

Thomas Eakins and The Metropolitan Museum of Art





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BY H. BARBARA WEINBERG

WITH A CONTRIBUTION BY JEFF L. ROSENHEIM

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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Front and back covers: Detail of *The Champion Single Skulls* (see
fig. 8)

Frontispiece: Attributed to Susan Macdowell Eakins. Thomas
Eakins in His Chestnut Street Studio, ca. 1891–92. Modern print
from dry-plate negative. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,
Philadelphia. Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection. Pur-
chased with the partial support of the Pew Memorial Trust

Director's Note

Little appreciated in his lifetime, Thomas Eakins is today recognized as one of America's finest painters, a respected sculptor and photographer, and an influential art teacher. This *Bulletin* accompanies an exhibition of his oil paintings, watercolors, and drawings owned by the Museum and a selection of our holdings of photographs associated with him and his circle.

Like the exhibition, this *Bulletin* honors the sesquicentennial of Eakins's birth in Philadelphia in 1844 and the Museum's early and continuing interest in his work. Eakins's *The Chess Players*, of 1876, presented by the artist to the Metropolitan in March 1881, was only the second painting by him to enter a museum's collection. Two months before Eakins's death in 1916, the Metropolitan's curator of paintings, Bryson Burroughs, bought his *Pushing for Rail*, of 1874, for the Museum and the following year organized a memorial exhibition with the help of his widow. This one-month display, which maintained the Museum's pattern of commemorating American painters, opened in November 1917. It provided the first overview of Eakins's achievements as a painter and the model for the ensuing memorial exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, an institution with which he had a more extensive connection.

Burroughs also arranged for the Metropolitan to buy two canvases from the memorial exhibition, furthering the growth of one of the most important collections of Eakins's paintings. Our oils by Eakins, exhaustively documented by Natalie Spassky in *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, volume II (1985), articulate his development and include several that are considered among his most significant. Perspicacious purchases and generous gifts have also made the Metropolitan a leading repository of Eakins's watercolors; we possess seven of his twenty-eight known works in the medium. Photographs, which the Museum began to acquire in 1941, enrich Eakins's representation at the Metropolitan.

The exhibition inaugurates the Eugénie Prendergast Exhibitions of American Art, which will focus on aspects of our collections. Like Susan Macdowell Eakins, the artist's widow, who worked tirelessly to build her husband's reputation, Mrs. Prendergast donated to museums throughout the country works by her husband, Charles, and her brother-in-law, Maurice, and generously supported scholarly inquiry. The Metropolitan is grateful to Jan and Warren Adelson, whose grant in honor of Mrs. Prendergast's one-hundredth birthday, in August 1994, established the exhibition series. Mrs. Prendergast died on September 7, 1994.

Philippe de Montebello
Director



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BY H. BARBARA WEINBERG, *Curator, American Paintings and Sculpture*

Thomas Eakins (1844–1916) is esteemed as one of America's greatest painters for his powers of characterization and his mastery of technique. He is also appreciated as a sculptor and as an innovative photographer. During his lifetime his efforts suffered such profound public indifference that he could rightly complain in a letter of April 1894, "My honors are misunderstanding, persecution, and neglect, enhanced because unsought." He was recognized by artists who saw his works in large group shows, but he received no prizes between 1878 and 1893. He exhibited at New York's National Academy of Design beginning in 1877 (after rejections in 1875 and 1876), but he was not elected an academician until 1902. Before his death only one monographic exhibition of his work was held, and it attracted little notice. Few critics other than friends had praised him without qualification, and no article devoted to his work had appeared.

Eakins pioneered his generation's pursuit of French academic study, but he revealed himself to be much more devoted to academic process, especially investigation of the underpinnings of appearances, than to academic product. He avoided the picturesque, exotic, or ideal subjects that brought fame and fortune to contemporary academics, French or American. Instead he enlisted laborious anatomical and perspective studies to portray familiar figures in traditional portrait formats or in genre settings, and to paint genre scenes with strong portrait elements. Fearlessly probing physiognomy and character, Eakins performed physical and

psychological dissections in his portraits. Accordingly, he received few commissions, and some friends and acquaintances who agreed to pose refused to accept their portraits as gifts.

At odds with his compatriots because of his ordinary subjects and his uncompromising realism during the 1870s and 1880s, Eakins was marginalized because of his style during the 1890s. It was then that many younger painters modified academic principles by reference to the French Impressionists' vigorous brushwork, brilliant palette, and commitment to the mundane. Although Eakins anticipated the American Impressionists' interest in modern life, his somber colors, deliberate technique, and studio light made his paintings seem old-fashioned.

Fame as an artist eluded Eakins, but he did gain a reputation as an innovative teacher. Between 1876 and 1886 he created a powerful analogue of the *École des Beaux-Arts* at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, emphasizing scientific study even more than did the Parisian school. Eakins's forced resignation from the Academy in 1886, his censure by the Philadelphia Sketch Club in the same year, and scandals arising from his employment of nude models compromised his stature as a teacher. Projecting his disappointments into his paintings, he turned away from genre settings and subjects to concentrate on austere portraits, and infused these with melancholy. Yet his students carried his creed to a younger generation, including Robert Henri and his circle.

The invention of Eakins's reputation as a great American artist began only after his death. The efforts of Bryson Burroughs and Lloyd Goodrich, influential figures in the New York art world, were

1. Self-portrait of Thomas Eakins rowing a scull, detail of *The Champion Single Sculls* (see fig. 8)



2. Detail of *Pushing for Rail* (see fig. 9)

crucial. Burroughs, who spent mornings painting and afternoons working as curator of paintings at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, organized the first memorial exhibition of Eakins's works at the Museum in 1917. Overseeing the Metropolitan's entire paintings collection from 1909 until shortly before his death in 1934, Burroughs also affirmed Eakins's importance by acquiring several of his oils and watercolors and by writing about him in the Museum's *Bulletin*. Goodrich, twenty-nine years younger than Burroughs, was also a painter and a friend of Burroughs's son-in-law, painter Reginald Marsh. In the early 1920s he joined the small coterie of Eakins admirers around Burroughs. Goodrich published on Eakins in *The Arts*, a magazine supported by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and began to write a comprehensive account of the artist in 1929. This monograph, informed by Goodrich's visits with Mrs. Eakins and with the artist's friends and sitters, appeared in 1933 in a series on American artists sponsored by the new Whitney Museum of American Art. It brought Eakins to a wider audience than had seen his works at the Metropolitan's 1917 exhibition or at the ensuing memorial exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy, or than had read articles about him.

Goodrich's pioneering study also determined the way in which Eakins was perceived by critics and scholars through the late 1960s. Like H. L. Mencken, Van Wyck Brooks, and other writers of the time, Goodrich was guided by a cultural-nationalist agenda that aggrandized "usable" elements in older American art and literature to encourage current efforts. What was considered usable was rugged, masculine, and national; what was disdained was genteel, feminine, and cosmopolitan. Reinforced by the isolationism of the postwar 1920s and the insecurity of the Depression-ridden 1930s, cultural nationalists heroized Eakins for his directness, his very lack of success, and his devotion to the Schuylkill rather than the Seine. In order to rescue him from the matrix of a period that they considered tainted by European influences, the cultural nationalists built a case for his independence. They aligned him—as an exhibition organized by Alfred H. Barr at New York's Museum of Modern Art did in 1930—only with Winslow Homer and Albert Pinkham Ryder, painters who had more fully resisted cosmopolitan impulses.

Since about 1970, interest in Eakins has been bolstered by renewed sympathy for figuration in painting and sculpture and by growing pride in all aspects of

American art. The cultural-nationalist bias that had inflected, and had even served to create, earlier American art history has been challenged by younger scholars. Gerald M. Ackerman, Kathleen A. Foster, Elizabeth Milroy, and I have recognized the enthusiasm of Eakins and hundreds of other American artists for French academic lessons and the influence upon them of such a Beaux-Arts teacher as Jean-Léon Gérôme. In the late 1970s catalogues of two leading collections of Eakins's works appeared: that of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, founded on works preserved by Eakins's acolytes Charles Bregler and Samuel Murray, purchased by Joseph H. Hirshhorn in 1961 and 1965, respectively, and given by him to the Hirshhorn Museum in 1966; and that of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, based on gifts from Mrs. Thomas Eakins and Mary Adeline Williams in 1929 and 1930. Growing interest in Eakins was served by a large exhibition organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1982 and seen also at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Responding to the newer scholarship, Goodrich revised and expanded his monograph on Eakins in 1982, somewhat modifying the mythic portrayal created almost fifty years earlier; his newer study remains the standard source on the artist. Pursuing another revisionist agenda in a book published in 1983, Elizabeth Johns analyzed Eakins's subjects in relation to the ethos of Philadelphia, further deflating the cultural-nationalist idea of Eakins as dissident hero. His originality and power are better appreciated, I agree, when judged in relation to the context in which he worked than in invented isolation. As art history has sought interpretive models in cultural history, psychoanalysis, and literary criticism, Eakins has proved susceptible to many different approaches. Perhaps only Homer nourishes such a varied scholarly and critical enterprise.

The Eakins industry has been stimulated by a flood of new materials, the bulk of a huge hoard that Bregler rescued from the artist's house after Mrs. Eakins's death in 1938. Bregler sold some items, including those pur-

3. Detail of *The Champion Single Sculls* (see fig. 8)



chased by Hirshhorn in 1961, but he left the remainder to his widow at his death in 1958. Mrs. Bregler refused access to the collection, vacillated about its disposition, but finally sold more than 3,000 manuscripts, letters, drawings, paintings, studies, sculptural maquettes, and photographs pertaining to Eakins to the Pennsylvania Academy in 1985. The Academy's 1989 publication of the manuscripts in Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection and their analysis by Foster and Cheryl Liebold have illuminated Eakins's artistic process and personality. Publication by Susan Danly, Liebold, and others of the photographs in Bregler's collection should offer many revelations; their book appeared in October 1994, after this *Bulletin* was put into production. Foster's forthcoming publication of the other works of art in the Bregler collection, including studies for works owned by the Metropolitan, will enhance our understanding of Eakins's methods and his expressive aims.

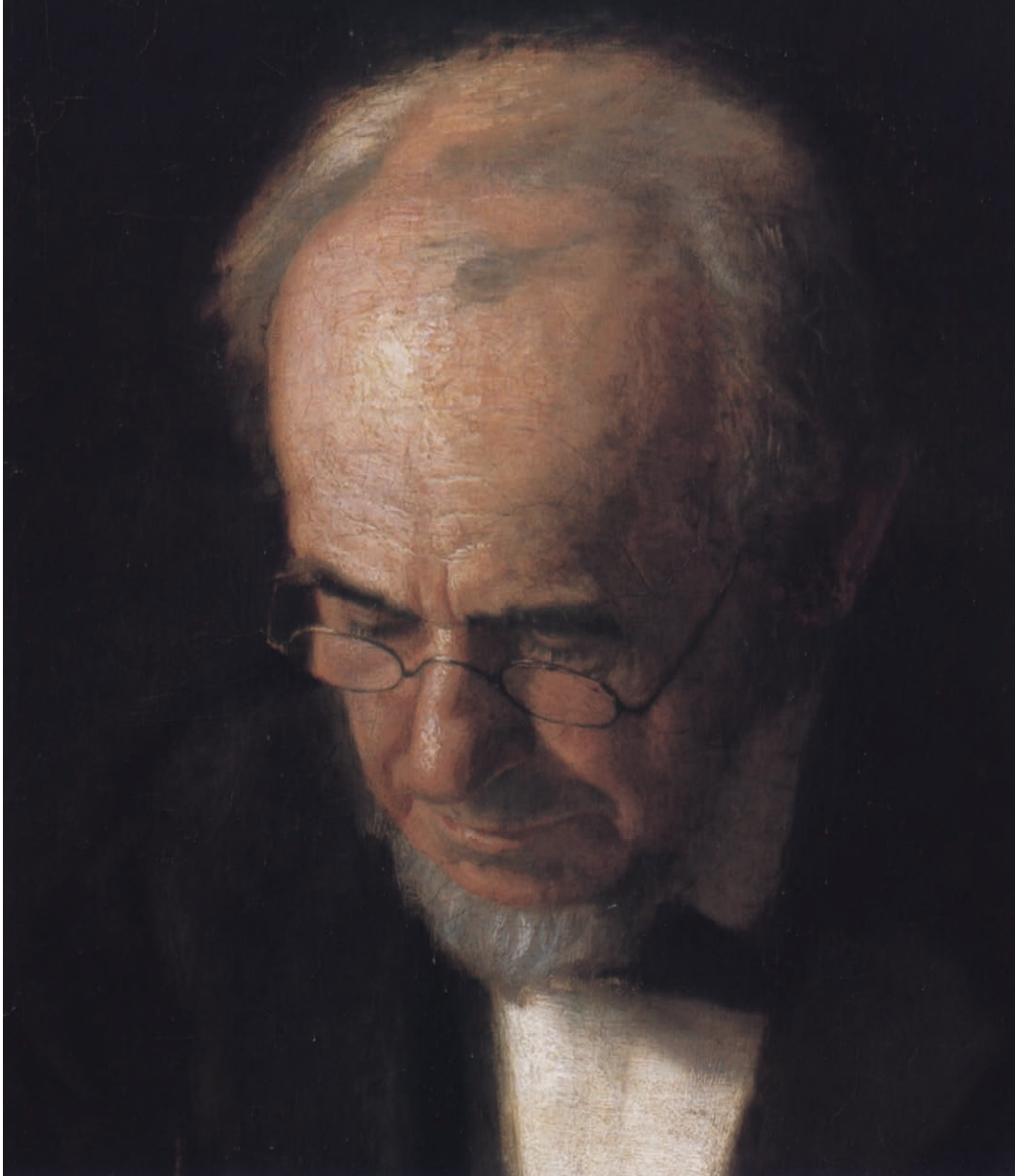
The outlines of Eakins's life and art are well known, and the range of his accomplishments is amply illus-

