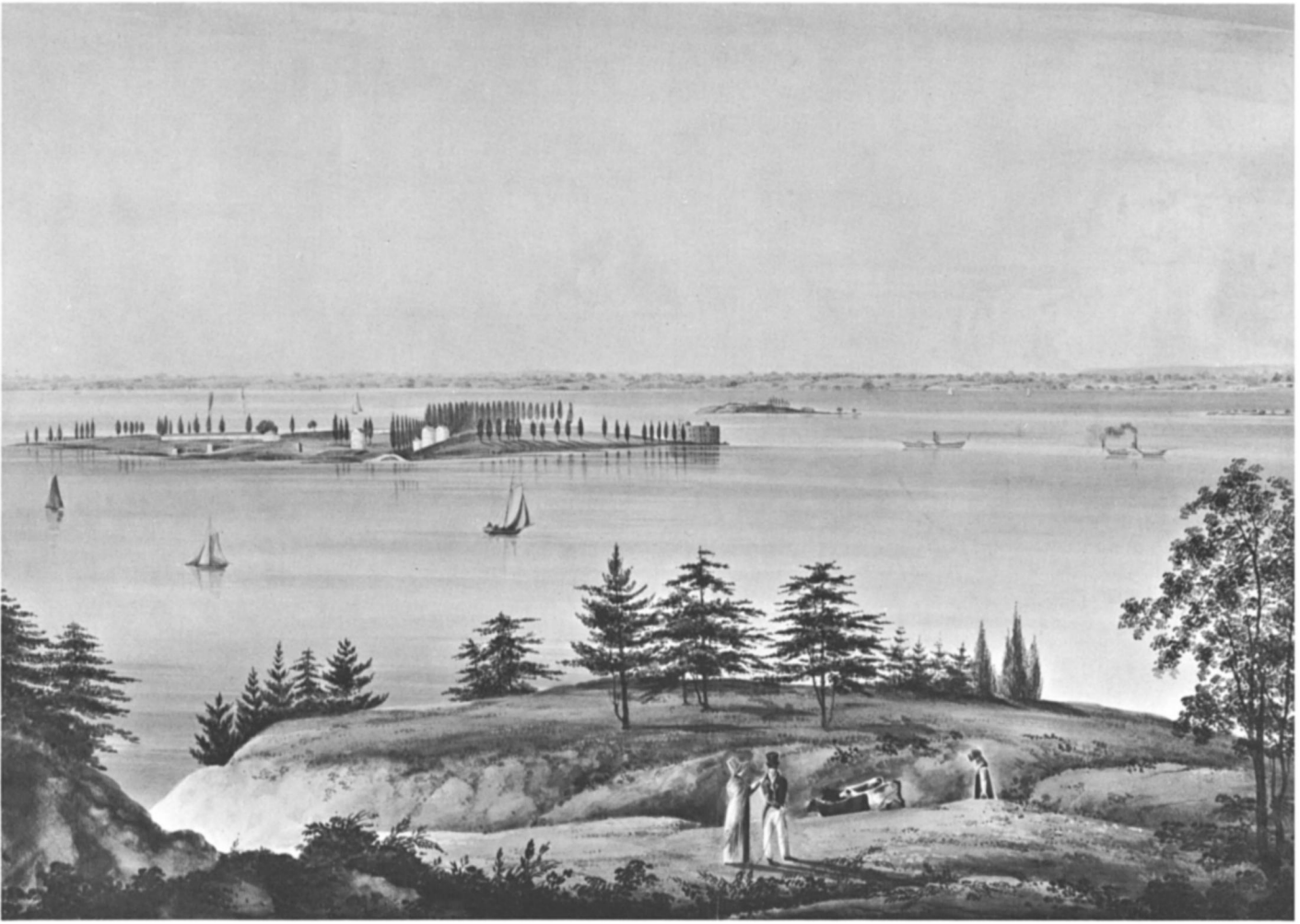
Although Durand's methods and finished pictures differed from Cole's, both men agreed in their puritan transcendentalism that art must be a vision of God through nature and never a thoughtless whim or attempt by the artist to be technically exciting or picturesque.

Durand's green and gold vision had an army of admirers and imitators. When he died in 1886 at the age of ninety, his example had also been set in his ideas, recommendations, and Jovian presence among his fellows.

JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT

John Frederick Kensett exhibited his first landscape in 1838 at the National Academy, where it met with mild interest as "a very fair production from a young engraver; a little too green, however, to be a good representation of nature."

Kensett's plucky spirit is one often seen in the younger, or "second generation," Hudson River School painters. They knew, and often said, they had to work hard to get recognition for their art, and prestige for the United States. Kensett returned to New York in 1847 after having painted and traveled widely in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. Everything began to go perfectly for him: he sold pictures with ease; he met the right people, joined their clubs, became a leader in New York art politics, and, in general, rode the crest of the growing wave of enthusiasm for



WILLIAM G. WALL *This scene of the bay of New York and Governor's Island from Brooklyn Heights was one of the numerous subjects not published in the influential Hudson River Portfolio. It is typical of Wall's work in its expansive feeling and pastel tonality. Governor's Island, at the entrance to the East River, had once been referred to by the Dutch settlers as Noten (Nut) Island, "on ac-*

count of the chestnut, oak, and hickory trees with which it had once abounded," and is said to have been the first place the Dutch occupied in the bay. Watercolor, 20 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 29 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Bequest of Edward W.C. Arnold, The Edward W.C. Arnold Collection of New York Prints, Maps, and Pictures, 54.90.108

art. The sarcastic George Templeton Strong, a New York social leader and diarist, described a "respectable" party he gave: "Rossiter, Kensett . . . and other artists assisted, whom it's not only creditable but aesthetic and refined to have at one's parties." The artists had indeed come a long way from 1825, when the gentry refused them equal membership in the American Academy of the Fine Arts.

Kensett scoured the picturesque parts of the northeast, the Great Lakes, and Colorado during his subsequent short career in search of subjects, producing hundreds of sketches and finished oil "rock portraits." A conscientious and thoughtful follower of Durand, Kensett selected and painted what he saw and never concerned himself with ideal or allegorical compositions. Like Durand, Kensett carted his oils, canvases, and trappings into the field in order not to

miss a thing. Using his small brushes like chisels, he built up his rocks, trees, waters, and skies touch by tiny touch. He painted the quiet, serene, rather ordinary aspects of nature, paying particular attention to the air and its effects. He wrote at one point, "Bright colors are sparingly distributed throughout the natural world. The white, red, blue and yellow blossoms of plants, shrubs, and trees are not prominent even in their season of bloom; while the main masses are made up of cool greens, grays, drabs and browns intermingled, and are always harmonious and agreeable." He was widely admired as a charitable person, and his pictures were highly influential.

FREDERIC E. CHURCH

Frederic E. Church, during his greatest popularity in the late 1850s and 1860s, was

probably America's best-known landscape painter at home and abroad. He studied with two Hartford painters for a short while before going to Catskill in 1844, where Thomas Cole took him as a student for two years, and Church learned his use of the loaded brush and dark colors.

From the first, Church was a great eye and a keen technician with the oils and traveled more widely than most of his colleagues in search of demanding subjects. In 1853 he made an extended trip to Colombia, Ecuador, and Panama and thereafter appropriated the unfamiliar mountainous South American scene as his primary subject matter.

Church's great fame came from the "full-length" showpiece landscapes, especially his Niagara and Heart of the Andes, which stood the art world and the general public on their ears when first shown in the late

1850s. His remarkable ability as a painter of detailed sketches served him perfectly as he compiled the massive landscapes, bringing together a mind-boggling variety of minutiae in vast panoramas. Church created his fantastic scenes believing that they expressed in their scale and beloved detail his most profound ideas of man's intimate but minor relationships to the marvels of nature. He delivered, as it were, Cole's and Durand's ideas with a showman's flourish.

