

Festival of the Arts

2006/2007

SOUTHERN VERMONT ARTS CENTER
Vermont's Premier Home for the Arts

Mary Cassatt

From Cassatt to Wyeth: American Masterworks from the Cedarhurst Center for the Arts

Elizabeth de C. Wilson Museum

HUNTER GALLERY

June 3-September 1

SATURDAY, JUNE 3

Kevin Sharp

Cedarhurst Center for the Arts, Director of Visual Arts

Free Lecture, 1:00 p.m., Arkell Pavilion

Opening Reception

2:00-4:00 p.m.

From Cassatt to Wyeth: American Masterworks from the Cedarhurst Center for the Arts is a selection of 33 paintings, works on paper and sculpture that, although well known to scholars of American art everywhere, has never been exhibited as a whole beyond the gates of the Mitchell Museum at the Cedarhurst Center for the Arts in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, before this exhibition.

This very rare showing includes the collected works of the late John and Eleanor Mitchell and, as such, is now the Permanent Collection of the Mitchell Museum. It is made up solely of masterpieces created by major American artists, including George Bellows, Mary Cassatt, Arthur B. Davies, Thomas Eakins, William Glackens, Childe Hassam, Robert Henri, George Inness, George Luks, Maurice Prendergast, John Singer Sargent, John Sloan, Andrew Wyeth and others.

Philanthropists John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell, the founders of Cedarhurst Center for the Arts, were active art collectors for more than four decades,



Frederick Childe Hassam, *The Garden Table*, 1910, oil on canvas, 39" x 29", gift of John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell, 1973

American painting.

eventually acquiring a highly prized collection of late 19th and early 20th century American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts. Upon their deaths, they left their entire estate for the benefit of residents and visitors in southern Illinois.

The Mitchell's collection, which has been enjoyed by thousands of individuals since the Mitchell Museum opened November 2, 1973, is one of the most significant collections of late 19th and early 20th century American paintings found anywhere; it includes examples of major American art movements including American Impressionism, the Hudson River School, the Ashcan School, and a host of other periods and figures crucial to the development of modern

Gala Preview Party

Thursday, June 1
Cocktail Reception
See page 66 for details.

The Works

It has been said that the history of modern art in America began at the Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia. After Lee's 1865 surrender to Grant, ending the Civil War, no aspect

of American life was left unaffected, including the visual arts. With the armistice, Atlantic sea-lanes were again opened to safe travel, and young American artists pursued educations and experiences abroad for the first time in years.

Among those to board ships and make their way to the academies of Europe were Mary Cassatt and her fellow Philadelphian, Thomas Eakins. Like hundreds of others, Cassatt and Eakins arrived in Paris within a year or two of the war's end. Unlike the majority of their compatriots, they were both accepted into the atelier of France's leading academic artist Jean-Léon Gérôme. For Eakins, perhaps the most gifted draftsman to matriculate from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, entry into Gérôme's studio was not unexpected. But for Cassatt, a woman seeking the highest levels of academic training in a profession dominated by men, that acceptance was nothing short of extraordinary.

