

ABSTRACT

Title: BEYOND REALISM: HISTORY IN THE ART OF THOMAS EAKINS

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Art historians often associate Thomas Eakins's realist depictions of modern life with the artist's most rational tendencies. In these images, Eakins's scrutiny of his subjects seems to verge on the scientific. Consequently, many of these works have been studied in terms of Eakins's devotion to understanding and replicating the tangible world around him, marshalling as evidence the artist's meticulous methods of preparation, his scrupulous study of anatomy, and his literal use of photographs.

The sense that Eakins's creativity was always bounded by reason has contributed to the canonization of these modern life subjects. While these images reinforce the notion of Eakins's almost scientific faith in the real, they do not include many of the works that the artist deemed most important. Concurrent with these modern life subjects, Eakins also completed works that engage with historical subject matter. Although these images have often been dismissed as unimportant to Eakins's career, the artist numbered many of them among his best. Ranging from his colonial revival subjects of the 1870s and 80s to his reprisal of *William Rush Carving His*

Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River in 1908, the historical works span the length of his career and engage in a dialogue with his more familiar realist images.

This dissertation examines how in each decade of his career, Eakins used historical subject matter to assert his most deeply-held professional beliefs. A complex amalgam of tradition and modernity, each of these historical themes relates to Eakins's creation of a professional identity as an artist. I explore how Eakins's consciousness of the art historical tradition specifically influenced these works as well as guided the trajectory of his career. With respect to this tradition, Eakins believed that life study and hard work bound all great artists together—past, present, and future. Eakins advanced this notion by his insistent placement of the historical works in major venues alongside his powerful images of doctors and rowers. In his desire to become part of the art historical tradition himself, Eakins hoped that his historical subjects would continue to speak for him after his death.

BEYOND REALISM: HISTORY IN THE ART OF THOMAS EAKINS

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2005

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INTRODUCTION

While an art student in Paris in 1866 Thomas Eakins visited the Musée du Louvre. Describing the treasures within the Palace in a letter to his sister Fanny, Eakins quickly dispensed with the art and launched into an extended discussion of the museum's "curiosities," which he appreciated for their "great historical interest." Among the objects that Eakins took notice of were the slippers of Mary Queen of Scots, a bible owned by Charles XII, and several personal items belonging to Napoleon. Eakins began his description of these objects by reminding Fanny that "history has been from my earliest youth my greatest delight & dearest study."¹

Eakins's love of history could not be more out of tune with the twentieth-century construction of the artist as a realist whose unrelenting devotion to modern subject matter caused him much trouble during his lifetime. Yet alongside these realist images, Eakins also completed a number of works that reflected his "delight" in history. Starting around 1875 with his preparations for the painting *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* and continuing into the twentieth century, Eakins returned again and again to historical subjects. Moreover, Eakins invested these images with great importance, placing them in major venues throughout his career and numbering them among the most significant works he had created. In spite of the vital role that these images played in Eakins's career, they have often been overlooked in favor of his grittier realist depictions of doctors,

¹ Thomas Eakins to Frances Eakins, October 30, 1866, Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

rowers, hunters, and wrestlers—modern, virile subjects that appealed to the New Deal scholars who championed Eakins’s work in the 1930s and 40s.²

Although the underpinnings of this nativist view were challenged long ago, Eakins’s historical themes have never truly been placed in context with the artistic currents of the late nineteenth century in which they were created.³ Indeed, throughout the literature of American art history Thomas Eakins is often situated at a remove from his contemporaries. Typically regarded with Winslow Homer as one of America’s greatest artists, both men have been celebrated for pursuing independent paths, eschewing traditional art historical models in favor of their own uniquely American visions. Unlike John Singer Sargent or William Merritt Chase, both Homer and Eakins are perceived as retreating from the fashionable art world, existing apart from it. Eakins’s “outsider” status is enhanced by the perception that his work was neglected during his lifetime, making him a talented “misfit whose true fame began to build only much later, after his death.”⁴ While Eakins’s posthumous fame has to some extent surpassed his lifetime accomplishments, his greatest professional failures were the consequence of his pedagogical methods and not his work. Furthermore, in the last twenty-five years of his life, Eakins’s art often received extensive praise.