ALBERT BIERSTADT

Cole and Church constructed very large and impressive landscapes of foreign and East Coast locations, but it was the German-born and -trained Albert Bierstadt who chose to explore and depict the scenic wonders of the American West on a truly epic scale. His timing was perfect – he was active during the 1860s and 1870s, when the popular press gave considerable attention to the opening of mountainous regions of the West. His fame approached or equaled that of Church, and his subject matter has guaranteed him a lasting national reputation. The West was big and Bierstadt painted it gigantic in such crushing masterpieces as *The Rocky Mountains* and *The Domes of the Yosemite*. Like Church, Bierstadt was a fluent and gifted draughtsman and oil sketcher who turned out countless preparatory pieces for his large machines, ranging from pencil sketches to finished medium-scale canvases.

The bottom went out of Bierstadt's market, just as it did for Church, in the late 1870s and the 1880s. After having astounded and pleased the public for twenty very lucrative years, Bierstadt must have found it devastating to read Yale Professor John Weir's *Official Report of the American Centennial Exhibition of 1876*:

... [Bierstadt's] pictures exhibited at Philadelphia indicate a lapse into sensational and meretricious effects, and a loss of true

artistic aim. They are vast illustrations of scenery, carelessly and crudely executed, and we fail to discover in them the merits which rendered his earlier works conspicuous.

Bierstadt's style had not changed so much as critical attitudes toward panoramic art. The bloom was definitely off the rose.

Church, Bierstadt, and others, as they declined into obscurity and repetitiousness during the 1880s, proved the point that art is not and cannot be a static thing. The public and the artist get bored with sameness, and the fatigued eye begins to look around for new exercises. Every art movement has within it individuals who are capable of moving on to new ideas and new styles – the Hudson River School was no exception to the rule.

GEORGE INNESS

George Inness, who worked in a detailed naturalistic style from the late 1840s through the 1860s, went to Europe several times and spent the years 1870 to 1874 in Italy and France. In the early 1850s he discovered the Barbizon painters of France and moved away from his earlier admiration for Cole and Durand. He told his son that "as landscape-painters I consider Rousseau, Daubigny, and Corot among the very best."

Varying considerably from previous Hudson River School example, Inness said, "Never put anything on your canvas that isn't of use, never use a detail unless it means something." As he developed his style, it became freer, almost impetuous, more atmospheric, and remarkable for the nearly palpable atmosphere of light and air that he created. He increasingly moved away from repetitiousness and drudgeline copying of nature. Inness had, in fact, applied the broad techniques of the Barbizon painters to his own highly mystical view of nature. Writing in 1879, S. G. W. Benjamin, author of *Art in America*, commented that "the first landscapes of George Inness

... properly belong in style to the early and distinctively American school of landscape, while his recent method had identified him with the later graduates of the ateliers of Paris." Benjamin was one of the critical holdouts in favor of the Hudson River School and felt uneasy about the invasion of French style into American art. He makes little mention of the fact that from Cole onward the American landscapists absorbed English, German, and Italian art quite freely without feeling that they were debasing American artistic currency. If we grant that all American art grew to greater or lesser extent out of European impulses, then the example of Inness shows the influence of Paris winning over the influence of Rome and Düsseldorf in New York's studios. Inness was an early warning of this major change of taste that shook the American art world and put the Hudson River School out of business.

Cosmopolitanism had overtaken the American art scene as a host of new artists, particularly portrait, figure, and genre painters, displaced the old guard. The younger artists wanted to pursue new avenues, working in the Barbizon and even impressionist styles, combining technical freedom and painterly bravura with poetic vision. There is no question that America's art vision had broadened and gained vitality as a result of the new tastes. The critics of the 1880s, 1890s, and after looked on Cole, Durand, and their progeny as naïve. The later men preferred to see paint used for its own sake, as a surface with a life somewhat independent of the subject depicted. Technique assumed a role of being as beautiful and admirable as the content. Today taste is perceptibly swinging back in favor of the romantic vision of the mid-nineteenth century, and we can congratulate and admire the landscape pioneers who worked in the studios of New York for their remarkable contributions to American art, as well as for their sympathetic presentation of a simpler world, of the beautiful, unravaged land of America.



THOMAS COLE Cole's creative freedom and individuality are perfectly embodied in this expressive view (above) from the Catskill foothills south toward the Hudson Highlands, painted about 1827. Cole incorporates weather-blasted tree trunks, trailing mists, impressive variations of mass, and theatrical lighting to give the scene an overwhelming sense of the presence of nature. This painting, early in Cole's work, is among his finest in its perfect appreciation of light and atmosphere. Oil on panel, $18\frac{3}{4} \times 25\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston





JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT Henry Tuckerman described the picture shown at the upper left—a view near Cozzen’s Hotel from West Point—and other Kensett paintings as “memorable illustrations of the scope and character of our natural landscape. . . . The calm sweetness of Kensett’s best efforts, the conscientiousness with which he preserves local diversities—the evenness of manner, the patience in detail, the harmonious tone—all are traceable to the artist’s feeling and innate disposition, as well as to his skill.” An almost impressionistic urge is seen in the suffused atmospheric light that is subtly reflected in the waters of the Hudson. Initialed and dated 1863. Oil on canvas, 20 x 34 inches. The New-York Historical Society, New York

ASHER BROWN DURAND Born in New Jersey and apprenticed as an engraver, Durand achieved prominence in that field and as a portraitist. Then at thirty-eight he began a career as a landscape painter. The formal composition of the picture shown at the lower left and on the Cover, and the introduction of cattle as subject matter, harks back strongly to Dutch and English landscape traditions, despite Durand’s stated rejection of European models in his work. Durand combines closely rendered foreground details, such as rocks and shrubbery, with tantalizingly distant vistas along woodland paths and into the hazy distance. The view is toward the southern entrance to the Highlands from Peekskill Bay. Signed and dated 1854. Oil on canvas, 24 x 34½ inches. Bequest of Mary Starr Van Winkle, 1970.58

FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH Church, a native of Hartford, Connecticut, began studying art at the age of sixteen and worked with several local painters before moving to Catskill in 1844 to study with his idol, Thomas Cole. Church settled in New York in 1847 and set out on a distinguished career that included extensive sketching tours of North and South America, Europe, Egypt, and the Middle East. From Cole, Church learned the cursive handling of paint that characterizes his beautiful oil sketches such as the one illustrated above. An English critic wrote perceptively that his landscapes were “great in conception, brilliant in execution, and with a finer perception of the beautiful, a more tender and elevated poetical feeling, than have been displayed in this branch of the art since Turner.” This winter scene looks south and west from Church’s estate, Olana, above Hudson, downriver toward the Catskills, and comes as close to perfection as anything done by American artists painting in the field. About 1870. Oil on paper, 11⅝ x 18⅛ inches. Olana Historic Site, New York State Historic Trust



GEORGE INNESS Inness was born near Newburgh, New York, and raised in Newark, New Jersey. His interest in art led him away from his father's grocery business to study drawing under John Jesse Barker, a Newark artist and drawing master. In 1846 he studied briefly with Régis Gignoux in Brooklyn. Inness made frequent study and painting trips to Europe, the first in 1847. As a result of these trips, he was strongly influenced by the French Barbizon landscapists, who had developed a broad plein-air style of realistic painting. Inness became the foremost exponent of their work in America and moved away from the minute techniques advocated by Durand and his followers. The scene of this painting is near Kingston, New York, on the Hudson's western shores. Signed and dated 1868. Oil on canvas. Private collection, New York

