

Hudson River School

Alfred Thompson Bricher, 1837–1908

Mississippi River (Dubuque, Iowa), 1870

Oil on canvas

Burrichter-Kierlin Collection at the Minnesota Marine Art Museum, Winona, Minnesota

Dedication to direct observation compelled many American artists of the of nineteenth century to go in search of new visual material, and westward expansion yielded numerous natural splendors for their interpretation. Alfred Thompson Bricher, who specialized in depicting lakes and coastal views, headed west in the summer of 1866, where in June he sketched the reaches of the upper Mississippi. Four years later, some of those sketches served as the genesis for this lyrical interpretation of the mighty river along its banks at Dubuque, Iowa.

George Loring Brown, 1814–89

The Crown of New England, 1863

Oil on canvas

Collection of Alfred and Ingrid Lenz Harrison

Many factors contribute to attracting a collector to a work of art. Visual power and personal taste are obvious elements. Sentiment, too, can play a role, as did this view of Mt. Washington in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, where the owner spent summers as a camp counselor. Further, as a native of Britain, the owner was stirred by the fact that this painting is a smaller version of the one purchased in the early 1860s by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII).

The Crown of New England is one of a series of American views Brown worked up in the years immediately following his return to America after spending twenty years in Italy.

William Mason Brown, 1828–98

Approaching Storm, c. 1870

Oil on canvas

Private collection

Although he is primarily known today for his still-life paintings, during the 1850s and 1860s William Mason Brown specialized in landscapes. His landscape paintings, like his later still lifes, were meticulous and realistically detailed works, reflecting his adherence to the teachings of the English art critic, John Ruskin. Advocates of Ruskin's "back-to-nature" doctrine were known here as the American Pre-Raphaelites.

Jasper Francis Cropsey, 1823–1900

The Abandoned Skiff, 1882

Oil on canvas

Collection of Alfred and Ingrid Lenz Harrison

As one of the key figures of the first generation of Hudson River School painters, Jasper Cropsey was acclaimed in both the United States and England for his grand and stunning canvases

celebrating the American landscape. Proceeds from the sale of his works made him a man of means. Following the Civil War, however, paintings that once had easily sold now found few buyers, as the images seemed at odds with the nation's post-war disillusionment.

Abandoned Skiff was executed by Cropsey at a time of personal crisis when his finances and health were both in steep decline. The symbolic nature of the lone hull of the skiff, abandoned at the shore of a stream, no doubt tapped into the artist's own feelings of being left adrift by a feckless public who had once appreciated his work.

Robert Scott Duncanson, 1821–72
Still Life with Fruit and Nuts, 1848
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Though underappreciated before the nineteenth century, Charles Wilson Peale's refined still lifes were integral to the genre's eventual popularity in the United States. Robert Scott Duncanson briefly explored the possibilities of still life on several occasions in the late 1840s. Although examples are rare, *Still Life with Fruit and Nuts* reveals his debt to Peale's restrained aesthetics. Deceptively simple in its presentation, the work is a complex melding of deftly modeled forms, subdued palette, and dramatic lighting, which rises to the level of pure visual eloquence.

Duncanson was the son of a free African American mother and a Scottish Canadian father. He was self-taught as an artist, and although most closely associated with Cincinnati, he worked for a time as an itinerant. He traveled widely in Canada and the United States—including trips to Minnesota in 1862 and 1869. His work brought him the recognition and patronage that allowed him to travel extensively in Europe, England, and Scotland.

Asher Brown Durand, 1796–1886
The Peaceful Glen, c. 1858
Oil on canvas
Collection of Douglas and Mary Olson

Asher Brown Durand, 1796–1886
Genesee Valley, New York State, c. 1850
Oil on canvas
Anonymous lender

Although Asher Durand is known today as the “father of American landscape painting,” and a major figure of the Hudson River School, he began his artistic career as an engraver. He was a recognized master of that craft and only took up painting in the late 1830s, with the encouragement of his good friend and frequent sketching partner, Thomas Cole, then the most famous landscape painter in America. Like Cole, Durand was deeply religious, and saw nature as a manifestation of God on Earth. Consequently, his work always presented nature as the primary focus, rather than a backdrop for human activity. Both of the present works demonstrate the artist's respect for his subject matter, as he allows nature, by his close observation, to speak for itself.