In addition to the mythic construction of Eakins as manly, strong, independent, and misunderstood, his work is also seen as eminently rational,

² For an exploration of this topic see: Carol Troyen, “Eakins in the Twentieth Century,” in Darrel Sewell, ed., *Thomas Eakins* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 367-376.

³ An exception to this is the body of literature regarding the influence of French painting on Eakins’s work, see: Gerald Ackerman, “Thomas Eakins and His Parisian Masters Gerome and Bonnat,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 73 (April 1969): 235-256; and H. Barbara Weinberg, *The American Pupils of Jean - Leon Gerome* (Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum), 1984.

⁴ Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 3. Burns excludes Eakins from her study of artists self-fashioning because she feels his reputation is a twentieth-century construction.

intellectual, and scientific—seemingly at odds with the superficial frippery of the Gilded Age. In the literature, Eakins, at times, seems more of a frustrated scientist than an artist. Emphasis has been placed on his meticulous methods of preparation, his scrupulous study of anatomy, his rigid adherence to the perspective grid, and his literal transcription of photographs into his paintings. Eakins's concurrent interests in medicine and science only amplify this vision of a rational man. Although these interests suggest to me a connectedness with his time, they have often been given as evidence of his detachment from the artistic realm.

The notion of the artist's subordination of creativity to reason is something unique to Eakins's artistic biography. In the first monograph devoted to his work, Eakins's biographer Lloyd Goodrich went so far as to declare the "aesthetic content" of Eakins's work as the "unconscious result of the desire for truth."⁵ This extreme statement is a measure of the reassessment of aesthetic values that took place in the 1930s. Yet, even in his much expanded 1982 monograph of the artist, Goodrich's Eakins remained the man who painted *The Gross Clinic*, not the artist who enjoyed his first critical successes with colonial revival subjects. Goodrich's selective interest in the realist aspects of Eakins's career has lingering ramifications in the enduring notion of Eakins as a *recorder* of reality, rather than a *creator* of images. Michael Fried has more recently commented upon the persistence of this tradition in the Eakins literature, suggesting that a tendency to accept the illusion of reality found in Eakins's work continues to frustrate more meaningful understandings of his *oeuvre*.⁶

⁵ Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins: His Life and Work* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1933), 155.

⁶ Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 3.

Throughout his writings Goodrich tended to see Eakins's frequent historicizing ventures into what could be termed "non-realist" territory as mistakes, aberrations that should not be taken as the efforts of the *real* Eakins. Yet a careful study of these works reveals an artist who was clearly interested not only in scientific observation but in the creative powers of the artist. Eakins's historical subjects undermine the facile notion of his realism as pure transcription, not only in the inherent anachronism of choosing historical subjects, but in the complexity of their narrative structure, and the value that he placed upon these images. Eakins, like most artists, played with reality, indulging his imagination not only in his depictions of historical subjects but throughout all of his work, even in his insightful and seemingly "honest" portraits.

This dissertation studies Eakins's historical subjects and seeks to understand their place in his career and within the time in which they were created. Each of the five chapters focuses upon the content and meaning of one of Eakins's major historical subjects. My approach has been to take each subject on its own terms, which is not to suggest that I understand them as discrete campaigns, or aberrations in an otherwise realist career. Rather, I see these works as forming a continuous intellectual thread throughout Eakins's life. Indeed, each of these themes in some way relates to Eakins's understanding of the art historical tradition and expresses his desire to carve out his own place within it. With respect to this tradition, Eakins used these images to assert the notion that a core set of artistic beliefs bound all great artists together—past, present, and future. Along with his powerful images of doctors

and rowers, the historical subjects are about art and reflect Eakins's thoughts about his profession.

