

Corcoran
Gallery of Art
American Paintings
to 1945

Corcoran Gallery of Art

AMERICAN PAINTINGS TO 1945



Sarah Cash, Editor

in collaboration with

Emily Dana Shapiro
Lisa Strong

with contributions by

Jennifer Carson

Sarah Cash

Lee Glazer

Adam Greenhalgh

Franklin Kelly

Susan G. Larkin

Valerie Ann Leeds

Lawford Alexander Mann II

Randall McLean

Ellen G. Miles

Dorothy Moss

Asma Naeem

Laura Groves Napolitano

Jennifer Raab

Katherine Roeder

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Marc Simpson

Paul Staiti

Lisa Strong

Ann Prentice Wagner

Jennifer Wingate

1906





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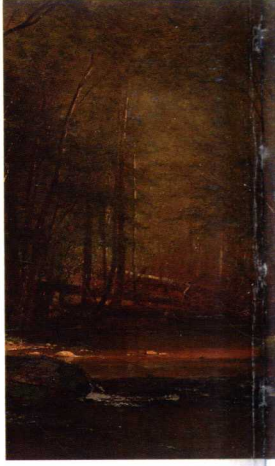
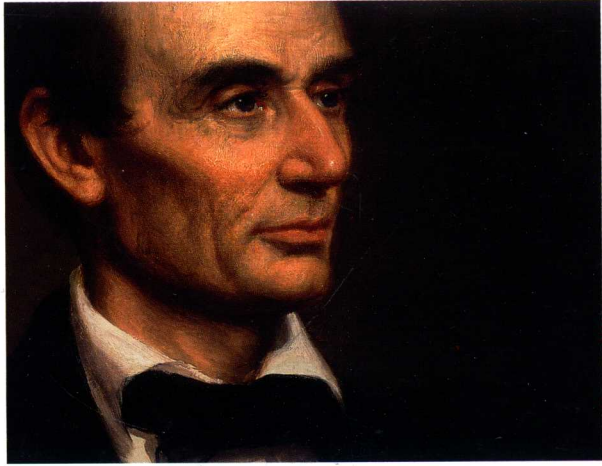
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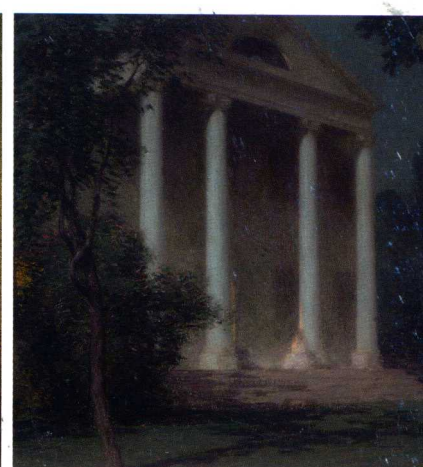
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Director's Foreword

The Corcoran Gallery of Art's *American Paintings to 1945* is a landmark publication for this institution. As the first volume in nearly half a century to extensively research, document, and interpret the Corcoran's outstanding collection of American paintings, it fills a substantial void in scholarship on our many canonical works of American art as well as the history of art patronage and institutional collecting.

Begun in 1850 and donated to the institution nearly twenty years later, William Wilson Corcoran's private collection has grown to become one of the nation's finest and most important holdings of historic American art. Comprising more than five hundred objects dating from 1718 to 1945, the collection now includes a remarkable number of iconic works in all genres of American painting from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. This list includes Samuel F.B. Morse's *The House of Representatives* (1822), Rembrandt Peale's *Washington before Yorktown* (1824–25), Thomas Cole's *The Departure* and *The Return* (1837), Frederic Edwin Church's *Niagara* (1857), John Singer Sargent's *En route pour la pêche* (1878), Thomas Eakins's *Singing a Pathetic Song* (1881), Albert Bierstadt's *The Last of the Buffalo* (1888), George Bellows's *Forty-two Kids* (1907), and Aaron Douglas's *Into Bondage* (1936). It also boasts outstanding breadth and depth in Hudson River School painting, nineteenth-century portraiture and genre painting, American Impressionism, and early-twentieth-century realism.

This catalogue and its companion section of the Corcoran's website document years of research by many scholars, highlighting the institution's commitment to the study and display of its permanent collection. It offers the most comprehensive and up-to-date interpretation of the museum's renowned collection of historic American paintings. Special thanks must go to Bechhoefer Curator of American Art Sarah Cash, who conceived this project in 2003 and has since served as project director and editor of this volume. Her introductory essay provides the first in-depth examination of the institution's long history of collecting and supporting American art.