Genesee Valley, New York State (bottom) was acquired by its present owners as a nod to their ancestral roots in the Genesee Valley.

Alvan Fisher, 1792–1863

Approaching Storm, White Mountains, c. 1820s

Oil on canvas

Anonymous lender

As an early interpreter of the American landscape, Alvan Fisher formulated pastoral scenes that rose to the level of visual poetry. Their celebration of the land had an immediate appeal to patrons in his day. *Approaching Storm, White Mountains* represents the best of his style, wherein delicate light, verdant clearings, and rounded forms exude a sense of peace and plenty. Fisher's role in setting the stage for the artists of the Hudson River School is hinted at through the gray mass of clouds that threaten at upper right—a foretaste of the romantic sublime.

William Michael Harnett, 1848–92

Still Life with Tankard, 1885

Oil on panel

Private collection

Irish-born William Harnett is recognized today as the premier practitioner of *trompe l'oeil* (fool the eye) still lifes in nineteenth-century America. Through painstaking attention to detail he was able to achieve such realistic results that in 1886, a painting containing a likeness of a \$5 bill got him arrested for the crime of counterfeiting.

Beyond his distinct gift for observation, Harnett was a key force in re-shaping the concept of the still life in American art by introducing new imagery. He exchanged the flowers and fruits of previous still-life painters for the indicators of America's post-war interest in domestic pleasure—provided by music, reading, and the occasional tankard of beer.

William Stanley Haseltine, 1835–1900

Off Newport Island, 1863

Oil on canvas

Burrichter-Kierlin Collection at the Minnesota Marine Art Museum, Winona, Minnesota

Following study at the University of Pennsylvania in his native Philadelphia, William Stanley Haseltine set off in 1855 for more extended study in Düsseldorf, Germany. Following his return to America in 1858 he took his first sketching trips along the New England coast. His images of rock outcroppings painted between 1862 and 1866 remain the artist's most well known works.

His attention to detail—a hallmark of his training in Düsseldorf—was well suited to the realistic rendering of these geologic masses. His contemporaries dubbed these paintings “rock portraits.”

Martin Johnson Heade, 1819–1904
Salt Marsh: Haystacks at Sunset, n.d.
Oil on canvas
Private collection

The son of Quakers, Martin Johnson Heade was born in rural Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and began his art studies quite early in life with the Quaker painter Edward Hicks. Heade's was a peripatetic existence that included several study trips to Europe, Latin America, and South America. In between these forays abroad he lived in New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Trenton, New Haven, and Providence.

Although Heade began as a portraitist, he turned to landscape in the 1850s, and his views of the salt marshes from the 1860s form the quintessential landscape subject of his prolific career. These images of coastal salt marshes straddled a space between untouched nature and natural farmland, which fascinated the artist. Over a period of forty years he generated more than 120 such views, each a fresh effort recorded under immediate conditions of season, day, and weather.

George Inness, 1825–94
Landscape with Sheep, 1858
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Integral to any consideration of American depictions of the land is the figure of George Inness, whose career spanned the key landscape movements of the nineteenth century. Born in Newburg, New York, Inness was initially discouraged from pursuing a life in the arts by his father, who tried to set his son up in business with a grocery store. Two years were more than enough to convince the aspiring artist to abandon commerce in 1841 and head for New York City to become an artist.

Inness' earliest works were firmly ensconced in the Hudson River School. However, *Landscape with Sheep*, with its intimate, cultivated landscape and subdued, atmospheric light, bears evidence of the artist's exposure to the French Barbizon aesthetic during two trips he made to France in the 1850s. The influence of Corot and Rousseau, in particular, helped emancipate the American from the tyranny of detail that had dominated his early work, resulting in a softened line and freer brushwork.

George Inness, 1825–94
View Near Rome, 1871
Oil on canvas
Collection of John and Elizabeth Driscoll

From 1870 to 1874, George Inness lived in Italy and painted in the Campagna, Florence, and the Alban Hills south of Rome. Although titled *View Near Rome*, the present work depicts a site near Perugia on Lake Trasimeno, where the artist went sketching in the summer of 1871.