In Chapter one I link Eakins's interest in historical subjects to the appreciation of art history that he developed toward the end of his studies in Europe as means to understanding his first history painting, *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*. As with all of his historical subjects, *William Rush* reflects the curious tension between modernity and tradition in Eakins's art. The Federal-era sculptor Rush became one of Eakins's artistic heroes, an American Old Master, whom he fashioned in his own image by selectively defining Rush's biography through his painting and its accompanying texts. The work also confronts a long-held belief about the sexual availability of female models and their relationships with male artists.

Chapter two examines Eakins's popular colonial revival subjects, which are closely related on several levels to his *William Rush* painting. Images of this type had become popular in the post-bellum years, in part, because they embraced the notion of the colonial past as a golden age of common history and national unity. A critique of modern womanhood also formed a strong undercurrent of the colonial revival. Many of the women in these Eakins works engage in the archaic task of spinning flax. In an era where the strains of modern life led women to neurasthenia and mental exhaustion, physicians nostalgically regarded the type of female industry that Eakins depicted as a positive example of healthy female productivity. Yet as a teacher of anxiety-prone New Women, several of whom served as models for the series, Eakins

may have revealed his personal doubts about such “lady painters” through these images.

The third chapter explores Eakins’s so-called Arcadian images, representing nude and classically-draped figures outdoors. In pursuing this subject Eakins followed a program of life study prescribed by the French memory theorist Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran. Lecoq’s method encouraged the training of memory as a tool for capturing the fleeting effects of light, color, and movement. He also advocated the study of active nude models outdoors, which he viewed as a return to the methods of great artists like Phidias. The application of this method and a corresponding classicism can also be detected in Eakins’s realist subjects of the 1880s indicating the influence of Lecoq’s writings on Eakins’s *oeuvre* beyond the Arcadian images. A close reading of these works and Lecoq’s texts reveal startling parallels. Eakins’s most extensive use of Lecoq’s writings can be found in the controversial painting *Swimming*. In this work and in the more overtly classicizing images of the Arcadian series we see that Lecoq’s little-known but vital realist theory was at the core of some Eakins’s most historicist images.

Chapter four looks at Eakins’s grandest historical subject: *Crucifixion*. Through this painting, Eakins both paid homage to an important art historical tradition, while simultaneously reinventing it for a modern audience. Twentieth-century art historians have considered the work as either an irreligious study of the nude figure or, at the opposite pole, as a Catholic representation of Christ. Yet the reception history of this challenging image makes clear that nineteenth-century critics understood it as an attempt to innovate the art historical tradition by transforming

Christ into a human historical subject akin to that described in the work of religious scholar Ernest Renan. In spite of criticism, Eakins continued to exhibit *Crucifixion* throughout his career and sometimes very pointedly, as in 1887 when he showed the work at the Philadelphia Art Club, almost exactly a year to the day after his dismissal from his position as Director of the Schools at the Pennsylvania Academy. Eakins's hope for recognition through a historical subject like *Crucifixion* challenges the long-standing notion of his detachment from the art world.

Chapter five discusses Eakins's most public historical subjects, his two war memorial commissions for the Brooklyn Soldiers and Sailors Monument at the entrance to Prospect Park and the Trenton Battle Monument in New Jersey. In these works I explore the tensions between commemoration, the Beaux-Arts tradition, and realism, particularly in the case of the Brooklyn Arch. Eakins's meticulous methods led to conflict over the Arch that ultimately excluded him from consideration for future commissions. Yet Eakins quietly continued to work in the realm of public sculpture by assisting his student Samuel Murray with his own large-scale historical subjects. As Eakins's most public works, his civic sculptures reveal the tension between his exacting working practices and the desire for public recognition. In the conclusion to the dissertation I examine Eakins's return to the William Rush subject as it relates to his interest in sculpture and his long-standing fascination with historical subject matter.

