

Exhibition of Paintings

by

John H. Twachtman

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January, 1919

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The Macbeth Gallery

450 Fifth Avenue

New York (



JOHN H. TWACHTMAN

## An Appreciation

by

Childe Hassam

IT is difficult to define, perhaps, what the charm is in a work of art, and in speaking here of Twachtman's work, which had so much charm and distinction, I shall probably parallel the thoughts of many of my fellow-painters, and possibly their words if they should speak of him.

The great beauty of design which is conspicuous in Twachtman's paintings is what impressed me always; and it is apparent to all who see and feel, that his works are sensitive and harmonious, strong, and at the same time delicate even to evasiveness, and always alluring in their evasiveness.

His is surely the work of a painter, too—a man's work. You feel the virile line. It is in his clouds and tree forms, in his stone walls and waterfalls, in his New England hillsides, and in the snow clinging to the roof of an old barn or edging the hemlock pool. His use of line was rhythmic, and the movements are always graceful. The many landscapes that these words will recall—with their simplicity and breadth of treatment, and their handling, often of great force and beauty, of brush work and painter-like assurance—are amongst the very handsome mod-

ern open-air canvases. Their breadth, with the swing and sinuosity of line in his rocky pastures, and in brooks set with boulders, with the swirl of little waterfalls, have something that is very large and noble in expression. All this, with his arrangement of forms (for the pleinairist does arrange forms when working from nature), makes his work most valuable and interesting—designed, and with great beauty of design. By design I mean by no means conventional composition. The definition so often given of the work of modern painters in landscape—which is, that they take a motif anywhere, as if looking out of an open window, and paint it just as they see it—is partly erroneous, only a half truth. These painters do try to give you frankly the aspect of the thing seen in its fundamental and essential truths; but that they do not place things as they feel they should be placed to get the balance and beauty of the whole, well seen within the frame, is a mistaken idea. Twachtman might have painted, indeed he did paint, a tree in Nutley, New Jersey, with a distance and middle distance of Gloucester Harbor, Massachusetts.

A noble and expressive line, with a joyous feeling for nature, a frank and manly directness in presenting truths, by painting, however poetic and fleeting, must give value and distinction to any work in paint—or in any other medium in which we express ourselves in what is called Art.

Twachtman was a boy in the sunlight; and Thoreau, that other remarkable landscapist and

pleinairist in words, says somewhere, "the Greeks were boys in the sunlight," and to me that is a complete description of the Greek nature. His work as color has delicate refinement and truth. His color is the color of northern nature in the changing envelopes of subtle gradation. There is nothing swashbuckler about his subjects or his color, and in these days of spurious old masters, of artificiality, of rainbows and sunbursts, this is refreshing. One gets tired of Alps and sunsets, at least in literature and painting; in music they can be better done. And in this province of the painter, Twachtman has, in his small slight sketches, these same qualities of charm of line and delicacy of vision. True to our northern nature, too! Truths well told, interestingly told, just as a few words well chosen will tell a truth a thousand cannot.

Such is the work of this American artist, a man who was an able painter and a joyous, energetic individual, who worked for the love of it and worked well.

(North American Review, April, 1903.)



No. 1. AUTUMN IN FRANCE

Size 17x21

A serenely beautiful landscape, treated in the soft grays and greens which Twachtman at this period so dearly loved, forms the subject of this picture. A path, wide at the foreground and narrowing as it winds inward toward a group of trees, divides the meadow right and left. Some very slender trees, their few leaves early turned an autumnal brown, grow along the edge of the path at a little distance from the foreground. From the center of the picture, the field slopes gently upward to the right, while to the left the broad green meadow narrows as it extends backward between wooded knolls until finally merged in the distant horizon. A sky, whitish gray, and of fleecy softness, hangs over this peaceful scene.

No. 2. BELOW THE HEMLOCK POOL # 129

Size 18x22

A small pool bordered with many rocks and reflecting the grayish-white clouds and pale blue of the sky is in the immediate foreground. Back of this, and toward the center of the picture, the ground is covered with patches of bright green grass, and to the right, as the rocky ledge slopes upward, the colors change to warm yellows under the influence of the bright sunlight. Off in the distance a clump of trees shows a hazy blue against the gray clouds which partially cover the sky.