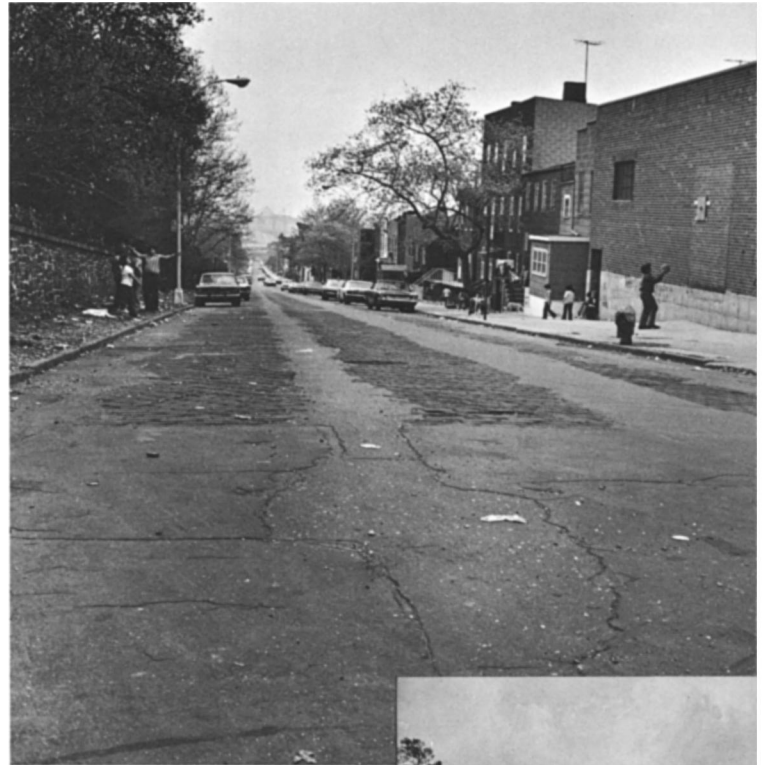
This article is adapted from *The Hudson River and Its Painters* by John K. Howat, the Metropolitan Museum's Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture. Published this spring by The Viking Press, the book includes 102 illustrations, seventy of them in color, accompanied by descriptive captions providing information about the artists and localities, as well as an essay on America's first school of landscape painters. There is a preface by James Biddle, President of The National Trust for Historic Preservation, and a foreword by Carl Carmer. 208 pages, 12 x 9½ inches. Hard-bound, \$25; special price for Museum members, \$18.75

PROGRESS?

These pictures dramatize what can happen when modern “development” invades New York’s beautiful landscape. Three of the nineteenth-century paintings illustrated in the preceding article are juxtaposed with a photograph of the same location as it appears now. The modern photographs were taken by C. P. Noyes.



View toward Storm King from Fort Putnam – 1853 and 1972



The bay and harbor of New York from Gowanus Heights, Brooklyn, in 1840 and the same view today



The bay of New York and Governor’s Island from Brooklyn Heights in the 1800s and today (note the Statue of Liberty in the far distance)

JACQUES LIPCHITZ

his life in sculpture

through September 12

The rare opportunity of seeing and hearing an artist discuss his works is offered by the Museum's current exhibition of the sculpture of Jacques Lipchitz. A charming and articulate raconteur, Lipchitz has cooperated in a series of interviews, filmed by television producer Bruce Bassett, which have been incorporated into a special educational installation that makes use of the most up-to-date audiovisual techniques. Throughout the show, the works of art are accompanied by Mr. Lipchitz's own words, telling the story behind their creation, their place in the evolution of his style, and the ideas that inspired them. This material provides insight into Lipchitz's career, which spans the twentieth century, and into his aesthetic aspirations.

Most of the commentary presented in the show is included in *My Life in Sculpture* (The Viking Press, 1972), an autobiography by Lipchitz with Harvard H. Arnason, art historian and guest curator of the exhibition. The following passages adapted from the book give the flavor of Lipchitz's candid analysis of his life and sculpture.

The period during the First World War was a very exciting time in Paris, with artists, philosophers, and poets continually discussing and arguing about the work with which they were involved. Although I myself am little concerned with abstract theory, I certainly do think of cubism as a form of emancipation essentially different from artistic movements that had preceded it. Thus, impressionism, while it was a revolutionary technique, was still an essentially naturalistic movement concerned with a precise examination of the nature of light and the effect of changing lights on representational scenes and objects. Cubism did add a new dimension to painting and sculpture, a dimension that changed our way of looking at nature and the work of art. This fact, which is now, in the 1970s, accepted as a commonplace, was then a tremendous revelation to me and to the others who participated in cubism.

I am frequently asked about the relationship of my cubist sculpture to the cubist paintings of Picasso, Braque, Gris, and others. Certainly I was influenced in my ideas by cubist painting which had preceded me, particularly by that of Picasso. When artists are living and working as closely together as we were in those years, they are all obviously influenced in some degree by one another; they all derive motifs from one another. I remember one day when Juan Gris told me about a bunch of grapes he had seen in a painting by Picasso. The next day these grapes appeared in a painting by Gris, this time in a bowl; and the day after, the bowl appeared in a painting by Picasso. This was not simply imitation; we were all working with a common language and exploring the vocabulary of that language together. But I must reiterate that

the ideas of cubist sculpture were essentially different from those of cubist paintings, in some ways simpler and more direct, since cubism lent itself so naturally to sculptural construction.

It is natural that we should have been interested in machines, not only because we were seeking in our painting and sculpture something of the clarity and precision of machine forms but because this was a moment in history when the machine loomed very large in our consciousness. It was the beginning of modern technology and much of modern industrial expansion. I was never interested, like the futurists, in machine forms as symbols of speed and power, but rather as models for a kind of clarity and order. This was also the approach of Léger in his machine paintings. We tended to angularity of design not only as a consequence of the machine aesthetic but as a reaction against the soft, curvilinear emphases of art nouveau.

I remember in 1915 when I was deeply involved in cubist sculpture but was still in many ways not certain of what I was doing, I had a visit from the writer Jules Romains, and he asked me what I was trying to do. I answered, "I would like to make an art as pure as a crystal." And he answered in a slightly mocking way, "What do you know about crystals?" At first I was upset by this remark and his attitude, but then, as I began to think about it, I realized that I knew nothing about crystals except that they were a form of inorganic life and that this was not what I wanted to make. In my cubist sculpture I always wanted to retain the sense of *organic* life, of humanity. I think that Romains wanted only to warn me as a young artist that my thinking was too simple, and his warning worked.

By the early 1920s I knew that I needed to move beyond the simple cubist vocabulary I had learned and to find a new content, a new personal expression. Abstraction was never enough for me.

This was not a conscious program of changing from one thing to another. I did not deliberately set out to develop a new subject matter. I was, in fact, strongly against what I consider the excesses of fantastic subject that the surrealists were beginning to

explore. To me, fantasy has a particular and somewhat disagreeable connotation, that of uncontrolled Freudian experience. I oppose to it what I think of as imagination or content, which I was seeking and have continued to seek, but imagination with a human base and the control of my hard-earned formal vocabulary. I recognize that there is an element of surrealist expression in the art of many different cultures. Even so traditional a work as the Venus de Milo is, in fact, greatly distorted in terms of human proportions, and could be called surreal. This is even truer of the highly elongated Romanesque sculptures; we could argue that a table, which is made out of a wood tree trunk but changed out of all recognition, is a surrealist object.

I have even experimented with a kind of semi-automatism. I remember an assistant of mine, Isadore Grossman, who was also attending school and who reported that a professor of his had dropped a lump of clay on the floor and then, picking it up, said, "That's a Lipchitz." This intrigued me to the point where I started taking melting pieces of wax, cooling them in a basin of cold water, and then molding them blindly with my hands to see what happened. Sometimes some extremely interesting images emerged, but the crucial point was that I then had to take these first suggestions and, with the knowledge and control I possessed, transform them into a work of sculpture.

But I still go back to this question of a personal vocabulary which the artist must learn, which must become an innate part of him, whether he realizes it or not, and which then controls or directs everything that he does. I never deserted the subject, even in my most abstract, cubist sculptures, because I have always believed that there must be communication between the artist and the spectator. The spectator must in the last analysis be able to see the human image in the sculpture, to be able – even though it requires a long and painful process of education such

Text Copyright © 1972 by Jacques Lipchitz and H. H. Arnason. Reprinted with the permission of The Viking Press

Overleaf: Jacques Lipchitz and an assistant in his studio at Hastings-on-Hudson, a few miles up the Hudson River from New York City. It was built after his New York studio was destroyed by fire in 1952. Photograph: George Moffett – Lensgroup





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as the artist had to go through in making the piece – to come to an understanding, a meeting of the minds.

