Cover: Joseph Rodefer DeCamp (1858-1923), (detail) The Kreutzer Sonata (The Violinist II)
Oil on canvas, 48 1/4 x 40 1/4 inches, signed and dated lower left: Joseph DeCamp 1912, (pg. 19)
The Boston School Tradition

TRUTH, BEAUTY AND TIMELESS CRAFT

June 6 - July 18, 2015
Boston Art Schools, Clubs and Studios
E.A. Downs, Boston, 1899, George H. Walker & Co. Lithography, Boston
Courtesy of The Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library

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Original Museum of Fine Arts location in Copley Square, circa 1895
Vose Galleries Archives
One of our artists, Joel Babb, recently gave me a book that I am in the midst of reading, Don Thompson’s *The $12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*. I have had a glimpse into the machinations of this dizzying world, which originated around 1970, and what passes for art in this world is baffling: the “shark” in the book’s title refers to British artist Damien Hirst’s piece in which he encases a real shark in a plastic tank filled with preserving fluid. The other pieces discussed in the book are also almost exclusively conceptual in nature and made of materials that are simply mind-boggling: one artist collected four pints of blood from his body for four months, then sculpted a “selfie” head made out of the blood (it’s frozen.)

While Boston’s art world has tended towards more conservative ideals for the past one hundred or so years, this was not always the case. Back in the 1870s and 1880s, Boston was the first American city to embrace the radical French Barbizon style, which was the precursor to Impressionism. The city’s artist/teachers who traveled to France, and most did, brought back the teachings of Monet and introduced Impressionism to the public and to their protégés who studied at Boston’s constellation of leading art schools. From the 1870s through the 1920s, Boston became home to the most celebrated and original artists in America. They continued their quest for innovative styles of painting, yet based their artistic foundation on the rigorous training and subject matter of the Dutch Masters and other Renaissance painters.

As the definition of “art” becomes increasingly diverse, I hope future historians will distinguish today’s realist painters as upholders of an art form that has been passed down for centuries, with each succeeding generation applying traditional methods and timeless craft in new and inventive ways. No blood drawn, no fish in formaldehyde. Simply a meditation of their own truth reflective of their contemporary environments.

We are very proud to present *The Boston School Tradition: Truth, Beauty and Timeless Craft*, the only major exhibition of this group held in over thirty years. The exhibit features over seventy fine examples by over forty artists, including the leading teachers of the movement along with a collection of rare canvasses by Joseph DeCamp, one of the earlier Boston School teachers.

We invite our readers to sit back, peruse the catalogue, and experience the effects that depictions of truth and beauty play on the mind.

NB: I would like to thank Trevor Fairbrother for his advice on this project and for his enlightening essay. Thanks also go to Gallery Director, Carey Vose, for her tireless efforts in creating this exhibition.
Winslow Homer (1836-1910), *An Open Window*
Oil on canvas, 18 x 14 inches, signed and dated upper right: *Homer 1872*


The Bostonians and Their Boston School
by Trevor J. Fairbrother

Wonders transpired in Boston in the 1890s when a coterie of figurative artists sought to broaden traditional historical approaches with a few contemporary trends. The leaders of the movement – Edmund C. Tarbell, Frank W. Benson, Joseph DeCamp, and Philip Hale – all taught at local art schools, and they were prolific artists who quickly developed national reputations. They and their numerous cohorts and protégés are now collectively known as the Boston School. When they first came to critical attention, in the 1890s, their most modern interest was Impressionism. In The History of American Painting (1905), Samuel Isham stated that Boston’s leading new artists put “a certain breadth, a rougher texture, and a quivering light” into their pictures. He detected a kinship with Winslow Homer in the “frankness and directness” achieved by the younger painters. Isham described the Tarbell circle more specifically by saying that their art had more of the “grace” and the polish of “training” that is learned at art school, and less of the “originality and elemental force” that Homer had developed.1 Isham’s reference to Homer is interesting because some of his best figurative works of the 1870s had a simple grandeur inspired by a slightly earlier love of artistic Bostonians: the Barbizon School, especially the art of Jean-François Millet.

According to Isham, Boston was the only city in the nation where the direction of contemporary art had attained “a distinct character of its own.” The author of The History of American Painting was a fifty-year-old artist based in New York, a metropolis whose competitive spirit precluded a sense of aesthetic solidarity. Isham argued that the artists derived their creative edge from the fact that their home upheld the “artist’s standpoint” – in other words, the new Boston artists (as opposed to the local critics, dealers and collectors) had the clout to set their own standard for excellence. As it evolved the Boston School came to favor simple and harmonious compositions, reflecting the arts and crafts philosophy and the burgeoning knowledge of the principles of Japanese design. Indeed, the Boston-trained painter and printmaker Arthur Wesley Dow expertly summarized these approaches in his landmark book Composition (1899).

The new style of Boston painting had, as Isham noted, a certain breadth and texture and a “quivering” light, but artists pursued these effects according to their instincts and therefore to different ends. After acquiring a professional grounding in the academic tradition they looked in various directions as they developed their individual styles. Many of them had copied famous pictures on display in museums and studied the broad painterly techniques of such Old Masters as Titian, Rubens, Hals, and Velázquez. Those who received their training in Europe could realize that the most innovative and challenging modern artists – from Édouard Manet to Edgar Degas – were engaged in a creative dialogue with these historic figures.

The American portraitist John Singer Sargent stimulated the impetus to combine the backbone of tradition with a degree of experimentation. Sargent proved to be a cultural mascot in Boston, even though he was a classic expatriate, with lifelong ties to Italy, France, and England (where he based his operations). After completing his training in Paris in the late 1870s, he practiced an increasingly virtuoso style, intensifying it with impressionist-derived touches as he saw fit. By 1890, Sargent, like his sawviest and wealthiest friends in Boston, was an enthusiastic collector of Claude Monet’s paintings. Initially the more conservative American critics dismissed Sargent’s style as overly clever, experimental, sketchy, or slapdash. In 1888, when Boston’s artistic upper crust hosted the first solo exhibition of his career (at the St. Botolph Club) the reviews were mixed, but soon thereafter he received a commission to paint a mural for the new Boston Public Library (designed by McKim, Mead and White). In 1899, when the Boston Art Students’ Association staged a large mid-career retrospective (at Copley Hall), the occasion prompted tremendous cultural and civic pride. In 1902, Rodin, whom Sargent had painted in Paris in 1884, referred to him as “le Van Dyck de l’époque” in the London press, confirming his international reputation as a living Old Master.

The national reputation of the Boston School artists was bolstered by its images of female models presented in rarefied settings. Samuel Isham argued in his History that the artistic worship of the “beauty and purity of young girls” was an important and nationally relevant subject for modern American artists. Even though “the homage to the eternal feminine” already had a long history in Europe, he felt that idealized depictions of secular women were destined to supplant the religious and mythological idols and goddesses that had inspired art in previous centuries. In 1892, the legendary Boston collector Isabella Stewart Gardner purchased Johannes Vermeer’s The Concert (c. 1665), and it became a catalyst for local artists. The charming composition featured two women in simple pearl necklaces entertaining a man who sits with his back to the viewer. Two centuries after Vermeer, Ter Borch, and De Hooch painted scenes of refined social interaction, the Boston School artists rediscovered their power to enchant. DeCamp, Benson, and Tarbell painted interiors featuring a demure subject, a few lovely objects and an atmosphere of subtle light. Some critics have condemned pictures of this type as overly precious flights from the realities of modern life or as stereotypes of a passive and domestically confined womanhood. Others enjoyed them

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1 In principle the Boston School aesthetic allowed artists to combine what they found most admirable in the art of the past and the present. This eclectic mixing of the historical and the innovative was a new departure in the late nineteenth century.
as self-conscious attempts to offer an experience of aesthetic contemplation, and this might have been the makers’ intent.

Lilian Hale was a Boston School artist whose work could achieve a tremendous sense of delicacy and refinement. These qualities were perhaps most consistently present in her carefully constructed drawings that magically evoke their subjects with a minimum of thin vertical strokes of charcoal. With their sophisticated tonal rendering of light and shadow, her pictures of alluring young women endure as outstanding meditations on beauty and grace. Hale studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, where Tarbell was her painting instructor and her husband was on the faculty. It is instructive to consider Lilian Hale’s evolution in relation to the splendid Whistler memorial exhibition presented at Copley Hall in 1904 (the year Hale graduated from the Museum School). Cultivated Bostonians venerated the “exquisite nuances” of color in the paintings of Whistler, who had been a supreme artistic innovator and notoriously dandified character since the 1860s. In honor of the occasion, the gallery was redecorated in a “scheme of pale grays,” and to judge from the following description, the tasteful new décor possessed the same aura of quiet elegance that Hale and her peers featured in their art: “The wall will be covered by a gray grass cloth. Gold ornament will be used sparingly in places, and vertical bands of rose pink brocade will break the monotony of the gray field on the upper part of the walls. These bands will be edged in white and gold, and they will terminate in a simple figure ornament. As accents, there will be at intervals Japanese wood carvings, gold lacquered.”

When the Tarbell circle peaked in popularity, Boston seemed to be synonymous with pictures of genteel femininity; but the practice of painting in Boston was not homogeneous. As in any large urban population, all genres of art were represented; there was a wide range of styles and talents; and, of course, there was factionalism. Several local painters espoused impressionist techniques but applied them primarily to landscapes or still lifes rather than portraits and figures in interiors. Charles Woodbury, Hermann Dudley Murphy and Gertrude Fiske, for example, made highly individual and poetic depictions of the coastline and the ocean. There were also numerous artists who spent their formative years in the city but moved away, taking their Boston-shaped attitudes with them: these included Arthur Wesley Dow, Childe Hassam, Willard Metcalf, Francis D. Millet, and Robert Vonn. Then there was another wave of progressive artists who began to look beyond Impressionism once the mainstream started to embrace it; that group included Carl Gordon Cutler, Dodge MacKnight, Charles Hovey Pepper, Polly Thayer, and, most exceptionally, Maurice Prendergast.

With hindsight, 1913 was a turning point for the Boston School. That year audiences in New York, Chicago, and Boston had an opportunity to experience the course of modern art, from Neoclassicism to Futurism, in a mammoth international survey. Because of its location in Manhattan the exhibition was quickly dubbed the Armory Show. The installation provided a comprehensive look at Post-Impressionist, Fauve, and Cubist art, and appreciative visitors were able to
accept that an era of rampant change – from women’s rights to flying machines – had inspired equally revolutionary changes in art. The Armory Show was a positive stimulus for modern art in New York and Chicago, but in Boston the prevailing response was a tightened commitment to traditionalism. Confronted with the most radical new expressions in art, many Bostonians balked at a complete break with the past, instinctively acting out a need to sustain certain ties.

The American traditionalists and progressives proved equally hostile and righteous in opposing each other. People open to the work of Cézanne, Van Gogh, or Picasso tried to strengthen their position by attacking Sargent and other pillars of the establishment. And lofty establishment types opposed to "reckless" experimentation assumed that their own stern authority could forbid the flow of new ideas. In 1911, Sargent told the British press that he had a very low estimation of Post-Impressionism, and the following year Kenyon Cox, a New York academic artist, wrote that Rodin’s late drawings were a "calamity" and likened Matisse’s art to that of "a nasty boy." 3

The fierce struggle in Boston doubtless reflected the symbolic role that history played in the city’s public image. Boston Brahmins took unbending pride in their city’s illustrious past, with its political legacy stretching from the Mayflower Compact through the Revolutionary War to the Abolition Movement. Moreover, the professional class took pride in a number of “firsts” in the development of their city’s cultural amenities.4 An army of noted professors, scientists, publishers, writers, and musicians had guaranteed the city’s prestige in the nineteenth century. Thus Boston – the “Cradle of Liberty” – proved key in the national clash between modernity and tradition precisely because it was so old and it had already accomplished so much. In the wake of the Armory Show, however, some argued that this kind of legacy was not relevant to the issue of “modernity.”