trated by the Metropolitan's holdings. He was born on July 25, 1844, in Philadelphia, where he spent most of his life, to Caroline Cowperthwaite Eakins and Benjamin Eakins, a writing master and for fifty-one years a teacher of calligraphy at the Society of Friends' Central School. Particularly after the premature death of his mother in 1872, following a period of mental illness, Eakins maintained a deep and durable devotion to his father. He honored their relationship, for example, by portraying him as the central figure in *The Chess Players* in 1876 (fig. 14) and inscribing the painting "Benjamini. Eakins. Filius. Pinxit. 76" ("Benjamin Eakins's son painted this in '76"), and by creating a powerful portrait of him as *The Writing Master* in 1882 (fig. 5).

Having excelled in his studies, especially French, mathematics, and mechanical drawing, Eakins graduated in 1861 from the challenging Central High School, Philadelphia's first public secondary school. Many of his classmates enlisted to serve in the Civil War, but Benjamin Eakins, endorsing his son's wish to become



4. Bertrand Gardel, detail of *The Chess Players* (see fig. 14)



5. Benjamin Eakins, father of Thomas Eakins, detail of *The Writing Master* (see fig. 15)

an artist, paid for a substitute so that young Eakins could continue his education and assist him as a calligrapher. Income from the elder Eakins's investments and real-estate rentals would always provide crucial support to an artist who made few sales and had a salary only from 1878 to 1886, when he taught at the Pennsylvania Academy.

Eakins registered for the Academy's antique-cast drawing class in winter 1862–63 and for the life class in spring 1863, supplementing his art instruction with anatomy lectures and demonstrations at Philadelphia's Jefferson Medical College. Encouraged by his father and probably by such friends of his father as Bertrand Gardel, a French teacher and the figure at the left in *The Chess Players*, Eakins left for Paris in the fall of 1866. Cutting through red tape with letters of intro-

duction from Gardel and others, he obtained permission from Gérôme, the most popular of the three painting teachers at the recently reformed École des Beaux-Arts, to enter his atelier in October as the second American pupil. Eakins did not matriculate in the École proper, failing the entrance examination in March 1867 and never attempting it again. He reinforced his command of anatomy and draftsmanship under Gérôme's tutelage but struggled when he began to paint in the spring of 1867, at the age of almost twenty-three. Eakins augmented academic instruction with travel in Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and Belgium. In March 1868 he undertook a brief period of study in the sculpture atelier of Augustin Alexandre Dumont at the École des Beaux-Arts. About the end of July 1869 he began a month's work in the indepen-

dent studio of Léon Bonnat, a young portraitist whose anti-academic style was based on the manner of Velázquez, Jusepe de Ribera, and Rembrandt.

Having completed his studies in Paris, where the damp climate had undermined his health, Eakins spent the winter of 1869–70 in Spain. During a few days in

Madrid in early December, he immersed himself in Spanish art at the Prado, and then set off with Philadelphia artist friends William Sartain and Harry Humphrey Moore for six months of work in Seville. *Carmelita Requeña* (fig. 6), painted there soon after his arrival, is a solidly modeled, richly colored oil study of



6. *Carmelita Requeña*, 1869. Oil on canvas, 21 x 17 in. (53.3 x 43.2 cm).
Bequest of Mary Cushing Fosburgh, 1978 (1979.135.2)



7. *A Street Scene in Seville*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 62 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 42 in. (159.4 x 106.7 cm). Collection of Erving and Joyce Wolf

the seven-year-old daughter of a family of street performers. It reflects the impact of Bonnat's portraits and assisted Eakins in constructing his first large-scale, multifigured painting, *A Street Scene in Seville* (fig. 7). This painting's composition echoed some of Gérôme's, its fluid strokes recalled Bonnat's lessons, and its handling of outdoor light suggested that the young artist was willing to wrestle with complicated problems, even if he was not yet fully equipped to solve them.

After returning briefly to Madrid and Paris in the late spring of 1870, Eakins left for Philadelphia in

mid-June, a few weeks before the Franco-Prussian War began. He established his studio at 1729 Mount Vernon Street, where his family had lived since 1857, and began to produce outdoor scenes that included male friends engaged in the sports he himself pursued; meditative indoor images of relatives and friends, usually women; and portraits.

The fledgling painter's technical struggles seem to have been resolved in the first major canvas he completed after his return, the celebrated *The Champion Single Sculls* (*Max Schmitt in a Single Scull*) (fig. 8), painted during the winter of 1870–71. This is the first

8. *The Champion Single Sculls*
(*Max Schmitt in a Single Scull*),
1871. Oil on canvas, 32¼ x 46¼ in.
(81.9 x 117.5 cm). Purchase,
The Alfred N. Punnett Endow-
ment Fund and George D. Pratt
Gift, 1934 (34.92)







and best-known work in a series of eleven carefully plotted oils and watercolors that Eakins painted on the subject of rowing, with which he is uniquely identified. *The Champion Single Sculls* (meaning “The Champion, Single Sculls”) probably commemorates Schmitt’s victory in an important race held on Philadelphia’s Schuylkill River on October 5, 1870. Schmitt, an attorney, oarsman, Eakins’s high-school classmate, friend, and rowing and swimming companion, appears in his shell *Josie*, named after his sister, at ease in a practice session, his figure cast into crystalline relief by the late afternoon sun. Eakins (fig. 1) rows in the middle distance in a scull with the stern bearing his name and the year, 1871. His presence, along with details of setting and activity on the river, add genre elements to the portrait of Schmitt.

Although its subject is mundane and marvelously original, *The Champion Single Sculls* indicates Eakins’s reliance on Beaux-Arts principles. Like paintings of more exotic types by Gérôme, it depends upon pencil sketches, oil studies, and a stagelike composition, and it focuses on nearly nude figures. An academic armature is also evident in the almost surreal stasis, the meticulous treatment of details and surface, and the luminous light that freezes rather than invigorates forms.

Eakins gave the painting to Schmitt and then encouraged him to send it to an exhibition that opened in April 1871 at the Union League of Philadelphia, the city’s principal display space while the Academy was closed from 1870 to 1876 for construction of its new building. Together with a now-



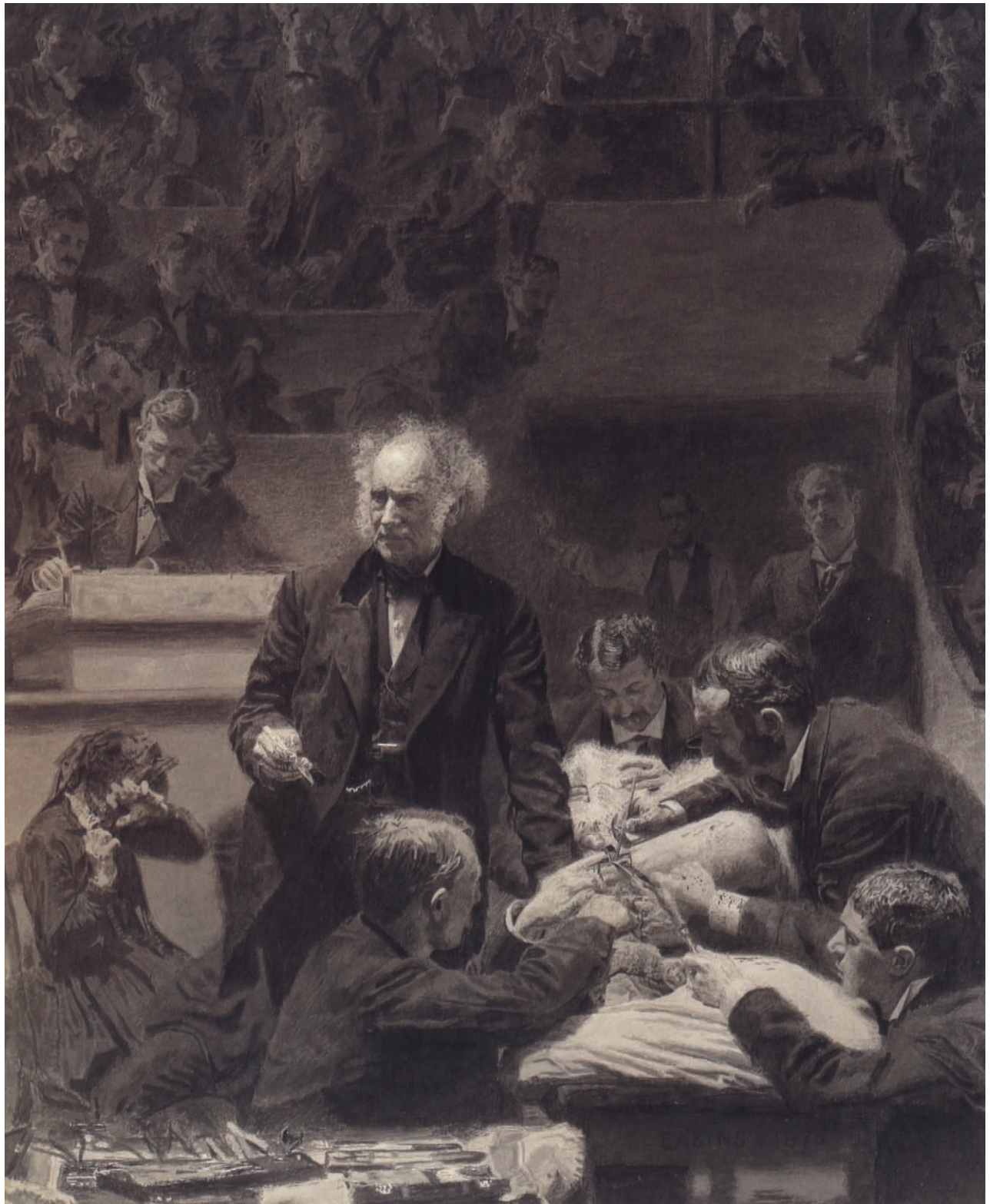
9. *Pushing for Rail*, 1874.
Oil on canvas, 13 x 30 $\frac{5}{16}$ in.
(33 x 76.4 cm). Arthur Hoppock
Hearn Fund, 1916 (16.65)

unlocated portrait loaned by a friend, it marked Eakins's professional debut—and his last showing in Philadelphia until 1876.