Although I had been collecting African sculpture (whenever I had any money) ever since I first came to Paris, there are few of my works in which I feel a definite influence from Negro art. I have never believed that African primitive art had much real influence in the development of cubism. Certainly Picasso, Braque, and others, including myself, saw and were intrigued by examples of primitive art in the Ethnological Museum; and Picasso and Braque, particularly in their protocubist paintings, used some details from primitive art, as in the masklike heads in the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*. But the greatest source for cubism was unquestionably in the late works of Cézanne; you can see immediately the relationship between these works and the first precubist paintings of Braque and Picasso.

My collection of objects from all periods in history is of immense importance to me, even if some of the pieces in it are not so important, so significant in themselves; but it is like a university to me. I have learned something from every work, something that has helped me to understand certain things about sculpture in general and about my own sculpture in particular. It is a sculptor's collection, and this is why I hope it can be kept together. I think that future generations of artists and art students can learn about themselves and their own work by studying it.

When I speak of my learning from the collection, I do not, of course, mean taking subjects or even motifs. Rather, what I have learned by constantly handling these objects and looking at them, living with them, are such things as forms, techniques, the ways in which an ancient or primitive sculptor-artist approached his material.

For instance, I am continually fascinated by the ways that ancient and primitive peoples experimented with bronze; how frequently daring and imaginative they could be in their handling of the material, much more so than many bronze sculptors of Renaissance and modern times. I have been a bronze worker now for over sixty years, constantly in foundries, since bronze is a material I love, and I think I have seen and

myself experimented with almost everything that can be done in bronze. Yet, when I say this, I realize that I am constantly finding new possibilities. I have tried other metals, such as aluminum, but bronze is my first and continuing love because it is so alive, so direct, warm, and fluid. Each piece has my fingerprints all over it.

One of the greatest tragedies of my life was the burning of my New York studio in 1952. It was on a Saturday and I was in Hastings with two visitors when, about seven o'clock, there was a call from the New York police department saying that my studio had burned and that I had better come at once to see what could be saved. This was the fifth of January, 1952. One of my visitors drove me to New York but we could not go into the building that evening because it was too dangerous, so we returned early the next morning and it was horrible; the studio was practically nothing except a hole in the ground. Almost everything in the studio had burned away, and some parts of plaster that had not burned were demolished. I had some bronzes stored in adjoining rooms and these, fortunately, were untouched, but the studio no longer existed. Papers and paintings, including a Courbet I had recently bought, had been thrown out onto a balcony by the firemen. My pieces from my collection, some of my best African pieces that had not yet been unpacked, were destroyed along with a portfolio of drawings, such things as three Cézannes, a Goya ink drawing, and others by Poussin and Gris. My first reaction was that of horror, as though my entire life, all my children, had been destroyed, but then this changed to a kind of fury, a passionate need to begin working again to recover all the lost years.

I do not come to my studio and wait for inspiration, for angels to speak to me and tell me what to do. Every day I begin to work immediately, real and important work, work that involves things and learning and teaching other people. If the result is successful it is not through any accident but through the experience of a long life of thought, experiment, and continual hard work.

RECENTLY ACQUIRED AMERICAN PAINTINGS

Seascapes and landscapes, splendid still lifes and charming portraits, paintings by colonial artists as well as by masters of the Hudson River and American impressionist schools – all are brought together in a small exhibition of the most significant eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works acquired by the American Paintings and Sculpture Department over the past five years. The show features such celebrated painters as Benjamin West, Gilbert Stuart, Winslow Homer, and Asher B. Durand. Their works, along with the others on display, are evidence of the standards of excellence that guide Museum curators in selecting new material for the collections.

Marine painting has had many skilled practitioners in the United States: men who have lived by the sea, been upon it, and learned to capture its essence on canvas. Among the most successful was William Bradford, born and brought up near the whaling port of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Bradford was taught drawing, coloring, and composition by a local Dutch marine painter named Van Beest, but his intimate knowledge of ship's rigging and the tempestuous character of sea and sky, dramatically rendered in *Shipwreck off Nantucket* (below), came directly from personal experience. There are few American pictures that depict so powerfully the force of a storm and the horror of shipwreck.

The Metropolitan Museum owns a relatively small number of American marine paintings, and most are not of great significance. The purchase of this one represents a major step toward rectifying the situation.

John K. Howat



Painted about 1859-1860. Oil on canvas, 40 x 64 inches. Purchase, John Osgood and Elizabeth Amis Cameron Blanchard Memorial Fund, Fosburgh Fund, Inc., Gift, and Maria DeWitt Jesup Fund, 1971.192

PATERSON, NEW JERSEY

THIRTY PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE A. TICE

through July 31

George A. Tice, a native of Newark, has been photographing the city of Paterson, off and on, for about five years. Thirty photographs from this series will be on view in the Prints and Drawings Galleries, documenting, austere and sensitively, a city whose magnificent natural setting forms a disturbing contrast to the shoddiness of its manmade environment.

These photographs of the city of Paterson, New Jersey, came about indirectly out of a trip to California which I took in 1965. California is a land of brilliant sunlight; all of it looks newly built. After several months I came home to the East, and the return produced a revelation. The strong light and sharp colors of California had prepared my eye for a fresh look at this older world. Here was time-colored country, almost an ancient civilization, and the atmosphere which enveloped it was predominantly gray. Then, too, it was a world which was everywhere patterned by men, both living and dead. As I looked, I began planning to photograph the obviously dominant expression of the eastern seaboard – the city.

I selected Paterson. What originally attracted me were its two natural areas, Garret Mountain and the Passaic Falls. Paterson lies in the valley below the mountain, from the top of which the entire panorama of the city can be seen, like a scale model of itself. As I looked out and down from Garret Mountain, I experienced a sense of the city from its creation – how it began, what its past was like, the patterns of its present, and even, perhaps, some suggestion of its future.

But even from Garret Mountain it is possible to see that the city of Paterson does not match the magnificence of its natural setting. There is a clear deterioration here. Greed and indifference have tarnished the noble promises of the site. I thought of all the people who have passed through Paterson, spending their lives on the way, the diminishing quality of their lives, and I thought also of the people yet to come. Everything I wanted to photograph was spread out before me, waiting to be rediscovered through the camera.

I did not start my city enterprise with immediacies, the details of time, setting, and people. I began by photographing the rock formations on Garret Mountain, and the corrupted majesty of Passaic Falls. Then, gradually, I began to record the streets and buildings of the Paterson of today. I attempted the impossibility of being at once subjective and objective, so the pictures might serve both as document and interpretation.

Car for Sale. 1969. Lent by George A. Tice, L 1972.19.1



The use of the bulky 8x10 view camera which I employed for most of the photographs was time-consuming. I seldom managed to expose more than four or five sheets of film in a single day. On occasion I found myself a minor street attraction; a small crowd of children would gather round and agitate to look under the focusing cloth. Or, with an irrepressible human enthusiasm, they would demand: "Hey! Mister! Take my picture!"

The people on Main Street were photographed with a 35 mm. hand camera. As I walked down the street I released the shutter on impulse, hoping to reveal the momentary figurations of the city's people against the timelessness of the mountain and the pattern of the city. And then, at the end of the day, I would return home realizing that photographing a city in this personal fashion – a private project undertaken over a long span of months and even years – is quite different from any usual professional assignment of a week or so. I found also that as the group of Paterson pictures grew, my own ideas were changing. The usual commercial assignment week allows for little more than first impressions. But as I returned to Paterson I began to appreciate the complexity of detail my camera was recording. Dispassionately it revealed both beauty and ugliness, and I began to see that each of those attributes was a function of the other.

I believe, too, that it was good that I did not live in Paterson. That would have been too close to the subject; I would have tended to become a part of it. Vision might have become casual, and when vision does that, you fail to see the significance of the commonplace. Repeated and periodic visits return you to the scene refreshed, vision acute and responsive.