In 1915 Guy Pène du Bois, a thirty-one-year-old New York realist painter and magazine editor, made a devastating assessment of the Boston School, using clichés about the city to color his argument. He accused the artists of pursuing an empty kind of beauty because they were “afraid to look truth in the face and report [their] findings.” 5 Pène du Bois saw Bostonian good taste as a front for the prudish avoidance of passion, humor, and irony, and he argued that refinement, upper middle class conformity, and gentlemanly exclusivity encouraged a reliance on sterile visual formulas. The author’s hardhearted tone and judgmental language — targeting the sins of refinement, complacency, and fear — made the essay more inflammatory than corrective. But he was far from the first visitor to see Bostonians as a high-minded tribe who lived in a city with a Puritanical penchant for banning things, nor was he the last.

Charles H. Woodbury (1864-1940), High Tide, Narrow Cove, Ogunquit, Maine
Watercolor and graphite on paper, 14 7/8 x 21 7/8 inches, signed lower right: Charles H. Woodbury, 1930
Ira Gershwin skewered the town as a cultural necropolis where “you never get ahead unless you’re dead.” In his brilliant lyrics for “The Back Bay Polka” he observed: “You can’t be yourself in Boston,” where “life is one big taboo.” The best way to survive there, he quipped, was to “keep up the cultured pose by looking down your nose.”

In principle the Boston School aesthetic allowed artists to combine what they found most admirable in the art of the past and the present. It was unmistakably the tenor of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, which rivaled the Museum of Fine Arts in the interweaving of old and new cultural expressions.

Indeed, Boston’s backward glance had many facets, ranging from noble statues commissioned to decorate public places to a passion for collecting replicas of famous works of art. In 1906, for example, the Copley Society of Boston hosted an exhibition titled “Copies of Old Masters by Modern Painters.” Even Sargent honed his rapport with the city’s historicist character. Although he had ruffled feathers in the 1880s with his devotion to sketch-like impressionist brushwork, in his last decade Sargent’s newest and somewhat surprising departure happened to
be the suite of painted and sculpted decorations in a disciplined neo-classical style, created on commission for the Museum of Fine Arts. His subjects included such mythological characters as Apollo, Athena, Hercules, and Perseus, and personifications of such exalted themes as Science, Philosophy, Time, and Truth. Creating murals for Boston institutions became an alternative career for Sargent, bringing distraction from the rote of professional portraiture. Inevitably, his much-publicized activities had an impact on local artists devoted to upholding historical practices. Thus William M. Paxton and R.H. Ives Gammell, whose primary interests encompassed the "Academic Tradition" and the "Renaissance Revival," may be added to the roster of Sargent’s Bostonian admirers.

The Boston School deserves to be remembered in terms of its achievements: a love of a particular kind of painting, a sensibility devoted to refinement, and a desire to develop an artistic legacy. It is fitting to end with a quote from the movement’s heyday. It describes a painting by Edmund Tarbell in which his daughter is shown playing with a toy boat at the seaside on a sunny day: “The spirit of the drawing, the brilliance of color, vivid suggestion of light and breeze, are admirable; but still more the fine assurance of the broad, free strokes of the brushwork. The picture is brimful of cleverness that is not allowed to run away with itself, and yet never loses its spontaneity.”

This text draws on the essay I wrote titled "History Lessons and the Boston School,” published in Realism Now: Traditions and Departures, Mentors and Protégés (Vose Galleries of Boston, 2003). I am grateful to Marcia Vose and Carey Vose for the opportunity to revisit an old topic of mine.

NOTES
4. Massachusetts thrives on its history. The Massachusetts Historical Society (the first organization of its kind in the U.S.) was founded in 1791. Boston was the first large city to open a free public library and to establish a municipal Art Commission. The Vose Galleries refers to itself as the "oldest family-owned gallery in the nation," and Provincetown claims the title of being the country’s first artists’ colony.
6. The song was part of the 1947 film musical The Shocking Miss Pilgrim, a story about a stenographer fighting for women’s rights in Victorian Boston.
7. For Gardner’s involvement with contemporary art see Alan Chong et al.; Eye of the Beholder: Masterpieces from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2003). Her patronage of Whistler, Sargent and Zorn was unmatched in Boston.
8. "Loan Collection of Copies of Old Masters by Modern Painters," an exhibition organized by the Copley Society of Boston and presented at Copley Hall, March, 1906. Almost one third of the 140 pictures on view were after Velázquez, including examples by local artists Marie Dantforth Page, Mary Brewster Hazelton, Charles Hopkinson, Helen M. Knowlton, William M. Paxton, Denman W. Ross, and Frederic P. Vinton.

About the Author
William M. Paxton (1869-1941), Two Models
Oil on canvas, 32 1/8 x 38 1/8 inches, signed lower right: Paxton, 1930
Period Arts and Crafts frame
William Morris Hunt's (1824-1879) three years of teaching women in his Boston studio laid the foundation for what was to become the Boston School of art. It was the combination of Hunt's contagious passion, his extensive knowledge of art, and his prominent social standing in Boston that not only made him a highly sought after teacher, but also someone with the ability to profoundly influence the taste of art collectors.

After attending Harvard University, Hunt spent eleven years in Europe, where he studied at the Düsseldorf Academy and in Paris at the atelier of Thomas Couture (1815-1879). His time abroad also exposed him to leading artists of the time, such as the French Barbizon artist Jean-François Millet (1814-1875), who had a particular influence on Hunt. Barbizon painters worked with a natural palette and used suggestive brushstrokes rather than exacting lines, techniques that Hunt adopted into his own work. This comprehensive training provided a wealth of knowledge that was a rare gift in the United States where such information was not readily available. As his pupil Helen Knowlton (1832-1918) pointed out in her biography on the artist: “He knew all the first artists of France, Germany, England and Italy; had absorbed the new ideas and methods of the day, and was eager to lay them before his pupils, asking only that they should believe that he knew what was best for them.”

In 1855 Hunt returned to the United States and became a professional painter, completing portrait commissions while based in Newport, Rhode Island. That same year he married the socialite Louisa Dumaresq Perkins (1831-1897) of Boston, whose wealth and Boston Brahmin father immediately gave Hunt entrée to Boston’s inner social and literary circles. These friendships, added to those made during his years at Harvard, were of considerable importance not only for his own career as a portraitist, but also for his persistence in bringing the works of the French Barbizon artists into prominent New England collections. With the combined efforts of fellow Barbizon devotee, gallerist Seth M. Vose (1831-1919), Boston soon grew to favor these suggestive, impressionistically-rendered canvases, which ultimately led to the American Impressionist style prominent among the Boston School artists.

Hunt’s favorable economic position allowed him to take his family on a two year tour of Europe starting in 1866. Upon settling in Boston in 1868, six or eight women greeted him at his studio on Summer Street, requesting his tutelage. Hunt insisted that if he were to teach, it would be for a class no smaller than forty. Soon
enough forty women were assembled and for three years he enthusiastically encouraged them to discover form rather than exacting lines, even suggesting that they draw figures without heads to get a sense of movement. Hunt was unafraid to give criticism and did not take into consideration the 19th century mentality that women were too fragile to handle harshness. Instead as Elizabeth Howard Barton (1842-1927) remembered, “[We] were taught as any students in school. [We] were criticized as roughly, made to work as strenuously, [and] praised as frankly as men.”

By 1871 Hunt had turned the school over to his pupil, Knowlton, with the arrangement that he would stop in occasionally to comment on each student’s work. It was Ms. Knowlton’s notes, made during these visits, that were eventually printed as his now famous Talks on Art. They were reprinted many times in this country and in England and are still used today, enjoyed for their pithy observations. Hunt continued these visits until 1875, but Knowlton would continue to teach until the end of the century. She invited various artists to give lectures and teach lessons including instruction on drawing from William Rimmer (1816-1879) and figure painting classes from Frank Duveneck (1848-1919). She created a sense of community among the students, inspiring a highly supportive environment.

The students of William Morris Hunt and Helen Knowlton continued not only to motivate each other, but also to travel and exhibit together. This bond can be seen in the various organizations and studios that developed throughout Boston in the next several decades.

Ellen Day Hale was born into a prominent New England family, and, like her younger brother Philip Hale (1865-1931), was encouraged to pursue the fine arts from an early age. Her first teacher was likely her aunt, the watercolorist Susan Hale (1833-1910), and in 1873 she attended William Rimmer's artistic anatomy classes. Ellen Hale began training with Helen Knowlton and William Morris Hunt in 1874, and after the classes were handed over to Knowlton, she joined efforts and taught a few lessons. The two women became close companions, and in the late 1870s they took Hunt's advice to travel abroad to further develop their education. The pair left in the early 1880s for a nine month trip to Europe, where Hale enrolled at the Académie Julian and worked in the atelier of Carolus Duran (1837-1913) in France.

Upon returning to Boston Hale taught art classes at the Marlborough Street School, while also completing portrait commissions. Hale's early paintings were marked by their bold color and strong compositional elements, features she incorporated from her time studying with Hunt. In the last decades of the 19th century, she lightened her palette as the Impressionist movement became more prominent, though her broadly executed style remained visible.

Hale's encouragement served as a source of inspiration for fellow women artists, particularly her sister in law, Lilian Westcott Hale (1880-1963).
Laura Coombs Hills (1859-1952)

Laura C. Hills became an artist to support herself financially. She began her career designing greeting cards, illustrating children’s books, and decorating pottery. Born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, she trained under Helen Knowlton with whom she exhibited at the Boston Art Club in 1878 alongside Ellen Day Hale. She continued her studies at the Cowles Art School, and by 1889, had her first solo show at J. Eastman Chase Gallery in Boston, a rarity for a woman artist. In 1890 Hills made a pivotal trip to England and learned to paint miniatures on ivory. Three years later she exhibited these works at Chase Gallery, and the show was so successful that she received twenty-two commissions for miniatures immediately. Hills became an important and award-winning figure in the miniature revival of the 1890s.

With the market for miniatures declining by the 1920s, she turned to flower subjects done primarily in pastels. Throughout the rest of her life, these works were avidly collected by an adoring public. She maintained a studio in Newburyport, as well as a row house on Beacon Hill, where she lived with her mother and sister.
The Museum of Fine Arts was founded in 1870 by a consortium of Boston citizens, including luminaries William Morris Hunt and Francis Davis Millet (1846-1912), who resolved to bring the treasures of the art world to the city's populace. In addition they wanted to provide a place where students could pursue instruction in the professional fine arts rather than travel to New York or Philadelphia for academic training. The Gothic-inspired museum building, with rooms in the basement reserved for visual arts classes, was opened to the public in 1876, reigning over the heart of the city in Copley Square. One year later the School of Drawing and Painting officially opened its doors and by 1879 had enlisted 160 students in its program, the majority of whom were women.

At the encouragement of museum founder Millet, the museum board welcomed Emil Otto Grundmann (1844-1890) as the first Director, assigning him the great task of shaping the curriculum for the new institution. A portrait and figure painter born and trained in Germany, Grundmann's approach mirrored that of the European academies. Students would first be required to master basic drawing, with still life, antique casts and a live model serving as subjects. They would then move on to a second drawing class focused again on still life and the human form, supplemented by lectures on anatomy. Only after completing these introductory courses would students graduate to painting studies. While men and women were taught separately, they underwent the same rigorous training and critiques, and if they chose to study abroad, would become experienced in the teaching structures of Germany and France. In addition to his duties as Director, Grundmann led classes in drawing and painting from the school’s launch. He was a faithful academic but was revered and beloved for his constant encouragement and amiable nature, so much so that the school's alumni association named their new headquarters and studio building in his honor in 1893.

During Grundmann’s tenure several notable names joined the faculty, including Frederic Crowninshield (1845-1918), Robert William Vonnoh (1858-1933) and Joseph DeCamp (1858-1923). Of Grundmann’s many appreciative students, a number went on to teach at the Museum School, carrying on the traditional methods he had fostered. Edmund Tarbell (1862-1938) and Frank Benson (1862-1951) were classmates during the early years, with Tarbell entering in 1879 and Benson just one year later. They joined the faculty of the Museum School in 1889, a year before Grundmann’s passing, and continued to instruct students in the fundamentals of the fine arts while providing mentorship and support as their protégés embarked on their own careers. Tarbell led classes on painting, and Benson concentrated on antique and life drawing until 1893, when he added painting to his schedule. Soon they were joined by colleagues Philip Leslie Hale and William McGregor Paxton (1869-1941). In 1901 the school was renamed the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, and when the museum was moved to its current Huntington Avenue location eight years later, the school followed, running classes from a one-story structure until its own building was designed and completed in 1927.

