



Wind and Dazzle

The Art of
Charles S. Hopkins
(1869-1962)

May 3 to June 30, 2001

VOSE GALLERIES OF BOSTON



Sparkling Ocean at Manchester, ca. 1920

Watercolor on paper

13 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

H-48-S

\$11,000

FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHARLES HOPKINSON FIRST EXHIBITED HIS dazzling watercolors at Vose Galleries in the early 1930s when he was an active member of the Boston Five. In 1945 Robert C. Vose organized a one-person exhibition of oils and watercolors by Hopkinson. After his death, however, Hopkinson was largely overlooked until 1988, when Leah Lipton organized a major exhibition of his paintings at the Danforth Museum of Art in Framingham, Massachusetts. She argued eloquently and persuasively for Hopkinson's place among accomplished American modernists. Three years later, Vose held the first of three retrospective shows. These exhibitions prompted a reevaluation of Hopkinson's career and works. As an artist he was truly remarkable for his productivity, skill, and the fresh creative spirit with which he approached his subjects.

We are pleased to present the following selection of oils and watercolors together with an informative essay by Hopkinson scholar Leah Lipton. We are indebted to Ms Lipton for her significant contribution to the scholarship of Boston art and culture.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the participation of the Hopkinson family. We would also like to thank Wendy Hurlbut of the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution and Lee B. Ewing for their help securing photographs of Hopkinson's early drawings.

Robert C. Vose III
Abbot W. Vose

Cover illustration:
Kite Flying, Ipswich, Fourth of July,
ca. 1955
Watercolor on paper
12 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
H-47-S
\$15,000

Catalogue by Nancy Allyn Jarzombek
Photography by Clive Russ
Photography of drawings in the Charles Hopkinson and Hopkinson family papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, by Lee B. Ewing
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WIND AND DAZZLE: THE WATERCOLORS OF CHARLES HOPKINSON

by Leah Lipton
Danforth Museum of Art

THROUGHOUT HIS LONG AND EMINENTLY successful career, Charles Hopkinson (1869-1962) was acclaimed for his vivid and highly accomplished portraits, among them, likenesses of President Calvin Coolidge, Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. The roster of his portraits included important professors, lawyers, bankers and other notable individuals. From this work, he earned a comfortable income, even during the barren Depression years of 1929-1935. He was surrounded by loving women: his wife Elinor, her four sisters, and his five daughters, whose childhood portraits are among his most charming works.

In those same years he also produced an impressive body of watercolors, painted largely for his own pleasure and for the enjoyment of his family and friends. These quick personal studies must have afforded him relief from the demands of his portrait clients for satisfying or even flattering likenesses. In the watercolors he was free to seek his own rewards. He could play with abstracted forms and indulge in fluid brush work and brilliant color. These small works on paper represent the most personal and intimate expression of his artistic output. He was liberated from all constraints and free to be experimental in both technique and subject matter.

Hopkinson's studio was situated on the top floor of a comfortable wood-frame house perched above the sea in Manchester, Massachusetts. Below the bluff and out at sea were Egg Rock and Dana Island, small outcroppings of earth and rocks that he enjoyed painting in every season of the year. From his studio window his ever-changing view included the sweep of Massachusetts Bay and occasionally the spires of Boston might even be visible in the distance, twenty miles to the southwest. The property was called "Sharksmouth" after the suggestive shapes of the rocks directly beneath the bluff.

Hopkinson's professional success as an artist was based upon his secure reputation as a painter of portraits that initially conformed to the accepted figurative style popular in Boston at this time. But he was also keenly aware of the new ideas and techniques of European modernism that were slowly



Charles Sidney Hopkinson painting a watercolor in Bermuda, ca. 1945

Courtesy of the Boston Public Library Print Division

infiltrating American art. It is worth noting that Hopkinson made a sharp distinction in style between his portraiture, painted in oil, and his watercolors which he must have felt were in some way less serious. These were small works on paper, requiring less commitment than the oils in both time and materials. Thus they were suitable for a more radical experimental style. The portraits were commissioned and provided his livelihood. The watercolors, although frequently exhibited and critically well-received, were for the most part kept in the family or given away to friends.