February 12, 1972

George A. Tice

From the introductory statement to *Paterson* by George A. Tice
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WILL BRADLEY AND THE POSTER

ROBERTA WONG

Curatorial Assistant
Prints and Photographs

“The people who still scoff at posters and poster collecting (and they are not a few), should bear in mind two things: First, that the great periods of art were those in which it allied itself most intimately with the daily life of the people. . . . Second, that many of the best artists have devoted their serious attention to the subject of the poster, and that therefore, we laymen should give serious attention and intelligent appreciation to their work in this line.”

An exhibition of posters, illustrations, book designs, and printing by Will Bradley will be on view in the Prints and Drawings Galleries through July 31

1. *The Twins*, by Will Bradley (1868-1962), American. 1894. Zincograph, 20 x 14½ inches. 57.627.4 (12)

The remarks quoted at the left, written by a Chicago artist in 1896, capture the sentiment of an age that encouraged one of America's finest illustrators, Will H. Bradley, to experiment with the poster at a time when this art form underwent a dramatic revival both here and abroad.

The poster was not new to this country. Barnum and Bailey billboards and theater posters had long adorned city streets and country barns and brought realistic pictures of stage or circus drama to the people.

About 1890, however, European placards began to appear in the United States, primarily in the form of covers and advertisements for such magazines as *Harper's Bazar* and *Century*. Through these the American public was introduced to the latest developments in poster design – strong, simplified compositions, often enlivened by bold color.

The American poster renaissance was formally initiated in April 1893, when Edward Penfield, the young art editor of Harper's, published the first of his monthly designs advertising *Harper's Magazine*. Their success can be judged by comments in *Publishers' Weekly*: “The advertising poster is fast becoming a work of art. . . . Harper and Brothers are said to have received so many requests for the series of monthly colored posters of Harper's Magazine that no more are obtainable.”

The publishing industry was the principal patron of the new art movement. Following the precedent set by *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *Century*, and *McClure's*, the avant-garde Chicago publishers, Stone and Kimball, commissioned Will Bradley in 1894 and 1895 to design seven posters to advertise their magazine, *The Chap-Book*.

Bradley's first poster in this series, *The Twins*, and his second, *The Blue Lady*, reveal why his designs were so successful (Figures 1, 3). Simple and direct, they are composed of strong outline and flat patterns. The rhythm of his line varied: usually it was the dynamically curvilinear configuration found in *The Twins* (the earliest American art nouveau poster), but it could be angular as in *The Blue Lady*. Bradley drew and arranged his compositions, as one contemporary observed, according to “the Japanese way of making pictures by a few colored plain surfaces.” Although Japanese art had been studied and appreciated in this country for several decades, Bradley was one of the first to assimilate the principles behind Oriental design, two-dimensionality and asymmetry. He absorbed these lessons along with similar concepts that he saw in some contemporary English black-and-white illustration and American pen-and-ink work.

Bradley's clearly separated color areas and large, flat, simple shapes facilitated the job of the technician who printed the poster. In addition, Bradley would carefully select a few colors that could produce a variety of tones: in *The Blue Lady*, the red ink used in the lettering when combined with the blue of the background became a rich black-purple in the trees and the woman's dress. By restricting the number of colors, Bradley reduced the number of printing plates needed for the finished work (and thus its cost).

Bradley's *Chap-Book* posters and later designs for *The Echo* (Figure 2)

The Chap-Book



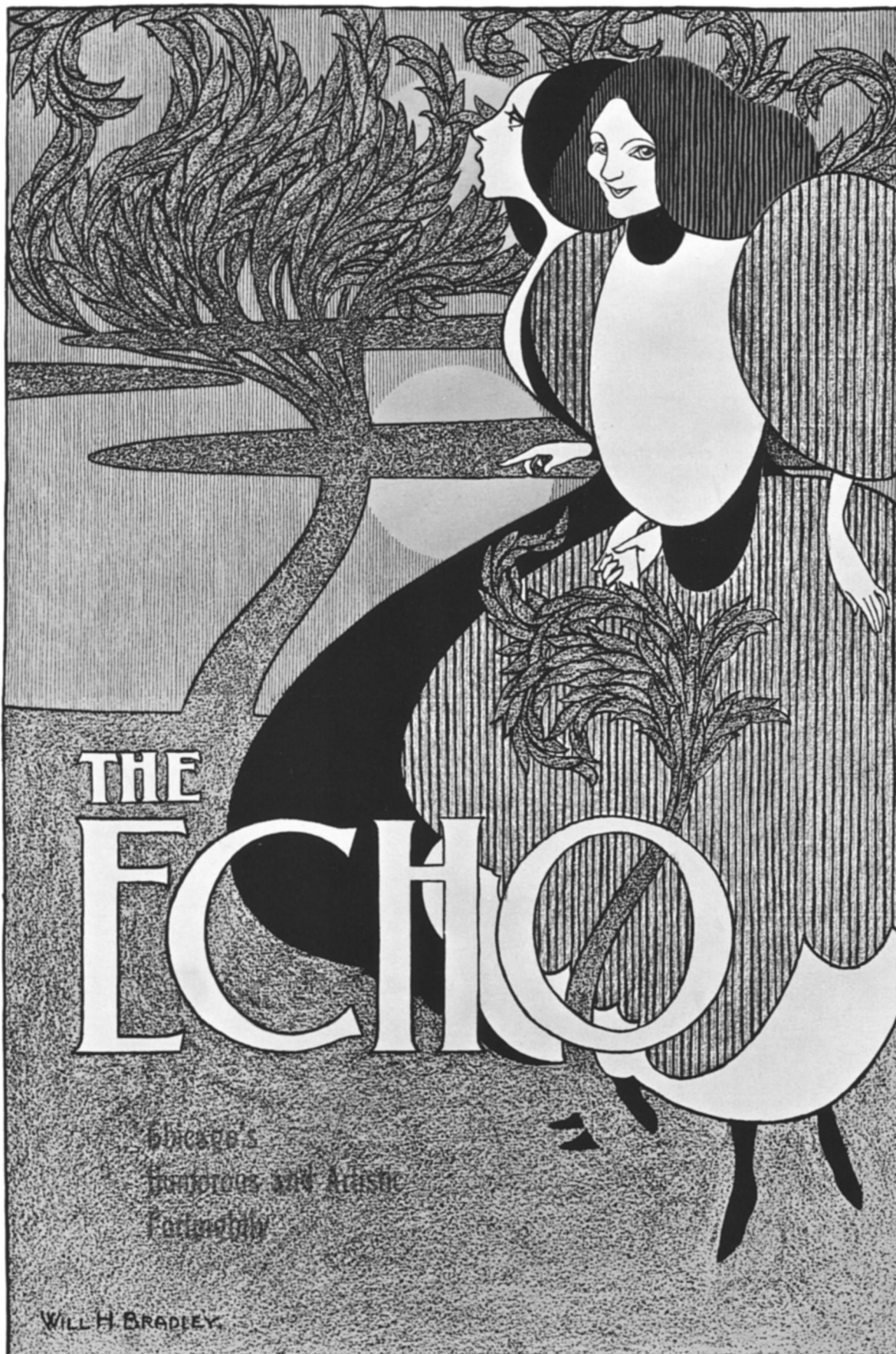
and *Bradley: His Book*, along with those by Penfield for *Harper's*, stimulated the growth and influenced the development of the American poster movement. Each had his own group of followers: Bradley led a troop of art nouveau enthusiasts, while Penfield was imitated by designers who were working in the manner of Alexandre-Théophile Steinlen and Toulouse-Lautrec. Together they turned out a remarkable number of posters in 1895 and 1896.

By 1896, poster production had become a big business in the United States, supporting about twenty companies with a capital investment of almost \$3,000,000. The magazines that proliferated in America during the 1890s helped the industry thrive. As *The Poster*, one of the contemporary publications, reported, "Harper's have issued over a hundred different posters, the Century Company as many more, and Lippincott's something like fifty." Eyecatching placards advertised *The Lark*, *Moods*, *The Philistine*, and *M'lle New York* in bookstore windows.