No. 3. GRAY DAY

Size 16x20

This little picture has a poetic charm and is painted with the artist's characteristic sympathy with his subject. The season is fall when the fields have lost their summer verdure and the trees their bright green foliage, and the dull gray tones of late November have replaced the brilliant hues of summer. Overhead a soft gray sky of exquisite tonality blends in subtle harmony with the quiet landscape below.

Signed at the lower left

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HORSENECK FALLS

No. 4. THE VALLEY

Size 32½x48

A veritable riot of greens, luscious in their varying shades, and in the height of their summer grandeur. Meadow flowers grow in the foreground, and just beyond we catch a glimpse of an old country road as it disappears down the valley. Across the road the meadows slope upward to a richly wooded hill whose trees are sharply outlined against a sky heavily banked with gray and white clouds indicative of approaching rain.

*Signed at the lower left and dated 1882*

No. 5. HORSENECK FALLS

Size 25x30

Large boulders and rock bound banks confine the stream on either side as far back as the eye can see. The green and blue waters of the cascade fall with great force and are broken into foam as they rush to join the lower level of this fast moving, swirling stream. There is great power suggested in this water as it surges swiftly onward, and in these ragged rocks we feel the stolid endurance of untold ages.

*Signed at the lower right*

No. 6. MEADOW BROOK

Size 29½x42½

Through the center of the picture, its sandy bed showing here and there, flows a shallow brook from whose banks the green meadowlands, bathed in summer sunshine slope upward to the right and left. In the middle ground, and growing close by the water's edge, is a group of trees distinguished from the long line of trees in the background beyond by virtue of a brighter, richer green. Overhead white summer clouds broken with patches of blue float buoyantly across the sky.



FROM THE UPPER TERRACE

No. 7. ARQUES DE BATAILLE

Size 18x26

An historic spot in France, "The Field of the Cloth of Gold." As seen by Twachtman, a landscape of lovely quality, of soft gray subtle tones. The gray-green foreground with its marshy grasses and its few meadow flowers borders the peaceful French river whose surface mirrors, in part, the sky and clouds above it and the darker grays of the uplands beyond. From the water's edge these grassy slopes move gently backward and upward to form a long, low ridge against the horizon, beyond which there is a consciousness of space and air. Back of the hills moist gray clouds touched with white rise upward and slowly spread themselves across the delicate pale blue sky.

*Signed at the lower left*

No. 8. GREENWICH HILLS IN WINTER

Size 25x30

All nature is asleep as winter holds the landscape in its icy grip. Everything is silent, so silent that we feel a whispered word would break the spell. The snowdrifts piled high, mass upon mass, in the foreground all but submerge the little cottage just beyond, the home of the artist and the sole suggestion of life in this frozen scene. This is not merely a picture of winter the artist has given us, it is the very spirit of winter, the seeming inertness of Nature at this season which he has tried to interpret and which he has expressed with a fine idealism and subtle tonality.