While my focus throughout the dissertation is on the works themselves, I also delve a great deal into the Eakins biography. Scholars such as John Wilmerding, Sarah Burns, and David Lubin have acknowledged a significant division in Eakins

scholarship between those who probe his biography and those who study his works.⁷ By contrast, this dissertation uses the voluminous biographical material now available from several notable Eakins repositories as a tool for analyzing his work. The recovery of Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins collection, combined with several other great caches of Eakins archival material now allows for an opportunity to more fully understand Eakins's methods and ideas. Though the Bregler collection has been thoroughly documented in three detailed publications, little of this material has been meaningfully integrated into other studies of his work.⁸ Additionally, the extensive and varied content of the Bregler material has lulled Eakins scholars into the belief that that collection represents nearly all that is knowable about the artist. I have attempted to combine Bregler material with other, less frequently consulted resources, in an effort to understand as much as possible about Eakins's art.⁹

As one of the most thoroughly studied American artists, I am deeply indebted to the scholarship that has come before. Elizabeth Johns's 1983 study of the artist remains among the most valuable investigations of Eakins and his work. In many

⁷ John Wilmerding, "Tensions of Biography and Art in Thomas Eakins," in John Wilmerding, ed., *Thomas Eakins* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993): 16-35. David Lubin, "Projecting an Image: The Contested Cultural Identity of Thomas Eakins," *Art Bulletin* 84 (September 2002): 510-521; and Sarah Lee Burns, "Thomas Eakins Exposed," *Nineteenth Century Studies* 13 (1999):139-152. Lubin summarizes the Eakins scholarship, noting the contributions of younger scholars who have controversially explored the Eakins biography in contrast to those who study how his works were crafted. Burns observes a similar distinction between "positivist" interpretations that delve deeply into method and content and scholars interested in critical theory who examine biography, psychology, and meaning.

⁸ More often than not, the work has been used to explain gaps in the Eakins biography. For example, the Bregler Collection photographs of nude students have been used to redefine notions of Eakins's sexuality, yet little has been written about the possible applications of such images to Eakins's pedagogical philosophy. I would not dispute that there are sexual implications for these works but this is likely evidence of a subconscious impulse rather than their reason for being.

⁹ The Philadelphia Museum of Art, for example, contains a vast treasure trove of Eakins material—including Lloyd Goodrich's archive and research notes, as well as exhibition catalogues, biographical materials, and exhibition reviews. Similarly, the Archives of American Art owns Gordon Hendricks's Eakins research files, which have yet to be used by any Eakins's scholars.

ways, Johns's book has provided a model for this dissertation. Kathleen Foster's careful documentation of the Bregler Collection has also been an invaluable resource. In spite of this I have also attempted to avoid relying too heavily on the secondary literature in an effort to better understand the pre-Goodrich Eakins. Toward this end, I have used archives and newspapers to help explore Eakins's intentions and to study the reception of his work in his own time.

What emerges from these primary sources is that, in contrast to what is taught in survey courses, Eakins ranked his historical subjects with his best realist images. For example, he clearly regarded *Crucifixion* as a more significant work than the now canonical *Max Schmitt in a Single Scull* (*The Champion Single Sculls*). Far from aberrations, the historical images tell an important part of the Eakins story. They reflect his reverence for tradition, and his use of that tradition to justify his most modern beliefs.

CHAPTER ONE

WILLIAM RUSH AND THE HISTORY OF ART

In 1877 Thomas Eakins completed the oil *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* (figure 1), a complex work that is equal parts portrait, genre, and history painting.¹ Eakins's image shows Rush, a Federal-era Philadelphia sculptor, in his workshop carving the figure of a nymph (figure 2) for a public fountain that stood in front of the city's water-works pumphouse at Centre Square in the early nineteenth century. In the painting, the fashionably-attired Rush works from a lovely nude model who poses in the foreground, while an elderly matron knitting nearby serves as the young lady's chaperone. Eakins filled the dark background with woodworking tools and several important examples of Rush's sculpture, culled from different stages in the artist's career. In order to recreate the sculptor's studio, Eakins studied Rush's extant work and undertook a great deal of historical research. He spent roughly two years working on the painting, carefully considering the subject and plotting its composition with an unusually large number of sketches and models.

When Eakins began the painting in 1875 he was known primarily for his contemporary genre scenes and for his portraits, including the ambitious, though potentially shocking, *Gross Clinic* (1875). Although admired for these works today, critics in the 1870s often regarded Eakins's attraction to modern subjects as eccentric.