After over twenty successful years at the helm, Tarbell and Benson resigned in 1912 following a series of events in which the Museum sought more control over the administration of the school and its curriculum. Paxton departed soon after Tarbell and Benson, and instruction was assumed by Museum School alumni Frederick A. Bosley (1881-1942) and Leslie P. Thompson (1880-1963). Philip Hale stayed on the faculty until his death in 1931.

Despite their exodus, the tireless efforts of Tarbell and Benson formed the bedrock of a distinct style of painting embodying thorough academic training, strong craftsmanship and a pursuit of beauty that came to be known as the Boston School.

References:
Francis Davis Millet graduated from Harvard University in 1869 and perfected his artistic craft while under the instruction of Henri Leys (1815-1869) at the Royal Academy of Art in Antwerp. Millet then went to Vienna where he worked for Charles Francis Adams, Jr. (1835-1915), the American representative to the World’s Fair in 1873. In 1875 Millet returned to Boston, opened a studio in the Studio Building on Tremont Street and assisted John LaFarge (1835-1910) in painting murals for Trinity Church. Together along with William Morris Hunt, they established the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, then known as the School of Drawing and Painting. It was Millet who suggested Emil Otto Grundmann, his fellow pupil in Antwerp, to be the Director of the painting department. Millet too taught at the school briefly after it opened, before leaving again for Europe.

Millet had an adventurous streak that took him to the far corners of the world. From 1877 to 1878 he went to the Balkans as a war correspondent and illustrator covering the Russo-Turkish War. In the early 1890s Millet traveled the length of the Danube, producing *From the Black Forest to the Black Sea* in 1893, an extensive travelogue of his experiences.

In 1879 Millet married Lily Merrill who rarely accompanied him on his travels, preferring to remain in Broadway, England, where she raised their family. Through the 1880s Millet painted there with Edwin Austin Abbey (1852-1911) and John Singer Sargent (1856-1925). It was during this time that Millet completed this portrait of Sadie (right), a nineteen-year-old artist, just before she moved to France to study painting. In 1889 Millet exhibited this piece at the National Academy of Design where it was singled out in a review as “a delicate and refined figure of charming maiden in a lavender gown.”

Millet was a member of the National Academy of Design, the Society of American Artists, and the Boston Art Club, where he exhibited from 1878 until 1909. He also served as Secretary for the American Federation of Art, Trustee for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and was appointed Director of the American Academy in Rome. He was an expert in mural painting, and the New Bedford Free Public Library commissioned him to paint a mural depicting the fishing history of the town. The project was never completed. The sketches were lost when the Titanic sank in 1912 with Millet aboard.

Joseph Rodefer DeCamp (1858-1923)

“I am painting a girl in a beautiful dress that changes from yellow to blue, but I have to keep remembering that it isn’t a dress I’m concerned with but a piece of light...Take care of the light and the shadows will take care of themselves.”

- Joseph DeCamp, quoted by one of his students

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, Joseph DeCamp began studying at the McMicken School of Design under Thomas Noble (1835-1907), who was instrumental in developing DeCamp’s skills as a draftsman. The following year he enrolled at the Ohio Mechanics Institute with a future member of The Ten American Painters, John Twachtman (1853-1902), where both were instructed by Frank Duveneck. In 1878 DeCamp traveled abroad to Munich, where he enrolled at Duveneck’s alma mater, the Royal Academy. By 1880 DeCamp was a member of the close-knit painting group Duveneck had established in Europe. In his teachings Duveneck emphasized building up the canvas in broad strokes of color, never relying on tightly-drawn underpainting. The Royal Academy proved to be too rigid, so DeCamp followed the “Duveneck boys” to the Bavarian village of Polling and then traveled to Venice and Florence to study Old Master paintings.

DeCamp returned to Ohio in 1883 and lived in a studio building along with fellow Duveneck student Theodore Wendel (1859-1932). Several painters joined together to host an exhibition at the Closson Gallery in Cincinnati in 1883, which received favorable reviews; however, due to the lack of exhibition space in Ohio, many artists (including DeCamp and Wendel) left for Boston. Upon arriving DeCamp was offered a position at Wellesley College, where he taught antique drawing and painting until 1886. From 1885 to 1889 he took on the additional responsibility of instructing a large class of students at the School of Drawing and Painting at the Museum of Fine Arts. His position involved initial instruction for the students who were not yet qualified to move on to the life drawing class, which was taught by the head instructor of the school, Otto Grundmann. The curriculum emphasized that each student must master the replication of separate body parts on the numerous plaster casts used as models prior to moving on in skill level. This structure was rather at odds with DeCamp’s training and emphasis on light, shadow and form. Thus he only maintained this second job until 1889, when Frank W. Benson took over his position. In the summer of 1890, DeCamp went to Annisquam on the North Shore of Massachusetts, where he instructed a group of twenty women in outdoor painting. Later that year, he accepted a position back in Boston at the Cowsles Art School. Between 1895 and 1897 he commuted between Boston and Philadelphia when he accepted a second teaching position at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In 1903 DeCamp began his twenty year career teaching portraiture at the Massachusetts Normal Art School.

In 1897 DeCamp became one of the founding members of the impressionist group, The Ten American Painters, along with Boston friends Benson and Tarbell. His career was on the ascent through widespread exhibitions until 1904 when his studio in the Harcourt Building burned down. The fire raged for almost twenty hours, and out of desperation several artists, including DeCamp, tried to salvage what was left. Only two of DeCamp’s paintings were recovered, and the artist suffered burns to his hands. The next day he knew he would have to start from scratch, so he entered the St. Botolph Club and offered to paint members portraits at a reduced rate. His offer was widely accepted, thus establishing him as one of Boston’s foremost portrait artists. DeCamp went on to capture the likenesses of many notable sitters, including Frank Duveneck (1911-12) and President Theodore Roosevelt (1908).

While his strength as a portrait artist is well-documented, DeCamp is equally celebrated for his exquisite paintings of elegant young women in classic interiors, key elements of the Boston School style. Painted in 1912, The Kreutzer Sonata (right) was included in an exhibition of The Ten at Montross Gallery in New York, in the spring of that year. This painting was also included in major shows at the Cincinnati Art Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis, and the Artists’ Club of Denver. Like several of his figure pieces done just a few years earlier (including The Guitar Player, purchased by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1908), DeCamp incorporates a musical instrument into the composition and imbues the model, who appears in several other DeCamp paintings, with a sense of introspection. In contrast to other Boston School style paintings, where figures lounge on sofas or simply gaze off beyond the picture plane, DeCamp’s subject is engaged in an activity that takes a great deal of talent. Written by Ludwig von Beethoven (1770-1827) in 1803 and considered one of his masterpieces, the Kreutzer Sonata is known for its ambitious violin part and can be counted among the finest pieces of chamber music ever composed. Likewise DeCamp’s painting of the same name is remarkable for its sensitive handling of light and color, especially in rendering the model’s dress and skin tones.

Joseph Rodefer DeCamp (1858-1923)

Joseph Rodefer DeCamp (1858-1923), *The Kreutzer Sonata (The Violinist II)*
Oil on canvas, 48 1/4 x 40 1/4 inches, signed and dated lower left: *Joseph DeCamp 1912*
Edith Franklin Baker was from Medford, Massachusetts, and attended the School of Drawing and Painting at the Museum of Fine Arts as DeCamp’s pupil. By 1891 he had moved north to Medford, and on September 21, 1892, the two were married, with Edmund Tarbell serving as a witness. Edith became one of DeCamp’s favorite models, appearing in numerous paintings. Shortly after the completion of this portrait, the couple moved into their first home in Medford to provide ample room for their growing family. They welcomed their firstborn, Sally, in 1892, Ted in 1894, Lydia in 1896, and Paulina in 1899. DeCamp often painted Edith with their children and won his first major award at Atlanta’s International Exposition of the Cotton States in 1895 for *The Hammock*, a depiction of Edith and their two eldest. The painting also graced the cover of Laurene Buckley’s 1997 book, *Joseph DeCamp: Master Painter of the Boston School*.  

Joseph Rodefer DeCamp (1858-1923), *Portrait of Edith, the Artist’s Wife*  
Oil on canvas, 24 1/4 x 20 inches, circa 1895
Joseph Rodefer DeCamp (1858-1923)

Painted around 1903 DeCamp’s likeness of Mr. Joseph Baker (1837-1914) reveals his strength for portraiture, particularly his ability to accurately render his sitters’ features and flesh tones while also allowing character and individuality to come forth. The father of De-Camp’s wife, Edith, Mr. Baker was an accomplished artist himself in the field of lithography. He apprentice with Winslow Homer (1836-1910) and remained lifelong friends with the artist. Like many of De-Camp’s paintings of men, Mr. Baker is shown here at a slight angle against a muted background, and he holds the tool of his trade in his hand.

DeCamp had been receiving a great deal of praise for his figural work. In 1903 around the same time he executed this painting, he began teaching portraiture at the Massachusetts Normal Art School. That same year De-Camp submitted three portraits, including this depiction of Mr. Baker, to the exhibition of The Ten American Painters at the Durand-Ruel Galleries in New York. DeCamp was an instrumental member of the group which strove to gain acceptance for Impressionism. While the majority of the members had been educated in Impressionism, DeCamp stood out with his Munich-educated palette which incorporated darker colors.

Following The Ten’s exhibition, the painting was also shown at several more venues throughout the Northeast, including the Pennsylvania Academy, the Carnegie Institute, the Poland Spring Art Gallery in Maine, and at the St. Botolph Club and the Copley Society in Boston. A review in the Boston Sunday Herald noted the portrait’s “wonderful resemblance, painted throughout in a ‘big’ manner, and with a subtle appreciation of character.”

The Ten American Painters, 1908.
Seated, left to right: Edward Simmons (1852-1931), Willard Metcalf (1858-1925), Childe Hassam (1859-1935), J. Alden Weir (1852-1919), and Robert Reid (1862-1929).
Standing, left to right: William Merritt Chase (1849-1916), Frank W. Benson (1862-1951), Edmund Tarbell (1862-1938), Thomas W. Dewing (1851-1938), and Joseph DeCamp (1858-1923).


Joseph Rodefer DeCamp (1858-1923), Mr. Joseph Baker
Oil on canvas mounted to Masonite, 27 5/8 x 24 1/4 inches
Signed upper left: Joseph DeCamp, circa 1903
Private Collection

Vose Galleries Archives
Joseph Rodefer DeCamp (1858-1923)

One of the two paintings saved from the tragedy of his studio fire, *The Listener (Woman at the Theatre)* remained in the DeCamp family for many years and was never shown by the artist in a public exhibition. Captured from a dramatic point of view, the model’s intense gaze and deftly rendered flesh tones demonstrate DeCamp’s gift for portraiture, while the theatrical setting relates to his interest in musical themes and subjects that began at the turn of the century. A pencil study for this painting, currently in a private collection, shows that he may have initially contemplated including more figures in the composition, yet the striking nature of the finished painting is immediately engaging and transforms the viewer into the object of her attention.
After a distinguished teaching and painting career, DeCamp passed away in February of 1923. His contemporaries lauded his sincere belief in and continued practice of the fundamentals of art and strong craftsmanship in the face of more modernist techniques. The Student Association of the Massachusetts Normal Art School compiled a book about the artist in 1925, and remarked: "With keen perception, quiet suggestion and criticism and sensitive understanding, coupled with brilliant technique, he was truly a Master. His guiding hand, his ideals and his spirit will always continue to live in the new and better school." 1

1 Joseph DeCamp, An Appreciation, compiled and edited by Lee W. Court, (Boston: The Student Association of the Massachusetts Normal Art School, 1925).
Frank Weston Benson (1862-1951)

SCHOOLS OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON: FACULTY

Frank Weston Benson (1862-1951) *Woman in a Blue Kimono*
Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches, signed and dated upper right: *F. W. Benson / 1902*

Frank Benson entered the School of Drawing and Painting at the Museum of Fine Arts in 1880 under the direction of Otto Grundmann and Frederic Crowninshield. His aptitude for the arts was clear, and his native town of Salem asked him to teach their Evening Drawing Class.