But the people who greatly admired Hopkinson's portraits were often distressed and deeply puzzled by the watercolors, with their abstract shapes and sometimes non-representational colors. Because of his extraordinary portrait skills the public could not simply dismiss Hopkinson by accusing him of being unable to draw, although this criticism was leveled at most artists attempting modernist work at that time. One Boston critic, William Germaine Dooley, wondered about what he called Hopkinson's "dual personality." He reported in the *Boston Evening Transcript* (March 6, 1937) that "Reactionaries [called the watercolors] wild, illiterate paintings of the 'ten year old child could do better' deprecation." Still, Dooley went on, since Hopkinson was "capable of turning out likenesses



Dana Island, Autumn
Watercolor on paper
15 ½ x 19 ½ inches
H-11-E
\$9,000

approved by the most conservative, they [the critical public] cover their discomfort by saying that he is probably playing a few practical jokes."

By the mid-1920s, Hopkinson had joined with four kindred spirits, Marion Monks Chase (1874-1957), Carl Gordon Cutler (1873-1945), Charles Hovey Pepper (1864-1950) and Harley Perkins (1863-1964), who were equally eager to explore the new possibilities of European modernism. In November 1924 they had their first exhibition together at the Boston Art Club. Included in this initial group show was a sixth artist, John Goss. In December the same exhibition was shown at the Arden Gallery in New York City where it was received with great interest. By 1926, however, Goss had dropped out and from that time on the group became identified as the Boston Five, a name they would continue to use in group exhibitions well into the 1930s.

In the next decade the Boston Five exhibited as a group at the Boston Art Club, the Vose and Grace Horne Galleries in Boston and the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University. In New York, they showed at the Delphic Studios and the Rehn, Montross and Fifteen Galleries. While they differed greatly in style what they had in common was a shared purpose to bring an awareness of modern art to Boston.

Although these watercolors may not look particularly modern to our twenty-first century eyes, these artists employed a new visual language that was bewildering to the general public. This is

evident from an article in the *Boston Herald* in October 1926 reporting on a Boston Art Club show which included, in addition to the "Five," Charles Demuth and Edward Hopper. The reviewer writes, "Their quest of style, freedom of expression and coloristic brilliancy carries them pretty far from what the plain person regards as a nice picture . . . with all due respect for the value of experimentation in art, the decoration of the homes of the nation is perhaps still the primary function of the painting art."

But the critical judgments were by no means entirely negative. A Boston Five exhibition at the Montross Gallery in New York City in January 1928 was called by a reviewer "the outstanding watercolor event of the year." Hopkinson's *Wind and Dazzle*, singled out as the best in the show, displayed a complex weaving of color sequences with broad washes of sea and sky and allowed large areas of white paper to remain untouched to represent the glare of brilliant light on water. In a review by an anonymous local critic, his *Afternoon Light* was deemed "as good as any French master" which was high praise indeed. The titles he gave to the paintings reveal his New England focus: *Sailing Breezes*, *Rock Rhythms*, *Spray and Glint*, *Rocks and Sea*, *Sharksmouth in Autumn*.

Critics frequently singled out Charles Hopkinson for special praise when the work of the Boston Five was exhibited and evaluated in newspapers

Dana Island in September
 Watercolor on paper
 14 ¾ x 21 inches
 H-1-C
 \$7,500




and magazines. His watercolors were perhaps the most abstract of the group but they commanded serious consideration because of his reputation as a portrait painter. In fact, his presence as a member of the group could be seen as lending considerable weight to the validation of the entire group.

The Boston Five's last shows together were at the Fifteen Gallery in New York in 1936, without Harley Perkins who had gone on to become the Director of the Massachusetts Federal Arts Project, and at the Worcester Art Museum in 1940, with Perkins but without Marion Monks Chase. Charles Hopkinson continued to maintain an active and successful painting career for an additional two decades. In the 1940s he traveled to Bermuda where the difference in light from chilly New England inspired him in new ways.

