

# Bulletin of The Detroit Museum of Art

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## A FEW THOUGHTS ON HOUSEHOLD DECORATION.

The whole idea of household decoration simmers down to simplicity, and this I believe is best accomplished by seeking the origin of things now used by us in our homes and then discarding that which is obsolete, or if we still persist in its use, use it as it was used originally, and not disguise it by combinations of modern invention.

For instance, a candelabrum, with imitation candles and electric lights, I dislike. The old cluster of tallow or wax candles was a delight, shedding a soft, diffused radiance which is never attained by the electric. I do not mean by this that electricity is not a great improvement, but let it be in fixtures appropriate to its use, and not parade in borrowed plumes. All woodwork in a house should be of the most simple character, and no matter how cheap, should be left in its natural color or at most stained, never varnished, but finished so that it will show the beauty of grain under a dull luster, letting use and time give it a polish hallowed by those who have gone before.

Varnish except as a protection to material exposed to the weather is an abomination. This same thought applies to our table ware, which began with wooden and pewter dishes, the sole ornamentation of which was that they be clean. Then came pottery, a better material when left in its simplicity with only a band or

at most a monogram in the center, until the craze of the china painter made it hideous with flowers and animals, and even portraits to be covered with meat and potatoes and cabbage; plates on which was painted dead fish, or game, all of which might be appropriate for the walls of a restaurant. We overload our walls and ceilings with meaningless, gaudy decoration appropriate to concert hall or bar-room. There is nothing so pleasing to the eye as white or some very delicate tone for a ceiling without any decoration, unless it be of the most simple kind in gold or silver. Our walls should be backgrounds, not flower gardens on which run riot the most gorgeous tropical plants as though you were in a jungle.

I know of a house that cost a lot of money in which one room was made to appear like a cave. From the ceiling hung plaster stalactites tinted in purple, pink and blue, the tips of gold. The walls were great mirrors repeating the horror, and in this fairy Grotto were rugs and upholstered furniture. Can you think of any thing more out of place or in such wretched taste? To my mind, walls should be of the most pleasing and unobtrusive character, on which pictures might appear as loop holes through which one catches a glimpse of nature's glory. The fields are clothed with grass and moss, fallen leaves, daisies, buttercups and violets, and yet we still buy carpets with roses as big as the head of a

Ward Loan Collection, having been purchased by Mr. Ward. Both are Museum pictures of the first order.

The selection of Hassam's "*Place Centrale and Fort Cabanas*" by the Picture Purchase Committee was a very wise one, for it represents a certain period of the artist's work that is distinctive in his development. It was painted in 1895, and was awarded the Webb Prize at the Society of American Artists the same year. In it the artist has attained the height of skill in a certain technical style that lent itself to the handling of his beautiful colors in a way that gives a sense of solidity and texture to the thing he depicts. The cement and plaster walls, and the tile roofs played upon by a tropical light, carry a feeling that these things are true. Between the city and the summit of the hill where the fort is situated, there is a most remarkable sense of intervening space, in which just the tops of trees are to be seen. The artist in a letter to us says, "I will not do anything like it again," and he means without doubt, that he can't. His progress and development have carried him to new methods, and he will never return to methods and perceptions that are passed, as good as these have been, and it is a matter for congratulation that the Detroit Museum has secured this period picture.

While we are on the subject of Child Hassam's paintings,—and he is a most interesting man to study, and gives us lovely things to think and talk about,—I would point out one other picture in this collection which is distinctly a period picture, viz:—"The Bowl of Nasturtiums." This no doubt would have been the choice of the Purchase Committee if their funds had been sufficient. It is one of those inspired works that a man accomplishes but few times in his short span of life. "*The Bowl of Nasturtiums*" is a step in advance of anything else in the exhibition, carry-

ing with it new beauties of tone, a new palate, and new spontaneity. A young woman is seated by a window on the sill of which is a bowl of the flowers which gives the picture its name. A flimsy curtain forms a background for the figure, but shuts out only a part of the view into the orchard beyond. The casement of the window is thrown up so that at the top of the picture the view is seen through glass, and as imperceptible as the glass would appear, the artist has given mysteriously, a feeling of it above, and an open view below. Mid-summer light and vibrant atmosphere circumscribe every object within one's vision. The pearly curtain and shimmering texture of the woman's dress, the casement and ledge of the window, are all wrought with a myriad of pigments that give a wonderful sparkle to it, and yet the tone and effect are perfectly realized. It is a wonderful harmony played over a pedalpoint in a high key.

Whether this will become the standard to measure the artist as a colorist by, or whether he will advance still further, remains to be seen, though the possibility of improvement seems out of the question at this time.