The ubiquitous poster became part of daily life: up-to-date hostesses gave poster parties to which guests came dressed as subjects from their favorite placards. Poster exhibitions sprang up everywhere from New Hampshire and Connecticut to Chicago, and many featured Bradley's work. In March 1896, the Kit-Kat Club of New York showed two hundred Bradley "originals," and, according to *The Echo*, "On the opening evening several hundred prominent artists visited the rooms, and willingly or unwillingly, all came to the opinion that Mr. Bradley is the greatest decorative designer in America today."

Many contemporaries reiterated the accolades Bradley received at the Kit-Kat Club and compared him favorably with other recognized artists. "The well-known Chicago artist, Will H. Bradley . . . was using bold blacks connected with sweeping lines and elaborate ornaments a year or two before the weird Englishman [Aubrey Beardsley] was heard of." Some believed that he, in fact, surpassed his English mentor, for he "eliminated the utter insanity, utilized the decorative effect of striking contrasts, and . . . made a reputation as a designer, bringing some good out of the mess of evil."

Like any new and popular art movement, the poster had aroused considerable controversy, and the art nouveau poster was particularly vulnerable to artistic and even moral condemnation. Not a few derided the unfamiliar style, and Bradley, as America's leading decorative illustrator, provoked more than his share of critical wrath. For example, when *The Twins* appeared, a reviewer for the *American Printer* wrote, "The very funniest thing out is the 'Chap-Book' poster. No mortal man can possibly tell without deliberately investigating, what it means or what it represents. Ten feet away one would be willing to make oath that it was a very, very red turkey gobbler very poorly represented. On closer inspection it seems to have been intended for two human beings, one at least being in a red gown very short at both ends. . . ." Some critics who acknowledged Bradley's talents as an artist and poster designer lamented his association with this



REFERENCES

The introductory quotation was taken from Claude Fayette Bragdon's article, "Poster Hunting in Paris" in *Poster Lore* 1 (1896), p. 24. S. C. de Soissons noted the relationship between Bradley's work and Japanese design in "William H. Bradley and His Art" in *The Poster and Art Collector* 1 (1898), pp. 158-160. Comments on Bradley's designs can be found in *The Echo* 2 (1896), p. 294; *The Poster* 1 (1896); *The Inland Printer* 14 (1895), p. 560; and *The American Printer* 19 (1894), p. 174. Bradley's analysis of the poster movement was drawn from interviews conducted by *The Sunday Inter Ocean* (October 27, 1895), p. 13; *The Book Buyer* 13 (1896), pp. 233-236; and *The American Chap-Book* 1 (1904).

3. *The Blue Lady*, by Bradley. 1894. Zincograph, 20 x 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Gift of David Silve, 36.23.20

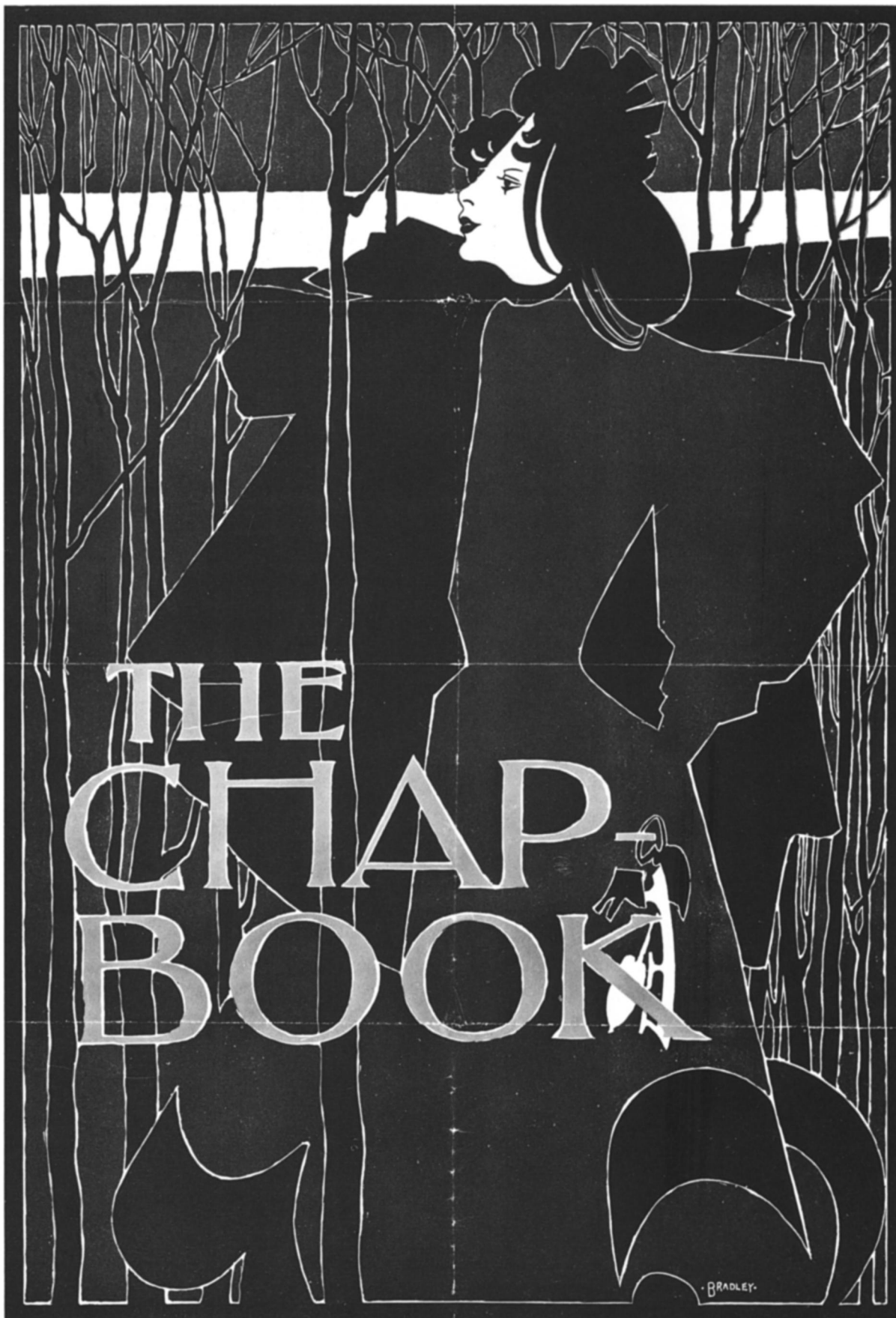
"grotesque craze." Their aversion to art nouveau prompted them to predict that the surfeit of strange, curvilinear designs would precipitate the demise of the poster.

Bradley took a stand between those who believed that the poster was the first sign of a renaissance and those who foresaw the downfall and degradation of this art form. He was skeptical about the fame won by poster artists of his day and critical of much contemporary design that he analyzed as: "A certain amount of color, some meaningless lines, and more or less bad drawing. . . . Today a gallery is devoted to an exhibition of paintings, and how one wishes he was represented, but the jury has said 'no.' Tomorrow the same gallery opens its doors to a poster exhibit, and behold, one's work is there; it blazes forth in all the colors of the rainbow. The public flocks to see it. They comment upon it. It is criticized and praised. Result - more or less notoriety."

Yet he did not consider the poster an artistic dead end. "If we can only look over all the work, study it and understand it, we will find that we are on the threshold of a new art, an art composed of three things: First, and paramount, the individuality of the artist; second, clear and vigorous thought; third, the utmost simplicity of the mode of expression." It is quite remarkable that Bradley, working at the end of the nineteenth century, perceived this as the important contribution of the new art movement. The poster had begun to educate the eye of both artist and public to appreciate simple and striking, often rather abstract compositions. Unlike many nineteenth-century artist-theoreticians who advocated simplicity in their books while they indulged in Victorian extravagances in their work, Bradley carried out this idea in his designs. The beauty and sensitivity of his arrangement of rhythmic line and pattern, and the directness of his compositions make his posters appreciated as much today as they were in the 1890s.