Such a project could not have been completed without the support of a number of foundations, institutions, and private contributors. The Henry Luce Foundation provided the first crucial gift, which allowed this project to take shape. The foundation's generosity was followed by major contributions from the Getty Grant Program and the National Endowment for the Arts, among many others. Each was essential to support the exhaustive research that underpins the essays published in this book. Their philanthropy has been rewarded by a publication that will enlighten readers for generations to come.

Fred Bollerer

Director and Chief Executive Officer

Corcoran Gallery of Art / Corcoran College of Art + Design

Acknowledgments

This catalogue of the Corcoran Gallery of Art's historic American paintings, which comprises the present volume and an accompanying section of the Corcoran's website, featuring exhaustive documentation on individual paintings, was conceived in 2003 as a publication that would fill a long-acknowledged need for scholarship on the museum's signature holdings. It builds on the several fine publications that have addressed aspects of the collection over the years, while presenting the first thorough scholarship. The only modern catalogue of the collection was published in two volumes, in 1966 and 1973. The result of pioneering efforts by curator Dorothy W. Phillips, it illustrated in black and white only a few of the works included and limited discussion to biographical information on the artists represented. Most important, the present volume is dependent on the remarkable vision of the individuals who have built the Corcoran's world-renowned American paintings collection, beginning with William Wilson Corcoran and the gallery's first curator, William MacLeod, and continuing to the dedicated later-twentieth-century curators Phillips and Linda Crocker Simmons.

A project of this scope, duration, and complexity necessarily incurs many debts. Fred Bollerer, the Corcoran's Director, Paul Greenhalgh, President and Director from 2006 to 2010, and Philip Brookman, Chief Curator, along with the Board of Trustees, have strongly supported this vital collections documentation project.

My most important debt of gratitude is to Emily Dana Shapiro, who served as Assistant Curator of American Art from 2004 to 2008. Emily came to the Corcoran as a Research Fellow in 2003, shortly after the project's inception, and assisted with nearly every aspect of its development, from selecting featured works to soliciting essayists to reading the final manuscript. Emily was also responsible for helping develop and supervise the extensive, multiyear endeavor of thoroughly researching the provenance, exhibition history, and historical context for each of the featured paintings. I am also deeply grateful to Lisa Strong, who joined the catalogue in early 2009 as Project Manager, energetically embracing complex details of budgeting, schedule management, organizing photographs, and cataloguing data at a critical juncture. This volume simply would not exist without Emily's and Lisa's tenacity, intellectual mettle, and unwavering collegiality and friendship.

The Corcoran Gallery of Art staff, present and former, has provided invaluable support with every aspect of this publication, beginning in its earliest stages. In particular, I would like to thank Jennifer Adams, Mario Ascencio, Michael Baltzer, Amanda Bloomfield, Kate Denton Earnest, Ila Furman, Kate Gibney, Cory Hixson, Andrea Jain, David Jung, Douglas Litts, Janice Marks, Debbie Mueller, Pat Reid, Brian Sentman, Jacquelyn Days Serwer, and Nancy Swallow.

Dare Hartwell, Director of Conservation, spearheaded the enormous task of performing technical examinations on each of the 102 works featured in the catalogue. In this effort she was aided by several expert colleagues who examined paintings within their area of expertise: Sian Jones, Lance Mayer, Gay Myers, Barbara Ramsay, and Elizabeth Steele. Marisa Bourgoin, Corcoran Archivist from 1993 to 2007, assisted with countless research questions, deftly located documents for Research Fellows, and shared her unsurpassed knowledge of William Wilson Corcoran and the history of the institution with me as I prepared the introductory essay.

I am very grateful to the contributing authors, who are listed on the title page. A number of these writers also served as Research Fellows over a period of four years: Jennifer Carson, Adam Greenhalgh, Randall McLean, Laura Groves Napolitano, Katherine Roeder, Emily Dana Shapiro, Lisa Strong, and Jennifer Wingate. The vast amount of new information compiled about the history of the collection, including the recovery of more than fifty original titles, dates, and attributions, and thorough provenances for all of the featured works, is the legacy of their skillful and dedicated work.

A number of talented young Corcoran interns also provided invaluable assistance over the course of this project: Matthew Bacon, Margaret Carragher, Aaron Cator, Andrew D'Ambrosio, Abigail Davis, Emma Dent, Diana Kaw, Margaret Morrison, Michael Raven, Heather Saeger, Ingrid Seggerman, Elizabeth Shook, Amy Torbert, and Victoria Yetter.