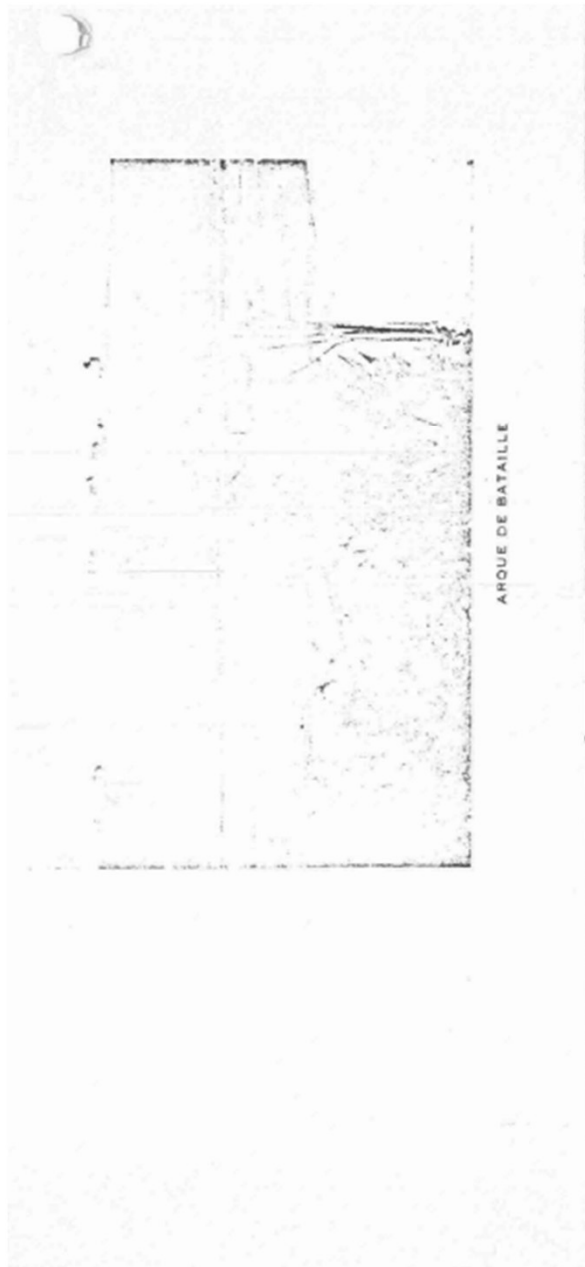
*Signed at the lower left*

No. 9. SUMMER\*

Size 30x53

The cottage shown in this brilliant landscape of sun and shadow is Twachtman's home in Greenwich, Conn., where he lived for many years and where were laid the scenes of some of his finest pictures. A road at the left winds its uphill way past the quaint white house and disappears into the distance beyond. Back of the house a huge maple luxuriant in its mid-summer grandeur towers majestically to the blue sky overhead. Low-lying cumulous clouds spread themselves lazily across the summer sky, casting lovely shadows on the fields below. Included in the Memorial Exhibition at the Lotus Club, 1907.

*Signed at the lower right*



ARQUE DE BATAILLE

No. 10. FROM THE UPPER TERRACE ●

Size 25x30

This subject is similar to number eight of the catalogue though seen under vastly different conditions. Here the landscape is clothed in summer's warmest and brightest colors, and in the foreground, instead of snow-drifts, we see spaces of green, and shrubs in full foliage. We are conscious of the warm breath of summer and of the hum of insects in the trees and grasses. The whole scene vibrates with life, cheerfulness and sunshine.

*Signed at the lower right*

No. 11. THE RIVER ●

Size 18x22

A foreground sparsely covered with marshy reeds and grasses, with trees at the left, extends well into the center of the picture. At the right the still, peaceful waters of this river in France reflect the grays and blues of the sky. In the background the green meadows partly wooded slope gently down to the water's edge.

No. 12. NIAGARA

Size 25x30

The water falling from the high overhanging precipice that rises at the right from a rocky, sandy foreground is tinted with a lovely iridescence as it nears the base of the violet colored cliff behind it. In the background beyond the light green waters of the mighty torrent thunder over in tremendous volume and with terrific force throwing back immense masses of foam shaded with light blue as they strike the waters of the river below. The sky is shrouded in a misty atmosphere showing here and there delicate patches of pale blue and violet.

*Signed at the lower right*



GREENWICH HILLS IN WINTER

No. 13. THE CASCADE ●

Size 30x30

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The blue waters of this double-terraced cascade break into foam and spray as they dash to the deep and turbulent pool below. Hard, uncompromising rocks on either side hold the rushing waters in their course, while overhead a patch of sullen gray sky looks down on the restlessness below.

*Signed at the lower left*

No. 14. EDGE OF THE MILL POND

Size 25x30

This picture with its warm sunlight of advancing autumn, the sparkling blue waters of the pond, and the delicate tracery of branches thrown across the sky, has a distinct poetic charm; an arrangement which delighted the artist's soul to paint. Beyond the hill in the background is the feeling of space and air, and the pale blue sky is mirrored in the water below.

*Signed at the lower right*

No. 15. FROM THE HOLLY HOUSE ●

Size 30x30

In the foreground growing on the terrace in front of the Holly House are the leafless stems and branches of some lilac bushes, and close by is the faintly indicated outline of a white flagpole. Just below the terrace the pale blue waters of an inlet of the Sound are crossed by a narrow roadway leading beyond an old red barn until it is finally lost to view in the blue hills far off in the distance. On the farther shore of the inlet, traced in delicate outlines, a group of farm buildings shows white and gray through the hazy atmosphere. The season is early spring, the ice is fast disappearing from the surface of the blue water and Nature has cast off the rigors of winter. Painted in Cos Cob, Conn., where Twachtman lived toward the latter part of his life.

*Signed at the lower left*