We can also sympathize with his attitude toward his own work and his philosophy of the so-called minor arts. "The painting of frescoes, stage scenes, or of posters for selling dried fish, may not be in itself a high grade of art, but even in such work there are things which may educate us, if we regard them aright." When an artist designed a placard, Bradley believed that he had to consider both business and artistic needs, for he had to "appeal to the people who will want to buy dried fish, and consider the position in which that poster will find itself when displayed in a fishmonger's store. If the poster is to attract buyers for a periodical or book, there must be an appeal to different impulses and sensibilities." Concessions made to such mundane requirements would not diminish the quality of his work, for he asserted that a good advertisement must be good art.

Once again, he realized these views in his work: he decorated book shops, grocery stores, and city streets with posters that caught the attention and delighted the eye. Although the American poster movement began to wane by 1897 and Bradley practically ceased to design them by 1907, his regard for the poster and his own work continue to speak to us in the second half of the twentieth century.





OUTSTANDING
RECENT
ACCESSIONS

19th-Century
Architecture for
The American Wing:
Sullivan and Wright

*1. Staircase from the north stair-
well of the Chicago Stock Ex-
change, American Wing Restricted
Building Fund, 1972.50.1. Photo-
graph: Richard Nickel*

Many significant American buildings are faced with destruction every year, and only rarely can museums preserve parts of them for public enjoyment. In the case of the recently demolished Chicago Stock Exchange Building, the Metropolitan was able to save four of its ornamental staircases. As functional units of the new American Wing, the stairs will face each other much as they did in their original setting designed in 1893 by Louis Sullivan. An even more gratifying opportunity arose when it became apparent that the house Frank Lloyd Wright built for Francis Little could not be preserved on its spacious site overlooking Lake Minnetonka outside Minneapolis. The Museum prevented the total loss of this important landmark by purchasing the building outright. Its vast living room will be installed in the American Wing with a view into Central Park, and the remaining rooms are being made available to other public institutions.

American architecture came of age in the late nineteenth century with Henry Hobson Richardson, Louis Henry Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright – each an architect of immense stature at home and demonstrable influence abroad. Richardson is remembered for his monumental masonry designs and shingled houses; Sullivan for his skyscrapers and architectural ornament; and Wright for, among other things, his organically conceived “prairie houses.”

THE SULLIVAN STAIRCASES

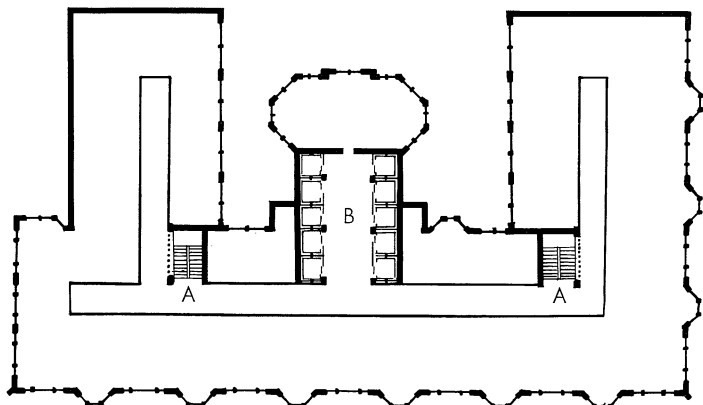
Sullivan is the ornamentalist par excellence among architects of the last hundred years. He was at his most creative between 1881 and 1895, during his partnership with the brilliant engineer Dankmar Adler. Their collaboration resulted in a series of splendid skyscrapers in Chicago: the Auditorium (1887-1889), the Schiller Building, later known as the Garrick Theater (1891-1892), and the Stock Exchange (1893-1894). After his split with Adler in 1895, Sullivan designed only one more major commercial building.

The Stock Exchange (Figure 2) was one of Adler and Sullivan’s most important commissions; except for the Auditorium, it was the largest building they ever undertook. The steel-framed structure is immortalized in architectural history as the first skyscraper using a caisson foundation, an innovation of Adler’s to solve a problem arising from the site’s location. The presses of the nearby *Chicago Herald* would have been damaged by the vibrations of pile drivers ramming wooden pilings into the Chicago clay, so Adler introduced a type of caisson to replace pilings on the western side. Large pipelike cylinders were sunk into the ground while the earth within them was being removed. The resulting shafts were filled with concrete and served to support the footings of the building. This procedure later became accepted practice in Chicago.

Louis Sullivan conceived of the skyscraper as divided into three distinct parts – the base, the shaft, and the cap – as opposed to the undifferentiated wall treatment of the now-popular slab or tower types. The exterior walls of the Stock Exchange were clad in terracotta, originally an eggshell white rather than the brownstone black (an accumulation of dirt) to which recent generations were accustomed. A two-story arcade above the ground-floor storefronts forms the base of the building. Since these masonry areas would be visible to the pedestrian at close hand, Sullivan covered them with exquisite, abstracted floral ornament. Ten stories above, he capped the building with a squat colonnade and a bold, projecting cornice, crudely detailed: the ornament was to be “read” from the ground about two hundred feet below.



2. *Chicago Stock Exchange Building*, by Louis Henry Sullivan (1856-1924), American. 1893-1895. Reproduced from *The American Architect and Building News* (October 16, 1897)



3. Typical office floor plan of the Chicago Stock Exchange (individual offices have not been delineated). From Randall J. Biallas, *Chicago*. A indicates the staircases, and B the elevators

Inside, the great Trading Room was enriched with molded plaster ornament and stenciled wall coverings. The bank of elevator cages at the center of the building and the staircases at either end were of elegantly decorated ironwork (Figure 1). It is four complete sets of these steps—two from either end—that the Museum has acquired.