Eakins based other works of the early 1870s on popular masculine activities that he himself enjoyed. In September and October 1873 he made excursions with his father and his father's friends to hunt for waterfowl in the tidal marshes of Cumberland County, New Jersey, along the Delaware River estuary. The result of these trips—in addition to a severe case of malaria—was a series of paintings that includes *Pushing for Rail* (fig. 9), probably completed in the spring of 1874. Here Eakins diagrams on an unusually wide canvas key episodes in the sport: pushers guiding skiffs through the marsh with long poles, holding the skiffs in place, and spotting the birds; hunters—Eakins called

them his “old codgers”—reloading, waiting to shoot, and taking aim; and the quarry flushed from the thick reeds and rising in flight (near the picture's left edge). The friezelike choreography, classical composition, sharp focus, firm brushwork, and finely articulated detail and surface recall Eakins's academic lessons and anticipate similar elements in such paintings as *The Swimming Hole* (1883–85; Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth).

By April 1875 Eakins had put aside rowing and sporting subjects to devote his attention to a monumental portrait of Dr. Samuel David Gross, known today as *The Gross Clinic* (1875; Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia). In undertaking this virtuoso work he aimed to announce his skills in a national forum, the Philadelphia Centennial

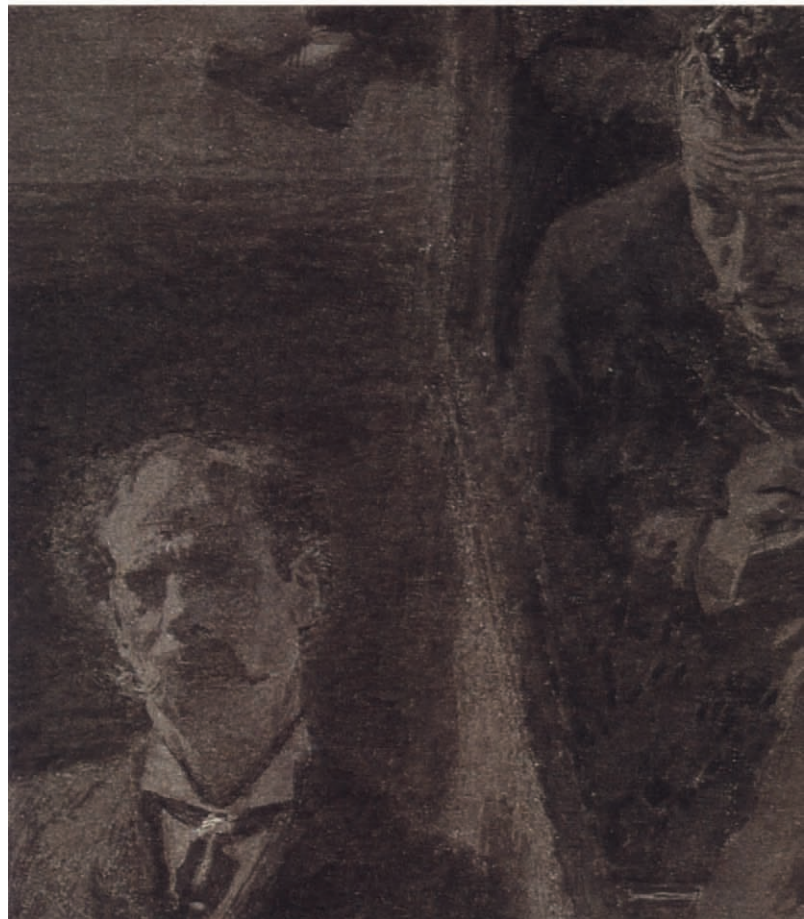
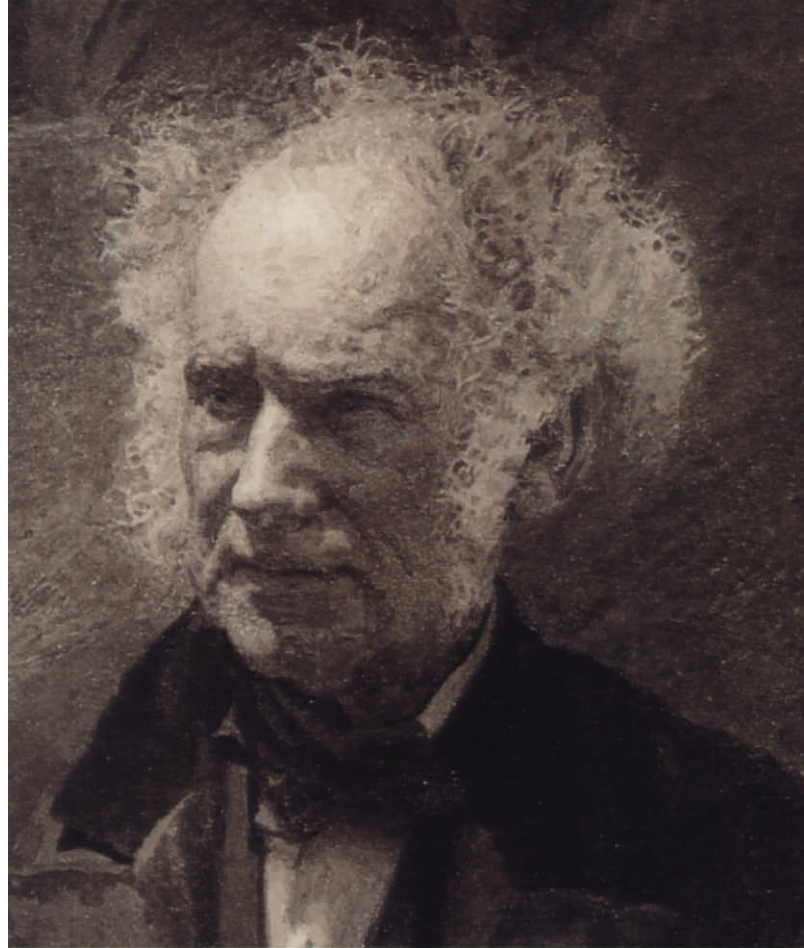


10. *The Gross Clinic*, 1875–76. India ink and watercolor on cardboard, 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (60.4 x 49.1 cm).
Rogers Fund, 1923 (23.94)

exhibition, and call attention to the need to understand human anatomy. Dr. Gross, a hero to Eakins, was a pioneer surgeon and leading professor at the Jefferson Medical College, in whose surgical amphitheater he is shown. Eakins had resumed attending anatomy lectures at Jefferson in 1873 and continued in 1874. Although the picture records a scene familiar to the artist, it invokes the tradition of Rembrandt in its chiaroscuro and refers for its subject to the Dutch master's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* (1636; Mauritshuis Museum, The Hague). However, Eakins updated his Old Master source with a modern realist's insistence on the here and now, showing Gross supervising and commenting on an operation on a living patient—whose terrified relative is present—rather than dissecting a cadaver.

Eakins so esteemed *The Gross Clinic* that he arranged for the world's best-known art publishers, the Alsatian firm of Adolph Braun and Company, to reproduce it as a collotype (or autotype, a carbon print that results from a photomechanical process). Sure that a photograph would distort the painting's details and values because "panchromatic" films were imperfect, Eakins made a monochrome replica (fig. 10) and lent it to Braun. Executed in India ink and watercolor on a sheet of cardboard one-quarter the size of the canvas, the replica documents details in the great work that have darkened over time, including the artist's self-portrait as he avidly records the scene (fig. 12). The drawing also reduces the impact of the blood in the incision and on the scalpel Gross holds.

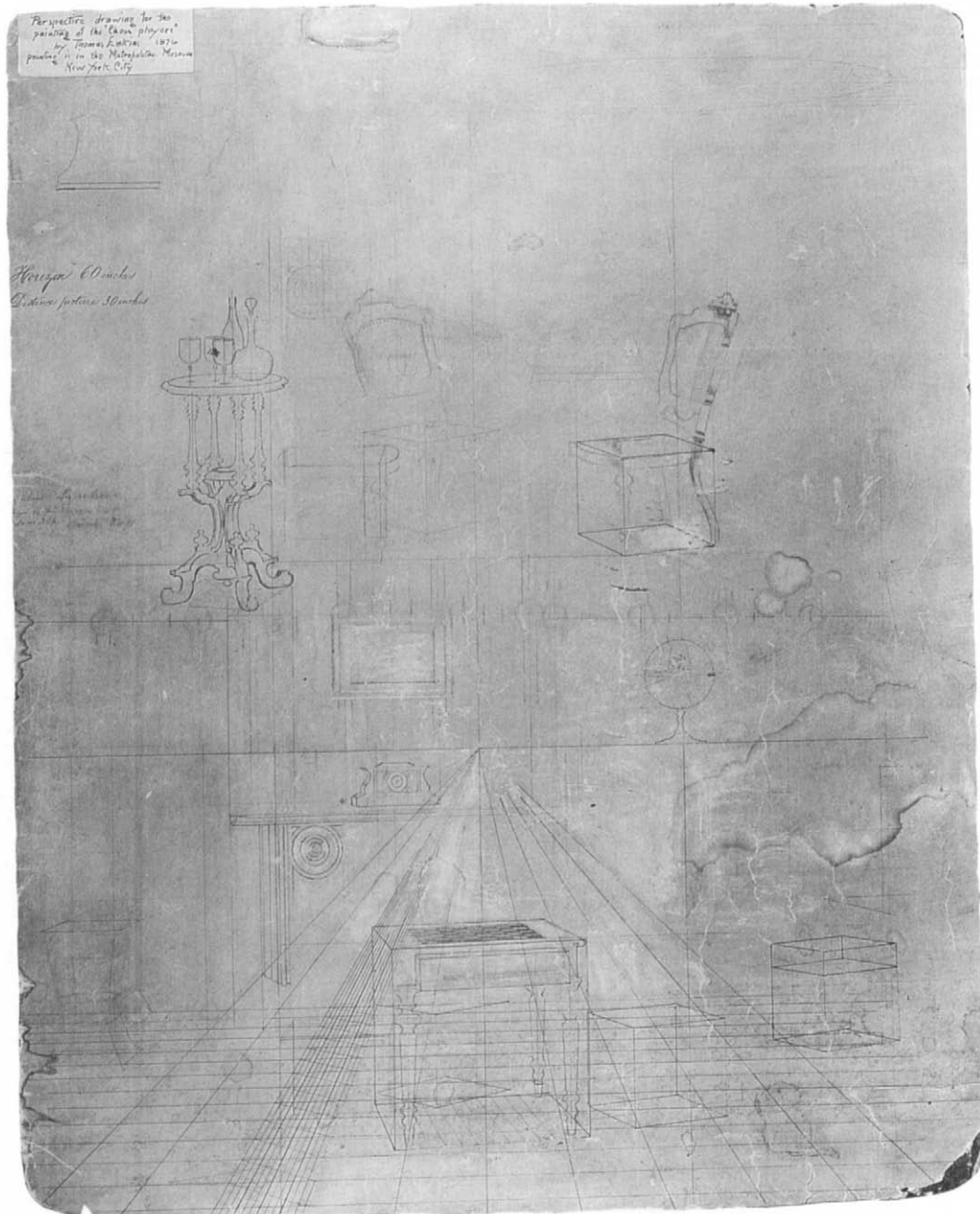
Eakins showed Braun's collotype at Philadelphia's Penn Club and at the reopened Academy in early 1876, provoking more curiosity than controversy. He put the large canvas on display at Haseltine's Gallery in late April, either just before he submitted it to the Centennial's Committee on Selection or just after he realized it might be rejected. Repelled by the painting's realism, the committee refused it a place in the American art installation in Memorial Hall; it was shown, along with the collotype, among medical exhibits in the United States Army Post Hospital. Despite its ambitious scale and the fact that only one other oil painting by Eakins is dated 1875, the artist had not painted *The Gross Clinic* on commission; he sold it in March 1878 to the Jefferson Medical College—for \$200. The size of the edition of the collotypes is not known. Eakins inscribed and gave a few to friends, and sold one for \$7,



11, 12. Above: Dr. Samuel David Gross, detail of fig. 10. Below: Thomas Eakins (right), detail of fig. 10

which may have been intended to demonstrate that he could work simultaneously on small and large scales, on panel and on canvas. In this conversation piece, Eakins portrays his father absorbed in watching a chess game between two friends—Gardel and, on the right, George W. Holmes, a painter and art teacher. The setting is the dim interior of the wood-paneled Renaissance Revival parlor of the Mount Vernon

Less problematic at the Centennial exhibition was *The Chess Players* (fig. 14), which Eakins probably began while he was painting *The Gross Clinic* and



