

WINSLOW HOMER: POET OF THE SEA

Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, February 22-May 21, 2006
Musée d'Art Américain Giverny, June 18 - September 24, 2006

The Musée d'Art Américain Giverny and the Dulwich Picture Gallery have organized *Winslow Homer: Poet of the Sea*, an exhibition that introduces European audiences to one of America's most treasured artists and indeed a central figure in all of 19th century painting. This will be the first major monographic exhibition in Europe on Winslow Homer, bringing new perspective to this great artist by expanding the discourse to an international level.

Though first celebrated for his Civil War and genre scenes, Winslow Homer is perhaps at his most magical when capturing water, whether in oil or watercolor. This exhibition is a focused examination of Homer's distinctive style featuring 60 works from throughout his career in which water dominates. The selection clearly represents the freshness of Homer's approach, his inventiveness, and the underlying emotional and psychological complexity of his work. Furthermore, the exhibition re-evaluates Homer's oeuvre, going beyond a reading within the context of American realism, to reveal his original and distinctly modern vision—something that sets Homer apart from his contemporaries.

Divided into five sections by geographical location, the exhibition confirms Homer's extraordinary ability to adapt his style and technique to the environment. He captured the quintessence of the surrounding landscape at each locale: his early seascapes of the East Coast until 1880, his scenes from the village of Cullercoats in England between 1881 and 1882, his commanding paintings in Prout's Neck, Maine, and finally vibrant tropical watercolors from the Bahamas or Florida shown with fishing scenes from the Adirondacks and Canada.

I. The Emergence of the Seascape: The East Coast

Winslow Homer's sudden but lasting interest in the sea coincides with his return from a one year sojourn in Paris at the end of 1867, which freed him from the burden of being 'the painter of national identity,' as the critics put it. Clearly influenced by the Barbizon school, Homer chose to paint outdoors. These early marine paintings from 1869-1870 demonstrate his rugged and dynamic brushstrokes and sketch-like techniques forming long horizontal bands of color—a stark contrast with the serene, transparent glazes of the Hudson River School.

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During two summer stays in Gloucester, Massachusetts, the painter threw himself into two series of watercolors: with freshness and subtle modulations of color, the first depicts children playing by the water. The second represents daring experimentations in form revealing an early mastery of the effects of light and a bold use of color.

II. The Perils of the Sea: Cullercoats, England

Homer set sail for England in 1881, ultimately settling in the fishing village of Cullercoats on the North Sea for almost a year and a half. The sojourn represents a turning point in his oeuvre marked by a deliberate attention to composition and line. Working almost exclusively in watercolor, he rendered scenes of the English seafaring population that reveal an interest in classicized composition in works such as *Fisher Girls on Shore, Tynemouth* (1884, Wadsworth Atheneum). These works won critical acclaim when exhibited in the United States.

III. Mastering the Elements: Prout's Neck, Maine

In 1883, Homer left New York to settle permanently in Prout's Neck, an austere stretch of land on the coast of Maine. His work from this period is characterized by a move away from 'realism' in its strictest definition. From 1883 to 1889 Homer produced heroic scenes that pitch individuals against the turbulent sea. Developed in his studio, the works often combined themes and sketches that dated back a few years, as with *The Life Line* (1884, Philadelphia Museum of Art). After 1890, Homer produced fewer canvases, producing works that are intense yet restrained.

IV. "Memoranda of Travel:" The Adirondacks, Canada and the Tropics

Homer continued to find inspiration during his travels. Fleeing the harsh winters at Prout's Neck, Homer traveled south to the Bahamas, the Bermudas, Cuba and Florida. In the spring and autumn he headed to the Adirondack Mountains and Canada for hunting and fishing. The watercolors he painted on these journeys illustrate his continuing interest in the study of the effects of changing light and atmosphere. The tropical works, such as *Glass Windows, Bahamas* (c. 1885, Brooklyn Museum), are characterized by the use of brilliant colors. While an unusual series of black and white watercolors painted between 1894 and 1895 in Quebec, including *Trout Fishing, Lake St. John Quebec* (1895, Museum of Fine Arts), reveal his interest in japonisme.

Travel sketches sometimes gave rise to ambitious compositions back in his studio at Prout's Neck, as in *Searchlight on Harbor Entrance, Santiago de Cuba* (1901, The Metropolitan

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Museum of Art). A stunning example of Homer's mature work, the painting depicts the 1898 blockade of the Spanish fleet in the Harbor of Santiago de Cuba during the Spanish War, relating the event with masterful simplicity and a carefully honed composition, .