"*The White Veil*," by Willard L. Metcalf is one of the pictures that have grown in favor every day that it has been here, and without question is the most popular as well as one of the very finest technically, of this artist's works. The summer visitor from the rural districts stands before it and exclaims, "Many a time have I hunted rabbits after a snow-storm like that," and it touches upon reminiscences that give him glimpses of an experience which he treasures, and his feelings are a critical compliment. He only says in a different way what the artist does when he enthusiastically points it out with, "That snow-storm is a bully good thing; its so true; its values are so good," and while the above are actual

flour barrel that never grew on earth or in heaven. Rugs are still sold on which are representations of peacocks, dogs and landscapes.

Unfortunately most of the offenses against good taste are committed by the large middle class who are in comfortable circumstances, for the rich man turns his house over to the experienced decorator and accepts his judgment, but the man or woman who own a comfortable home feel that they can rely upon their own selection of all that enters into their house and spend more, which if rightly used would make their habitation a delight to themselves and the visitor beneath their roof. In a word, a hall should welcome, a living room should be restful, a dining room cheerful, a library inviting and a bed room peaceful, while in a man's den can be gathered the flotsam and jetsam of fancy and travel, tokens of friendship, and mementos of vacations spent far from the haunts of man.

A. H. G.

### SUMMER EXHIBITIONS.

It has been very gratifying to have had for the past three months, a Summer Exhibition of such rare quality as that of the combined Metcalf-Hassam collection of paintings, and it has been even more gratifying to note the interest Detroiters took in this exhibition, by coming repeatedly to see and study the pictures. That a lasting impression was made by these two essentially American painters upon the art loving people and the artists of this city, there is no doubt; some of the striving members of the brush took advantage of the opportunity by making a comparative study of their sketches alongside of these two colorists of the first order, a most commendable way of making use of special exhibitions of this character.

It is with regret that we see the ap-

proach of a new season, bringing with it special exhibitions to displace those by Childe Hassam and Willard L. Metcalf, though the coming exhibitions will have their compensations. Metcalf and Hassam, as lavish as nature itself in their resplendent coloring, and presenting as varied a group of subjects, have made us love the sky, the sunshine and the water more. They have tempered our vision to the seasons' wealth of beauty, and have interpreted the moods of nature through these glimpses of the out-of-doors. Their pictures are windows through which the beauties of detached bits of landscape are brought home to us so forcibly, that our appreciation of all out-doors is enhanced. On our next walk after study and enjoyment of these collections, we find that we have added perception of color scheme of nature, and we find so many intermediate colors that we never saw before, that we feel much like a blind man whose sight has suddenly been restored; we are amazed at the revelations, and are spiritually benefitted by the simple pleasure of seeing changes each hour and each day in the little Eden that has been allotted to us during our short stay on earth. What a wholesome enjoyment good pictures are!

There are two consoling things which make the departure of these good pictures bearable, however; one is the promise of something just as good in the exhibitions that will take their place month after month during the winter months; the other, the fact that a painting by each of these artists will remain permanently in our collection, for the enjoyment of the many friends they have made while in Detroit.

"*Place Centrale and Fort Cabanas, Havana*" by Childe Hassam has been acquired by purchase and will go into the Museum's permanent collection, and "*The White Veil*," by Willard L. Metcalf, will hang in the Charles Willis



quotations of two men of different viewpoints, how perfectly they co-incide. "*The White Veil*" is a scene essentially American, which is a part of the recollection of all northerners. New snow has covered a hilly landscape, and is still falling. A group of evergreens are bending beneath the weight of the white burden that has collected on them, and in the distance is just the suggestion of a house where shelter and warmth are to be had.

### SUNDAY AFTERNOON TALKS.

The nineteenth annual series of Sunday afternoon talks will open in the auditorium of the Museum Sunday, November fifth, and we believe they will prove as popular as in the past. While we can not at this time announce the subjects, they will be along the same lines as in former years. Art, history and travel will be the topics, and every effort will be made to make them not only entertaining, but of a highly educational character. The subjects will be announced through the daily press each week.

Again we are compelled to say, that, owing to the limited capacity of the auditorium, no children will be admitted to the lectures. In this connection we will say that illustrated lectures will be given schools during the week at any time the teachers will advise us a few days in advance of their desire to bring their pupils.

The Detroit Museum of Art is frequently called upon to give lectures to schools from the surrounding towns. These requests are always granted and the visitors made welcome. In this it will be seen that the work of the institution is not confined to the city, but that it is one of the elements that help to attract visitors from afar.

### VALUABLE ADDITION TO THE LIBRARY.

Through the courtesy of Mr. Henry Russel, the Library of the Detroit Museum of Art is designated as the recipient of a gift from Hon. Thomas J. O'Brien, United States Ambassador to Japan, and at present Ambassador to Rome, of three rare and beautiful volumes of reproductions of Japanese prints which a Japanese gentleman has had made. The Japanese text accompanying the prints will be translated at an early date, so that the greatest possible good may be gotten out of them by students of Japanese art who consult our Library. Books of this quality afford an opportunity to study an art in which Japan has surpassed all other countries, and it is hoped that they will often be called for in the future.