¹ Surviving sketches suggest that Eakins began thinking about this image as early as 1875. See Darrel Sewell, *Thomas Eakins: Artist of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1982), 46-57. Although begun after a few failed efforts at historical subject matter, such as his two unfinished paintings of Hiawatha, and finished after some of his colonial revival genre scenes, *William Rush* appears to be the earliest historical work that Eakins decided to complete.

Such critics typically acknowledged Eakins's tremendous ability as a draftsman, but hoped someday to see his talent put to better use. After struggling with several unfinished history paintings Eakins met this challenge with *William Rush*, a historical subject that followed European precedents. Indeed, as Gerald Ackerman, Elizabeth Johns, and others have shown, *William Rush* closely adheres to a centuries-old European tradition of representing artists, particularly Old Masters, in their studios.²

In spite of these associations with the past, *William Rush* also advanced a particularly modern agenda through its illustration of an artist working from a life model. Life study was at the core of Eakins's art, the basis of the training he received at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in France in the 1860s, and the foundation of his teaching at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. For these reasons, art historians have considered *William Rush* largely in terms of Eakins's teaching and his identity as a realist artist. Since the use of nude models in American art schools remained controversial well into the 1890s, the painting has been viewed as "an assertion of the legitimacy of Eakins' own artistic methods."³ More specifically, since Eakins began assisting Christian Schussele, professor of drawing and painting at the Academy,

² Gerald M. Ackerman, "Thomas Eakins and His Parisian Masters Gérôme and Bonnat," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 73 (April 1969): 235-256; Elizabeth Johns, *Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 91-95; H. Barbara Weinberg, *The American Pupils of Jean-Léon Gérôme* (Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum, 1984), 35-47. Eakins purchased at least two European cartes-de-visite of such subjects while he was a student in Paris. Both are now in the Seymour Adelman collection in the Mariam Coffin Canaday Library at Bryn Mawr College. They are: Charles-François Jalabert's *Raphael's Studio*, showing the Renaissance master working from a live (though fully clad) model for a painting of the Madonna and Child and Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Rembrandt Etching a Plate in His Atelier* (both published by Goupil).

³ Kathleen A. Foster, *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 144. In 1886, the Director's of the Pennsylvania Academy forced Eakins to resign his position as Director of the Schools over the use of life models. In March 1895 Eakins was similarly ousted from a teaching position at the Drexel Institute for using a nude model. Augustus St. Gaudens also faced some obstacles in his use of nude models while teaching at the Art Students League in New York. See: "Mr. St. Gaudens Has Not Resigned," *New York Times* (May 15, 1890): 8. This is only one of several instances in St. Gaudens's career where the propriety of his work was called into question over the nude.

while he was working on his image of Rush, the painting has additionally been seen as a visual defense of the use of nude models at the Academy.⁴

These interpretations shed light on the meaning of *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*, and aptly explicate the circumstances of the painting's creation at a time when Eakins was beginning his ill-fated career as a teacher. Eakins clearly used *William Rush* to assert the core beliefs of his realist art and teaching. Yet some nagging questions remain; namely, why did Eakins frame his defense of life study in the past? He could have used his teacher, Jean-Léon Gérôme or another respected artist of the period to make his point—an approach, one could argue, he used in *The Gross Clinic* or even in *Max Schmitt in a Single Scull (The Champion Single Sculls)*. The fact that he defended his profession through the use of history suggests something about the way Eakins regarded his craft that has yet to be fully explored.

Additionally, if Eakins intended the painting specifically as a defense of his practices at the Academy, which seems reasonable given his use of Rush, one of the Academy's founders, then why did he show the work in Boston, New York, and Brooklyn, before exhibiting it in Philadelphia, the city that had the best chance of understanding his subject?⁵ Was there, in fact, something more universal, less

⁴ The most exhaustive study of the William Rush subject is found in Johns, 82-114. Other extended discussions of the paintings include: Gordon Hendricks, "Eakins's *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Statue of the Schuylkill*," *Art Quarterly* 31 (Winter 1968): 382-404; Theodor Siegl, *The Thomas Eakins Collection* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1978), 67-72; Phyllis D. Rosenzweig, *The Thomas Eakins Collection of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), 63-75; Sewell, 46-57; Norma Lifton, "Representing History: From Public Event to Private Meaning," *Art Journal* 44 (Winter 1984): 345-351; Michael Fried, *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration: On Thomas Eakins and Stephen Crane* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 2-89; Foster, 144-150.

