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"Paintings and Pastels by J. H. Twachtman." *Boston Evening Transcript*, January 23, 1886, p. 6.

Paintings and Pastels by J. H. Twachtman.

Since his exhibition here last year, which drew so much attention, several changes have occurred in Mr. Twachtman's work, notably the slow loss of the taint of Munich, with its blackness. There is an immense gain in this direction, for the new school of French landscape painting has shown Mr. Twachtman that *Nature out of doors* is the true guiding influence for a landscape painter, not arbitrary rules as to what Nature should be, read by the artificial light of a studio. The exhibition last year was transitional, and the new French influence was paramount; but this year there is a great advance in the direction of pure and true color, omnipresent atmosphere and luminosity. Pictures that last year seemed fresh and vital now by comparison look black and paucur. But with this advance there has come, also, what seems like a retrogression, possibly only a halt. Among the oil pictures this year are almost none that show long and faithful study. They are merely the vaguest impressions. The delicacy and approach to detail of some of the pictures of last season is quite absent. Mr. Twachtman sees things admirably in mass and preserves the values perfectly. Besides this, he strikes at what may be called the essential nature of an object, rendering this most truly, finding in a tree on a far horizon, a windmill or a boat its quality of luminous green shadow, or its weather worn woodiness, or its larry saltiness. All these qualities he renders to perfection, but his pictures are but memories, without detail and without delicacy of workmanship.

The chief picture of the exhibition is the "Hollandsch Diep," a large canvas hanging in the place of the "Chateau Garden" of last year. In the centre of the picture rise the dark shapes of several windmills, vanishing in the distance; the foreground is low, sandy marsh, with parts of gray water and harsh, rank rushes; a curve of slow river winds off on the right, and far away lies the dull blue line of the sea. The sky is full of vast, vaporuous masses of clouds, and the air is wet and still, with faint light diffused through it. One finds fault with the picture at first, because its handling is so curiously vague and coarse, and because the quality of form is entirely absent, but of a sudden critical capacity fails, and the consciousness comes that a great mistake has been made, and that Mr. Twachtman cared nothing for these things. For very subtly the picture itself begins to exert its influence. This level waste, with its infinite distance, these silent and impressive windmills, the dull, gray water, and the great, vacant, luminous sky combine to form a picture that has a distinct and decided influence; it is certainly impressive. Mr. Twachtman has discriminated delicately, and has produced a picture that, while lacking the truth of form of Nature, yet has that which is always sacrificed—truth of impression. Technically the sky would pardon all that is bad in the picture—it is masterly; the effect of blue sky seen through drifting fog is wonderfully good, and the great clouds themselves are in quality, form and luminosity truly wonderful.

This picture shows little study and is only an impression, but the two winter scenes are very different, and while they possess all the qualities of objective truth held by the more sketchy pictures, they are still complete in themselves. The effect of snowy air filling No. 7 is absolutely true, as is also the diffused light in No. 4. The first picture is very simple—a waste of white snow, a

wheel track, deep-rutted, sinuous, stretching away to a group of farm buildings, with low hills in the distance. A man who can paint the phase of atmosphere that is rendered in this picture can do nearly everything. Its very simplicity makes it triumphant. The "Parkedrecht" is a huge empty space of water and sky, with a line of tree-covered shore stretching out and away into the distance—a strong, bold thing that is entirely true. The three Kinderdijk sketches are admirable, particularly No. 15, in which the wide reach of soft green meadows, with the huts' beyond, is finely treated and with great truth. No. 13 is an example of the brilliancy of diffused sunlight which Mr. Twachtman can paint. No. 14 is of a dyke, it would seem, and is hardly a satisfactory subject, but the effect of high sunlight on different surfaces is well rendered. In his marines, Mr. Twachtman usually gives himself up to unmitigated rudeness and roughness of work, dashing paint on here in daubs, leaving the canvas bare there, forsaking all shape and outline, and yet there is a truth of light values that makes amends for much, and in some of the studies there is, as Mr. Harvey says—and he should know—a swirl in the tide and a crisp saltiness in the air that are entirely and eternally true. In a picture not catalogued, but representing a group of silent boats in a wide reach of still water, with soft gray clouds above, all roughness is put aside, and there is a refinement and delicacy that is unusual. Not only is the color tender and gracious in the extreme, but the treatment of the clouds is masterly; their quality in shadow would escape any but a true painter. The last oil landscape that can be mentioned is one that shows much of Mr. Twachtman's strength and much of his weakness, the "Landscape near Honfleur;" the composition is fine, the air of course exemplary, while the low blue hills have a quality that can only be rendered by one who is trained or qualified by Nature to read the finest and subtlest gradations, and yet so slovenly and careless and without sense of form or detail is the picture in execution, that one compares it involuntarily with Charles H. Davis's "Village in the East," where there was all Mr. Twachtman's truth of tones and qualities and values, and, besides, a delicacy and sweetness and truth of detail that gave the picture a quite unusual position.

One must go to the pastels to find the refinement and daintiness observable last year, and here there is no chance for disappointment. Lake Appleton Brown Mr. Twachtman paints with his crayons, and the result is work that is of extreme excellence and beauty. The study of willows is charming and the "Mill on the Dunes" has a light sky that is delicious, the bits of blue that break through the fleecy clouds are full of light and sun, which can rarely be said of blue sky as it is generally painted. "Sunlight" is one of the best things in the collection; it has a delicacy and sweetness of color and light, a variety in the greens, a movement in the white sky of clouds, and a purity of touch that remind one of the qualities of the "Chateau Garden." The flowers in the right foreground are particularly lovely.

"Late Twilight," though done on paper so rough as to seem like affectation, is yet very effective. A huge bulk lying in smooth water, and behind it a great sweep of cold, black cloud, with pale green sky above, a good study. On the whole, Mr. Twachtman's work is of great interest and worthy all praise and encouragement, for he himself is manifestly a painter, with a painter's eye and a painter's soul; he is not a manufactured man. And since he is so really right in motive, his extreme impressionism and carelessness of handling, though unmistakably faults, yet really go for little or nothing in the final decision. He is more like Daubigny than any living painter, and this is immense praise.

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