Between 1948 and 1957 Hopkinson made five trips to New Zealand and two to Ireland to visit his eldest daughter Harriot, whose husband, Alfred Rive, was the Canadian High Commissioner to those two countries. Edgar Driscoll, reviewing a show at the Childs Gallery in Boston for the *Boston Globe* (Nov. 9, 1958) wrote about Hopkinson's watercolors from some of those trips: "As usual his watercolors are bursting with vitality and clear singing colors, belying his august years." Hopkinson at the time was eighty-nine years old! Driscoll went on to say, "All the zest of an inquiring spirit, the sure color of a gifted artist, and the disciplines of a remarkable

talent are here in force. Per usual, it's quite a show."

The New Zealand landscapes were shown at the Margaret Brown Gallery in Boston in October 1948. The review in the *Boston Herald* included a photograph of Hopkinson standing with the Minister to the United Nations from New Zealand, who later visited with the Hopkinsons at their home in Manchester. The following year Hopkinson received an honorary degree from Harvard University. The commendation statement that was read at the ceremony declared that "his sympathetic insight and sincere handling of color and line have left an enduring record for posterity." What proved to be his final one-man show, in 1958, drew a large and enthusiastic crowd. Three years after Hopkinson's death in 1962, at the age of 93, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts mounted a retrospective exhibition of his work that included twelve self-portraits in oil but concentrated mainly on the watercolors.

It seems fitting to allow the artist to have the last word. Foreground details, he believed, were to be painted as if seen "out of the corner of the eye," and the central focus of the painting must display what he called 'vigor'. He aimed to see with "the innocent eye, not the intellectual eye" and to allow the impact of the scene before him to influence his approach. "It should be," he said, "as if one were opening his eyes for just a moment and then shutting them quickly to retain the single forceful impression." In this way, he was able to capture the "heart" of the scene. 



Madame Bellec, Brittany, ca. 1896
Oil on canvas
25 x 24 inches
H-42-S \$19,500

Happy and Maly, ca. 1920
Oil on canvas
45 x 32 inches
H-19-M \$35,000

(right)
Self Portrait, 1959
Oil on canvas
14 x 10 inches
Collection of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian
Institution, Washington, DC (not in exhibition)



Portraiture

In the summer of 1896, fresh out of the Académie Julian and recovering from a failed marriage, Hopkinson went to Finisterre at the very western tip of Brittany. There he stayed with the Bellec family, sketched local fishermen and made this portrait of *Madame Bellec*, a superb example of his careful, somewhat formal academic style. Hopkinson's mature portrait style initially conformed to the conventions of the time. By the 1920s he was one of Boston's foremost portrait painters, specializing in painting notable members of the community and in 1931 Henry McBride, art critic of the *New York Sun*, wrote, "About the strongest card we have to play against the avalanche of French Art that confronts us this week is Charles Hopkinson, the Ace of American Portrait Painters."

Although he counted some of America's most prominent as his clients, Hopkinson's favorite subjects were his family and close friends. He spent hours sketching and painting his five daughters throughout their youth. Over time his technique broadened and his palette expanded to include bold, strongly-contrasting colors as he experimented with ways to communicate the vitality of his sitters, as evident in his 1920 portrait of his daughters Maly and Happy.

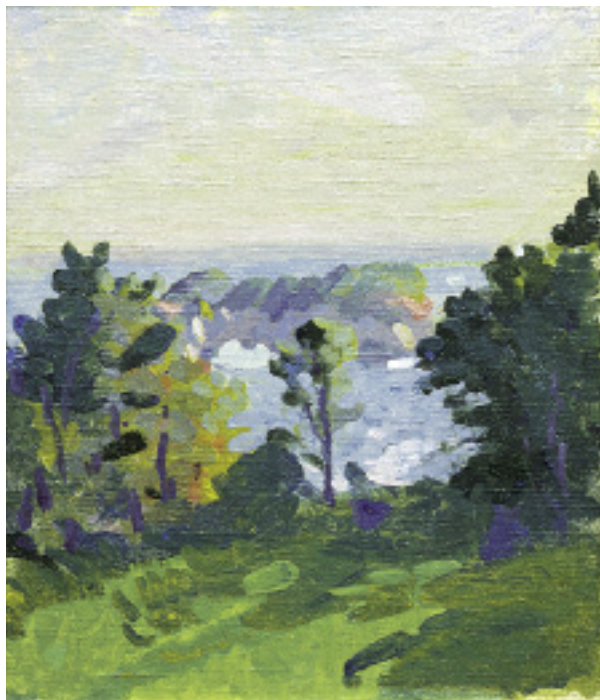
Far from being a passive observer, Hopkinson was fully engaged with both sitter and painting process. In the 1955 *Atlantic Monthly* article, "The Portrait Painter and his Subject," he described his approach: "There is an excitement in portrait painting. The thing has to be done with all the tension that one uses in a violent game, keeping this up for the two hours of a sitting. You have to think and feel at the same time . . . making yourself into the person before you, not reasoning what sort of person he is, mentally or spiritually, but being that person as he