It was during Inness' Italian sojourn that he adopted a lighter, more pastel palette. The pervasive atmospheric light (a mix of gold and rose hues), while capturing the sense of an Italian sunrise, imbues the entire scene with a reverential spirituality.

Eastman Johnson, 1824–1906

Sugaring Off, 1863

Oil on canvas

Private collection

Maple sugar occupies a distinct place in New England lore, which the artist Eastman Johnson sought to define and exploit in a series of paintings of sugar making from the early 1860s. At the center of these paintings is the “sugaring off,” the raucous party celebrating the boiling of the season’s first batch of sap.

The series also carried deep political subtext. Johnson—an abolitionist—created these paintings during the Civil War, using the subject of sugar to underscore the differences between free and slave labor. Maple sugar was produced by free, independent workers, unlike cane sugar, which relied on the joyless enforced labor of slaves.

John Frederick Kensett, 1818–72

Border of the Brook, c. 1855–58

Oil on canvas

Collection of Douglas and Mary Olson

John Frederick Kensett, 1818–72

Lily Pond, Rhode Island, 1860

Oil on canvas

Private collection

Born in Cheshire, Connecticut, John Frederick Kensett was one of the brightest lights of the Hudson River School painters. Like many of his contemporaries, he began his career as an engraver. By 1840, Kensett had departed for Europe where, along with Asher B. Durand and others, he studied painting in London, Paris, and Rome. Following his return to America in 1847, Kensett quickly became known for his sensitive approach to the landscape genre. Both of the present works indicate the artist’s move away from traditional Hudson River School views, while maintaining his unswerving devotion to the intimate study of nature.

John Frederick Kensett, 1818–72

Beverly Shore, Massachusetts, c. 1870

Oil on canvas

Anonymous lender

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Around 1860, John Frederick Kensett increasingly turned toward coastal scenes, and by the time he executed the present painting, his experiments with atmosphere and light were quite advanced.

George Cochran Lambdin, 1830–96
Rose and Ivy, 1875
Oil on panel
Collection of Douglas and Mary Olson

The son of a successful painter of portraits and miniatures, George Cochran Lambdin was exhibiting at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts by age eighteen. In the years leading up to 1870, he enjoyed a solid reputation as a painter of genre scenes. Around this time he began to produce still lifes, most in the traditional format of flowers in vases. However, it was his departure from such conventions that produced his most interesting work.

Rose and Ivy springs from the best impulses of Lambdin's still-life aesthetic, in which the flat background serves as an effective backdrop to the textures and shapes of the plants. Dramatic lighting and artful arrangement reveal the life cycle of the rose from bud to full bloom.

Homer Dodge Martin, 1836–97
White Mountains (Mts. Madison and Adams) from Mt. Randolph, c. 1862-3
Oil on canvas
Anonymous lender

In 1862 Homer Dodge Martin made a sketching trip to the White Mountains of New Hampshire, where he captured views of various peaks at different times of day. The light effects of the day's last rays of sun tipping the barren peaks of Mounts Madison and Adams (the northernmost peaks in the Presidential Range) was certainly the artist's focus in the present work. Pleased with the result, Martin exhibited the work at the National Academy of Design in 1864.

Born in Albany, New York, and primarily a self-taught artist, Martin was a transitional figure in the second generation of Hudson River School painters. Following a trip to Europe in 1876, he experimented with Barbizon School, Tonalism, and Impressionism to varying degrees. In 1893 the artist and his wife moved to Minnesota and settled in St. Paul, where in his final four years he created some of his finest works. Because of this local connection, many Minnesota collectors are drawn to his work.

Homer Dodge Martin, 1836–97
Woodland Waterfall, c. 1890
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Woodland Waterfall is a prime example of Homer Dodge Martin's powers of close observation of nature. Compared to the expansive views of Martin's two other works in this exhibition, the present painting demonstrates his abilities in conveying nature's beauty on a more intimate scale.