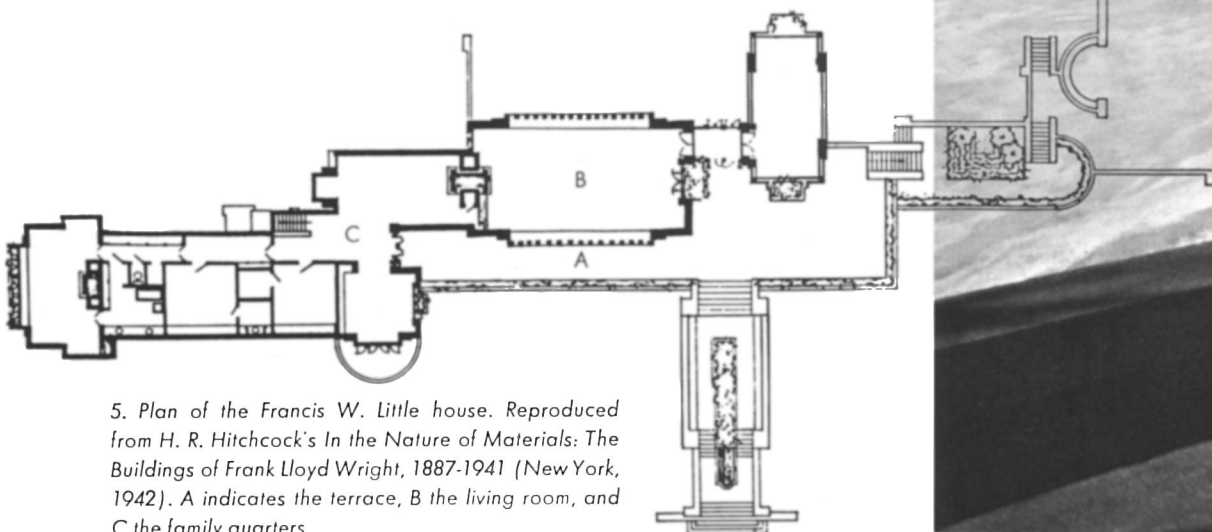
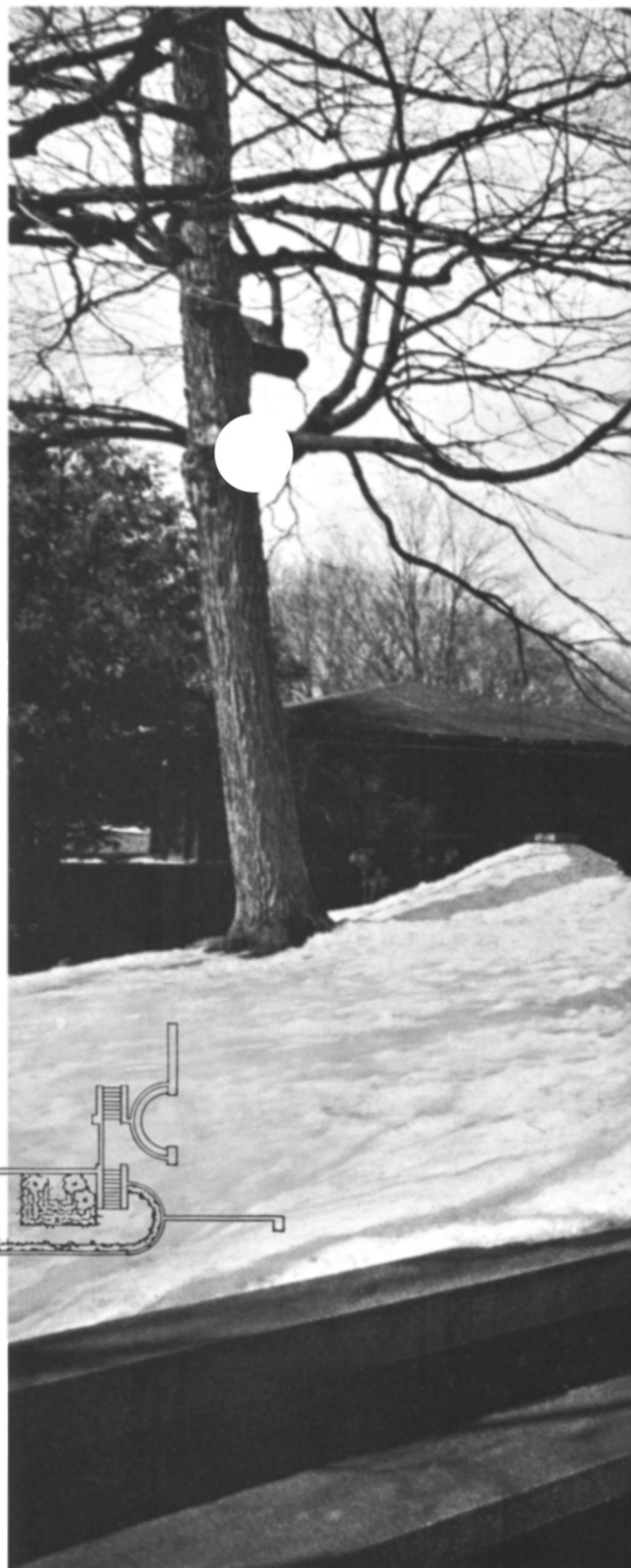
The staircases ran continuously from the third to the thirteenth floor. Between floors each one consisted of two flights ascending in opposite directions, linked by a rectangular landing. The staircases were placed at the junctures of the main axis with the long arms of the E-shaped plan (Figure 3). Sullivan took advantage of this location to omit the wall at the outer side of each stairwell, thus exposing to view the flanks of the staircases and affording him more opportunities to decorate. The surfaces of the massive stringers that support the steps display star or pinwheel motifs, and the shieldlike balusters repeat on a large scale the circle-within-an-oval of the stringers.

Except for the white marble treads and mahogany handrails, the staircases are made of pieces of cast iron bolted or riveted together. The iron was cast by The Winslow Brothers Company's Ornamental Iron Works in Chicago, then the leading American foundry for architectural ornament. The firm's elaborate illustrated catalogue of 1894 featured two recent works: an entrance gate (in the full-blown Louis XV style) that had been awarded highest honors at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and the stairs and elevators of Chicago's Stock Exchange. The design of these last was proudly acknowledged to be Sullivan's. The stairs were electroplated in bronze and then coated with asphaltum varnish—a colored finish that served to darken the recessed portions of the design and highlight the raised.

THE WRIGHT LIVING ROOM

Frank Lloyd Wright came to Chicago in 1887. For six years he worked as a devoted disciple of and design assistant for Louis Sullivan on the Auditorium, the Stock Exchange, and other commissions. Then he established his own office and switched immediately from commercial to domestic architecture. His first few months in Chicago had been spent with J. L. Silsbee, a Massachusetts architect who had brought the Richardsonian style of shingle-clad houses with him to the Midwest. Wright's first auton-

4. *Francis W. Little house*, by Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), American. 1912-1915. Photograph: Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates, New York



5. *Plan of the Francis W. Little house*. Reproduced from H. R. Hitchcock's *In the Nature of Materials: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1887-1941* (New York, 1942). A indicates the terrace, B the living room, and C the family quarters



omous work, a home for himself in the Oak Park suburb of Chicago in 1889, was shingled but already showed a strong sense of order and linearity hitherto lacking in such buildings. The characteristic features of his “prairie style” soon evolved – generally, a low, horizontal mass, hugging the ground; specifically, wide, overhanging roofs, grouped windows with leaded-glass designs, and natural wood and brick for interior trim. The Robie House of 1909 is perhaps the best known of the dozens of such houses Wright built in the Chicago area.

In 1910 Wright left his family and Chicago for Europe, where the German publisher Wasmuth issued a famous portfolio of drawings of Wright’s work, changing him overnight from a Midwestern architect into an international figure. Returning in 1911, Wright settled in Wisconsin and began his new residence and office, Taliesin I. The next year he designed a summer house in the prairie style for F. W. Little, a client for whom he had built a house in Peoria a decade before. In 1914 construction was proceeding well, when tragedy struck: Wright’s wife and children were killed, and Taliesin burned, by a demented servant. Thereafter Wright shifted his sights to Japan, immersing himself in the Imperial Hotel project in Tokyo. The first phase of his career was over.

Francis Little had acquired several acres of land on a bluff high above Lake Minnetonka, where he wanted a house that would serve for both intimate family life and large-scale entertaining. Wright’s solution emphasized the separateness of the two functions within a plan that had an overall coherence. Approaching the house by the main steps, one saw a large, freestanding pavilion with hipped roof extending way out on all sides, dominating the scene (Figure 4). It housed a great living room intended for entertainment and the musical recitals so loved by the family. The living quarters of the house were barely visible off to the left. The visitor now had a choice – straight ahead into a vestibule, then left into the great living room; or left and along the outer flank of that room to another set of doors leading directly into the family quarters (Figure 5). On the inside, public and private sectors are connected only by a narrow door adjacent to the living-room fireplace, but on the outside they are effectively linked by the terrace path. The monumental steps and the screened porch were placed at right angles to the predominant axis of the house, counteracting its tremendous length.

It is the public part of the house – the vast, self-contained living room, 35 by 55 feet – that the Museum will reerect in New York (Figure 6). Its spatial effect is breathtaking: the ceiling floats high above the beholder; light floods the room – natural light during the day, soft electric light at night. A bank of exquisitely designed leaded-glass windows made up of twelve interrelated panels is centered in each side wall. Clerestory windows repeat the leaded-glass motifs, and a window seat runs the full length of the bank of glass below. The focus of the flat-coved ceiling is a series of five stained-glass skylights with the original electric lighting behind them. Throughout the room the architectural trim is finely executed in native white oak, and its old wax finish remains intact. Much of the Wright-designed furniture – standing lamps, easy chairs, and tables – survives in the room. It should be remembered that Wright conceived of his interiors as a totality, the furniture playing an integral part in the design.

As the Bicentennial celebration of the American Revolution approaches, the American Wing is making plans for a new building in which to display the arts of the United States and give special recognition to the masters of American architecture. Will the incorporation of works by Sullivan and Wright in the Metropolitan Museum lead to increasing popular support in the battle to save other outstanding buildings threatened with destruction? We hope so.

Morrison H. Heckscher
Assistant Curator, The American Wing

6. Living room from the Francis W. Little house, seen from the fireplace end. Purchase, Estate of Emily C. Chadbourne, 1972.60.1. Photograph: Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates, New York