Landscapes

Hopkinson began painting land and sea-scapes after he moved to Sharsmouth, his home by the sea in Manchester, Massachusetts. Unlike his approach to portraiture which was, to a certain degree, intellectual, he strived to see landscape with an "innocent eye," as he called it, and he argued that in landscape painting one must have "nothing but humbleness before nature, an intelligent humbleness, an emotional response . . ."

To record the essence of a scene Hopkinson developed a restless calligraphic style, at times highly original and at other times borrowing ideas from Henri Matisse, John Marin, Marsden Hartley and even oriental landscapes, as he continually tried to achieve the effects that he wanted. Although his oils never approached abstraction in the way that his watercolors did, some, such as *Study of Winter Ocean* show Hopkinson's remarkable ability to reduce nature to its most essential forms.



(upper left)
Dana Island from the Stone House
 Oil on canvas
 13 ½ x 11 ½ inches
 H-14-S \$4,400

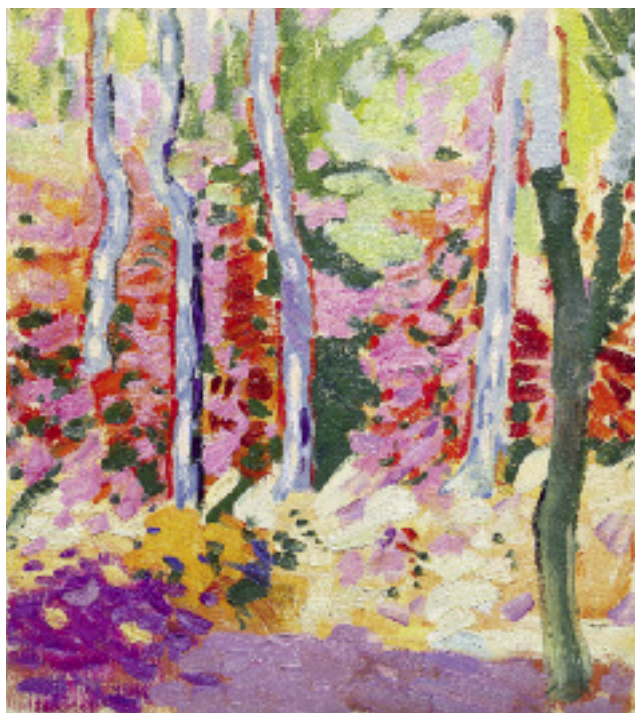
(upper right)
Study of Winter Ocean
 Oil on canvas board
 14 x 10 inches
 H-35-S \$2,400

(lower left)
Yellow Sky and Dana Passage
 Oil on canvas
 33 x 45 inches
 H-18-M \$35,000

On Modern Art

"Why do 'Modern' artists paint and draw and carve as they do? It is because they are real artists. They are interested in *Art*, in the way of doing things, in expressing ideas that can be expressed in no other way but by the forms of art; and so they use what I will call the *Terms* of art. They translate their ideas derived from life into terms of art . . . The painter has only his little range of the colors of the spectrum, from white paint to black paint. He may be carried away by his reaction to nature but he only has these materials and so he uses them in the relation to each other that belongs to them."

— Charles S. Hopkins, "On Modern Art"
(undated manuscript, Vose Galleries)



Colored Woods
Oil on canvas
19 x 17 inches
H-3-E \$4,500

Fall Color, Tennis Court, Manchester
Oil on canvas
19 ½ x 18 inches
H-16-M \$6,500

Ocean Spray from Rocks
Oil on canvas
18 x 25 inches
H-17-S \$6,500





Watercolors

"As aquarellist, [Hopkinson] invites his artistic soul. He tries out new schemes in design; he plays around with new color motives, he essays abstraction. Amongst the splendid young water colorists of Boston, he is a veritable *enfant terrible*... Mr. Hopkinson, unlike fellow painters working with the same medium, is less interested in fidelity to surface appearance of things in nature than he is in working out a design which has its own logic of color and mass."