Prior to traveling abroad to further his studies, Benson was exposed to Impressionism at an exhibition featuring Claude Monet (1840-1926), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) and others at the Studio Building in Boston. Benson understood the importance of exposure to various forms of art and therefore took full advantage of visiting the museums and art colonies in France during his two years abroad. In Paris he studied at the Académie Julian under Jules-Joseph Lefebvre (1836-1911) and Gustave Boulanger (1824-1888). With a solid foundation in academic training, Benson returned to Boston in 1885 ready to explore less traditional methods of painting.

After returning to the United States, Benson worked as a portraitist in Salem. He received numerous commissions and began to move away from a strictly realistic approach, incorporating the newly formed techniques regarding the depiction of light. Benson’s mastery with light gained attention in 1891 at an exhibition at Chase Gallery in Boston where a review in the *Boston Herald* pointed out his “exceptional delight in color problems, particularly in studies of light under various conditions.”

In 1889 Benson accepted a position at his alma mater to teach antique and life drawing classes, and in 1893 he added painting to his schedule. His friend and classmate, Edmund Tarbell, was appointed that very same year, and together they made the Museum School one of the most reputable and profitable art schools in the country.

By the turn of the century Benson had fully incorporated a fusion of Impressionism and traditional techniques. In 1897 he...
Frank Weston Benson (1862-1951), *Blue and Gold*  
Oil on canvas, 26 1/4 x 36 1/4 inches, signed and dated lower right: *F. W. Benson '21*, original Thulin frame

joined the group The Ten American Painters, along with his friends and colleagues Tarbell and DeCamp. Being the only three artists in the group from Boston, they were often called “The Tarbellites,” as Tarbell was considered the leading painter of the Boston School. They exhibited frequently, and by 1910 Benson was one of the most lauded American painters. An article in Boston’s *Sunday Herald* from 1914 noted that he was the “nation’s most medaled painter.” *Woman in a Blue Kimono* (left), completed in 1902, was shown in one of The Ten’s exhibitions. It exemplifies his fascination with light, seen here filtering through a window, creating broken shadows as it illuminates the figure. Beginning around 1919 Benson acquired a renewed interest in still-lifes and began a series of tabletop paintings in which he used an array of props, including several Asian-inspired pieces such as porcelain jars. These objects reflect the décor found in the homes of the collecting public at the turn of the century, a trend that began when trade commenced with Japan in the 1850s and was introduced to American audiences during the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Benson painted less than eighteen still lifes in oil, making *Blue and Gold* (above) a rare gem.

After over twenty successful years at the helm, Tarbell and Benson resigned in 1912 following a series of events in which the museum directors sought more control over the administration and curriculum of the school. The two continued to work closely in the construction of Riverway Studios and the establishment of the Guild of Boston Artists, where their passion for upholding the traditional style that defined the Boston School would continue to be valued.

Philip Leslie Hale (1865-1931)

Philip L. Hale
(1865-1931)
The Cottage
Oil on canvas
30 x 25 inches

Philip Hale experimented more thoroughly with the tenets of Impressionism, straying further away from Realism than any of his Museum School colleagues. Unlike Edmund Tarbell and Frank Benson, Hale spent time directly under the influence of Claude Monet in Giverny, an experience that inspired him to attempt dissolving his figures and landscapes into the transient qualities of light and color.

Hale enrolled at the Museum School in 1883 and was one of the first students of Tarbell when he was an assistant teacher. In 1887 he traveled to Paris where he studied at the Académie Julian before settling in Giverny, where he met Monet. In 1893 Hale accepted a position teaching antique drawing at the Museum School. He began to experiment with Impressionism in his work and in 1899, the eponymous Durand-Ruel gallery put on a solo exhibition. The press, however, was critical, writing that his paintings ranged from courageously modern to crudely impressionist. Apparently stung, Hale altered his style to align more closely with his fellow Bostonians. He depicted elegant women in interiors, athletes and formal portraits, all with a greater attention to form and line and with a more controlled and academic approach than seen in his earlier work. Over his career he wrote a myriad of critical reviews for Boston papers and exhibited at the Guild of Boston Artists and the Boston Art Club. Vose Galleries first exhibited his work in 1924.
EDMUND CHARLES TARBELL (1862-1938)

The leading painter of the Boston School, Edmund Tarbell was born in West Groton, Massachusetts, and began his art training at the Massachusetts Normal Art School before entering the Museum School under Otto Grundmann and Frederick Crowninshield. Tarbell traveled to Paris in 1883 with fellow classmate Frank Benson and enrolled in the Académie Julian.

Between 1889 and 1912 Tarbell was an influential painting teacher at the Museum School. By 1898 the term “Tarbellites” was coined to describe his students and followers. Tarbell was a major figure among the Boston Impressionists, concentrating on depictions of figures outdoors dappled in sparkling sunlight. Later he moved his subjects indoors and focused on atmospheric light and elegant arrangements, characteristics of the Dutch Master Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675), whose work was rediscovered in France in the 1860s. Tarbell was a founding member, and one of the most admired, of The Ten, a group that achieved national recognition. He developed close relationships with his fellow members, even naming his first daughter Josephine after Joseph DeCamp, another founder of the group.

Tarbell’s presence in Boston was long felt, but in 1918 he left the city to become the Director of the Corcoran School of Art in Washington D.C. His success as a portraitist led to important commissions of Presidents Hoover (1874-1964) and Wilson (1856-1924), but he is best remembered for his thoughtful depictions of women, often his daughters, typically bathed in sunlight.
William Paxton had just come back to Boston from four years in Paris, where he had studied with the master academian, Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), when he met Joseph DeCamp at the Cowles Art School in 1893. Paxton was influenced by DeCamp’s attempts to set down color exactly as it appeared to his eye. This was a more modern approach to color theory than Gérôme’s academic theories, and the young Paxton set to work on mastering these new impressionist ideas. Paxton never did subscribe, however, to the spontaneity of Impressionism either in style or technique; his paintings were always carefully thought out and meticulously rendered. While studying with DeCamp, Paxton met fellow student Elizabeth Okie (1877-1971), who would later become his wife. The two artists maintained a studio at the Harcourt Studio building on Irvington Street but relocated to Fenway Studios after the 1914 fire. In 1906 Paxton took his place beside Benson, Hale and Tarbell at the Museum School where he taught drawing from antique casts. He maintained this position until 1913, when he resigned, following the departure of Tarbell and Benson in protest of the School’s increasingly modern approach.

Paxton was a member of the Guild of Boston Artists and the Copley Society. The Blue Jar (right) was exhibited at both venues shortly after its completion in 1913 and was singled...
William M. Paxton (1869-1941)

Out in a review of the Copley Society exhibition: “... Mr. Paxton conveys an impression of an exquisite object seen under light that has a beauty of its own and amidst beautiful accessories such as the oriental jar that gives the picture its name.”¹ A master of lace, satiny skin and rich fabrics, he frequently received the popular prize by vote in exhibitions, including first place at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. on four occasions, including Two Models (p. 11) during the 1930-1931 show.

¹ F. W. Coburn, Poetry of Femininity in Paxton Picture, (Date and Publication unknown), Vose Galleries Archives.
Leslie Prince Thompson (1880-1963)

Leslie Prince Thompson had a reputation for producing masterful impressionistic landscapes, portraits and beach scenes. He learned these skills while training at the Massachusetts Normal Art School under Ernest L. Major (1864-1950) and continuing at the Museum School with Edmund Tarbell. Thompson received the prestigious Paige Traveling Scholarship and proceeded to spend two years in Europe before returning to Boston, where he received private instruction under Tarbell.

In 1912 when Tarbell and Frank Benson resigned from the Museum School, Thompson and fellow Museum School graduate Frederick Bosley were appointed as replacement teachers. Thompson upheld the traditions championed by his predecessors, but after eighteen years he resigned with Bosley in protest over the introduction of modern art into the curriculum.

Thompson was a colorful character and active in Boston’s art circles. He kept a studio at the Fenway Studios building and was a member of the Copley Society, the Guild of Boston Artists, the St. Botolph Club, the Tavern Club and the National Academy of Design. He also taught classes in Ogunquit, Maine, and became an avid fisherman. Robert C. Vose, Jr. (1912 - 1998), remembered Thompson in his studio, where, “during spring and summer months, one would find, more often than not, a sign on his door reading: ‘Gone Fishing.’”

1 Vose Galleries Archives
Frederick Bosley entered the Museum School in 1900 and learned to combine solid drawing with impressionistic brushwork and color, techniques he mastered while under the influence of Frank Benson and Edmund Tarbell. In 1904 he won the Sears Prize, followed by the prestigious Paige Traveling Scholarship in 1907. After returning from Europe, he taught painting at the Abbott Academy in Andover and at the Groton School. In 1909, Bosley moved with his wife to Lincoln, and he maintained a studio in Boston at Fenway Studios. He was also a member of the Guild of Boston Artists and the Copley Society.

In 1913 upon the recommendation of Tarbell (who was resigning), Bosley succeeded his revered former teacher as Director of the Department of Painting and Drawing. For eighteen years Bosley perpetuated the ideals and technical training that had previously been established. His primary interests — those for which he is best known — were portraits and interiors. Even more important to him was his teaching and the satisfaction of seeing his pupils develop into competent artists.
Early graduates of the Museum School understood the importance of upholding the traditions of their academic training and supporting those who demonstrated those principles. Through the efforts of alumni, several awards were financed and bestowed each year to deserving students, the most prestigious being the Paige Traveling Scholarship. Its namesake, Boston businessman James William Paige, recognized the clear absence of financial support for serious women artists, especially in light of their overwhelming numbers on the Museum School’s rosters: “In this school of two hundred and seventeen pupils there are only twenty seven men, and of the one hundred and ninety women are said to exist none who are not faithfully and conscientiously devoting themselves to the study of art, and yet, most strange to say, there is no provision for a foreign scholarship for women – and this in view of the fact that they are doing decidedly the best work in the school. The reason for this unfair discrimination is said to be in consequence of the liability of girls to marry.” Traveling abroad to enrich and complete their fine arts education, often at the Académies Colarossi and Julian in Paris, had become a common practice among American painters in the late 19th century, but women often had to forego this essential training because of family and financial demands.

Through Paige’s bequest of $30,000, with the stipulation that an additional $10,000 be raised within a certain time period, the Paige Traveling Scholarship was established to enable a student “who shall have been most proficient in painting” to continue training abroad for two years. Although created with the interests of women artists in mind, the prize was open to both genders, and the endowment was supplemented through the efforts of alumnae, including Sarah Choate Sears (1858-1935), an artist whose family was among the wealthiest and most prominent in Boston. In 1899 Mary Brewster Hazelton (1868-1953) became the inaugural recipient. An 1892 graduate of the Museum School and star pupil of Tarbell, she also taught drawing under his leadership until 1906. The scholarship awarded $800 a year for two years of study in Europe, with the itinerary entirely up to the recipient. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the most popular destinations for those intent on seeing the historic collections of Europe and perfecting their skills were the culturally-rich cities of Paris, Rome, Venice and London, although many also ventured beyond the city limits.

The winners of the Paige prize took full advantage of their time in Europe, some learning techniques through first-hand study of the Old Masters, others finding their calling by adopting a whole new medium or painting style. While most worked independently with no agenda beyond knowing which countries they wanted to visit, a few welcomed the opportunity to enroll at one of the prestigious academies to further their education, as their own instructors at the Museum School had done years before. During Hazelton’s travels she visited historic churches on the island of Sicily and became enamored with the use of gold in their mural decorations to enhance the other colors, a treatment that informed her own work when completing religious murals for the Congregational Church in Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, in 1912. Additional recipients of the award featured in this catalogue include Leslie P. Thompson (1904), Frederick Bosley (1906) and Carl Nordell (1909), who attended the Académie Julian under Jean-Paul Laurens (1838-1921). Aldro T. Hibbard (1886-1972) won in 1913 and recorded his travels en plein air, which effected a love of working outdoors in all manner of weather that would come to define his artistic style. Aiden Lassell Ripley (1896-1969) received the award in 1924 and found that the ease of transport of watercolors, something he had not yet tried, allowed him more spontaneity in his work, thus commencing a successful career with the medium from that point forward. Today the Paige scholarship is still awarded to alumni of the Museum School program, although both the amount of the prize and the range of countries visited by recipients has understandably increased over the last one-hundred years.