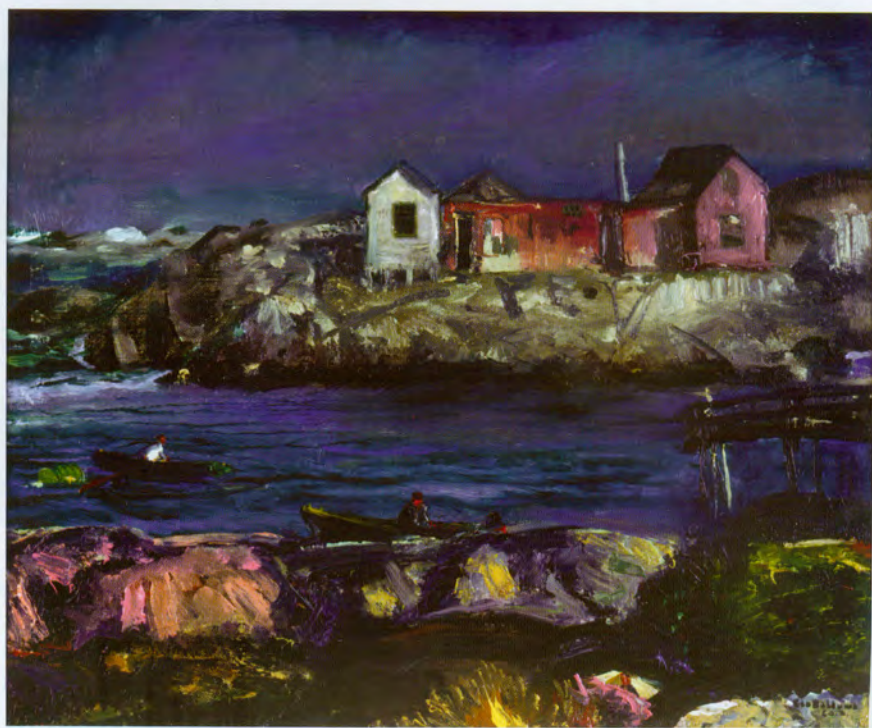
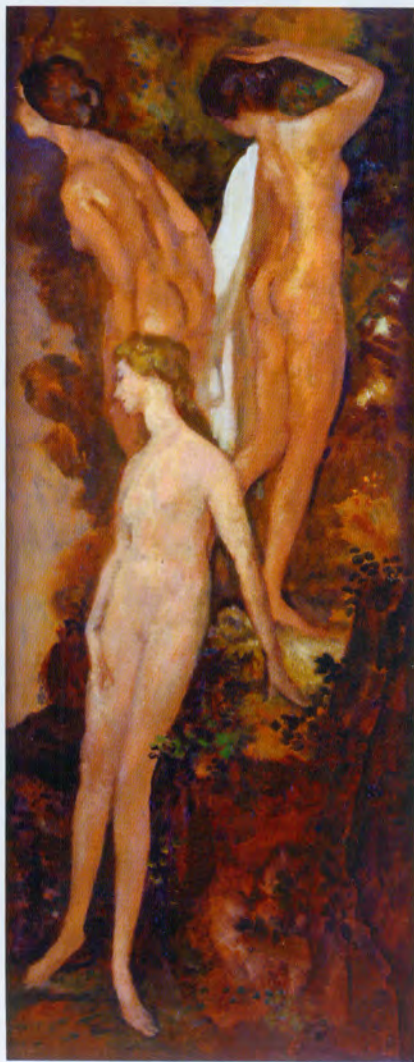
Although bound by their connections to Philadelphia and to the French academic system, Cassatt and Eakins took quite different paths to their deservedly lofty positions in American art history. Eakins would return to the United States and became arguably this country's most inventive artist-educator as well as its most outspoken advocate of modern art.

By the time he painted the collection's remarkable painting of his sister Margaret in 1871, Eakins had already startled Americans with his unflinching realism and aesthetic candor. Eakins' later portraits of his friend Professor George P. Barker and his student Samuel Murray were even more psychologically probing and visually incisive than his first great works had been.

In the early 1890s, when Cassatt began to paint mothers and children – her signature theme

Continued on next page

Arthur Bowen Davies, *A River Floweth*, 1910, oil on canvas, 14³/₁₆ x 8", gift of John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell, 1973



George Wesley Bellows, *Fishermen's Huts*, 1918, oil on panel, 20" x 24", gift of John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell, 1973



Siegfried Reinhardt, *The Horn*, 1966, oil and wax on panel, 48" x 24", gift of John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell, 1973

Cedarhurst *continued*

— she had already achieved more professional success than almost any American artist of her era had. She had participated in four of the eight famous Impressionist shows in Paris, the landmark exhibitions staged by Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Camille Pissarro between 1874 and 1886, and she was claimed by the French as one of their own.

By 1908, the year she produced the collection's magnificent *Jeune Femme Allaitant Son Enfant* (Young Woman Nursing Her Child), Cassatt was as well known in the United States as she was in France. Americans admired her sensitive yet unsentimental portrayal of maternity and her dedication to the principles of Impressionism, which would shape American painting for years to come.