—"Charles Hopkinson," *Boston Evening Transcript*
(Jan. 9, 1932)



Sharksmouth and Windmill Pond

Watercolor on paper

9 x 14 inches

H-13-M

\$3,000

Mount Ann, Cape Ann, Massachusetts

Watercolor on paper

16 ½ x 25 inches

H-25-S

\$6,500

Fisherman on Favorite Island, Manchester,

ca. 1925

Watercolor on paper

9 ½ x 13 inches

H-6-S

\$3,000



(top)
Autumn at Manchester
 Watercolor on paper
 21 x 28 ½ inches
 H-2-E \$12,500



Trees
 Watercolor on paper (double-sided)
 19 x 12 ½ inches
 H-15-E \$5,500



Fall Sumac, Manchester
 Watercolor on paper
 21 ½ x 15 inches
 H-6-E \$6,000



Single Tree, Dana Island
Watercolor on paper
13 ½ x 20 ½ inches
32656
\$3,500

Low Tide, Bath House Point, Manchester,
ca. 1925
Watercolor on paper
14 ½ x 21 inches
H-29-S
\$5,900

Sunset over Bath House Point, no. 1
Watercolor on paper
14 x 20 inches
H-28-S
\$5,800



Travels

Although he went to Europe as a young man, Hopkinson found great satisfaction painting at home and in his Boston studio. In 1940 he and Elinor began making annual trips to Bermuda and after her death in 1947 he entered a new phase of his art, dropping portraits almost entirely in favor of land and seascapes in watercolor. He began to travel widely, visiting his daughter Harriot whose husband was the Canadian High Commissioner to New Zealand and Ireland. Well into his eighties he exhibited the watercolors made on these trips in Boston and New York.



Coral Blocks, Bermuda, 1940

Watercolor on paper

15 x 21 ¼ inches

H-26-S

\$8,800

Wild Day, Bermuda, ca. 1948

Watercolor on paper

15 x 22 ¼ inches

H-2-C

\$9,800

Gray Day, Hamilton Harbor, Bermuda

Watercolor on paper

13 x 20 inches

H-21-S

\$11,500



Wreck Island, Bermuda
Watercolor on paper
14 x 21 ½ inches
H-27-S
\$14,000

Agave Plant, Bermuda, ca. 1940
Watercolor on paper
14 x 19 ½ inches
H-9-S \$5,700



(lower left)
Diamond Head, Hawaii, ca. 1950
Watercolor on paper
13 x 20 inches
H-46-S \$5,800

(lower right)
Niunalu, Honolulu, 1951
Watercolor on paper
21 ½ x 14 ½ inches
H-4-E \$5,500



Hopkinson in France

Hopkinson entered the Art Students' League in the fall of 1891, where he met Angelica Rathbone (1871-1940) of Albany, New York. Against the better judgement of his parents, they married in 1893 and went to Paris where they both enrolled in the Académie Julian. In around 1896 the marriage fell apart. Distraught, Hopkinson bought a ticket for the end of the earth, *Finisterre*, in Brittany. He stayed with the Bellec family there and made sketches of the villagers, streets and harbor. At the end of the summer he returned to Cambridge and obtained a divorce.

The drawings reproduced here are not in the exhibition, but are preserved in sketchbooks in the Charles Hopkinson and Hopkinson Family Papers, 1890-1991, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.



Ships in harbor, Roscoff, Brittany, ca. 1896



Three men in Roscoff, Brittany, ca. 1896



Young woman, Roscoff, Brittany, ca. 1896



Elinor, 1903



Elinor sketching, 1903

Elinor (1869-1947)

Hopkinson met Elinor Curtis in 1901. They married in 1903 and, in Hopkinson's words, "an intensely happy life began for me."

Eventually the young couple moved to a house built for them by Elinor's mother in Manchester, Mass. Elinor managed not only their large household and five daughters but also all of her husband's business records. She devoted herself to preserving a rich and serene home life to support Hopkinson's art.