### PICTURES LOANED OTHER EXHIBITIONS.

In the Sixth Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by American Artists, which is being held in the City Art Museum, of St. Louis, Mo., are three of the paintings belonging to the Detroit Museum of Art permanent collection which were invited by that institution. They are "*Unfolding Buds*" by Willard L. Metcalf, "*Portrait of Mrs. Melchers*" by Gari Melchers, and the recently painted "*Portrait of Director A. H. Griffith*" by Samantha L. Huntley, which will explain their absence to such of our visitors as find them missing from their accustomed places.

The Catalogue of the exhibition, which is beautifully illustrated, gives page half-tone reproductions of the Metcalf and the "*Portrait of Director Griffith.*"

### Hours of Admission.

The Museum is open to the public FREE every day in the week from 9 a. m. to 4 p. m., except Sunday, when the hours are from 2 to 4 p. m.

## In Memoriam

On the 25th of July, 1911, the Executive Committee, learning of the death of Mrs. Sara M. Skinner, a member of the Board of Incorporators, approved the following resolutions:

The many friends of MRS. SARA M. SKINNER, and the organizations of this city with which she was connected, learn with sadness of her sudden death.

Mrs. Skinner was one of the coterie of energetic women, whose work entered so largely into the success of the Detroit Museum of Art in its early days of struggle. She was one of the original incorporators through whose active work and generous contributions the interest in the collections of the Museum was sustained. Nor did her interest cease with the growth of the Museum, but up to the very last she has kept in touch with the work.

*Resolved*, that in the death of Mrs. Sara M. Skinner the Museum has lost one of its early and steadfast friends, a woman whose amiable qualities endeared her to all; and be it further

*Resolved*, that the heartfelt sympathy of the Incorporators and Trustees of the Detroit Museum of Art be extended to the members of the bereaved family, and a copy of the above be spread upon the records of the Museum.

Respectfully,

BRYANT WALKER, President.

## COMING EXHIBITIONS.

The exhibitions scheduled for the coming winter will be of a higher standard than ever before, showing especially, good American Art, with a number of local exhibitors on the list that ought to prove of interest to Detroiters.

### Will H. Low.

During October will be shown in the Main Gallery an exhibition of Mural or Decorative Painting by an American, pre-eminent in this branch of art in this country, Will H. Low. Mr. Low is not entirely unknown to Detroit, as an exhibition of his works were shown here some years ago, and on that occasion, Mr. Low delivered a very instructive and entertaining lecture before a large Detroit audience on Decorative Art. The exhibition this year will consist of sketches and studies and photographs for some of the important mural works which the artist has executed, and will give a comprehensive idea of the making of a great decoration.

### Miss May Ames.

Later in the same month, Miss May Ames of Cleveland, O., a woman painter

of considerable talent will exhibit a small group of her works.

### C. Harry Allis.

The balance of the month of November, the Main Gallery will have an exhibition of another Detroit artist who has been abroad for the past few years. C. Harry Allis, who is well remembered in local circles, has been asked to show some of his recent work and has consented to do so, and his exhibition ought to be of interest to every Detroitite. Much artistic talent has grown up in our city, and it should meet with every encouragement here.

### Roy C. Gamble.

During the month of December, a group of sketches and paintings by Mr. Roy C. Gamble, one of the younger Detroit artists of talent, will be shown in one of the East Galleries. Mr. Gamble is a student of the Fine Arts School, who has spent a year abroad in serious study, and despite his youth shows good feeling for color, individuality, and settled style.

These and other exhibitions will also be announced in the public press from time to time.

merit are often valuable as marking some period in the development of art. Museums that have the means, like New York, Boston, Philadelphia and other cities, are seeking examples of the early American painters as showing the stepping stones of American art, but all this requires time as well as money, and as Detroit is growing in wealth as well as population, there is no doubt that its Museum will also grow with the city and become even a greater factor in all that goes to make it famous.

### ACQUISITIONS.

By purchase, the oil painting "*Place Centrale and Fort Cabanas*," by Childe Hassam, was acquired.

Mrs. A. H. Pickering loaned a water-color painting by F. Hopkinson Smith entitled "*The Old Mill*."

Mr. Joseph Hooper gave seventeen replicas of the Early Colonial Coins.

Mr. Oscar A. Graesser gave a coin.

Mr. John C. Rose loaned ten coins, six of them of the United States, a German Thaler of 1784, a Cuban Scrip, and a Columbia coin.