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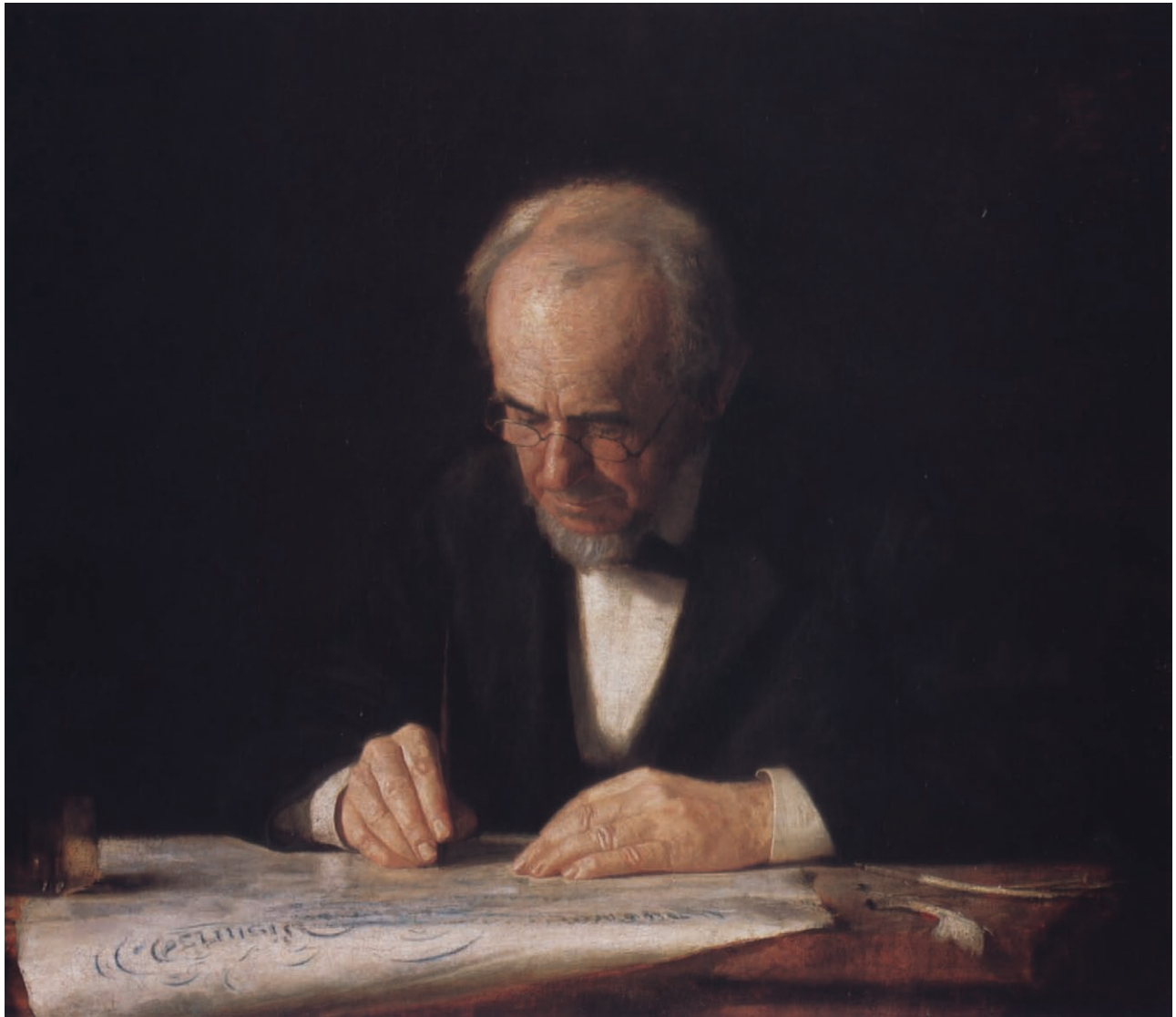
14. *The Chess Players*, 1876. Oil on wood, 11¼ x 16¼ in. (29.8 x 42.6 cm). Gift of the artist, 1881 (81.14)

Street house. Eakins dated and inscribed his homage to Benjamin Eakins in Latin on the drawer of the central table and included a tribute to Gérôme in the reproduction over the mantel of the French artist's well-known *Ave Caesar! Morituri Te Salutant* (1859; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut). *The Chess Players* refers to other works by Gérôme for its composition; to paintings by the contemporary French academic Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier for its precise detail; to scenes by Rembrandt for its chiaroscuro; to images by seventeenth-century Dutch little masters for its intimate mood; and to *The Gross Clinic* for its focus on an older male hero seen at the apex of a powerful pyramid. *The Chess Players* also manifests Eakins's laborious process of preparation, which is confirmed by a sheet in the Museum's collection (fig. 13). This drawing, which contains perspective studies for the room's

space and furnishings, is characteristic of Eakins's drawings, which were always made for specific purposes.

Proud of *The Chess Players*, Eakins sent it to the art jury for the Centennial exhibition, which accepted it along with two other oils and two watercolors. Between 1876 and 1880 Eakins showed the painting in a number of venues in Philadelphia, New York, and Brooklyn to enthusiastic reviews that echoed those received at the Centennial, and probably chose it for reproduction as a wood engraving in *Scribner's Monthly* in May 1880. He also used it to establish a relationship with The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In 1882 Eakins again made his father the focus of an important work, showing him as *The Writing Master* (fig. 15). The portrayal of a venerable professional man at his job echoes *The Gross Clinic* and other canvases Eakins painted throughout his career. The delineation



15. *The Writing Master*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 30 x 34¼ in. (76.2 x 87 cm). John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1917 (17.173)

of the sixty-four-year-old sitter's head and hands typifies Eakins's modern investigative skills. Simultaneously, the portrait is saturated with Rembrandtesque light and eloquence and suffused with nostalgia, showing the aging calligrapher engrossing a document in an old-fashioned "copperplate" hand.

Not long after Eakins achieved ease in oil painting, he began to experiment in watercolor, which was then attracting unprecedented interest among professional artists. In 1873—when Homer also took up watercolor—Eakins began to translate into the new medium the themes he had been exploring in oil, showing water-

colors beginning in January 1874. That exhibition, at the American Society of Painters in Water-Colors (renamed the American Water Color Society in 1877), marked Eakins's public debut in New York and brought his first known sale—*The Sculler* (whereabouts unknown), for \$80. Watercolors also brought Eakins his first award—a silver medal for *Negro Boy Dancing*, 1878 (fig. 17), and *Young Girl Meditating*, 1877 (fig. 19), at the 1878 Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics' Association exhibition in Boston—and favorable reviews. Only three of Eakins's twenty-eight known watercolors are dated after 1882, when his teaching responsibilities

increased and photography became his principal medium other than oil paint.

Given the technical success of *The Champion Single Sculls* and other rowing scenes, it is not surprising that Eakins turned to this subject when he began to work in watercolor. His favorite models were John Biglin and his younger brother, Barney, acclaimed professional rowers from New York, whom Eakins knew, admired, and portrayed often between 1872 and 1874. In spring 1873 he painted a watercolor, now lost, that showed John Biglin rowing and sent it to Gérôme. Responding to his teacher's criticism that the rower, depicted in midstroke, seemed static, Eakins made rag figures and a cigar-box model boat and studied them in sunlight; painted an oil sketch that shows Biglin leaning forward to begin a stroke (later reworked, 1873–74; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut); mapped

the space and the reflections in a large perspective drawing (probably 1873; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); and painted a revised, large-scale watercolor. This he sent, along with three other sheets, to the January 1874 exhibition of the American Society of Painters in Water-Colors before forwarding it to Gérôme in May. The French master liked the improved sheet, writing to Eakins in September: "Your watercolor is entirely good and I am very pleased to have in the New World a pupil such as you who does me honor."

The watercolor that Gérôme praised descended in Gérôme's family until it was sold at auction in New York in May 1990. This long-unknown sheet (1873; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, Upperville, Virginia) verified the place of the Metropolitan's watercolor, *John Biglin in a Single Scull* (fig. 16), in the sequence of



16. *John Biglin in a Single Scull*, 1873. Watercolor on off-white wove paper, 19 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 24 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (49.2 x 63.2 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1924 (24.108)



17. *Negro Boy Dancing*, 1878. Watercolor on off-white wove paper, 18 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 22 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (46 x 57.4 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1925 (25.97.1)

images. Before Eakins sent the second watercolor to his teacher, he made the Museum's watercolor as a replica, increasing the luminosity, enlivening the clouds, and omitting the signature and date. The replica remained in Eakins's possession until his death, was lent by his widow to the 1917 memorial exhibitions, and was sold to the Metropolitan in May 1924. Both watercolors of John Biglin typify the artist's approach to the medium: he painted watercolors for exhibition rather than as preparatory sketches and, inverting the normal sequence, used oil studies—in which alterations are easier—as well as perspective drawings for reference.

Eakins had worked in watercolor as a boy, probably with advice from his father and from Holmes, but his

lack of formal training in the medium and his tendency to painstaking preparation and scientific study determined his precise, dry, opaque style. Often preserving traces of underdrawing, Eakins's ambitious watercolors result from labor over the course of weeks. They are quite unlike the sketchy, spontaneous watercolors by Homer or John Singer Sargent that were seemingly executed in minutes or hours. Eakins's watercolors are nonetheless luminous, delicate, and atmospheric, and they express the medium's potential for suggesting highlights and reflections.

Eakins's deliberate watercolor technique explains why he painted so few sheets and valued them as highly as he did his oils. Encouraged by favorable commentary and by the 1874 sale and the 1878 silver

medal, he priced his watercolors from \$100 to \$300 in the 1870s and 1880s, when he rarely asked more than \$300 for his oils. He sent *Negro Boy Dancing* (as *The Dancing Lesson*) to the American paintings display at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, where it stood out among the oils that almost all the other artists submitted.

Eakins's watercolors in the Metropolitan's collection illuminate his subject interests, his technique, and his connections with several contemporaries. For example, the figures in *Negro Boy Dancing* (fig. 17), like those in the postbellum Virginia scenes by Winslow Homer, are American counterparts of European peasants painted by more cosmopolitan artists, and of the figures whom Eakins had depicted in *A Street Scene in Seville*. *Negro Boy Dancing*, whose city setting is suggested by the top hat and cane on the central chair, also elaborates on Eakins's interest in urban African Americans, shown in such earlier scenes as *Pushing for Rail*. The watercolor challenges the stereotype of black performers entertaining white patrons of vaudeville and minstrel shows. In this intimate gathering three males of different generations make and respond to their own music. The framed oval photograph of Abraham Lincoln and his son on the bare background wall suggests familial relationships among the figures and emphasizes their emancipation. Although the watercolor is based on a preserved pencil sketch, oil studies of the figures, and a perspective drawing, it appears more spontaneous than most of Eakins's watercolors, reflecting, perhaps, the influence of such a popular Spanish painter as Mariano Fortuny.

Young Girl Meditating (fig. 19) exemplifies the images of introspective women confined in shadowy interiors that Eakins created during the 1870s. The work is one of ten scenes of women in historical costumes that he began to paint in watercolor and oil media in 1876. This historical series reflects the fad for American artifacts and old-fashioned subjects stimulated by the patriotic historicism of the Centennial celebrations in Philadelphia. It also suggests Eakins's temporary renunciation of his commitment to depict modern realities of the sort that had generated antipathy to *The Gross Clinic*. Although these historical scenes are infused with sentiment, they are not sentimental and suggest that Eakins was ironic about the contrivance required to portray the past. For example,



18. Detail of fig. 17

Young Girl Meditating shows a model in an acid-green, high-waisted dress of a style current about 1830. She is not a woman of 1830, but a model dressed up for a pose and surrounded by studio props: an American Queen Anne tilt-top table like ones exhibited at the Centennial and reproduced in its wake, potted geranium plants that capture her gaze, and a small wooden bench signed and dated "77." Appealing to the taste of the time despite its critique of historical painting, the watercolor was praised in the American Water Color Society's 1878 display and, as has been noted, won a medal in Boston. In 1879 Eakins sold *In Grandmother's Time*, an oil in the historical series, to the Smith College



19. *Young Girl Meditating (Fifty Years Ago)*, 1877. Watercolor and gouache on off-white wove paper, 9 $\frac{9}{16}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (24.3 x 15.6 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1925 (25.97.2)



20. *Home-spun*, 1881. Watercolor on off-white wove paper, $13\frac{7}{8} \times 10\frac{3}{4}$ in. (35.2 x 27.3). Fletcher Fund, 1925 (25.97.4)

Museum of Art; it was the first of his works to enter a museum's collection.