AWARDS

Pan American Exposition, Buffalo, NY, Bronze (1901)
Louisiana Purchase Universal Exposition, St. Louis, MO, Bronze (1904)
Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA, 2nd Prize (1902, 1905)
Pan-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, CA, Silver (1915)
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA, Gold Medal (1915)
Sesquicentennial Exposition, Philadelphia, PA, Logan Medal (1926)
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois: Logan Medal (1926)
Saltus Gold Medal of Merit (1929)
National Academy of Arts and Letters: Prize for Portrait of Dr. George Richards Minot (1942)

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Accademia, Venice, Italy, *Biennales*, 1930s-1940s
Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA, 1931, 32, 35, 41, 42
Albright Knox Gallery, Buffalo, NY, 1906, 11, 15, 18, 20-28, 31, 36
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, *Paintings Annuals*, 1897, 1900, 01-04, 07, 08, 10-12, 15-17, 20-23, 26, 28, 31, 38-40; *Watercolor Annuals* 1909, 10, 12, 15, 21-23, 25-32, 35, 42
Baltimore Museum of Art, 1923
Boston Art Association, 1920s-30s
Boston Art Club, Boston, MA, 1919, 20, 23-26, 29
Boston Society of Independent Artists, 1935, 40
Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, PA, *Annual International Exhibitions*, 1896, 1898-1900, 03-05, 07, 09, 10, 22-26, 31, 33-40, 43-49
Champs-de-Mars Salon, Paris, France, 1896
Child's Gallery, Boston, 1950-53, 56-59
Copley Society, Boston, 1914, 20, 23, 79
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1907, 10, 11, 14-17, 21-24, 26, 28, 30-33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45
Danforth Museum, Framingham, MA, 1989
De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, CA, 1943
Doll and Richards Gallery, Boston, 1920, 31, 47
Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA, 1934
Guild of Boston Artists, 1921, 27, 30
Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 1954
International Exhibition of Modern Art, New York (Armory Show), 1913
Louisiana Purchase Universal Exposition, 1904
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1921
Montross Galleries, New York, 1927, 28, 30, 31
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1965
National Academy of Design, New York, 1892, 93, 1908, 15, 18, 23, 28-30, 35-38, 41, 43-45, 49
National Gallery of Canada, 1934, 35
National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC, 1989
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA, 1893, 1896-1912, 14-17, 19-21, 23-26, 28, 29, 31-42, 44, 52

Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, CA, 1915

Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, NY, 1901
St. Botolph Club, Boston, 1906, 07, 10, 12, 24, 47, 56
St. Louis Exposition, St. Louis, MO, 1904
South End Free Art Club, Boston, 1899
Twentieth Century Club, Boston, 1906, 08, 1910-30
Vose Galleries, Boston, 1930's-1940's, 1980's to present
Worcester Art Museum, 1902, 1919

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Boston Athenaeum, Boston, MA
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
Brown University, Providence, RI
Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA
Cape Ann Historical Association, Gloucester, MA
Century Association, New York, NY
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
Columbia University, New York, NY
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, MA
Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Huntington Art Collections, San Marino, CA
International Red Cross, Geneva, Switzerland
Jefferson College of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA
Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Boston, MA
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
National Academy of Design, New York, NY
National Art Club, New York
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC
National Museum of Art, Wellington, New Zealand
National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC
Peabody Essex Institute, Salem, MA
Phillips Academy, Andover, MA
Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, NH
Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI
Smith College, Northampton, MA
Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA
Union College, Schenectady, NY
United States Supreme Court, Washington, DC
University Basle, Basle, Switzerland
University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA
Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY
Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA
White House, Washington, DC
Yale University, New Haven, CT



Three Sisters, ca. 1911
Oil on canvas
42 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 32 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
H-29-E \$95,000

This picture is a variant of *Three Little Girls*,
which was shown in the International
Exhibition of Modern Art, now called
the Armory Show, of 1913.

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DEALERS IN FINE PAINTINGS FOR FIVE GENERATIONS
238 NEWBURY STREET BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS 02116
TEL 617-536-6176 ESTABLISHED 1841 FAX 617-247-8673
E-MAIL INFO@VOSEGALLERIES.COM WEBSITE WWW.VOSEGALLERIES.COM