Mrs. Abby W. Major loaned some very interesting things, among them, an antique French clock, a pair of Colonial lanterns, a rare wooden flower known as "Rose of Hell," an interesting wood-carving of the Crucifixion from the panel of a door in an old Mexican church, a Meerscham carving, a shell carving of Bacchus, an old Dutch silver spoon, hand hammered, an old Dresden soup-tureen used by the Royal family, and a number of very interesting Mexican curios and utensils. She also loaned an oil painting by F. A. Fuller, and one by Robert Hopkin.

Mr. Gilbert Edgarton Hall gave a book plate.

The Director of The National Museum, Amsterdam, gave a DeLuxe catalogue of that collection.

Mr. B. B. Garrett gave a copy of the New York Herald of April 15th, 1865, giving details of the assassination of Lincoln.

Hon. Thomas J. O'Brien gave, through Mr. Henry Russel, three very beautiful volumes of reproductions of Japanese prints made by a Japanese gentleman.

Mr. Abraham Somers gave a French coin of Napoleon, a franc of 1808.

### COIN DEPARTMENT.

Mr. Joseph Hooper, of Syracuse, N. Y., a prominent numismatist, has given to the Museum a number of replicas of the Colonial coins,—the first coinage in use in this country before the separation from the Mother Country. The originals of these coins are very rare; of one of them, only two specimens are known to exist. For Museum purposes, therefore, these electrotype reproductions made in the British Museum, are quite as good as the originals.

They have been installed in the Coin Collection, where those interested in early coinage may see the medium of exchange used in Revolutionary days.

### THE SOROLLA.

Miss Cornelia B. Sage, Director of the Albright Art Gallery, has continued the loan of the "*Old Castilian*" by Sorolla, which compensates in a great measure for the absent pictures. The Sorolla, which has been with us all summer, has grown in favor each day, and many compliments have been paid it by visitors from our own and other cities who have seen the Sorolla exhibit. It is without doubt one of the best of the Spanish master's works, and Detroit was exceedingly fortunate in showing this good example, inasmuch as it was unable to show his exhibition in this city.

### WHAT OTHERS SAY.

The publicity which the Detroit Museum of Art and the methods of its Director, have received from widely read magazines and newspapers of national circulation during the last three months is very flattering to an institution that is still in its struggling period.

A July issue of the Baltimore Sun devoted a whole page to a description of the Detroit Museum and the work being done here for the people, written by Dr. D. H. Steffens, who was sent to this city to review the Museum and get an interview with Director A. H. Griffith. After a resume of the work in Detroit covering a period of twenty-five years, and many very flattering compliments to its Director, Dr. Steffens says in conclusion:—

"This Detroit Museum of Art is a very busy place, and far removed from the average picture gallery, which seems to have fulfilled its purpose when the sedate maiden lady at the door hands you a catalogue and takes your quarter. I have even heard some people say that it (judged by high standards of art) is no museum at all, but rather a sort of art exchange. By way of reply, it might be pointed out that an exchange, whether it be a corn exchange, or any other exchange, usually serves some very definite and very good purpose. This museum, open to the public and depending upon the public for support, serves the public—the students, the teacher, the school children, the artisan, the mechanic, the designer and draftsman of Detroit. The present seal of the museum has no motto. Fortunately it has just room for the splendid words "Ich Dien"—"I Serve." May we suggest that they be placed in the seal? No words can more aptly characterize the spirit and purpose of this splendid institution, which is today no longer a private corporation, but a free educational agency of the city of Detroit and an inspiration to every public museum in this country."

The leading article in the August number of the Fine Arts Journal is devoted to The Detroit Museum of Art, and is illustrated with nine beautiful half-tones of important paintings in our collection. James William Pattison, Esq., is the author, and he concludes his writing by saying: "The Museum has a very high place in the estimation of American artists, and it never calls for material with which to make an exhibition without receiving a hearty response.

"There are little art museums springing up all over the United States, and Detroit has been a forerunner, a splendid example of what may be done anywhere that the spirit exists and the friends of art are earnest and serious."

"Art and Progress" and "The Literary Digest" have devoted lengthy articles recently to the efforts of Director Griffith to popularize the museum, and to show the people that art is a vital thing that enters into everyday life. Miss Minnie Cage, who wrote the article for "Art and Progress" says, in going into an analysis of his Sunday lectures which have become so popular, "In order to attract the public and grip the attention of his audience, Prof. Griffith makes his talk complete with human interest. For instance, when lecturing upon a great painter, he does not dwell upon his 'technique'; in describing his paintings he does not employ terms meaningless to the average listener; he pictures the time in which the artist lived and the condition under which he worked; he tells about his loves and friendships and the influences that shaped his art, all of the intimate things that he can discover about the artist's life which help to make of the man of genius a real flesh-and-blood person with whose hopes and fears, joys and sorrows every one in the audience can sympathize, and when this interest is aroused, he points out with the aid of stereopticon slides, the beauty of the artist's works."