2006 will be a banner year for American art in Europe. In London, *Winslow Homer: Poet of the Sea* will coincide with the presentation of *Americans in Paris*, an exhibition at the National Gallery that will include Homer's masterpiece *Summer Night* from the Musée d'Orsay. Purchased during the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900, it is the only painting by Homer in a French public collection. While in Giverny, *Winslow Homer: Poet of the Sea* will be exhibited concurrently with *American Artists and the Louvre, 1760-1930*, the first exhibition devoted to American art held at the Louvre, sponsored by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Biography

1836

Winslow Homer born February 24th in Boston, the son of Charles Savage Homer, Sr. and Henrietta Benson Homer.

1855

Entered the lithography shop of John H. Bufford in Boston as an apprentice.

1857

Left Bufford's and began freelance illustration work for *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* and *Harper's Weekly*.

1859

Moved to New York and registered in the life School of the National Academy of Design.

1860

Skating in Central Park by Homer listed on exhibition at the Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design.

1861

Weekly painting lessons from French artist Frédéric Rondel (1826-1892). Homer sent by *Harper's Weekly* to cover the front lines of the Union armies.

1863

Painted his first successful oil painting: *The Sharpshooter on Picket Duty*.

1864

Elected as Associate Academician at the National

Academy of Design and Full Academician the following year.

1866

Painted and exhibited *Prisoners from the Front* at the National Academy of Design.

December sailed to France.

1867

Prisoner from the Front and *The Bright Side* are exhibited at the Paris Universal Exposition.

Autumn returned to New York.

1868

Exhibited French pictures at the National Academy of Design.

1869

Summered in Long Branch, New Jersey and in Manchester, Massachusetts.

1870

Summered in Gloucester, Massachusetts.
September, first visit to the Adirondack Mountains in New York.

1873

Summered in the Greenwich area in Connecticut and in Gloucester.

1874

Spring and Autumn visits to the Adirondacks.
July spent in East Hampton, Long Island, New York.

1875

First large show of watercolors at the American Water Color Society.
Summer, first visit to Prout's Neck, Maine.

1877

Became a founding member of the Tile Club in New York.

1878

Exhibited *The Bright Side*, *Snap the Whip*, *A Visit from the Old Mistress*, *Sunday Morning in Virginia* and *Country School* at the Paris Universal Exposition.
Summer and Autumn visits to Houghton Farm in Mountainville, New York.

1880

Summer in Gloucester.

1881

Sailed to England for the first time and settled for twenty months in Cullercoats, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Tynemouth in Great Britain.

1882

November returned to New York.

1883

Summer in Prout's Neck.
Settled permanently in
Prout's Neck at the end of
the year

1884

December sent by the *Century Magazine* to the Bahamas to illustrate an article.

1885

February trip to Cuba.
Winter 1885-1886 first trip
to Florida.

1893

Trip to Chicago on the
occasion of the World's
Columbian Exposition, where
he exhibited fifteen
paintings.
Spring first visit to
Quebec.

1896

First International
Exhibition at the Carnegie
Institute in Pittsburgh
(Pennsylvania). *The Wreck*
won a gold medal.

1898

August 22nd death of Homer's
father.

1899

Summer in the Adirondacks,
where he would return each
year during spring between
1901 and 1906, then during
summer between 1907 and
1910.

First visit to Bermuda at
the end of the year.

1900

Summer Night won a gold
medal at the Paris Universal
Exposition.

1905

Executed his last signed and
dated watercolor *Diamond Shoal*
in Prout's Neck.

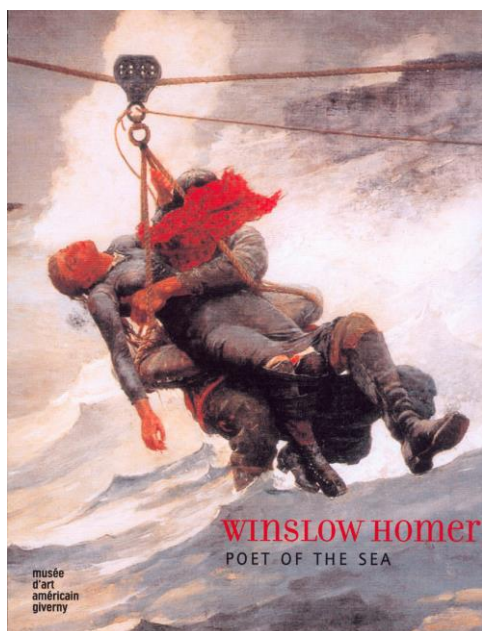
1906

The Metropolitan Museum of
Art bought *The Gulf Stream*.