CSK

Mary Brewster Hazelton (1868-1953), *Reverie*

Oil on canvas, 32 x 28 inches, signed and dated upper left: *M. B. Hazelton / 1914*

Original Carrig-Rohane frame

*Reverie* demonstrates Hazelton's embrace of the principles of her Boston Museum School education, from the skillful drawing of the figure to the soft lighting on various fabrics and textures. The painting was first exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery’s *Fifth Exhibition of Oil Paintings by Contemporary American Artists*, followed by the world-famous 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, where it won the bronze medal. In 1916 it was shown at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, through a special loan exhibition from the Guild of Boston Artists to show visitors some of the finest paintings being done by the city’s artists.
**MARIE DANFORTH PAGE (1869-1940)**

Marie Louise Danforth was an accomplished painter, winning numerous awards, including the prestigious Julia A. Shaw Prize from the National Academy in 1916 for the best painting by a woman artist. In 1927 she was elected an Associate Member of the Academy and was awarded the Thomas Proctor Prize for the best portrait the following year.

Born in Boston into comfortable circumstances, the artist began taking drawing classes with Helen Knowlton at age seventeen. Frank Duveneck, who was offering criticism in Knowlton’s classes in 1889, cultivated Danforth’s interest in portrait painting. A year later she enrolled in the Boston Museum School, studying for the next five years under Frank Benson and Edmund Tarbell. In 1892 she exhibited for the first time at the Boston Art Club and in the same year was awarded a traveling fellowship. Danforth later had to cancel her plans to explore Europe to care for her ailing mother, but she considered her Boston arts education just as valuable: “Boston is as good a place as any in the world to learn painting… I found no need for going elsewhere. Of course, we must go to Europe to see the pictures, but we may as well stay here to learn to draw and paint.” ¹ In 1896 the artist married Calvin Gates Page and finally made her trip abroad in 1903.

In Boston the Pages lived at 128 Marlborough Street where Marie maintained her studio. In 1914 she began to specialize in mother and child paintings, likened to those of Mary Cassatt (1844-1926). The portraits were especially popular among the affluent families in her Back Bay neighborhood.

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Marie Danforth Page (1869-1940), *Little Boy with His Dog*
Oil on canvas, 44 1/2 x 30 1/4 inches, signed and dated lower right: *Marie D. Page 1918*
Lilian Westcott Hale (1880-1963)

Lilian Westcott came to Boston in 1899 after attending William Merritt Chase’s Summer School in Shinnecock, Long Island, while a student of the Hartford Art School. She then followed Chase’s advice to enter the Museum School in Boston and entered an advanced painting class with Edmund Tarbell. She married faculty member Philip Hale in 1902, and in 1905 they moved into two adjacent studios at the newly opened Fenway Studios.

After the birth of their daughter, Nancy, in 1908, the Hales purchased a home in Dedham, Massachusetts. The large parlor was converted into a multi-windowed studio for Lilian, and their home acted as the setting for many of Lilian’s interior scenes, including this portrait of Agnes Doggett (right).

A devoted mother, Lilian still managed to show her work extensively. Locally she exhibited at the Guild of Boston Artists and the Boston Art Club. She was particularly praised for her expressive portraits, executed in delicate charcoal, in a manner characteristic of the Boston School tradition. By mid-career she was considered a pillar of the society of women painters in Boston, and the demand for her drawings far exceeded the ability to produce them.
Ernest Ludvig Ipsen was born in Malden, Massachusetts, to Danish parents who both had artistic careers: his father was an architect, and his mother was a musician. Ipsen knew he wanted to be an artist by the time he was sixteen years old and enrolled at Boston’s Museum School from 1885 until 1887, where he trained under Frederic Porter Vinton (1846-1911) and Joseph DeCamp. With his European ancestry, Ipsen chose to continue his studies at the Copenhagen Royal Academy for four years. Upon returning to Boston, he set up a studio and worked under the direction of his first instructor, Vinton.

Ipsen thoroughly enjoyed sailing and made frequent trips to the North Shore of Massachusetts, where he completed many marine scenes and landscapes, including this charming rendition of Marblehead (above). The smaller, manageable size and impressionist brushwork suggest the scene may have been done en plein air, at least in part, in order to capture the gleaming mid-day sunlight on the figures walking near a quiet cove. By 1908 he had moved to New York, and around the same time, he purchased a studio in South Dartmouth, Massachusetts, where he spent the summers painting.

Although he was extremely diverse in his subject matter, painting landscapes, marine scenes and still life, he received international recognition for his portraiture. Ipsen was a member of the Salmagundi Club, the American Watercolor Society and the Century Association, and in 1924 the National Academy of Design inducted him as a full Academician. His work was exhibited locally at the Boston Art Club from 1895 to 1909, the New Bedford Art Club during the teens, and he participated in the annuals at the National Academy, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Corcoran Gallery of Art during the 1920s.

In 1941 Ipsen moved to Florida where he continued working near to the time of his passing in 1951. Vose Galleries hosted an exhibition two years later, featuring a selection of quality paintings from his estate.
Aiden Lassell Ripley (1896-1969), Waiting Gondolas, Venice
Watercolor and graphite on paper, 16 x 19 7/8 inches, signed and dated lower left: A. L. Ripley 1926

Aiden L. Ripley attended classes at the Fenway School of Illustration before he enlisted in the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I. After the war he entered the Museum School on a scholarship, where he received instruction in figure and portrait painting from Philip Hale and Frank Benson, who, by that time, was a visiting critic for the advanced classes. In 1924 the Museum School awarded Ripley the highly coveted Paige Traveling Scholarship, and he spent two years abroad exploring France, Holland and Italy. Ripley used this time to broaden his scope and experiment with plein air subject matter and a new medium for him, watercolor. Although he enjoyed the freedom of working out of doors, Ripley relied on his Museum School training. He believed that good, competent paintings “begin with as good a drawing framework as possible.”

In 1925 Ripley settled in Lexington, Massachusetts, where he built his home and studio on land he purchased from artist and close friend Hermann Dudley Murphy (1867-1945). He exhibited at the Guild of Boston Artists, the Boston Art Club, the Museum of Fine Arts and annually at Vose Galleries as part of the Boston Society of Watercolor Painters from 1928 to 1935.

JOHN WHORF (1903-1959)

At the age of fourteen Whorf traveled from his home in Winthrop, Massachusetts, to attend classes at the nearby Museum School under Philip Hale. That same year, 1917, he began studying in Provincetown with Charles Hawthorne (1872-1936), E. Ambrose Webster (1869-1935) and George Elmer Browne (1871-1946). Whorf continued his studies in Paris at the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Colarossi before traveling through France, Portugal and Morocco. During his travels Whorf concentrated on watercolors, capturing the subtle blend of hues and play of light and shadow in his landscapes and urban scenes. In 1924 he had his first one-man show at Grace Horne Gallery in Boston, which attracted a great deal of attention. Fellow watercolorists John Singer Sargent and Dodge MacKnight (1860-1950) both purchased a painting. Between the years of 1944 and 1951, he exhibited annually at Vose Galleries.

By 1929 Whorf was a member of The Boston Six, a group that included fellow Museum School graduate Aiden Lassell Ripley. Together they exhibited oils and watercolors, striving to uphold the traditions of the Boston School. The group had a strong connection to the Guild of Boston Artists, which also worked to maintain these standards.
JOHN WHORF (1903-1959)

John Whorf (1903-1959), Summer (The Courtyard)
Watercolor and graphite on paper, 15 1/4 x 22 inches, signed lower right: John Whorf

John Whorf (1903-1959), View through the Window, Paris
Watercolor on paper, 15 1/2 x 22 1/4 inches, signed in framed picture and lower right: John Whorf
Aldro T. Hibbard (1886-1972)

Trained at the Massachusetts Normal Art School, followed by his matriculation at the Museum School, Hibbard carried forth the tenets of the Boston School into a new generation in the twentieth century. Entering the Museum School in 1909, he studied under Edmund Tarbell, Frederick Bosley, Philip Hale, and the visiting faculty member, Frank Benson. Although he excelled at painting the figure so prized by his teachers, Hibbard knew that he wanted to be a landscape artist rather than “catering to fussy sitters.”

In 1913 on the eve of Hibbard’s graduation from the Museum School and the culmination of seven years of academic study, he was awarded the Paige Traveling Scholarship, which allowed him to travel to England, Italy and Spain to further hone his craft. After returning home Hibbard began taking painting trips to Vermont at the suggestion of MNAS alumnus William Kaula, who specifically recommended the splendors of Newfane, Brattleboro and the West River Valley. Hibbard’s paintings were infused with broken color, a technique learned from Frank Benson, to describe light and shadow by creating a veil of delicately toned colors placed side by side, rather than mixed on the palette. Soon he began to exhibit his landscapes widely across the U.S. and launched himself in the Boston art world with a one-man exhibition at the Boston Art Club in 1916. Three years later a show of his winter scenes at the Guild of Boston Artists received glowing reviews.

By the 1930s Hibbard spent winter months in Vermont and the rest of the year in Rockport, MA, where he established the Rockport Summer School of Drawing and Painting. The artist grew to become a legendary member of the North Shore artist colony and even started, played for and managed the Rockport baseball team. His painting Village Along the West River, Vermont, painted directly outdoors, is a prime example of his facility with broken color, and he became known as the foremost painter of snow.
Polly Thayer Starr (1904-2006)

Polly Thayer entered the Museum School at age nineteen under Philip Hale and Leslie Prince Thompson. After 18 months she left the school to take private lessons with Hale, but her strong desire to learn more about composition and color theory led her to Provincetown, where she continued her studies with Charles Hawthorne. Thayer further broadened her education by spending several years abroad, with time spent in Paris at the Académie Colarossi, visits to Morocco and Madrid, finally returning to Paris, where she trained briefly under the cubist artist André Lhote (1885-1962).

Upon returning to the States, Thayer knew she had mastered the classical techniques from her Boston School training and was ready to explore more modern ideas. Along with several other graduates from the Museum School, including Gertrude Fiske (1878-1961), Thayer sought to expand the tastes of Boston collectors by introducing new methods of painting into her work. Her first solo show at Doll & Richards Gallery was successful and resulted in numerous portrait commissions. In 1932 she rented a studio at the Fenway Studios building in Boston, where she established herself as a portrait artist. This success encouraged her to take a class with Harry Wickey (1892-1968) at the Art Students League, which led to a breakthrough in her understanding of form and space. Pont Alexandre III is a prime example of this new way of seeing, clearly paying homage to her teacher, cubist André Lhote.
The Massachusetts Normal Art School (MNAS), now the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, is the oldest public art school in the nation. Although there had been efforts to promote state instruction in drawing since 1844 in Massachusetts, it wasn’t until after the Civil War that the cause was sparked by the needs of industry. Still reeling from the cotton supply cutoff from the South and facing educational deficiencies in mechanical draftsmanship within its workforce, the Massachusetts textile industry found itself disadvantaged in competition with European mills. In order to meet this need for educated draftsmen, fourteen prominent Bostonians, including Francis Cabot Lowell, Jr., and Edward Everett Hale (father of artists Ellen and Philip Hale) petitioned for the inclusion of industrial drawing classes in Massachusetts public schools. Meeting many of the petitioners’ demands, the Drawing Act of 1870 mandated industrial drawing be taught to all students older than 15 in towns with populations exceeding 10,000.

The MNAS relocated to the corner of Exeter and Newbury Streets from 1886 to 1929, then to Washington Street in 1880, and Walter Smith’s tenue at the helm of the MNAS came to an end in 1882. Smith’s successor, George H. Bartlett, lightened the technical requirements of the curriculum even further, allowing for the addition of several electives. However, the school still maintained a greater focus on the teaching of art than the other Boston art schools of the time as well as providing large financial incentives for students contracted to serve as teachers throughout the state.

The MNAS relocated to the corner of Exeter and Newbury Streets from 1886 to 1929, then to Longwood and Brookline Avenues. There the school still thrives today as the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, providing art education opportunities for countless Massachusetts residents at an affordable tuition.