Home-spun (fig. 20), for which Eakins's favorite sister, Margaret, posed in January 1881, is one of the last two works in the historical series, which he had put aside about 1878. The emphasis on craft reflects the nostalgia for simpler times, to which many painters on both sides of the Atlantic responded as the Industrial Revolution overtook home manufacture. Recalling his early mechanical-drawing exercises, Eakins devised the

problem of rendering a foreshortened view of a complicated machine in motion. Bent over her task, her head aligned with the flax bundle, Margaret is seen not in period dress but in the sort of classical costume Eakins would use for Arcadian paintings beginning two years later. In 1882 Eakins revived the composition of *Home-spun* for one of a pair of oval reliefs for a chimneypiece in a Philadelphia house. These were Eakins's first independent sculptures. By the time the relief was commissioned, Margaret had died (from typhoid fever



21. *The Pathetic Song*, 1881. Watercolor on off-white wove paper, 16¼ x 11½ in. (42.6 x 28.3 cm). Bequest of Joan Whitney Payson, 1975 (1976.201.1)

at the age of twenty-nine), and Eakins enlisted another model. During the course of his prolonged study, the new model learned to spin so well that Eakins had to break down what he had done and begin again. Eakins, like Gérôme, often explored a theme in several media and was sensitive to the fluid relationship between painting and sculpture. He used wax maquettes for reference in paintings, worked as a sculptor,

and urged students to study sculpture as he had done, in order to maintain solidity in painted figures.

Music, the subject of *The Pathetic Song* (fig. 21), was of enduring interest to Eakins, who often portrayed relatives and friends singing or playing music, and painted portraits of musicians, musicologists, and a great collector of musical instruments. This watercolor is a small-scale replica of Eakins's oil of the same title

(1881; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), which concluded the series of images of women in interiors and marked Eakins's return to contemporary subjects after the historical costume pieces. Both women shown in a parlor concert were Eakins's pupils: the singer, dressed in a lavender silk gown with ruffled trim and train, was Margaret Alexina Harrison, a member of a family of Philadelphia landscape painters; the pianist was Susan Hannah Macdowell, who would marry Eakins in January 1884. Eakins depicts the moment at the end of the song: the singer lowers the score and the accompanists (including a cellist) hold the last note. Grateful to her for posing, Eakins made the watercolor replica for Miss Harrison, in whose family it remained until about 1970. In 1885 Eakins sold the oil to Edward H. Coates, chairman of the Pennsylvania Academy's Committee on Instruction, who preferred it to *The Swimming Hole*, which he

had commissioned but decided not to accept. The price for *The Pathetic Song* was \$800 (reduced from \$1200), the highest sum Eakins had yet received and one of the few times he was ever paid for a work of art.

Taking Up the Net (fig. 22), one of a series of luminous oils and watercolors that Eakins made in 1881 and 1882, records shad fishing at Gloucester City, New Jersey, across the Delaware River from Philadelphia. Eakins replaced the rowers and hunters he had portrayed in the preceding decade with commercial fishermen—often African Americans—who work at paying out nets from scows, taking them up, or mending them. The paintings are mid-Atlantic counterparts of Homer's contemporaneous scenes of North Sea fishermen, and of more cosmopolitan painters' images of picturesque European fisherfolk. Like sculling on the Schuylkill, shad fishing was enjoyed by urban spectators who could make a short journey and watch the



22. *Taking Up the Net*, 1881. Watercolor on off-white wove paper, 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (24.3 x 35.9 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1925 (25.97.3)

activity just off shore. In *Taking Up the Net*, the classical ordering of figures, sense of frozen motion, and precise detail recall Eakins's sporting scenes of the early 1870s and suggest his reliance on study photographs. The watercolor's evanescent atmosphere is enhanced by the heavy, textured paper on which it is painted.

Eakins's shad-fishing scenes are distinguished by his sensitivity to landscape and weather. Continuing to explore these interests, he created in 1883 and 1884 a series of pastoral paintings and sculpture reliefs based on more than a dozen preserved outdoor oil sketches, studio photographs, and outdoor figure and landscape photographs. These idyllic works were inspired by Eakins's visits to the farm of his sister Frances and her husband, William J. Crowell, in Avondale, Pennsylvania, about an hour's train ride southwest of Philadelphia. As in his sporting and work images, Eakins showed figures outdoors but depicted them as nude or classically attired and engaged in bucolic pastimes. Some play on primitive instruments; others are transfixed by the melodies. The figures and their sylvan settings hint at a distant time and place, but the paintings avoid the narrative fictions that academics would have used. Unidealized models—the Crowell children and Eakins's students—proclaim the artist's antipathy to prudery at least as much as they assert his interest in the literary or the mythological. The largest and most ambitious painting in the series is *Arcadia* (fig. 23), an unfinished canvas Eakins never exhibited. Beside a brook a boy plays a panpipe and another the aulos (double flute), while a reclining, oddly formless young woman listens. The mood of pagan innocence forbids embarrassment.

Although Eakins was moved by the Crowell farm's pastoral spirit, his intention to depict Arcadia is not documented, and the Arcadian theme was first associated with the Avondale paintings by his widow in 1929. Because Eakins's expressive agenda is ambiguous and because the series' historic remove contradicts his devotion to the here and now, the Arcadian works have provoked varied interpretations inflamed by their homoerotic content and by their proximity in date to the tragic death in December 1882 of Eakins's sister Margaret. Their subject may be peculiar for Eakins, but their content is not, as they recapitulate his interests in music and in meditation and the nostalgia of his historical series. They also declare his fundamental admi-

ration of classical art, his obsession with the nude human body as a foundation for art, and his understanding that the great artists of antiquity studied living nudes, not plaster casts.

The Arcadian paintings are linked to Eakins's appointment in 1882 as director of the Pennsylvania Academy's school and his new power to enforce study of the nude. Perhaps not coincidentally, Eakins gave *Arcadia* to a friend, the painter and celebrated teacher William Merritt Chase, a colleague at New York's Art Students League from 1885 to 1889, and director of the Pennsylvania Academy's school from 1897 to 1909. He may have put aside the Arcadian project to devote himself to the commission for a related work, *The Swimming Hole*, and then have abandoned the subject of the outdoors nude when his patron rejected that canvas.

Eakins began teaching at the Academy when the school reopened in 1876. At first he volunteered to assist in the evening classes of Christian Schussele, the Alsatian-born, Beaux-Arts-trained professor of drawing and painting. Prohibited from substituting for the ailing Schussele in 1877, Eakins taught a life class at Philadelphia's new Art-Students' Union. Invited to return to the Academy and salaried as Schussele's assistant in 1878, Eakins succeeded him as professor after his death the following year. Eakins revived the Academy's emphasis on work from the nude model, which had waned during Schussele's tenure. He so extensively increased access to life study for both men and women that the Academy school was the most liberal and advanced in the world by the early 1880s.

Yet Eakins experienced growing opposition to the rigorous curriculum he enforced, his insistence on study from the nude, and his use of his pupils as models. His conflict with the Academy's board—businessmen, not artists—was exacerbated by his unkempt appearance and candid speech, the relentless realism of his works, rumors of his scandalous behavior, and rivalry from his potential successors. His perceived insubordination culminated in an incident that forced his resignation in 1886: he removed a loincloth from a male model during an anatomy lecture given in January 1886 to a mixed or women's class. Details of his "troubles" with the Academy, suppressed by his widow, have come to light in manuscripts in the Academy's Bregler collection.



23. *Arcadia*, ca. 1883. Oil on canvas, 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 45 in. (98.1 x 114.3 cm). Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot (1876–1967), 1967 (67.187.125)



24. *The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog*, ca. 1884–89? Oil on canvas, 30 x 23 in. (76.2 x 58.4 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1923 (23.139)

Susan Eakins's involvement in her husband's difficulties is suggested by her appearance in *The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog* (fig. 24), a portrait apparently begun soon after she married the artist. William H. Macdowell, a well-known Philadelphia engraver, had encouraged his daughter's interest in art and her studies at the Academy, where she worked with Schussele and Eakins from 1876 to 1883. Although Eakins deemed her one of his most promising pupils, she gave up her career after their marriage, assisting his efforts instead and returning to painting only after his death.

The portrait is set in Eakins's studio at 1330 Chestnut Street, where he and his bride lived until they moved to 1729 Mount Vernon Street in July 1886. Susan Eakins, a slender woman of thirty-two or thirty-three when work on the portrait began, is shown seated, her body slumped, her head inclined, her gaze at the spectator uncompromising, her hands holding in her lap an open Japanese picture book. She wears an old-fashioned high-waisted dress of light blue silk with



26. Detail of fig. 24



25. *The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog*, ca. 1884–86. Photogravure, reproduced in Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer, *The Book of American Figure Painters* (New York, 1886), pl. [24]

deep lace cuffs; on her extended right foot is a fuzzy bright scarlet stocking and a soft black slipper. Merciless light from the overhead skylight casts her gaunt features into relief and reveals her sunken chest, careless topknot, and the rings under her red-rimmed eyes. She is accompanied by Harry, the dark-red setter dog that Eakins had inherited from his sister Margaret; the dog is rendered with loving attention to such canine specifics as paw pads and the tiny hairs below the tip of his nose.

The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog is one of Eakins's most personal images, articulating aspects of his career by the presence of his works on the studio walls (including a plaster relief, *Arcadia*) and by allusions to sources such as Gérôme's depictions of artists' studios. The evolution of the portrait also implies its autobiographical significance. A photogravure of it reproduced in October 1886 (fig. 25) reveals a healthier, more stylish, less neurasthenic woman than appears on the canvas. After the photogravure was made, Eakins reworked the portrait, tinkering with it perhaps as late as 1889. The alterations, confirmed by autoradiographs, coincided with Eakins's crisis at the Pennsylvania Academy. Taking an image that epitomized his work as a teacher—a portrait of a star pupil who began to study with him just after he began to teach—he seems to have projected onto it his own disappointments.



27. *Cowboy Singing*, ca. 1892. Watercolor and graphite on off-white wove paper, 18 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (48.1 x 38 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1925 (25.97.5)

28. *James MacAlister* (sketch), ca. 1895.
Oil on canvas, 14¼ x 10¼ in. (36.8 x 26 cm). Bequest of Miss
Adelaide Milton de Groot (1876–1967), 1967 (67.187.206)



Exhausted after his dispute with the Academy, Eakins traveled alone in July 1887 to the B-T Ranch, on the edge of the arid badlands of the Dakota Territory, to live for ten restorative weeks among cowboys, whom he sketched in oil and photographed. The unusual destination may have been recommended by Eakins's friend, Philadelphia neurologist Horatio C. Wood, a proponent of the "camp cure" for nervous disorders and a shareholder in the ranch. A year after his return to Philadelphia, Eakins completed *Cowboys in the Badlands* (1888; private collection), a large multifigured painting based on his studies—and his last outdoor subject. Four years later he produced three pictures of his pupil Franklin Schenck, sitting in a green kitchen chair, wearing Eakins's broad-brimmed felt hat and fringed buckskin cowboy suit, and playing a banjo or a guitar. *Cowboy Singing* (fig. 27), one of these variations on the same theme, is among Eakins's last water-

colors; two related oils, entitled *Cowboy Singing* and *Home Ranch*, are in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In all three works Eakins emulates Gérôme's accounts of characters in exotic costumes—which both artists collected on their travels—and reiterates the pose Gérôme had used in painting a Turkish musician. The series recalls Eakins's portrayals of melancholy musicales and bespeaks his nostalgia for the freedom he must have enjoyed in the Dakota Territory.