Several museum colleagues who have recently completed excellent American collection catalogues were of enormous assistance and support as we considered the different forms this project could take. For their input and support, I am most grateful to Teresa A. Carbone, Brooklyn Museum; James W. Tottis, formerly of the Detroit Institute of Arts; Pamela Belanger, formerly of the Farnsworth Art Museum; Thayer Tolles, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Margaret C. Conrads, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; and Linda Muehlig, Smith College Museum of Art.

I am also grateful to the manuscript's readers, Emily Dana Shapiro and Margaret C. Conrads, for their insightful comments on the essays. Their keen eyes and sharp intellects helped to bring clarity to the disparate voices showcased in the catalogue. I was delighted to collaborate once again with Fronia W. Simpson, who brought her matchless copyediting skills to the entire volume.

Ed Marquand and his team at Marquand Books expertly guided this volume to fruition. Managing Editor Brynn Warriner, Image Librarian/Media Manager Sara Billups, and Production Manager Keryn Means saw to myriad details and kept the book on schedule, and Jeff Wincapaw translated its many components into a clear and elegant design.

Deepest appreciation is due to the individuals and organizations that generously provided funding for the project. The seminal gift from The Henry Luce Foundation, Inc., whose long-standing support of American art research and publication projects has been essential to undertakings such as this one, was followed by contributions from the Getty Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts; The Page and Otto Marx, Jr., Foundation; Martha A. Healy; Ambika Kosada, James Atwood, and Richard Atwood in memory of Joyce Rose Atwood; and Furthermore: a program of the J.M. Kaplan Fund, Inc. Additional support was provided by the Peters Family Art Foundation; Catherine Dail; James Graham and Sons; Max N. Berry; Debra Force Fine Art, Inc.; Conner•Rosenkranz, New York; Ted Cooper; Maryann and Alvin Friedman; Betty Krulik Fine Art, Limited; Arthur J. Phelan; Richard D. Chalfant; Diana Kaw; Lawrence W. Chakrin; and Marjorie S. Lindemann. Each of these gifts was essential for supporting the comprehensive biographical, provenance, and exhibition research that underlies each of these essays. Support for the photography of original frames included in the catalogue was provided by Eli Wilner and Company.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the many museum colleagues, librarians, archivists, art dealers, collectors, and other scholars in the United States and abroad who gave their time and energy to answering questions or sharing research as we prepared the catalogue. Many of those who helped are recognized in this volume's endnotes. A special debt is owed to William H. Gerdts, whose superb files resolved many of our quandaries and allowed us to compile more thorough histories of the Corcoran's objects than we had ever hoped to be able to do. The tireless Washington researcher Colonel Merl M. Moore, Jr., also assisted with many queries. Numerous scholars also provided specialized assistance with particular artists: Gerald Carr, Rowena Houghton Dasch, Peter Hassrick, Pamela Ivinski, Kenneth Maddox, Mark Mitchell, Alan Wallach, and James Yarnall. Valuable assistance was also provided by the outstanding staff of several Washington, D.C., research institutions. At the National Portrait Gallery and Smithsonian American Art Museum Library, which provided our Research Fellows with stack access and free photocopying, thanks go to Cecilia Chin, Alice Clarke, Douglas Litts, Patricia Lynagh, and Stephanie Moyes. The staff of the Archives of American Art, especially Marisa Bourgoïn, Richard Manoogian Chief of Reference Services, and her predecessor, Judith Throm, made researchers' use of that incredible resource efficient and pleasant. The staffs of the Library of Congress, the National Gallery of Art Library, the Historical Society of the District of Columbia, and the Library of the Daughters of the American Revolution were also extraordinarily helpful to the many researchers on this project.

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As the director of the catalogue, I would like to offer a personal reflection. Over its years of preparation, a number of friends have offered unwavering support; besides Emily Shapiro and Lisa Strong, who provided daily collegiality and reinforcement, those at a greater distance include Teresa A. Carbone, Margaret C. Conrads, Erica E. Hirshler, Thayer Tolles, and Sylvia Yount. Closer to home, this project has been a presence in my life nearly as long as my son, Colin; to him and to my husband, Glenn R. MacCullough, I owe deep gratitude for their patience and support.

I have been deeply honored to oversee a project that renders the Corcoran's fascinating history and holdings accessible to the field of American art and to future generations of museum visitors. As such, I hope this contribution to the tradition of collections stewardship upheld with such dedication by my predecessors will inspire all who have the good fortune to mine the rich American paintings collection of this distinguished institution.

Sarah Cash
Bechhoefer Curator of American Art
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
January 2010



Sarah Cash “Encouraging American Genius”:
Collecting American Art
at the Corcoran Gallery of Art