⁵ Eakins first exhibited *William Rush* in January 1878 at the Boston Art Club. The next venue for the painting was the First Exhibition of the Society of American Artists in New York in March 1878,

parochial, that he hoped to articulate through this work? Further, why did he choose a sculptor rather than a painter to argue the case for life study? By the time Eakins painted this work he had yet to create an exhibition sculpture—his own reputation rested exclusively on his paintings.

Building upon the arguments of Ackerman, Johns, Kathleen Foster, and others, I would like to consider *William Rush* as the starting point of Eakins's life-long interest in historical themes to further understand the tension between Eakins's progressive teaching, his "modern life" subjects, and his adherence to tradition. At once a conservative and a radical, throughout his career Eakins curiously "root[ed] his 'modernity' in what had gone before."⁶ *William Rush* reflects Eakins's belief that life study was not merely modern but the guiding principle behind all great artistic achievement, extending back to the work of Phidias in classical Greece. This perhaps suggests why he labored to find a historical subject and finally chose to represent an artist for his first major history painting.

"*Big Painting*"

The genesis for *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* came not solely from a European iconographic tradition, but from the understanding of art history that Eakins gained during his studies abroad. In 1866 when Eakins wrote about the galleries of the Louvre to his sister Fanny and expressed his "delight" in history, he had not yet begun a single painting. In fact, he had only just entered Jean Léon Gérôme's atelier the previous day. But it was not atypical of

followed by an exhibit at the Brooklyn Art Association in April 1878. The painting was not shown again until November 1881, when it finally appeared at the Pennsylvania Academy.

⁶ Johns, 99.

Eakins's first two years as a young art student in France that he found himself more attracted to historical relics, public amusements, opera, and musical performances, than to Paris's artistic offerings. Although he had benefited from the rigorous curriculum of Philadelphia's Central High School, followed by study at the Pennsylvania Academy, then one of the best art schools in the United States, Eakins's early letters convey his extreme naiveté when confronted with European art and culture. Indeed, though he could speak with ease about the historical artifacts in the Louvre, he could only inadequately describe the paintings as "nice funny old pictures." He assured Fanny that he believed his taste had "been very much improved" by his encounter with art, but he mentioned not a single work by name, nor did he espouse any preferences for particular artists or periods.⁷

A few months later, in a letter to his father, Eakins explained his inability to describe the art he had seen on his visits to the Luxembourg and the Louvre claiming that "the pleasure in seeing a picture cannot be conveyed in writing." He felt that the best he could do was to suggest a comparison with the paintings shown in Philadelphia's Sanitary Fair of 1864, some of which, he felt "have never . . . been surpassed" but, he continued, "I see many here just as good."⁸ In assessing one of the greatest art collections in Europe, Eakins could, at this point, only weigh it against what he had known in Philadelphia. Eakins similarly revealed in his parochialism in a letter to his friend Emily Sartain in which he spoke of his love of Philadelphia,

⁷ Thomas Eakins (hereafter "TE") to Frances Eakins, October 30, 1866, Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

⁸ TE to Benjamin Eakins (hereafter "BE"), January 16, 1867, Bregler Collection. Philadelphia's Great Central Fair of June 1864 was held in Logan Square, not far from the Eakins home. It included works by Europeans as well as Americans, but these were generally minor pictures by minor artists—not at all comparable to what Eakins saw in the galleries of the Louvre. Among the American works there, Eakins could have seen paintings by Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Sully, in addition to contemporary landscapes and genre scenes.