JOSEPH RODEFER DECOMP (1858-1923)

In 1903 DeCamp began teaching portraiture at the Massachusetts Normal Art School as the head of the painting department. As author William Howe Downes pointed out in his 1913 article in *Art and Progress*, “[DeCamp] has been for many years a teacher of painting, and his pupils in the Massachusetts Normal Art School can testify to the efficacy of his intelligent and sound methods and his great knowledge.” DeCamp was surrounded with an incredibly supportive staff and developed strong relationships with his fellow teachers. He became particularly close to Ernest Lee Major who not only taught at the MNAS, but was also a teacher with DeCamp at the Cowles Art School. The two teachers often summered together in Annisquam, on the North Shore of Massachusetts, and DeCamp even painted a striking portrait of Major’s wife in 1902-03 while spending time in nearby Rocky Neck. DeCamp remained at the MNAS until 1923, the year of his death.

*Seascape, Venice, Italy* was painted in 1880, shortly after the Duveneck boys dispersed. DeCamp decided to travel to Venice and executed at least five known paintings during this trip.

EDWARD WILBUR DEAN HAMILTON (1864-1943)

Hamilton was born in Pennsylvania and came to Boston in 1879 to study painting at the Massachusetts Normal Art School. He fulfilled the requirements for certificates in all four of its arts programs and was honored for the best set of works in the constructive arts program.

In 1889 Hamilton traveled to Paris and entered the École des Beaux-Arts under Jules-Élie Delaunay (1828-1891). He returned to Boston in 1892, took a studio on Boylston Street and began exhibiting his paintings at the Boston Art Club. That same year he accepted a position at his alma mater, teaching drawing and painting from the antique figure and living model. Hamilton remained there for 50 years, eventually becoming the head of the Fine Arts Department. In the 1920s he bought a house in Kingston, Massachusetts, where he established a summer school.
Having studied at the Corcoran Gallery, the Art Students League and at the Académie Julian, Ernest Lee Major dedicated the next 54 years of his life to disseminating his knowledge to Boston art students. His first teaching position was at the Cowles Art School, where he instructed students in the art of figural work. In 1896 he joined the faculty at the MNAS and presided over still life drawing and painting classes for the next 46 years. Major dedicated his full attention to only 25–30 pupils at a time, meeting with his classes for weekly critiques. He was a strict and brilliant teacher with an incisive wit that both captivated and intimidated generations of young artists. His student, Aldro Hibbard, recalled one class in which Major stopped at a student’s easel, grabbed her dirty brushes and threw them out the window onto the Newbury Street sidewalk, teaching her (and any student who wanted to retain their art supplies) to “paint clean.” However, Major never touched his students’ work, a technique that Hibbard adopted later as a teacher.
Reminiscing about his school days, Hibbard said, “In art school you learn from your fellow students. You live and work with them, share their successes, observe their mistakes, hear their criticisms. The professors talk shop eternally. You are in the world of art... This environment and the lessons it teaches aren’t available through private instruction.”

The Cowles Art School was established in 1883 by Frank Cowles, a former student at the Museum School and a member of the Boston Art Club. He sought to offer a spirit of *bonhomie* and a French-inspired curriculum. Based on Parisian art academies rather than the London industrial art schools, he based the pricing structure for the school on the Art Students League of New York. Starting in a small room on Tremont Street with several students studying from plaster casts, the school moved after a couple of years to 145 Dartmouth Street. Here it offered watercolor, still-life, modeling, composition, perspective, artistic anatomy, sketching and separate men’s and women’s life classes. In a departure from other art schools, Cowles also offered more liberal arts based courses in French language, literature and art history. Fulfilling Mr. Cowles’ intent, the school was referenced as the “Julian’s of Boston” because its teaching was informal and emphasized life and modeling classes and served as a connection to Boston artists studying in France. Frank Robinson of *The Art Interchange* magazine wrote, “Relative to the instructors who second the efforts of Manager Cowles a word must be said, for to them is due the atmosphere of the old-world masters’ schools which permeates every nook and corner of this institute. There has not been one of the teachers or heads of classes but has made his mark in the best French ateliers.”

Dennis Miller Bunker (1861-1890), fresh from his studies at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and summers spent touring and sketching the French countryside, settled in Boston in the fall of 1885. He accepted the position as Chief Instructor of Painting at the newly opened Cowles Art School, where he spent the next four years, then left for New York City in 1889. Joseph DeCamp took his place in 1890 and taught advanced painting classes as well as head and life drawing classes through the 1898-99 season. His close friend E. L. Major (who studied at the Académie Julian and traveled Europe before accepting a position at Cowles in 1888) and Theodore Wendel (who had just returned from Giverny, where he had met Claude Monet) were also instructors at the time, and the three teachers summered together in Annisquam in 1894 and 1895. Elizabeth Okie was one of the many students to study under DeCamp and Major in the early 1890s and during this time met her future husband, William McGregor Paxton, also a student of DeCamp’s.

The Cowles certificate program was adapted to the individual needs of its students, allowing part-time attendance and encouraging them to take breaks from their studies in Boston to travel to Europe. Cowles pupils found the school to be favorably known in Paris and relied on this reputation to facilitate advantageous opportunities in the city. “In addition to giving a continuous and thorough training in art, the school meets in a wholesome way the needs of a considerable number of earnest students who are not able to attend for long periods at a time, or who have been obliged to gain their instruction in an irregular and unequal way, and need to have their deficiencies made up in special lines of study...Each student intent on joining is allowed to enter at once upon the highest grade of work for which he or she is capable of, and is carefully advised and guided in subsequent work.” The school offered morning, afternoon and evening classes throughout the week in addition to Saturday morning and summer programs. The students showed their work in semi-annual exhibitions, which granted the opportunity to receive honorable mentions and traveling scholarships based on their efforts. The Cowles School merged with the New England Conservatory in the late 1890s, and in 1902 instruction in the fine arts ceased altogether.

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Life drawing class at the Cowles Art School, circa 1897
In October of 1890 Joseph DeCamp had just left his position at the Museum School when he took over for Dennis Miller Bunker at the Cowles Art School as Chief Instructor of Painting. DeCamp maintained this position through 1898-1899 and was very pleased with the flexibility in the curriculum, as opposed to the rigidity of the Museum School.

Painted circa 1896, *Portrait of a Young Lady* reveals the period during DeCamp's career when he began exploring the genre of idealized figures in interiors, a subject that his fellow Museum School teachers were addressing. Critics were favorable towards this type of painting, in particular when executed with loose brushstrokes and bright colors. Just one year after the completion of this portrait, DeCamp was asked to be a member of the impressionist group, The Ten American Painters. While he certainly fit in with these talented painters, DeCamp's biographer, Laurene Buckley, points out that “…it was DeCamp’s academic approach, his ability to capture a certain sophistication in his sitters, and above all, his sheer expertise in the handling of paint that gave him a special place within the group.”

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Theodore Wendel (1859-1932), Lobster Shack
Pastel on paper, 17 1/2 x 23 1/4 inches, signed verso: Theo. Wendel

Theodore Wendel joined Joseph DeCamp, his classmate at the McMicken School of Design in Ohio, on a trip to Germany where they both enrolled in the Royal Academy in Munich in 1876. Before long they joined a circle of artists around Frank Duveneck, painting and traveling through Italy during the summers and spending winters at Duveneck’s School of Art in Munich. Wendel briefly returned to the United States in 1882, but by 1886 was back in Europe. He studied briefly at the Académie Julian prior to visiting Giverny, where he became part of the first generation of American artists to establish themselves in Monet’s hometown. Wendel soon abandoned the dark realism of his Munich years and embraced the lighter palette and more atmospheric painting of the Impressionists.

In 1889 Wendel moved to Boston where Impressionism was already gaining in popularity. When the St. Botolph Club held an exhibition of Monet’s work in 1892, most of the works in the show were loaned by Boston collectors. Landscape painting in this impressionist style became more prevalent with the arrival of Wendel and fellow Giverny artist, Willard Metcalf (1858-1925). Prior to that time, Boston artists largely incorporated this new style into their portraiture, whereas Wendel painted the New England landscape, especially Gloucester and Ipswich. He was a great proponent of the pastel medium and exhibited these works at the Boston gallery, Williams and Everett.

Wendel taught at Wellesley College for two years, and then he joined the staff at the Cowles Art School in 1892, where he remained for five years.
Elizabeth Okie Paxton (1877-1971)

Elizabeth Vaughan Okie painted exquisite still lifes, timeless compositions of everyday domestic objects rendered with a sensitivity to light, color and form. *Kitchen Still Life - China, Pewter and Lemons* was featured in R. H. Ives Gammell’s (1893-1981) book *The Boston Painters*, in which the author acknowledges the early influence of Elizabeth’s husband and tutor, William Paxton, but praises her distinctive style: “For sheer sensitivity of perception and veracity of statement her color relations challenge William Paxton’s own, as he himself proudly proclaimed. The jolt given the beholder by her simple revelation of the beauty of commonplace things transformed by the magic of light and shade and atmosphere is given an additional fillip by the originality of her selective taste.”

Born in Providence, Rhode Island, Elizabeth attended the Cowles Art School under Ernest Lee Major and Joseph DeCamp. It was during this time that she met fellow student William Paxton, whom she married in 1899. Together they moved into the Fenway Studios building in 1906, but Elizabeth always kept a studio at their home in Newton. She exhibited with the Guild of Boston Artists and the North Shore Arts Association, which presented her with the Alice Worthington Ball Prize in 1927.

Established in 1893 in what was formerly an ice-skating rink, the Grundmann Studios building on Clarendon Street in Boston’s Back Bay was the site of many creative and cultural endeavors throughout its 24-year existence. It was named in honor of Emil Otto Grundmann, the much-beloved first Director of the Museum School and served as the home base for the Boston Art Students’ Association (renamed the Copley Society by 1901). Many artists occupied its thirty-four studios, including Hermann Dudley Murphy (no. 20), Charles H. Woodbury (no. 19) and Mary Bradish Titcomb (no. 17). The building was described by the Boston Sunday Globe as “so delightfully picturesque, with little overhanging galleries, which are reached by the tiniest flight of stairs, it seems like climbing into a doll’s house.”

Exemplifying the Boston Art Students’ Association’s (BASA’s) principles of providing encouragement and fellowship for residents, while also extending this camaraderie to the larger community, the association sponsored exhibitions, lectures, plays and festivals held in its spacious functions rooms, Allston and Copley Halls, throughout the year. The first festival to take place at the newly opened Grundmann building was an Arabian Nights-themed soirée, about which a guest later wrote: “The atmosphere of the place is impregnated with artist life; the quaint little studios which were thrown open for the reception of guests and later became the scenes of private banquets were cozy and inviting and lent a homelike air to the building… the secret of it all was that this is the home of this delightful art colony.”

Having joined the BASA in 1895, Mary Bradish Titcomb eventually moved into Grundmann Studios by 1908, while still a student at the Museum School, and lived and worked there for the next eight years. For professional, unmarried women artists, the Grundmann environment was uniquely advantageous, as noted by a visitor in 1898: “The feminine contingent is delighted with the quarters, and enjoys to the full privilege of cultivating ‘bachelor quiet and bachelor conviviality’ at their own sweet will…She can command at will the solitude, said to be so necessary to the development of genius, or, if she longs for companionship, she has but to open her door to the miniature world around her.”

In 1916, after decades of playing host to dozens of artists and hundreds of Copley Society exhibitions and events benefitting the greater artistic community, the Grundmann Studios building was sold by the landlord and soon razed to make way for the Stuart Street extension. The artist-residents dispersed throughout the city, some finding spaces on their own or chancing upon an opening at the Fenway Studios building on Ipswich Street, built in 1905. The Copley Society would eventually find a new home on Newbury Street.

Mary Bradish Titcomb (1858-1927)

After completing the one-year foundational course at the Massachusetts Normal Art School in 1886, Titcomb accepted a job as Director of Drawing for Brockton, Massachusetts. She continued this position for seventeen years but always maintained ties to Boston. She was a member of the MNAS Alumni Association as well as the Boston Art Students’ Association. With these memberships she had a wide group of artist friends with whom she attended many events, including an Arabian Nights Festival held at Grundmann Studios.

At the age of forty-four Titcomb decided to move permanently to Boston and become a professional artist. She entered the Museum School in 1902 under Edmund Tarbell, Frank Benson and Philip Hale, and her maturing style began to reflect the influence of these teachers. She expanded her repertoire to include portraits and figures in interiors, executed with the technical skill and depth of shadows which had long been associated with the Boston School tradition. Her numerous friendships with artists at the Museum School and the Copley Society inspired her to move into Grundmann Studios where she remained a member of a vital community of hard-working, serious-minded women artists. In 1917 she joined with Laura Hills, Lucy Conant (1867-1921), Margaret Patterson (1867-1950), Elizabeth Roberts (1871-1927) and Jane Peterson (1876-1965) to form The Group, an exhibiting circle of Boston’s leading women painters. Although short-lived, lasting only until 1919, The Group exhibited across the United States and was critically well-received.

