

“Poppy Field (Landscape at Giverny)” by Willard Metcalf (American, 1858-1925), 1886, oil on canvas, 10-5/8 by 18-5/16 inches. Collection of J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox.



“Dorothea in the Woods” by Cecilia Beaux (1855-1942), 1897, oil on canvas, 53¼ by 40¼ inches. Whitney Museum of American Art; Gift of Mr and Mrs Raymond J. Horowitz, Inv. N. 70.158, digital image ©Whitney Museum of American Art/ Licensed by Scala/Art Resource, NYC.

San Antonio Museum Examines Impressionism’s Development In United States



“Yacht Club Basin, Cos Cob Harbor” by Theodore Robinson (1852-1896), 1894, oil on board, 19 by 22½ inches. Brandywine River Museum of Art, Richard M. Scaife Bequest.



“On the Gallery, at the Pines” by Emma Richardson Cherry (American, 1859-1954), 1896, oil on canvas, 24 by 36 inches, Collection of Juli and Sam Stevens.



“Feeding Chickens, Monterey” by E. Charlton Fortune (American, 1886-1969), 1918, oil on canvas, 28 by 26 inches. Crocker Art Museum, Melza and Ted Barr Collection, 2010.9. Photo ©Museum Associates/LACMA.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS — On view at the San Antonio Museum of Art (SAMA) until September 5 is “America’s Impressionism: Echoes of a Revolution,” an exhibition that explores the development of Impressionism in the United States. While Impressionism made its public debut in Paris with a shocking exhibition in 1874, the style did not fully take hold in America until more than a decade later, after a major exhibition of French works in New York City in 1886. With this belated arrival, American Impressionism might be understood merely as the adaptation of techniques and visual vocabularies honed by French masters. Through more than 70 works assembled from public and private collections, “America’s Impressionism” redefines our understanding of the movement to show how American artists drew upon transatlantic exchange to create an independent movement, uniquely shaped by American sensibilities and regional landscapes.

Impressionism has been one of the most enduring styles of art ever produced, and its complex and often contradictory articulation in the United States has captured interest for more than a century. Yet, the development of American Impressionism remains understudied, and the artists who worked within the genre have not been given ample credit for the ways in which they made this imported style wholly their own. Featuring works by Cecilia Beaux, William Merritt Chase, Willard Metcalf, Emma Richardson Cherry, Jane Peterson and Theodore Wendel, among numerous others, the exhibition reveals a more nuanced history of the artistic exchange between the United States and France in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries and the trajectories of Impressionism across the Atlantic.

Claude Monet modeled a form of Impressionism that held particular appeal for American artists, and the exhibition includes a selection of works that represent an enclave of Americans working in Giverny under his tutelage, including Metcalf and Wendel. While American artists working abroad in Europe drew upon Impressionist pedagogy, artists working in communities across the United States truly established an Americanized version of the international style. As these artists developed their own aesthetic approaches and techniques, American Impressionism took on specific regional characteristics. For example, in the Northeast, where impressionism thrived, it was honed by artists featured in the exhibition, such as Daniel Garber, who worked in New Hope, Penn., John Henry Twachtman in Cos Cob, Conn., and Childe Hassam in Massachusetts and New York. The exhibition traces the presence of Impressionism as it moved actively from the Northeast to the Southwest and into the California coast, creating a rich and intricate national fabric of artistic interpretation.

As Impressionism spread West, Texas, too, became an important place. To engage audiences with this particular history, SAMA’s presentation of “America’s Impressionism” will include works by Texas artists, including Onderdonk, Dawson Dawson-Watson and José Arpa, among others. These paintings are drawn from SAMA’s permanent collection as well as from local private collections. American Impressionists were attracted to Texas’ varied landscapes, from the wildflowers of the hill country to the plains of North Texas and the arid West Texas countryside.

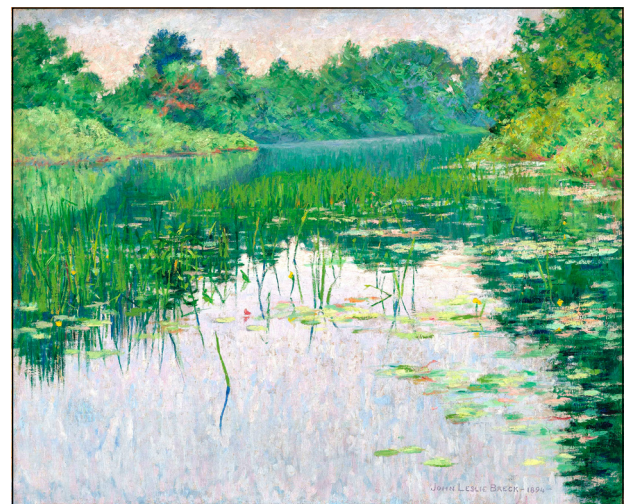
The SAMA presentation is further distinguished by the incorporation of masterworks from the San Antonio-based Marie and Hugh Halff Collection, a collection of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century American impressionist paintings. Among the numerous works to be featured are Frederick Carl Frieseke’s striking painting “The Bathers” (about 1914), Childe Hassam’s “The New York Bouquet” (1917) and Edmund C. Tarbell’s “Girl Cutting Patterns” (1907-08).

Originally curated by Amanda C. Burdan of the Brandywine River Museum of Art in Chadds Ford, Penn., the exhibition is also co-organized by SAMA and the Dixon Gallery and Gardens in Memphis, Tenn.

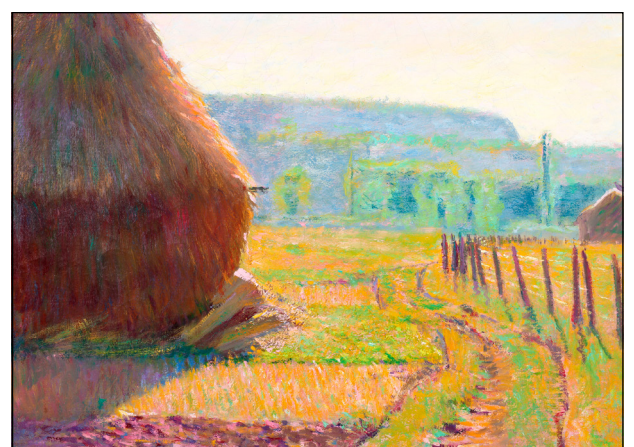
The San Antonio Museum of Art is at 200 West Jones Avenue. For information, 210-978-8100 or www.samuseum.org.



“Old Farm, Giverny” by Lilla Cabot Perry (1848-1933), 1900, oil on canvas, 25¾ by 32 inches. San Antonio Museum of Art, Purchased with funds provided by the Lillie and Roy Cullen Endowment Fund.



“Grey Day on the Charles” by John Leslie Breck (American, 1860-1899), 1894, oil on canvas, 18 by 22 inches, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art, 90.151. Photo: Katherine Wetzel/©Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.



“Grainstacks, Giverny” by Theodore Earl Butler (American, 1861-1936), circa 1897, oil on canvas, 21¼ by 28¾ inches. Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Museum purchase by the Dixon Life Members Society, 1991.4.