After resigning from the Academy, Eakins taught until 1892 at the Art Students League of Philadelphia, founded by Academy students who had resigned with him, and lectured on anatomy at art schools in New York and Washington. He also limited the range of his subjects and the variety of settings for his portraits. Four portraits in the Metropolitan's collection exemplify Eakins's late work. *James MacAlister* (fig. 28) depicts the noted educator and president of Phila-



29. *Mrs. Mary Arthur*, 1900. Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 in. (61 x 50.8 cm)
Gift of Mary Arthur Bates, 1965 (65.83)

delphia's Drexel Institute of Art, Science, and Industry, founded in 1890. Drexel Institute was the forum for a program of twelve anatomy lectures to have been given by Eakins beginning in early 1895. However, in the third lecture, Eakins disrobed a male model in a mixed class, repeating the incident that had provoked his departure from the Academy. This time he had violated Drexel's understanding that a "nude" model would be draped in a loincloth; the remainder of the series was canceled. Eakins used the sketch of MacAlister, squared for enlargement, to paint a lifesize portrait,

which he showed in May 1896 with twenty-eight other works in his first and only one-man exhibition during his lifetime, at Earle's Galleries in Philadelphia. Once stored at Drexel but mysteriously lost, the portrait is now known only from the sketch, whose importance thus exceeds its small size and unfinished state.

Although Eakins painted half as many women as men after 1900, the Metropolitan owns two late portraits of women. These typify the bust-length format that he often used at that time. *Mary Arthur* (fig. 29), which shows the seventy-six-year-old mother of his



30. *Signora Gomez d'Arza*, 1901–02. Oil on canvas, 30 x 24 in. (76.2 x 61 cm).
George A. Hearn Fund, 1927 (27.220)

friend, artist Robert Arthur, reiterates Eakins's earlier paintings of women engaged in domestic crafts. The dramatic light, forceful modeling, and dispassionate depiction of an elderly sitter also recall *The Writing Master*, whose protagonist is similarly absorbed in a useful manual task despite his advanced years.

Signora Gomez d'Arza (fig. 30), whose subject was about thirty years old when Eakins painted her, was an Italian actress, the wife of a struggling impresario of a small theater that the artist and his wife visited in South Philadelphia's Italian quarter. With its tense posture,

theatrical dress, and brooding expression, her portrait is one of Eakins's most eloquent character studies, and it communicates his gift for psychological probing. The painting's gilded Spanish Baroque frame, apparently chosen by Eakins himself, indicates the artist's concern with the presentation of his works, which led him to design frames for some of his paintings.

One of Eakins's most haunting late portraits, also painted without a commission, is *The Thinker: Portrait of Louis N. Kenton* (fig. 31). It depicts the artist's brother-in-law Louis N. Kenton, who beginning about



31. *The Thinker: Portrait of Louis N. Kenton*, 1900. Oil on canvas, 82 x 42 in. (208.3 x 106.7 cm). Inscribed (on stretcher): 'Thinker' T. Eakins. John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1917 (17.172)

1899 was briefly married to Elizabeth Macdowell, Susan Eakins's sister. Eakins showed the picture widely after its completion in 1900 as *Portrait of Mr. Louis N. Kenton*. The descriptive title derives from an inscription on the stretcher, probably in Mrs. Eakins's hand and probably conceived in response to Rodin's popular image of 1879–89. The family's estrangement from Kenton may have prompted the shift of the painting's title from the specific to the generic, but the new title is appropriate to the universal image that Eakins created.

Little is known of Kenton, although his introspective pose suggests a scholarly person. Silhouetted life-size against an unadorned backdrop, he appears a plain-looking man in his mid-thirties, ungainly, flat-footed, absorbed in thought. He wears an austere costume: a rumpled black suit with long coat and vest, baggy trousers, a shirt with a starched high collar, a patterned dark-red necktie, and a gold watch chain across his vest. His gaze is downward, his eyes averted and obscured from the viewer by a pince-nez. The portrait's restraint, flattened space, restricted palette, and emphasis on expressive silhouette reveal Eakins's admiration of Velázquez, tempered by his durable allegiance to French academic specificity in such details as the shoes. The portrait offers a memorable image of both an individual and an archetypal modern man of the new century, proclaimed, along with the artist's signature, on the floor at the lower right.

The Metropolitan Museum's official association with Eakins dates from April 1, 1880, when he lent *The Chess Players* to an exhibition in its new building in Central Park. The loan continued until March 17, 1881, when the artist wrote to Waldo S. Pratt, second assistant to the director, "It would give me great pleasure to leave my picture of the Chess players in your beautiful galleries. If agreeable to the Directory, I should present it to the Museum." Eakins would have been aware that the Metropolitan had been interested in contemporary American art since its founding in 1870, when its trustees included Hudson River School painters Frederic E. Church and John F. Kensett. By 1881 the Museum had accepted gifts of paintings by Kensett and Edwin White from their families just after their deaths, and by Jasper Francis Cropsey, Asher B. Durand, and others from various donors while they were still alive; it had not yet accepted a gift proffered by a living American painter. Although he had been creating

impressive works for ten years, *The Chess Players* was only the second painting by Eakins to enter a museum.

Aspects of the later relations between the Metropolitan and Eakins and his widow are detailed in letters and documents preserved in the Museum's Archives and the records of its Department of American Paintings and Sculpture, in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and in the Pennsylvania Academy's Bregler collection. Many of these letters and documents are excerpted in Goodrich's 1982 monograph.

In early January 1910 Harrison S. Morris, former managing director of the Pennsylvania Academy, which had reconciled with Eakins during the 1890s, approached Burroughs on the artist's behalf. Morris inquired whether the Metropolitan would consider purchasing works from Eakins with funds made available to it by George A. Hearn for acquisitions of American paintings. Eakins himself wrote to Burroughs on



32. Detail of fig. 31

January 17, 1910: "I have always felt inadequately represented in the Metropolitan Museum. Hearing that the Museum was now buying some American pictures I have hopes that something of mine may be included." Although Burroughs suggested that Eakins solicit Hearn's support directly, no purchase ensued. When Eakins visited Burroughs in April 1910 and offered to sell *The Crucifixion* (1880; Philadelphia Museum of

Art) to the Metropolitan Museum for an unrecorded price, it was declined.

In 1916 American Impressionist J. Alden Weir reinforced Burroughs's growing enthusiasm for Eakins's works and instigated the Metropolitan's acquisition of a second painting by him. *Pushing for Rail* had been shown at Goupil's in Paris in 1875 (though not in the 1875 Salon, as has been believed) and at Earle's Galleries, Philadelphia, in May 1896, but it had not found a buyer. In February 1916 Eakins priced the painting at \$800 and put it on exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy's annual. There it was seen by Weir, president of the National Academy of Design and an ex officio member of the Museum's Hearn Fund purchasing committee, who recommended it to Burroughs. Informed of the Museum's purchase, Eakins wrote to Burroughs on April 23, 1916: "I thank you very much for the kindly interest you have taken in my work." But, he continued, "I sincerely wish the Museum had chosen a larger and more important picture, such as 'The writing master'." Burroughs, confident of the importance of *Pushing for Rail*, wrote a perceptive description of it for the Museum's June 1916 *Bulletin*. "His interest," Burroughs said of Eakins, "has noted everything . . . in a sort of Walt Whitman fashion." Burroughs would fulfill Eakins's wish that *The Writing Master* be added to the Metropolitan's collection after the artist's death, which occurred on June 25, 1916.

Eakins's will provided enough money to sustain his widow. It also stipulated that the works of art remaining in his estate—most of his accomplishment, the whole appraised at less than \$3,000—be put into a trust to be administered by Mrs. Eakins for her benefit and that of their friend Addie Williams. The two women, especially his widow, undertook the lifelong task of installing Eakins in the American artistic pantheon. Early in 1917 a movement was begun for a memorial exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy, but John Frederic Lewis, president of its board, assured that Mrs. Eakins was not in dire financial straits, did not pursue the scheme. In New York, however, Burroughs devised a plan for a memorial exhibition. Goodrich's 1982 monograph, which offers an excellent summary of the creation of Eakins's posthumous reputation, provides the basis for my discussion of that exhibition.

Burroughs broached his idea to the Metropolitan's director, Edward Robinson, writing on February 24,

1917: "As you know, I think Eakins one of the most interesting of recent American painters. His work is rather forbidding in aspect being dull in color and his point of view is very individual and there is an intensity and vigor in his pictures which make them worth while." Burroughs enlisted the help of Pennsylvania Academy curator Gilbert Sunderland Parker, who asked Mrs. Eakins for reproductions. Burroughs wrote to her in March 1917: "The photographs seen all together are to me most convincing of Mr. Eakins' rare powers. I admire his work very enthusiastically!" In April 1917 Burroughs obtained Robinson's approval and that of key trustees for an exhibition of no more than thirty pictures to open in the fall. Working through Parker with Mrs. Eakins and visiting Philadelphia to see the paintings in her home, Burroughs expanded his plan, obtaining a larger gallery and receiving the widow's keen support for the new scheme. He borrowed forty-four works from her and, with Parker's help, located and borrowed works from other collections. Even the reluctant Pennsylvania Academy agreed to lend Eakins's *Walt Whitman* (1887–88) and *The Cello Player* (1896) in response to Burroughs's urgent request.

The Metropolitan's secretary, Henry W. Kent, invited a number of critics and artists to write about Eakins for the Museum's *Bulletin*. Mariana Van Rensselaer, once sympathetic to Eakins's works, begged off, claiming that she had not looked at the paintings for twenty years. Academic Kenyon Cox declined tartly: "Eakins cared nothing for those qualities of painting that mean *art* to me. He was a scientist—and while I admire a few things of his I hate most of them and *love* none." Sargent, then visiting Boston, admitted having liked Eakins's early works but demurred: "I do not like writing for publication." Only two "appreciations" appeared in the November 1917 *Bulletin*: by Harrison S. Morris and by painter J. McLure Hamilton.

The exhibition at the Metropolitan (figs. 33, 34), which opened on November 5, 1917, for one month, offered the most comprehensive showing of Eakins's works to date. Fifty-four oils and six watercolors were densely installed in a large rectangular gallery. The works shown included: *The Gross Clinic*, the second great medical group portrait, *The Agnew Clinic*, which Eakins had painted in 1889 on commission for the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine; and Eakins's portrait of painter James Carroll Beckwith



33,34. Views of the Eakins memorial exhibition, which opened at the Metropolitan November 5, 1917, in what are now the Assyrian galleries. At the left in the top photograph is *The Agnew Clinic*. Below, among others on the long wall, are *The Thinker*, *The Gross Clinic*, *The Writing Master*, and the portrait of James Carroll Beckwith.

(1904; The Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego), bearing on its frame a memorial plume that acknowledged Beckwith's death on October 24. The fully illustrated catalogue included a sensitive introduction by Burroughs based on an article he had published in the Museum's October 1917 *Bulletin*. Situating Eakins within the international realist tradition, Burroughs

remains with me, of the beauty and elegance of your arrangement of my husband's pictures in that splendid room." Henry McBride, Burroughs's friend and an astute art critic for the *New York Sun*, wrote of the exhibition on three Sundays in November, calling Eakins "one of the three or four greatest artists this country has produced" and adding, "Under the cir-



35. Detail of *The Pathetic Song* (fig. 21). Susan Macdowell is at the right.

invited the public "to judge his manly and thoughtful art." To promote the exhibition, Burroughs had solicited encomia from Cecilia Beaux (who declined) and Robert Henri, whose long, enthusiastic response the curator sent to the *New York Times*.

Susan Eakins, who visited the exhibition with Burroughs before it opened, was very appreciative of his efforts and wrote to him on October 25: "I think I can hardly express, the impression that filled me and

cumstances it can be seen that the Metropolitan Museum has undertaken an enterprise of importance—nothing more nor less than the crowning with honors of one of our most neglected geniuses." Other writers were complimentary, if less effusive. Yet, although the exhibition enjoyed critical success, attendance was modest and not all of the thousand copies of the catalogue were sold.

Two paintings were purchased from the memorial

exhibition—both by the Metropolitan. On November 26, 1917, the Museum bought *The Writing Master* from Mrs. Eakins, who wrote to Burroughs on December 17 to express her “happiness in the knowledge that the most treasured, for all reasons, of the pictures—the portrait of my husband’s father ‘The Writing Master’ has found a safe and honored position among the works of other painters, whom Mr. Eakins respected and admired.” On January 11, 1918, she thanked Burroughs for his advice about selling pictures and noted, “No, I am not rich, or I would not have sold ‘The Writing Master’—but I feared that nothing would sell.” The Museum also purchased from Elizabeth Macdowell Kenton *The Thinker: Portrait of Louis N. Kenton*, which had appeared with its descriptive title for the first time at the memorial exhibition.