When Grundmann Studios was torn down in 1917, Titcomb moved to Fenway Studios where she maintained a studio until the end of her life.
Hermann Dudley Murphy (1867-1945)

A vital presence in Boston, Hermann Dudley Murphy was not only a member of the Guild of Boston Artists, the Boston Art Club and the Copley Society, but also a devoted teacher. In 1899 he began holding summer painting classes on Cape Cod, and for thirty-six years he taught at the Harvard University School of Architecture.

Murphy first studied art at Boston’s Chauncey School before he enrolled at the Museum School under Otto Grundmann and Joseph DeCamp. Upon graduating he went to Paris for five years, studying at the Académie Julian. While abroad he was introduced to the work of James Abbott McNeill Whistler and the Aesthetic Movement. Beach Scene (lower left) reflects this influence in the use of tonalism and atmospheric effects, rendering the warm, hazy summer sunlight and the gentle breezes blowing off the water. Two years later he returned to the States and took a studio in the Grundmann Studios building on Clarendon Street in Back Bay, which then housed the Copley Society as well as a number of notable Boston artists.

While Massachusetts remained his home base, Murphy went back to Europe in 1908, during which time Rio del Paradiso (left) was most likely painted. Later on in his career, wishing to escape New England winters, Murphy traveled to the warmer climates of California and the Caribbean.

During the 1920s, after moving to Lexington with his second wife Nellie Littlehale Umbstaetter (1867-1941), Murphy started to produce carefully arranged floral still lifes, seen in The Azalea (right), for which he is best known today. The painting is complemented by the artist’s hand-carved frame and was most likely shown in an exhibition of his work held at Vose Galleries in 1928.
HERMANN DUDLEY MURPHY (1867-1945)

Hermann Dudley Murphy (1867-1945)
The Azalea
Oil on canvas
22 x 24 inches
Signed lower right:
H. Dudley Murphy
Circa 1927
Original Murphy frame

In 1897 Murphy, discouraged by the poor quality of the frames he was able to obtain commercially, decided to buy materials and teach himself how to carve and gild. He embraced the theory of his friend James Abbott McNeill Whister that a frame and painting should work in harmony and in 1903 created the Carrig-Rohane shop. By 1906 the shop had expanded to include expert carvers Charles Prendergast (1863-1948) and Walfred Thulin (1878-1949). As Bill Barol wrote in his American Heritage article in 1989, together these framers focused on producing the “finest possible hand-carved and gilded frames, custom designed for the paintings they were to enclose.”

By 1915, Vose Galleries bought the business in order for Murphy to spend more of his time painting and designing frames. Vose Galleries carried on Murphy’s tradition of exquisitely hand-carved frames until 1939, threatened by the Great Depression and the looming crisis in Europe.
Margaret S. Peirce (19th/20th c.)

Margaret S. Peirce was active in the Boston area during the first two decades of the twentieth century. She acquired a studio at the newly opened Fenway Studios building in 1906 and remained there until 1915. Some of the city’s best-known artists—William Paxton, Ernest Lee Major and Philip Hale—occupied Fenway Studios during Peirce’s time there. Though little is known about her education, the influence of these Boston School proponents is clearly evident in her work, particularly in *Seamstress* (right).

Unlike Grundmann Studios, Fenway Studios did not have a central exhibition space. Artists there did not organize exhibitions together nor did they hold building-wide artist festivals such as those held at Grundmann. Peirce, therefore, exhibited at such venues as the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in their 1912 annual.

An interior scene with a woman absorbed in her work on the fabric before her, *Seamstress* reveals how Peirce painted in the traditional manner that her fellow Fenway Studios artists promoted.

Charles Hopkinson (1869-1962)

Charles Hopkinson was one of only a handful of early Modernists who grew up in the Boston area. After graduating from Harvard University in 1891, he opted to study at the less traditional Art Students League in New York City instead of pursuing his art education at the Museum School. In 1893 he went abroad and enrolled at the Académie Julian in Paris. His travels exposed him to the work of Francisco Goya (1746-1828), whose vivid paintings were greatly influential on the young artist.

In 1897 Hopkinson was living back in Boston and began a highly successful portrait career, counting President Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933) among his elite clients. With an established presence in the art world, Hopkinson began to experiment with a number of color theories which he applied to paintings of his friends and family. From 1906-1962 he maintained a studio at Fenway Studios, bucking the trend towards more conservative and academic painting seen in the Boston School artists. With like-minded artists Marion Chase (1874-1957), Charles Hovey Pepper (1864-1950), Harley Perkins (1883-1964) and Carl G. Culter (1873-1945), he formed the Boston Five, a group that introduced a new visual language to a traditionally-minded public. Between 1920 and 1935 they exhibited their works together at the Boston Art Club, Vose Galleries and the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard.
The Kaulas were among the first occupants of Fenway Studios in Boston; they moved to the large corner studio, number 311, just after the building opened in 1905. Edmund Tarbell also maintained a studio there, and the Kaulas developed a close relationship with the leading painter of the Boston School, often summering together in New Ipswich, New Hampshire. Lee Lufkin Kaula soon became known for her depictions of figures in interiors, a tradition that gained her a reputation as a Tarbellite.

Lee Lufkin met William in 1894 while traveling in Crécy, France. They were both abroad continuing their education: Lee Lufkin at the Académie Colarossi and William at both the Académies Julian and Colarossi. Prior to that, Lee Lufkin had studied painting with Charles Melville Dewey (1849-1937) in New York.

Lee Lufkin Kaula was an active member of the professional circle of women artists both in Boston and throughout the nation. She was a member of the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors as well as the New York Women’s Art Club. In Boston she exhibited at the Copley Society and the Guild of Boston Artists.
William Jurian Kaula (1871-1953)

"His work is genuinely satisfying and stimulating to those who appreciate an artist who understands how to paint and what to paint and can put that touch of poetry and imagination into his work which appeals to every lover of nature...Mr. Kaula has long been distinguished for his skies. He feels and understands cloud forms as do few artists, especially the massive beauty of the summer cumulus clouds as well as their depth and luminosity under given circumstances."


William Kaula is best known for his cloud-filled landscapes painted in New England, primarily around the Monadnock region in New Hampshire where he spent many summers in nearby New Ipswich. He was highly praised by critics, fellow artists and collectors for his compositions featuring low horizons and expressive skies.

Born in Boston, Kaula began his artistic studies at the Massachusetts Normal Art School (1887-1891) and the Cowles Art School (1891-1896) before continuing his training in Paris. Maintaining a studio at Fenway Studios, Kaula exhibited his work at the Copley Society and the Guild of Boston Artists.
Founded in 1855, the Boston Art Club (BAC) and its annual exhibitions were vital contributions to Boston’s artistic patronage and cultural life for nearly a century. Starting as a supper club rotating among artist studios on Tremont Street, the original 20 members of the club wanted to “foster a taste for high art.” Most of the artists had started out as self-taught itinerant portrait painters but were looking for exhibition opportunities for their New England landscapes. Lacking their own exhibition space, the Boston Art Club collaborated with the well-established Boston Athenaeum and exhibited an eclectic group of members’ works and European paintings there. Encouraged by the success of their first exhibition, the Athenaeum’s Alfred Ordway (1821-1897) continued to organize annual exhibitions until 1863, applying a heavier focus on Hudson River School and Boston painters. The objective of these exhibitions was not only to display the works, but also to educate the public and art collectors, and for this purpose, the club launched a lecture series in January of 1857.

The club took a hiatus around the Civil War, but with support from art advocate Charles Callahan Perkins (1823-1886), the club reformed in a townhouse on Boylston Street in 1869. It hosted two juried exhibitions annually, and Perkins was insistent that it was necessary to nurture not only the artists but the collecting members as well. Open to upper-class men only, the gentlemen’s club was socially driven, with a refined central exhibition space as well as dining and reading rooms. It provided a meeting place plus the opportunity to exhibit paintings in large, well-reviewed shows. William Morris Hunt, who served as the club’s Vice President in 1872, withdrew from the club due to temperamental differences with Perkins, bringing many of his inner circle with him. Further divisions occurred within the club owing to the disproportionate 5:1 ratio of businessmen to artists, the latter feeling underrepresented in decision making. In January of 1881 Perkins stepped down from his presidency, but he went on to help found the St. Botolph Club, which emerged as the Boston Art Club’s biggest rival. At that point the BAC had 600 members and started construction on a permanent clubhouse at the corner of Newbury and Dartmouth Streets. Designed by architect William Ralph Emerson (1833-1917), a Queen Anne style building was erected with both public and member entrances and spaces.

While studying engineering at MIT in 1882, Charles Woodbury (1864-1940) took drawing lessons from Ross Sterling Turner (1847-1915) and the very same year exhibited a painting in the Boston Art Club’s inaugural exhibition in the new clubhouse. Only fifteen years old at the time, Woodbury had the distinction of being one of the youngest exhibitors of the Boston Art Club and continued to contribute his watercolor and oil paintings there until 1915.

By about 1900 the heyday of the BAC had passed, and with the emergence of several other downtown art societies, artists no longer depended on the club as their primary source of exposure in Boston. In 1917 Charles Hovey Pepper became Director of the Exhibitions Committee, and the public saw the club’s conservative aesthetic ideals shift to modernist ones, exhibiting paintings by Charles Hopkinson, Louis Kronberg (1872-1965) and Edward Hopper (1882-1967). In 1928 the BAC fired the entire Exhibitions Committee, and the Governor of Massachusetts, Alvan Fuller, and artist Hermann Dudley Murphy, who referenced the modernist phase as “that crazy stuff,” transitioned the club back to its traditional roots. Finally accepting women club members in 1933, the majority of Boston female artists rejected the idea of joining, as many of the other Boston clubs had opened their doors much earlier to them. The women who did decide to become members were only allowed through the public entrance and into specified club rooms. The fact that the club had exhibited modern artists before their own traditional works certainly did not serve as incentive to join. In 1941 the Art Club merged with the Grace Horne Gallery, which consumed the first two floors of gallery space, and in 1950 the Boston Art Club dissolved completely.

Carl John David Nordell (1885-1957)

Carl Nordell’s family emigrated from Denmark and settled in Boston in the 1890s. He began his studies at the Rhode Island School of Design before attending the Art Students League in New York under George Bridgeman (1865-1945).

Around 1906 Nordell visited an exhibition by The Ten American Painters and was so inspired by the work of Tarbell and DeCamp that he enrolled at the Museum School. In 1909 his tireless studies paid off and he was awarded the prestigious Paige Traveling Scholarship which he used to travel to Paris and study at the Académie Julian.

Upon his return to America, Nordell worked at the Fenway Studios and completed many portrait commissions for a number of Boston’s elite citizens. Beginning in 1911 he exhibited at the Boston Art Club and also received such awards as the silver medal at the esteemed 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

William Lester Stevens (1888-1969)

In 1921 John Pepper, the President of the Boston Art Club, asked William L. Stevens to hold a one-man show of 54 paintings. A review of the exhibition noted “Mr. Stevens is evidently a swift and skillful craftsman; there is a great deal of zest in his work; one feels the stir, the bustle, the busy and energetic activity that pervades the scene.” For the next two decades he became well-known for his New England landscapes rendered in all seasons.

By the age of eighteen Stevens had exhibited his first piece at the National Academy of Design and won a scholarship to attend classes at the Museum School under Edmund Tarbell. Eager to share his knowledge of art, Stevens worked with fellow Museum School graduate Aldro T. Hibbard to found the Rockport Art Association. He also taught at both Boston University and Princeton University.