Cassatt's achievements in Paris encouraged generations of younger American artists to seek success comparable to her own, beginning with the brilliant expatriate John Singer Sargent. He would become the most cosmopolitan and fashionable portraitist of his age, but he was perhaps most inspired when portraying members of his intimate circle in landscape settings, as in the collection's *Ilex Wood at*



Andrew Wyeth, *Winter Furrows*, 1941, watercolor on paper, 21" x 29", gift of John J. Parish, 1973

Majorca with Blue Pigs.

J. Alden Weir founded the Society of American artists, an independent exhibition union based on the French Impressionist model. Although the son and brother of academic painters, Weir would champion Impressionism in America, while producing such spectacular examples as the

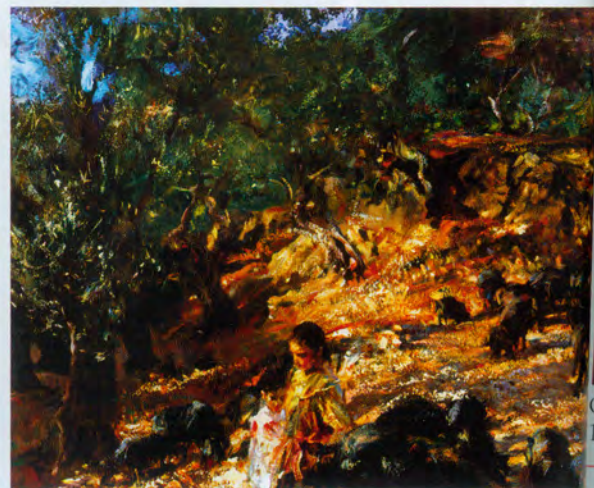
collection's *The Feather Boa*. Similarly, Childe Hassam haunted the same Paris arrondissement that Cassatt and her colleagues had pioneered, and through such works as *The Table Garden*, he became America's quintessential Impressionist.

Philadelphia produced some of America's most important painters of the early 20th century, thanks in part to the liberal pedagogy of Eakins. The younger artists Robert Henri, John Sloan, George Luks, William Glackens, and Everett Shinn were not students of Eakins, but they benefited from his ideas. Along with Maurice Prendergast, George Bellows, and Arthur B. Davies, these artists formed a collective called The Eight, which has come to be known as The Ashcan School.

Inspired by Eakins' model of almost scientific realism, the



Maurice Brazil Prendergast, *By the Seashore*, 1905-1906, oil on cradled panel, 11" x 16", gift of John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell, 1973



John Singer Sargent, *Ilex Wood at Majorca with Blue Pigs*, 1908, oil on canvas, 22" x 28", gift of John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell, 1973

painters offered biting social commentary while recording the harsh reality of urban life. By later in their careers, when Glackens produced *A Summer Day*, Henri painted *Patience*, (*From the Gypsy Camp*) and Bellows executed his portrait of Mrs. T. in *Wine Silk*, they had come almost full-circle, back to the lessons they inherited from Eakins.

With significant examples by Eakins, Cassatt, Sargent, Hassam, Bellows, Luks, and others, *From Cassatt to Wyeth: American Masterworks from the Cedarhurst Center for the Arts* possesses an exceptional collection that has enriched the cultural life of many. But, this group of masterworks also represents a cogent synopsis of American art history during the modern era, a crucial period that may have begun in 1865 at the Appomattox Courthouse.

From Cassatt to Wyeth was developed by Cedarhurst Center for the Arts, John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell Foundation, Mt. Vernon, IL and the tour organized by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC.



Alexander Brook, *The Pink Pitcher*, 1927, oil on canvas, 25" x 30", gift of John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell, 1973



George Inness, *Durham, Connecticut*, c.1879, oil on canvas, 22" x 17³/₈", gift of John J. Parish, 1973



Julian Alden Weir, *The Feather Boa*, c. 1890, oil on panel, 18³/₁₆" x 12", gift of John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell, 1973

This show sponsored in part by:

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