Jervis McEntee, 1828–91
Lake Placid—Adirondac, 1868
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Although Jervis McEntee never enjoyed the celebrity of his teacher, Frederic Edwin Church, or Albert Bierstadt, he achieved a more personal approach in his creations. His early work adhered to John Ruskin's prescription of "truth to nature" and somehow McEntee managed to remain true to that ideal even as his style shifted away from the exacting detail of the Hudson River School style.

Lake Placid—Adirondac, in its muted, atmospheric presentation, bears the looser brushwork that McEntee adopted in his effort to convey an accurate impression without compromising his devotion to objectivity and truth. His eloquent interpretation also remained true to the Hudson River School creed that art is the interpreter of nature and nature is the interpreter of God.

Joseph Rusling Meeker, 1827–89
Bayou, n.d.
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Following his training with Asher B. Durand and Charles Loring Elliott at the National Academy of Design in New York, Joseph Rusling Meeker began a slow, westward migration, spending several years in Buffalo, New York, and Louisville, Kentucky, until finally settling in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1859.

During the Civil War, Meeker served on a gunboat that patrolled the Mississippi Delta. The atmosphere was like nothing he had encountered before, and he was fascinated by the mysterious swamps. He would make repeated trips from St. Louis to the bayous of the delta, recording its landscapes for the remainder of his career.

Frederick DeBourg Richards, 1822–1903
Untitled Pastoral Landscape, c. 1880
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Frederick DeBourg Richards began his career as a daguerreotypist and photographer, and although he had been working in oils for some time, did not devote himself to painting until the 1860s. His painted work is devoted in great part to landscapes in the countryside of Pennsylvania, as well as scenes along the coast of New Jersey.

William Trost Richards, 1833–1905
Nantucket Bluffs, 1866
Oil on canvas
Collection of Douglas and Mary Olson

In terms of coastal scenery in nineteenth-century art, William Trost Richards was among the chief interpreters. His late works are remarked for their convincing close-up portrayals of cresting waves close to shore and their interaction with light. The present work, however, captures the artist at an earlier phase, when the scope of his coastal scenes was less focused on the water, giving over a greater part of the composition to the land and shore.

In the following year, 1867, during a storm at sea on his return from England, he became fascinated with the structure and behavior of waves, which would re-shape his observations and production for the remainder of his career.

Sanford Robinson Gifford, 1823–80
The Beach at Cohasset, 1864
Oil on paperboard
Private collection

Sanford Robinson Gifford, a leading artist of the second generation of Hudson River School painters, is most remarked today as an interpreter and practitioner of what is often called “luminism.” During extended travel in England and Europe in the late 1850s, Gifford was drawn to works of J. M. W. Turner, whose experiments with light and atmosphere were to have a tremendous impact on the future course of the American’s work.

The Beach at Cohasset is a modest display of Gifford’s skill in conveying atmospheric effects through the reflection of light off surfaces and its diffusion through a sheer haze.

Severin Roesen, 1815–72
Fruit Still Life, c. 1860s
Oil on canvas
Collection of Douglas and Mary Olson

The German-born Severin Roesen was one of the still-life genre’s most prolific practitioners. His elaborate compositions of fruits and flowers looked back to the Dutch tradition of the

seventeenth century, while in their sumptuous spreads, profuse detail, and high finish, reflected nineteenth-century optimism in the richness and abundance of America.

The elegant *Fruit Still Life*, though more restrained than some of Roesen's larger and more exuberant compositions, exhibits the hallmarks of his style in its high-key palette and painterly treatment of the textured surfaces.

Worthington Whittredge, 1820–1910

The Club House Sitting Room, at Balsam Lake, Catskills, New York, 1886

Oil on canvas

Collection of Eleanor and Fred Winston

Belonging to the second generation of Hudson River School painters, Worthington Whittredge was one of the great interpreters of the Catskill Mountains. Also, like his close friends Jervis McEntee and Sanford Robinson Gifford, he was an avid trout fisherman.

As a frequent visitor to Balsam Lake in the Catskills, Whittredge always enjoyed a little fishing when sketching the local scenery. In 1885 or 1886, he visited the lake (famous for its plentiful supply of native brook trout) and stayed as a guest at the Balsam Lake clubhouse (built in 1884). The young woman glimpsed at the writing desk may well be his daughter Effie, who often accompanied him to the lake.