With no tribute to Eakins in Philadelphia planned by November 1917, Helen Henderson, art critic for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, sent to Lewis copies of McBride’s and her own reviews of the New York exhibition. She complained: “I hope you know that the initiative with regard to this splendid showing of the master’s work came entirely from the management of the Metropolitan Museum. . . . You have allowed New York to show you what should have been our immediate impulse.” Her urging, and that of others, including Parker, finally prompted the Academy to launch a three-week memorial exhibition of 139 works, which opened on December 23, 1917, with a catalogue introduced by Parker. The Metropolitan lent *The Writing Master* and *The Thinker: Portrait of Louis N. Kenton*. The Academy’s installation seems to have been more sympathetic to the works than the crowded gallery at the Metropolitan, but no additional paintings were sold. The eighty-two works still owned by Mrs. Eakins were returned to her after the exhibition closed.

In the 1920s Burroughs encouraged institutions other than the Metropolitan to purchase works from Eakins’s widow. In 1923 he acquired from her, through her New York agent, Joseph Brummer, the portrait of herself with the setter dog Harry. She had refused to include the painting in the memorial exhibitions because the subject was so personal. Yet she wrote appreciatively to Burroughs on June 3, 1923: “I am glad, indeed, that you care for the picture. I had intended never to part with it & had it hidden away. Now it seems best, that I should accept always an

opportunity to place my husband’s pictures, and what better place could be than the Met. Museum, and what greater pleasure, than to have had you interested to have it there.” At about the same time, Burroughs bought for the Metropolitan Eakins’s monochrome replica of *The Gross Clinic*, and he also encouraged the interest of his son, Alan Burroughs, in Eakins. The



36. Susan Macdowell Eakins, detail of fig. 24

younger man published in *The Arts*, in March and December 1923, two articles that provided the fullest account of the artist to that date; in 1924, with Mrs. Eakins’s help, he completed the first catalogue of the artist’s works.

In May 1924 Bryson Burroughs purchased from Mrs. Eakins the watercolor *John Biglin in a Single Scull* and shared with her his plan to add watercolors to the Metropolitan’s collection. Reminding her of this on April 1, 1925, he wrote: “I am very anxious for this Museum to have a representative group of your husband’s watercolors to match in importance those we have by Winslow Homer and John Sargent.” Responding to Burroughs’s request, she sold five more of Eakins’s rare watercolors to the Metropolitan in April 1925: *Negro Boy Dancing*, *Young Girl Meditating*, *Home-spun*, *Taking Up the Net*, and *Cowboy Singing*. She noted in a letter to him on April 29: “I am parting with old companions, but it is a keen satisfaction to know they

go where they will be valued and treasured with many other fine works." The twelfth work acquired by the Museum was the portrait of Signora Gomez d'Arza. Seeing the painting in 1925 in an exhibition at the Brummer Galleries, New York, McBride had listed it with "two or three portraits . . . which would, and someday will, hold their own comfortably in any European collection of masterpieces." In November 1927 Burroughs obtained the painting through Babcock Galleries, Brummer's successor as Mrs. Eakins's New York agent. By this time other museums, as well as private collectors, were beginning to buy Eakins's works from his widow and from other owners.

Mrs. Eakins had long envisioned placing a large group of Eakins's works in a museum and wrote of her desire to Burroughs on October 31, 1917, the week before the Metropolitan's memorial exhibition opened: "It has been my hopeless wish, that at whatever Institution Mr. Eakins' pictures might create interest, that it would be possible that a group of them would be desired." During the 1920s several Philadelphians voiced the hope that an Eakins gallery could be established in that city, even though no institution or collector there had acquired additional works by him. Hearing, in 1927, of an interest that had developed in Philadelphia, Burroughs wrote to Mrs. Eakins on July 7 that he was glad that "Philadelphia has at last waked up to the appreciation of her greatest artist." He also told her of "a long cherished ambition" for the display of Eakins's works at the Metropolitan: "When more space is allotted to the paintings galleries I am very anxious to install three special galleries, one to be devoted to your husband's work, one to Winslow Homer and one to John Sargent. . . . I want to suggest to you that if you could arrange your will so that a number of his pictures could become the property of this Museum after your death we could be sure that the usefulness of his work would be perpetuated."

Burroughs's plan and the efforts of principals of the Babcock Galleries in 1929 to have Mrs. Eakins offer more works to the Metropolitan could not overcome her determination to establish an Eakins memorial collection in Philadelphia. In November 1929 she and

Addie Williams decided to give fifty oils and assorted other works to the expanded Pennsylvania Museum of Art (renamed the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1939), whose director, Fiske Kimball, had shown increasing interest in Eakins since his appointment in 1925. Even before he came to Philadelphia, Kimball recalled, he had asked the Metropolitan's curator of prints, William M. Ivins Jr., "for ideas; Ivins had said: 'Go to see the widow Eakins'." Kimball's ensuing visits to her had been fruitful.

Burroughs continued his friendship with Mrs. Eakins and assisted her efforts to build Eakins's reputation. In April 1931, for example, he worked with her to convince the Pennsylvania Museum to give to the Louvre Eakins's portrait *Clara* (ca. 1900), which had been part of her gift. The fulfillment of Mrs. Eakins's wish to have her husband's works displayed in his home city liberated others for placement elsewhere. For example, *The Champion Single Sculls* had been bequeathed to Schmitt's widow after his death in 1900. Mrs. Eakins purchased the painting from her in 1930, following its display in the Pennsylvania Museum's large Eakins exhibition, and she sold it through Milch Galleries, New York, to the Metropolitan in June 1934. This was the last painting by Eakins that Burroughs bought for the Metropolitan; he died five months later, in November 1934. The Museum's final purchase of a work by Eakins was the perspective drawing for *The Chess Players*, acquired from Bregler in 1942.

Thereafter, gifts enhanced the Museum's holdings of the artist's paintings and watercolors. The sitter's granddaughter gave to the Metropolitan the portrait of Mary Arthur in 1965; the bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot added *Arcadia* and the portrait of James MacAlister in 1967; the bequest of Joan Whitney Payson in 1975 included the watercolor *The Pathetic Song*; and the 1978 bequest of Mary Cushing Fosburgh brought to the Museum its earliest work by Eakins, *Carmelita Requeña*. Eakins's oils and watercolors in the Metropolitan are of exceptional quality, provide an overview of his enterprise as an artist, and reflect the institution's unique, longstanding connection with him and its durable support of his work and reputation.





Thomas Eakins, Artist-Photographer, in The Metropolitan Museum of Art

BY JEFF L. ROSENHEIM, *Curatorial Assistant, Photographs*

Although it is not known from whom or when Thomas Eakins learned photography, by 1880 he had already incorporated the camera into his professional and personal life. For the painter it was a teaching device comparable to anatomical drawing and a tool modern artists should use to train their eyes to see what was truly before them. Working with a wooden view camera, glass-plate negatives, and the platinum-print process, Eakins distinguished himself from most other artists of his generation by mastering the technical aspects of the new medium and requiring his students to do the same.

The vast majority of photographs attributed to Eakins are figure studies (nude and clothed) and portraits of his pupils, his extended family (including himself), and his immediate friends. Approximately eight hundred images are currently attributed to Eakins and his circle—ample proof of the intensity with which he worked with the camera.

Eakins did not generally employ photographs as a preparatory aid to painting, although a small number of oils have direct counterparts in existing photographs: the Amon Carter Museum's *The Swimming Hole* and the Metropolitan's *Arcadia* are the foremost examples. To the contrary, he envisioned a different role for photography—one related to his extraordinary interest in knowing the figure and improving his sensitivity to complex figure-ground relationships. Committed to teaching close observation through anatomical dissection and preparatory wax and plaster sculptures, Eakins

introduced the camera to the American art studio. Initially, his photographs were very likely practical studies of pose and gesture; later, perhaps during the processes of editing the negatives and making enlarged platinum prints, Eakins saw the photographs as discrete works of art on paper—at their best of equal status with his watercolors.

The nature of Eakins's interactive teaching methods and the survival of a large number of photographs in which the painter appears have raised doubts about the exact authorship of all but a few series of photographs, notably the Dakota Territory pictures and the motion studies. Notes on the prints themselves would presumably have distinguished Eakins's pictures from his pupils', as would information gathered from the artist's papers. Unfortunately, few known photographs are annotated in Eakins's hand, and virtually no surviving manuscripts relate directly to Eakins's photographic activity other than scant notes pertaining to the equipment needed to produce the series on the analysis of motion.

Various hands can be discerned in these photographs, but at this date even the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, keepers of the massive archive of Charles Bregler's collection of Eakins material, including more than 225 negatives, has taken the centrist position that the majority of the photographs should remain attributed to "Thomas Eakins and his circle." How many individuals that circle encompasses is at present unknown.

Most likely responsible for the majority of other photographs in Eakins's circle was his pupil and later his wife, Susan Macdowell Eakins. A serious amateur photographer, she worked side by side with her husband and is now generally credited with making some

1. Two Pupils in Greek Dress, ca. 1883. Platinum print, 8 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (22.5 x 17.1 cm). Gift of Charles Bregler, 1941 (41.142.3)



2. Clinch Mountain, Saltville, Virginia, 1880–82. Platinum print, 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (27.5 x 20 cm). Gift of Charles Bregler, 1941 (41.142.2)

of the portraits of Eakins and of their family and friends previously attributed to her husband. According to Bregler, she may also have assisted with the printing of many of Eakins's negatives. Certain other photographs are now attributed to his pupil Samuel Murray and to Elizabeth Macdowell Kenton, his wife's sister. Still other photographs previously credited to Eakins have been reattributed to unknown artists during the intensive efforts made to analyze the Bregler archive.

Despite the continuing discussion over authorship, it is evident from the compelling personal nature of the photographs that Eakins was committed to the

medium of photography more than any other nineteenth-century American painter. The exceptionally large number of Eakins photographs in the Metropolitan's collection—176 prints, glass positives, and original negatives—bears testimony to Eakins's accomplishments in photography and makes it the third largest public collection of Eakins's photographs.

The Metropolitan first acquired photographs by Eakins in 1941. A. Hyatt Mayor, the Museum's associate curator of prints, admired Eakins more than any other American painter. Mayor wrote to Bregler about the possibility of acquiring some of Eakins's pho-

tographs “if any survive and are of the artistic quality that one would expect from such a very great man.” Before the year’s end, Bregler had made the first of six donations of photographs, which eventually totaled 64 prints by Eakins and his circle, to the Museum. In 1961 his widow, Mary Bregler, donated an additional 34 photographs, and in the past 30 years the Museum has continued to increase its holdings.

Mayor’s high opinion of Eakins’s photography was based on a group of extraordinary figure studies and nudes executed as enlarged platinum prints. The largest of these delicate prints, some more than 14 inches high, are known only in examples in the Metropolitan’s collection. The selections by Mayor from Bregler’s massive archive for the 1941 gift include an unusual study of two pupils dressed in white Grecian dresses with a plaster cast of *Arcadia* on a small table (fig. 1) and a group portrait of William H. Macdowell, Margaret Eakins, and two boys at Clinch Mountain in Saltville, Virginia (fig. 2). The latter photograph shows Eakins’s sister and the Philadelphia engraver who would soon become his father-in-law. At first glance the photograph appears to foreshadow the easy look of the snapshot of the 1890s, but nothing here has been left to chance. As carefully posed as *Taking Up the Net* from the same period, this seemingly casual outing shows Macdowell’s hat carefully resting on its crown and a rough-hewn bench providing the visitors with just the shade and respite they sought. The quarried rock wall translated by the muted palette of the platinum print serves as a neutral studio backdrop, a foil for the figures exquisitely rendered before the natural curtain.