writing “you should hear me tell the Frenchmen about Philadelphia. I feel 6 ft & 6 inches high whenever I only say I am an American.”⁹

During his first two years in Paris, when Eakins discussed art at all, he spoke primarily of his teachers at the Ecole and of their contemporaries.¹⁰ As he struggled to master painting technique and gain greater facility as an artist his appreciation for historic works of art developed. By 1868, in anticipation of launching a professional career as a painter, Eakins sought to define what sort of artist he wanted to be with an eye on the past. While he professed that an artist who forsook Nature in order to follow “another man that run after nature centuries ago,” would fail to become a “big painter,” the very idea of “big painting” expressed his increased consciousness of European art.¹¹ Though he would not emulate other artists, he began to discern Old Masters that he could appreciate for their adherence to Nature. Gaining the skills needed to produce “big painting” became his primary aspiration.

For Eakins “big painting” meant something different than attaining financial success with his work. He alluded to this distinction in a letter to his father, in which he wrote that although he thought that he could “earn a respectable living . . . painting heads,” he still felt like “a little child . . . alongside of the big painters around me and fear that I will be for some time yet, but I will try my best.”¹² Months later he reported on his progress, writing that he felt that he could at least “equal the work . . . some of the big painters” had done during their own youthful apprenticeships. He

⁹ TE to Emily Sartain, November 16, 1866, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Archives.

¹⁰ In addition to his work with Gérôme, Eakins studied briefly with the sculptor Augustin-Alexandre Dumont in March 1868. Gustave Boulanger also occasionally took charge of Gérôme’s classes, while the latter traveled in the Middle East with his friend Leon Bonnat in search of orientalist subject matter. Later, Eakins spent a month in Bonnat’s studio.

¹¹ TE to BE, March 6, 1868, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

¹² TE to BE, March 17, 1868, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

continued by remarking his disdain for the “namby pamby fashion painters” and hoped that he might one day “find poetical subjects & compositions like Raphael.”¹³ At this early stage of his career Eakins dismissed conventional indications of artistic success—quick sales and fleeting popularity—in favor of the idea of a more enduring legacy. As he approached the end of his career as a student he again wrote to his father about his goals, stating that more than anything else “worthy painting is the only hope of my life and study.”¹⁴

Eakins’s quest for “big painting” came to a head during a trip to Madrid in 1869. In the galleries of the Prado Museum, Eakins found the “big painting” that “I had always thought ought to have been done and what did not seem to me impossible.”¹⁵ Unlike his description of his first visit to the Louvre, Eakins was enthralled by the Prado’s collection. During his visits to the museum he filled a small notebook with his observations of Old Master technique, citing paintings and artists, and comparing their works to one another. Eakins particularly admired the Spanish Baroque master, Diego Velazquez. Much of his enthusiasm for Velazquez grew out of the interest that his own teachers had shown for Spanish painting, especially Léon Bonnat, with whom he studied prior to his trip to Spain. However, Eakins’s reverence for the “big painting” of Velazquez probably extended beyond matters of popular taste and an artist’s appreciation for a master’s virtuoso technique. As court painter to Phillip IV, Velazquez had created masterpieces of genre, portraiture, and history painting—the very sorts of subject matter that Eakins would attempt to build his own reputation upon.

¹³ TE to BE, October 29, 1868, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

¹⁴ TE to BE, May 7, 1869, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

¹⁵ TE to BE, December 2, 1869, Bregler Collection, PAFA

Hiawatha, Columbus, and Lee

Eakins began exploring historical subject matter only a few years after launching his professional career in the United States. His studies for the three unfinished history paintings: *Hiawatha*, *Robert E. Lee Defeated*, and *Columbus in Prison (Columbus in Chains)* illustrate how this interest in history evolved during the years when Eakins was also working on his painting of William Rush. Individually, each of these peculiar studies appears so thoroughly uncharacteristic of Eakins that little attention has been paid to them, yet taken together they suggest a context for understanding the Rush painting.¹⁶ Whether drawn from the distant mythologized life of Columbus, Longfellow's vision of Native America, or the more recent conflict of the Civil War, in each of these works Eakins mulled over the idea of creating a traditional history painting. His search ended with *William Rush*, a traditional theme, newly envisioned through an American lens.