1910

Died September 29th in his
studio at Prout's Neck.

Catalogue



Winslow Homer:
Poet of the Sea
pas de
majuscules?

Edited by Sophie Lévy
Essays by Eric Shanes,
Marc Simpson and Judith Walsh

22 x 28 cm

152 pages

100 color illustrations

French and English editions

Price: £14.95 / \$24.95

Winslow Homer: Poet of the Sea will introduce European audiences to one of America's most important artists. Considering that Homer's captivating and distinctive work remains little known in Europe, a monographic catalogue is long overdue.

This fully illustrated scholarly catalogue brings together contributions by American and European specialists including Marc Simpson (US), Eric Shanes (UK) and Judith Walsh (US) with contributions by Sophie Lévy (FR), Vanessa Lecomte (FR) and Bronwyn Griffith (FR). It is published to accompany the exhibition *Winslow Homer: Poet of the Sea* scheduled to open at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London in February 2006 and at the Musée d'Art Américain in Giverny, France, in June 2006. The University of Chicago Press will distribute the catalogue in Great Britain and the United States and Le Seuil will distribute the catalogue in France.

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contributors

Sophie Lévy is chief curator of the Musée d'Art Américain Giverny where she has organized many exhibitions, including *A Transatlantic Avant-Garde: American Avant-Garde Artists in Paris, 1918-1939* in 2003 (Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma and Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago) ~~and~~ *Mary Cassatt. Impressions* in 2005. She is the curator of the exhibition *Winslow Homer: Poet of the Sea*

Eric Shanes, a well-known J. M. W. Turner and English watercolor specialist, has also written extensively on American art. He has curated two recent shows: *Turner: The Great Watercolours* at the Royal Academy and *The Golden Age of Watercolour: The Hickman Bacon Collection* at Dulwich Picture Gallery and the Yale Center for British Art.

Marc Simpson is curator of American Art at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute as well as associate director and lecturer in the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art. He received his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1993 and is known for his research on American Art from 1860 to 1930. Recently published essays focus on the work of James McNeill Whistler, Thomas Eakins, and Winslow Homer. He has curated many exhibitions on American art, including the Fall 2005 event held at the Clark Art Institute, *Winslow Homer: Making Art, Making History*.

Judith Walsh joined the Art Conservation Department of Buffalo State (State University of New York) in Fall 2005. She earned her Certificate of Advanced Studies in Art Conservation from the Cooperstown Graduate Programs (SUNY College) in 1977. She has spent the last fourteen years as Senior Paper Conservator at the National Gallery of Art. Prior to that, she worked at the Worcester Museum of Art and in private practice in Portland, Maine. Walsh has taught at the New York University School of Continuing Education and the Clark Art Institute Art History Program among others. She has conducted extensive research on Winslow Homer and Georgia O'Keeffe and has published on those artists as well as on other topics.

Conference Winslow Homer

Heroism and Reportage

Terra Foundation Conference/Courtauld Institute of Art
Research Forum

Courtauld Institute of Art and Dulwich Picture Gallery, April
10 and 11, 2006

A two-day international conference will be held at the
Courtauld Institute of Art and the Dulwich Picture Gallery on
10-11 April 2006 to coincide with the exhibition *Winslow
Homer: Poet of the Sea* (Dulwich Picture Gallery, 22 February -
21 May). Organized by the Courtauld Institute Research Forum
and the Terra Foundation for American Art, the conference will
address the topics of heroism and reportage in relation to the
art of the second half of the nineteenth-century.

Between 1850 and 1900 the illustrated press grew immensely in
the United States, Britain and Europe both in terms of
audience size and significance. Popular imagery, largely
produced in the context of the periodical press, had a
profound impact on nineteenth-century art, particularly in
works that dealt with contemporary events and modern life.
Investigative reporting and sensationalist presentation of
events in the media redefined the lineaments of heroism that
had once been more securely the preserve of history painting.
At the same time, history painting sought to give new
relevance to traditional hierarchies of value. The interaction
between high art and popular imagery destabilized more
traditional forms of representation through the mixture of the
factual and the heroic, thereby changing the role of pictorial
devices such as staging and composition as well as influencing
the rhetoric of pose and gesture, the construction and
position of the viewer and pictorial style. Related topics
include witness, record and documentation, the emergence of
the anti-hero and the redefinition of the heroic in modern
times. An international panel of speakers is being invited to
consider these topics.