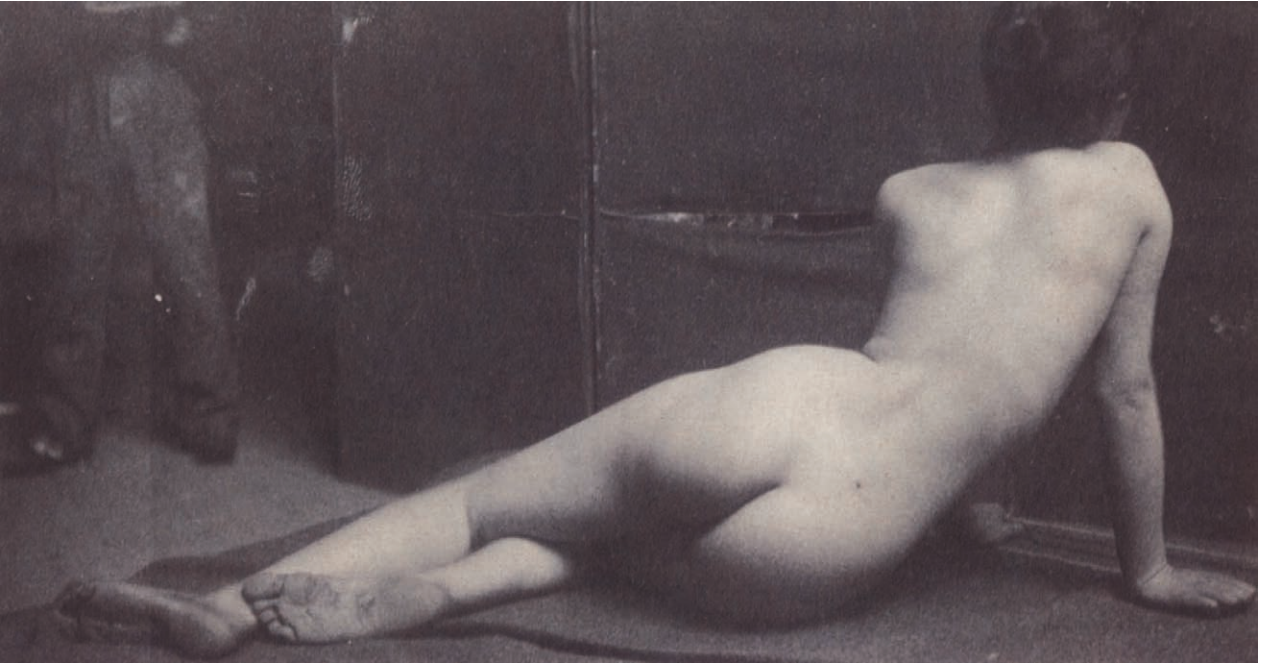
The technique of producing an enlarged platinum print was exceedingly difficult to master even for a practicing fine-arts photographer, which Eakins was not. Platinum papers were best used in direct contact with a photographic negative and characteristically did not respond well to enlarging. Eakins, however, used his notable skills as an amateur scientist to design, construct, and operate a solar enlarger equipped with a motorized mirror that tracked the sun and permitted the enlarger to be used for exposures lasting up to three hours. This allowed Eakins to accurately focus sunlight through his 4 x 5 inch negatives and a lens with sufficient intensity to generate some of the earliest and finest platinum enlargements. The challenge

inherent in their production and the authority of the results suggest that these prints were not experiments but fully realized works of art.

Two years after Bregler’s first gift to the Museum and on the eve of the Museum’s Eakins Centennial exhibition, Mayor purchased 24 more photographs from Bregler—an important early acquisition using funds established in 1938 by David Hunter McAlpin exclusively for the purchase of photographs. This group remains one of the most important acquisitions in the early history of the Department of Prints. Fifteen additional enlarged platinum prints were added to the collection, including eight exceptional nude studies: six male, two female.

The two reclining female nudes are small, slightly more than five inches wide, but they are printed in rich, velvety black platinum tones. One includes a rare glimpse of the artist’s teaching studio (fig. 3). The setting is crude; the folding screen is ripped; and the model’s feet are black with dirt. Posed on the floor between Eakins, his camera, and a pupil with a sketch pad, the model glows with vitality and beauty, the focus of all attention.

The male nudes are much warmer in tone and four times the size of the female nudes. Other than a single study of Eakins’s pupil Bill Duckett reclining in a room at the Art Students’ League, all are outdoor scenes. Several show Eakins’s students, including J. Laurie Wallace, playing the pipes in the sun, and one shows Eakins himself on the same occasion, suggesting that the camera operator may have been Wallace. These studies seem to relate directly to the Metropolitan’s *Arcadia* and to other oils in the series. The highlight of the group is the portrait of Eakins and Wallace posed at the edge of a lake beside a small rowboat (fig. 4). The camera draws their attenuated bodies from behind. Hands behind their backs or dangling, the two men seem to float, lost in thought. They are neither athletes nor swimmers contemplating a dip in the lake, but two common men, each an Adam. A masterful study of man’s essential form, the photograph recalls the solitude of expression and neutrality of tone of the Metropolitan’s painting of Louis Kenton. Direct and revealing, such photographs celebrate the body and increase our understanding of the artist’s refined naturalism and his respect for the essential beauty and complexity of the human form.



3. Nude, ca. 1882. Platinum print, $2\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ in. (7.1 x 13.4 cm). David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 1943 (43.87.25)



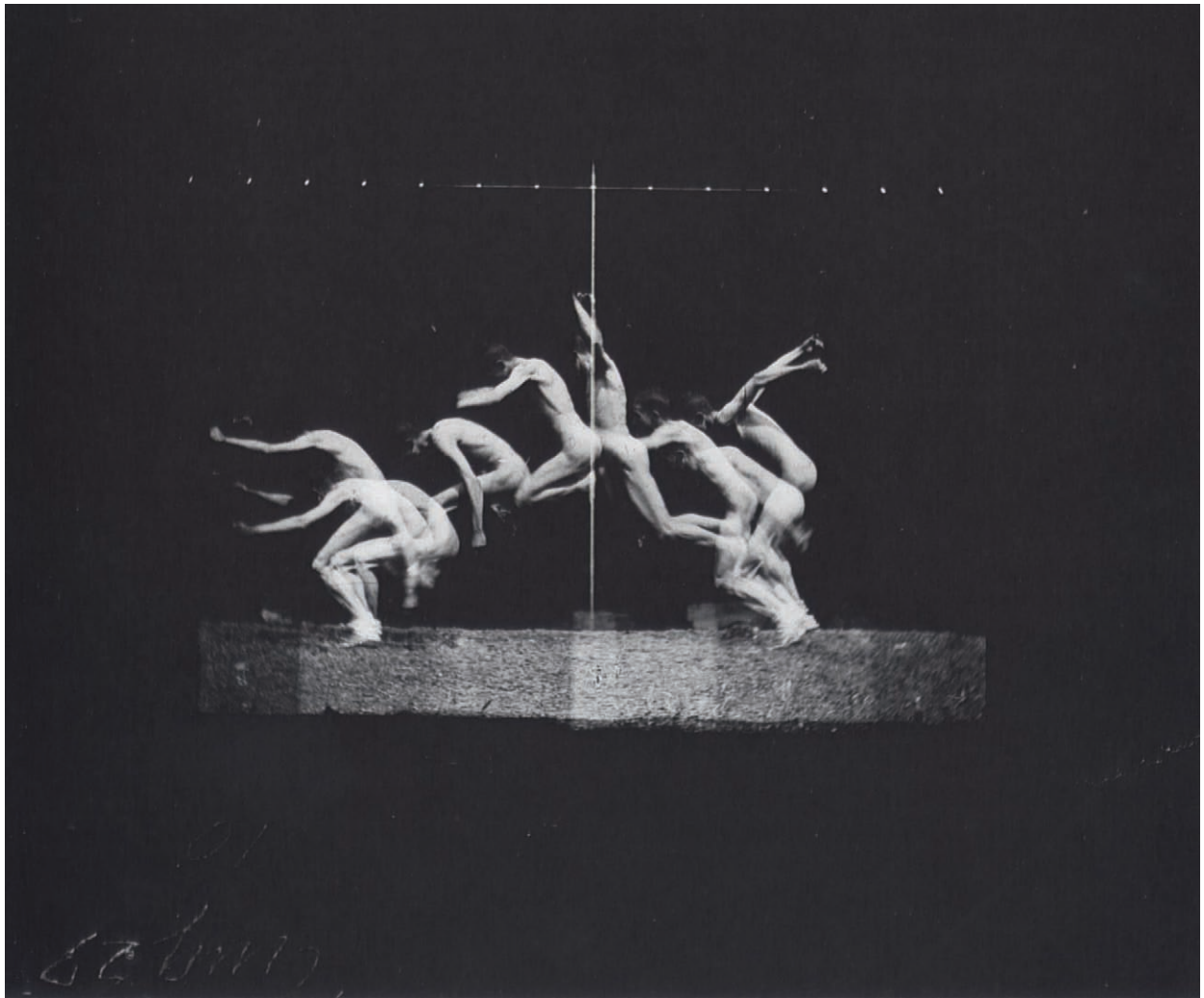
4. Thomas Eakins and J. Laurie Wallace at the Shore, ca. 1882. Platinum print, 10 x 8 in. (25.5 x 20.4 cm).
David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 1943 (43.87.23)

Over the years Bregler's donations to the Museum included prints he had made himself from Eakins's original negatives of the analysis of motion (fig. 5). No earlier prints of these images exist, and Bregler's often serve as the only surviving record of individual glass negatives now broken or lost. Before he died in 1958, Bregler also donated several original negatives from this pioneering series to the Museum.

In 1884–85 Eakins had devoted his energy to scientific studies of motion, using a camera and a special shutter of his own invention. Modifying Étienne-Jules Marey's basic technique, Eakins photographed men and women walking, running, jumping, and vaulting. In each image made on a single photographic plate, the camera caught the same figure as many as eleven times before it left the range of the lens. The pictures were

intended to illustrate muscular activity by tracing the subject's subtle, interconnected movements through the course of action. With their sequential but overlapping forms, Eakins's motion studies create a truer depiction of kinetics than the contemporaneous pictures made on separate plates in separate cameras by Eadweard Muybridge, his colleague at the University of Pennsylvania. Eakins's photographs do not dissect the body—which the artist knew from first-hand experience—but reveal the body in motion, the body alive.

Bregler's generosity and relationship to the Metropolitan continued even after his death; in 1961 his widow donated prints by Bregler from Eakins's negatives and twelve rare portraits of the artist that span his lifetime. Since Mayor's tenure as curator, the Museum



5. Motion Study: Jumping, August 27, 1884. Gelatin silver print, ca. 1940, $3\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{7}{8}$ in. (9.5 x 12.4 cm). Gift of Charles Bregler, 1941 (41.142.13)



6. Unknown artist. Crowell Boys, Avondale, Pennsylvania, ca. 1883. Platinum print, $3\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ in. (8.9 x 11.4 cm). Gift of Charles Bregler, 1944 (44.75.7)



7. Unknown artist. Crowell Family, Avondale, Pennsylvania, July 4, 1883. Albumen silver print, $3\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$ in. (8.9 x 11.1 cm). Gift of Robert D. English, 1985 (1985.1027.43)

has continued to add important Eakins photographs to its collection through both gift and purchase. The most recent acquisition is a group of 60 unique photographs selected from a cache of material owned by the heirs of Eakins's sister Frances and her husband, William J. Crowell, which was donated by a consortium of ten individuals in 1985. Although none of these prints are believed to be by Eakins himself, the photographs provide invaluable documentary material about Eakins's family life. Most of the prints, with period inscriptions and dates ranging from June 1880 to September 1883, depict the Crowells' farm in Avondale, outside Philadelphia, where Eakins spent much of his free time (figs. 6, 7).

With his first acquisition of photographs by Eakins, Hyatt Mayor began establishing Eakins's place in American art history as the country's first artist-photographer. Linking Eakins to Edgar Degas, Mayor argued in the Museum's summer 1944 *Bulletin* that both artists used the camera for aesthetic purposes, not documentary ones, and certainly not "as a cheap aid to painting." Mayor was careful to acknowledge that authorship for Eakins's pictures was unclear, and he invoked the spirit of the "studio," where tradition dictated that the teacher take full credit for his pupils' work. Mayor went on to write: "The question [of attribution] may not matter much since Eakins's way of seeing pervaded that whole talented group of artists as thoroughly as it pervades these photographs. The vision that focused the camera was undoubtedly his."

Recent scholarship has provided few answers to the question of attribution of Eakins's photographs. Nevertheless, the essential role of photography in Eakins's life and work has never been more evident.

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