

WINSLOW HOMER  
— AND —  
JOHN SINGER SARGENT

AN EXHIBITION OF  
WATER COLORS

THE DETROIT MUSEUM  
OF ART

This catalog is free, but visitors who have no further use for it are requested to return it before leaving the galleries.

In the Library of the Museum may be found many reference works on Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent.

# WINSLOW HOMER AND JOHN SINGER SARGENT

**T**HE exhibition of water colors by Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent, herewith presented, are more significant in revealing the respective accomplishment of these artists to the public than one at first realizes. Their pictures in this medium may be fairly regarded as the height of self-expression, uninfluenced by public demand and unfettered by the convention of finish. They are the artistic emanations of two great painters done in months of leisure, for their own pleasure, when the urge was upon them, and for this reason they give us a peculiar insight into the character of the creative artist obtained in none of their more ambitious works.

Homer probably never thought his holiday sketches would be so avidly sought by the public. They were notes recording as it were, in painters' shorthand, new observations which impressed him at a given moment; they set forth only so much of the scene as concerned him and in a manner of delineation, less exacting than the public would demand, hence one generally (not always) finds them executed with a startling economy. The frugality of means accompanied by an emphatic effort to record a particular impression enables one to seize upon Homer's habit of mind in dealing with elemental forces and to study his work with unbounded delight. His water colors reveal his power of observation, his grasp of reality and potency of expression in other subjects than those by which he is so widely known to the public.

Sargent, like Homer, seems to allow himself in his water colors greater freedom, if that were pos-

sible, than in his oils. It has always been his habit when overtaken by fatigue with his portrait commissions, and cloyed with looking upon his constant stream of fashionable sitters, to turn to new and refreshing surroundings. Traveling in Europe, Africa, the Orient, and in his native land, his holidays have been replete with new impressions done only for his own pleasure. In these his technical facility has broadened until the momentary impression for which he stands pre-eminent in the world of art is rendered with consummate and unsurpassable skill and ingenuity. In recent years he has given up his lucrative practice of portrait painting altogether, to devote himself solely to the pleasure of painting how, where and when he likes, and his devotion to the water color medium is shown in his preference for it, since his declaration of independence from the routine and exactions of portraiture.

What a contrast these two giants of American art present in their lives! Yet how interesting and fitting this joint exhibit of their works!

Winslow Homer of New England stock, born in Boston in 1836, was apprenticed as a lithographer. He became an illustrator for Harper's Weekly during the Civil War, and recorded his first success as a painter of war incidents. On the strength of these he was duly elected an Associate of the National Academy in 1863 and an Academician in 1864. After the war he painted in the south, negro life having an especial appeal for him. A very good example of this period of his work is owned by Colonel Frank J. Hecker. During the next decade he tried his hand at many things, among them farming subjects and Adirondack Mountain scenes, in all of which one may note his tendency for keen observation and fidelity to nature, but in none of them are presaged the Homer of later

years. He was past fifty before he reached the height of his power, as shown in the "Life Line," "Undertow," "Eight Bells," and "All's Well," subjects which were inspired by the Maine Coast with its fisher folk, and from that time on a succession of great works from his brush, inspired by the elements and by the heroic men and women of the sea, were to follow. In daily companionship with the ocean, he learned its every aspect, set down forcefully and directly if not beautifully the titanic bulk, weight and movement of it all as no painter before him had been able to do.

In the excellent critical summary given by Kenyon Cox in his book on Winslow Homer, the public preponderance in favor of the water colors is explained. Mr. Cox points out that the artist "painted better in water colors—with more virtuosity of hand, more sense of the right use of material, more decisive mastery of its proper resources—than almost any modern has been able to do in oils. One must go back to Rubens or Hals for a parallel in oil painting to Homer's prodigious skill in water color. . . . Sargent's stupendous cleverness in water color is not more wonderful, though Sargent seems to be thinking a little of the brilliancy of his method, whereas Homer is thinking single-mindedly of the object or the effect to be rendered, and is clever only because he is sure of what he wants to do and seizes instinctively on the nearest way of doing it."

Practically self taught, with but a limited knowledge of the art and culture of other lands, uninfluenced by his contemporaries from whom he withdrew to a life of seclusion, with supreme assurance of his own observation and ability and with an all-compelling absorption in the material about him, his contributions are more eminently worthy of the

designation of American Art, than are those of any other painter of our country.

How different the life and influences surrounding his co-exhibitor! John Singer Sargent was born of well-to-do and cultured parents in Florence, in 1856, and throughout his childhood and youth had the advantages of intimate association with the art works of the masters of the Renaissance. At eighteen he was a talented draftsman and was admitted to study in Paris with Carolus Duran. After assimilating his master's teachings, he traveled extensively in Spain, where he came under the influence of Velasquez, and in Holland, where he studied Franz Hals, after which he set up a studio of portraiture, and was attended by unprecedented success almost from the beginning. The charm of his vivid and spontaneous portrayal, and the celebrity of his gifted technical ability brought to the portals of his studio a continuous procession of wealthy, gifted and notable patrons. The facility of his magical brush, and the fidelity of his modish portraits reached a perfection hitherto unsurpassed. A few years ago, after a triumphant career which included nearly every honor which could be bestowed by his world-wide contemporaries, he turned his attention to the pictorial subjects which please him and which he renders in a manner so charming and spirited.

C. H. B.

## WATER COLORS BY WINSLOW HOMER.

1. The Berry Pickers.
2. Boys Wading.
3. Weary.
4. A Flock of Sheep.  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. N. T. Pulsifer.
5. A Wreck Near Gloucester.
6. Watching from the Cliffs.  
Owned by the Carnegie Institute.
7. The Return, Tynemouth.
8. Tynemouth Priory, England.
9. Marblehead.
10. Sunshine and Shadow, Prout's Neck.
11. Campfire, Adirondacks.
12. The Rapids, Hudson River, Adirondacks.
13. End of the Day, Adirondacks.
14. The Lone Boat, North Woods Club, Adirondacks.
15. North Woods Clubs, Adirondacks.
16. The Gulf Stream.
17. After the Tornado, Bahamas.
18. Stowing Sail, Bahamas.  
Lent by Mr. Martin A. Ryerson.
19. The Portage.  
Lent by Mr. Desmond FitzGerald.
20. Salmon Fishing.  
Lent by Col. Frank J. Hecker.
21. Sun and Cloud.
22. Waterfall in the Adirondacks.  
Lent by Smithsonian Institution (Freer Collection).
23. Market Scene, Nassau.  
Lent by Mr. Robert M. Thompson.
24. Hauling in Anchor.  
Lent by Cincinnati Museum Association.

WATER COLORS BY JOHN SINGER SARGENT.

25. The Bridge of Sighs.
26. Santa Maria Della Salute.
27. From the Gondola.
28. Spanish Soldiers.
29. In Switzerland.
30. Zuleika.
31. Stamboul.
32. Arab Stable.
33. White Ships.
34. In the Hay-loft.  
Lent by the Brooklyn Museum.
35. Camping on Lake O'Hara.  
Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard  
University.
36. Study of Lake O'Hara.  
Lent by Mr. Edward W. Forbes.
37. The Derelicts.
38. The Pool.
39. Palms.
40. The Patio, Vizcaya.
41. The Loggia, Vizcaya.  
Lent by the Worcester Art Museum.
42. The Mother.  
Lent by The Bohemian Club, San Francisco.