1. “Paintings by Mr. Stevens - First Autumn Exhibition at Galleries of Boston Art Club a One-Man Show by Able Rockport Artist” W. H. D., Boston Evening Tribune, October 20, 1921.
The Copley Society

In 1879 alumni from the first graduating class of the Museum School founded the Boston Art Students’ Association in order to “supplement the academic training of the school of drawing and painting…to assist its members in their artistic career, to cultivate a spirit of fraternity among art students, and to promote the interests of art in the city of Boston.” Having chosen a profession often fraught with financial insecurity, the group offered camaraderie and support at a critical time in their careers by organizing semi-annual exhibitions of members’ work. The Society sponsored classes and lectures on a variety of art subjects, ranging from composition to wash drawing to Barbizon paintings and the Italian Renaissance. Concerts, costume balls and theatricals were also staged throughout the year. In time membership was opened to artists and art enthusiasts beyond the Museum School rosters, and, because the Society lacked a permanent location, annual dues were put towards renting halls and rooms throughout the city for their meetings and events. Finally, in 1893, the BASA leased a building on Clarendon Street near Copley Square, converting an ice-skating rink into a collection of artists’ studios and large function rooms. They affectionately christened their new home Grundmann Studios in honor of the much-admired instructor at the Museum School, who had passed away just three years before.

By 1901 the association had expanded beyond a student group and was renamed the Copley Society. They continued the tradition of presenting its members’ work in regular exhibitions while also hosting festivals and talks on art. The Society also brought major shows to Boston audiences, including a John Singer Sargent retrospective in 1899 and a condensed version of the famous Armory Show in 1913, following its dramatic New York debut. When the Grundmann Studios building was razed in 1917, the Society found temporary exhibit space through the Boston Art Club, where they showed the watercolors of Dodge MacKnight, Winslow Homer and Sargent in 1921. Later that year they moved to Commonwealth Avenue. Several more moves would follow over time before the Copley Society, the oldest non-profit art association in the nation, established its permanent home at 158 Newbury Street, where it remains to this day. Among its thousands of members over the years, a few are featured in this catalogue, including Lilian Westcott Hale, Marie Danforth Page and Frank W. Benson.

CSK


George Loftus Noyes (1864-1954)

George Noyes is recognized for his richly-colored New England landscapes and his ability to paint sunlight. He learned these skills while exploring the French countryside in the 1890s, where he discovered his love for painting landscapes en plein air. Noyes went to France to attend the Académie Colarossi after completing the program at the Massachusetts Normal Art School.

Returning to Boston in 1893, Noyes moved into Fenway Studios where he lived between 1907 and 1911 and exhibited regularly at the Boston Art Club, the Copley Society and the Guild of Boston Artists. Vose Galleries featured the artist in two solo exhibitions during his lifetime, in 1911 and 1923.

In 1900 Noyes established his own summer school of painting in Annisquam, along the North Shore, where N. C. Wyeth (1882-1945) was one of his best-known students. He also taught painting and drawing at the Leland Stanford School of Art at Stanford University in California for three years.
Arthur Merton Hazard (1872-1930), *The Letter*

Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches, signed and dated lower right: A. M. Hazard / 03

*The Letter*, an early work by Arthur Hazard, reveals the influence of the Boston School tradition of depicting elegant women posed in beautifully furnished interiors. Hazard mastered this tradition while training at the Museum School as well as the Cowles School under Joseph DeCamp. He also studied under Frank Duveneck in Cincinnati before going abroad to Paris where he worked with Henri Blanc-Fontaine (1819-1897) and René-Xavier Prinet (1861-1946). After settling back in Boston, Hazard embarked on a career as a landscape and portrait painter, specializing in sun-filled garden and coastal scenes.

*The Letter* was one of Hazard’s first submissions to the National Academy of Design and was accepted in their 1904 Annual Exhibition and illustrated in the catalogue. It was fortunate that the piece was away at an exhibition that year since most of Hazard’s work was destroyed in the Harcourt Studios fire of 1904. Hazard eventually found studio space on Boylston Street and later on Commonwealth Avenue, while continuing to widely exhibit his work. In Boston he showed at the Boston Art Club, the Copley Society and also with Vose Galleries in 1922.
The Guild of Boston Artists

The Guild was created at a time when Modernism was becoming a popular style in New York and other cities, especially with the launch of the 1913 Armory Show. This exhibition was organized by the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, a group of artists interested in exposing the American public to new modern art trends developing in Europe at the time—Post-Impressionism, Symbolism, and the Futurist, Fauvist and Cubist art movements. The show started in New York and then traveled to Chicago. By the time it reached Boston, the exhibition had garnered a notorious reputation for controversy. Predictably, the majority of Boston artists and collectors abhorred the show. Art critic F. W. Coburn wrote in the Boston Herald, “There is nothing pornographic in the exhibition — nothing that a censor of public morals would regard as indecent — unless it be indecent to trifle and jest with such sacred things as form and color and air and sunlight and the human being’s love of refined, intelligent workmanship.”

Boston artists felt strongly about preserving their more traditional style, including influential teachers Edmund Tarbell and Frank Benson. Therefore a group of the leading artists of the day joined together to establish an organization that upheld those practices. The year after the Armory Show, the Guild opened its doors at 162 Newbury Street with its first group show.


To this day their mission statement remains the same: “The Guild of Boston Artists is a non-profit association of painters and sculptors whose purpose is to promote, nurture and encourage traditional art while adhering to the highest standards of quality and presentation.” The Guild is still thriving today and just celebrated their Centennial Anniversary.

2 Special Exhibition Catalogue City Art Museum Saint Louis: An Exhibition of Paintings, Miniatures and Sculpture by Members of the Guild of Boston Artists, (Saint Louis, MO: City Art Museum, 1916), p. 3.
Lilla Cabot Perry (1848-1933)

The daughter of two prominent Boston families, the Lowells and the Cabots, Lilla had a well-rounded education in music, art and literature. In 1826 she married Thomas Perry, an intellectual, and after the birth of their three daughters, enrolled at the Cowles School in Boston under Dennis Bunker and Robert Vonnoh (1858-1933). Upon graduating she moved with her family to Paris where she studied at the Académies Colarossi and Julian. In June of 1889 she attended an exhibition of Claude Monet's paintings of figures in the landscape at the Galerie George Petit. That summer she met Monet in Giverny and spent the next nine summers there, usually renting property adjacent to him. From the artist himself she learned to capture in bold strokes and color the sprawling landscapes of the French countryside. She also applied this style to the American landscape and to her figural work. In 1894 Perry was honored to be included in an exhibition at the St. Botolph Club, where her work hung beside fellow impressionist supporters Edmund Tarbell and Philip Hale.

Perry became one of Impressionism's earliest proponents in America, bringing back with her a painting by Monet as well as several works by John Leslie Breck (1860-1899), a fellow artist living in Giverny. She hosted exhibitions in her home, exposing Bostonians to artists who mastered the impressionist aesthetic, including organizing Monet's first solo exhibition in America at the Boston Art Students' Association in 1894.

In 1898 Thomas Perry took a teaching position at the Keiogijiku University in Tokyo and the entire family moved to Japan for three years. She took full advantage of this unique opportunity and became fully involved in the local art community, earning an honorary membership to the Nippon Bijutsu-In Art Association. While abroad she painted over eighty pictures of Japanese life and scenery. Upon returning to Boston, Perry became a founding member of the Guild of Boston Artists.
A leading woman artist of the Boston School, Gertrude Fiske trained under Edmund Tarbell, Frank Benson and Philip Hale when she entered the Museum School in 1904. The influence of these instructors can especially be seen in her early portrait and interior figure paintings. While she often used young women in her figure studies, she differed from her Boston colleagues with frequent portrayals of tradesmen and the elderly. Her brilliant, vigorous landscapes reflect the qualities of her other instructor, Charles H. Woodbury. Fiske attended Woodbury’s classes in Ogunquit, Maine, during the summers, and his bold, aggressive and painterly visions of nature were to have a profound influence on her artistic career.

Fiske established herself at Riverway Studios, then later at Fenway Studios in Boston while also maintaining a studio at her family’s home in Weston. Summers were spent with friends at her second home on Pine Hill Road in Ogunquit, capturing the many moods of the Maine beaches, rocky coasts and seashore. With a keen eye for nature, light and atmosphere, she executed hundreds of *plein air* sketches that captured the fleeting moments of time and weather in thick, bravura strokes of paint. She made a number of trips abroad but never stayed for long.

Fiske’s increasing interest in the art and artists of New England led her to become a founding member of the Guild of Boston Artists, and she exhibited in numerous group shows around the country, including a 1917 women artists show held at Vose Galleries. By her late thirties, Fiske had earned a reputation for being a leading woman painter in Boston.
Gertrude Fiske (1878-1961)

Gertrude Fiske (1878-1961), Wells Beach, Maine
Oil on canvas board, 12 x 16 inches, estate stamped

Gertrude Fiske (1878-1961), House and Garden
Oil on canvas mounted to board, 8 1/8 x 10 1/4 inches, estate stamped
R. H. Ives Gammell carried on the legacy of the Boston School in his paintings, writings and teaching. As a young man he enrolled at the Museum School upon the advice of Joseph DeCamp and studied with Frank Benson, William Paxton and Philip Leslie Hale until 1913. During several summers he painted with Charles W. Hawthorne at his Provincetown studio and then spent a year in Paris at the Académie Julian. He returned to Boston at the onset of World War I and began studying privately with Paxton, with whom he continued taking lessons until Paxton’s passing.

During the 1920s Gammell enjoyed a successful career as a portraitist, and he completed murals for the theatre of the Toledo Museum of Art and the Newark, New Jersey, Public Library, among others. These commissions waned with the arrival of the Great Depression and he turned to allegorical and religious subjects. Gammell was a serious student of history and classical literature, providing a plethora of stories to draw from. Sketching trips through Italy and North Africa offered ancient settings to incorporate into his work. Gammell was also an accomplished author, writing *The Twilight of Painting* in 1946, in which he defended traditional academic painting from what he felt was the Modernist’s degeneration of art.

Gammell was an influential teacher and proponent of the Boston School style while offering lessons in his studio at Fenway Studios, in Provincetown and Williamstown, MA. He exhibited at the Copley Society and the Guild of Boston Artists, where he served as President between 1950 and 1952.

*R. H. Ives Gammell (1893-1981), Study for Panel VIII of the Hounds of Heaven Series\ Oil and graphite on Masonite, 27 x 14 3/4 inches*
Gammell’s depiction of Mrs. Richard Cary Curtis exemplifies the Boston School roots of his education. The sitter, Anita Diadamia Grosvenor, was born in Providence and married Bostonian Richard Cary Curtis in 1917 in Newport. Painted three years later, Gammell captures his subject in her mid-twenties, fully embracing her role in Boston society as the wife of a Navy veteran, Harvard graduate and successful lawyer.
Robert Douglas Hunter (1928-2014)

Robert Douglas Hunter was born in Dorchester and attended the Vesper George School of Art in Boston. After graduating in 1949, he continued his education under Henry Hensche (1899-1992) in Provincetown, Massachusetts, as well as with Robert Hale Ives Gammell between 1950 and 1955. Gammell assisted his student in becoming fully steeped in the traditions that have come to characterize the Boston School of painting.

In 1950 Hunter began a teaching career at the Vesper George School of Art, and he also taught at the Worcester Art Museum from 1965 to 1975. In his teachings Hunter emphasized the importance of perfecting the artist’s craft early on:

“We strive in our early years to learn our craft; therefore we search for a master teacher who has demonstrated this in his own work. Afterwards, there comes a long period of growth during which we experiment, embracing some ideas for fuller development and discarding others not useful to our creative needs. When our work begins to reveal individuality, it is still essential to pursue an honest observation of nature interpreted within the framework of varied compositions of our invention. If we fail at this point we run the risk of displaying mannerisms that will inhibit our artistic growth.”

- Robert Douglas Hunter, 2004

Hunter was a member of the Copley Society and the Guild of Boston Artists, serving as President of the latter between 1973 and 1978. His paintings were exhibited widely during his long and distinguished career, and he received numerous awards including a Citation from the Governor of Massachusetts in recognition of his contribution to the education of youth. In 2001 a new naturally-lit gallery at the Cape Museum of Fine Arts in Dennis, Massachusetts, was named in his honor.
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Right: William M. Paxton (1869-1941)
Portrait of James Paxton, the Artist’s Father
Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 inches
Signed and dated lower right: Paxton / 1906
Back cover: William M. Paxton (1869-1941)
Girl with Gold Drapery, oil on canvas
32 1/8 x 26 1/8 inches, circa 1914