Throughout Eakins's search for a subject he remained deeply wedded to finding it in the American historical past. Near the end of his life Eakins famously urged American artists that: "If America is to produce great painters and if young art students wish to assume a place in the history of the art of their country, their first

¹⁶ Part of the difficulty in discussing these paintings relates to the impossibility of definitively situating the Lee project within the Eakins chronology since the artist did not date the two sketches he made. However, most scholars, including Goodrich, place all three of the historical projects, including *Robert E. Lee Defeated*, around the time of the 1876 Centennial exhibition. On the Columbus painting see: Foster, 384-385, Margaret McHenry, *Thomas Eakins, Who Painted* (Oreland, Pa.: Privately printed, 1946), 33, and Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins: His Life and Work* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1933), 169. For the Lee painting see: Rosenzweig, 55 and Carol Troyen, "The Surrender of General Lee to General Grant: Thomas Eakins and History Painting," *Apollo* 157 (May 2003): 30-31. William Innes Homer has discussed the Lee and Columbus projects as images of "defeated men" and relates them to Eakins's own professional disappointments, see William Innes Homer, *Thomas Eakins: His Life and Art* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1992), 100. Eakins began his painting of Rush shortly after he decided to leave *Hiawatha* unfinished. He completed the painting around the time that he abandoned *Columbus in Prison*, the last of these unfinished projects.

desire should be to remain in America to peer deeper into the heart of American life.”¹⁷ This statement is often viewed as a summation of Eakins’s career—an affirmation of his investment in realism and “modern life” subjects, yet he appears to have expressed a similar view in 1881 when he was at work on several subjects that, at least on the surface, were less realist and less modern.¹⁸ In this year, the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* declared, “Mr Thomas Eakins is an artist who has theories. One of his theories is that an American artist cannot do better than to treat American subjects, for the reason that no better subjects than American subjects exist.”¹⁹ Shortly after the publication of this article, Eakins exhibited two works at the Pennsylvania Academy to illustrate his point. In this exhibition *William Rush* appeared in Philadelphia for the first time, along with the contemporary genre painting *Mending the Net*. The two works together represent America past and present, reflecting Eakins’s intentions to “treat American subjects,” but not exclusively modern ones.

Hiawatha (figure 3), the first of Eakins’s unfinished historical paintings, was both “modern” and historical. Eakins derived his subject from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s popular poem *The Song of Hiawatha*, which like many of Longfellow’s works offered a fictionalized account of the American past. Eakins discussed the painting in a letter to his friend Earl Shinn, securely dating *Hiawatha* to late 1874. In this letter Eakins explained his reasons for abandoning the painting, writing, “it got so poetic at last that when Maggy [his sister] would see it she would make as if it turned

¹⁷ “Eakins Chats on Art of America. Veteran Painter Vigorous and Enthusiastic As in Days Past,” *The Philadelphia Press* (February 22, 1914): 8.

¹⁸ In this year, he was still working on Colonial Revival subjects, he had painted but not yet exhibited, *Crucifixion*, and was developing his Arcadian works.

¹⁹ “The Fine Arts: Artists and Art Doings,” *The Daily Evening Telegraph* (October 17, 1881): 4.

her stomach. I got so sick of it myself soon that I gave it up.” In order to excuse his interest in this unusually fanciful subject, Eakins suggested to his friend that artistic bohemianism had gotten the best of him: “I guess maybe my hair was getting too long for on having it cropped again I could not have been induced to finish it.”²⁰

For his image, Eakins combined two passages from “Hiawatha’s Fasting (Canto V).” In this canto, Hiawatha, faced with the starvation of his people, fasts and prays in the forest for seven days during which he has “dreams and visions many.” His first vision conjures before him the animals hunted by his people—deer, rabbits, pheasants, squirrels, pigeons, and geese. Eakins painted the forms of several of these animals in the sunset clouds of his painting but he also deviated from Longfellow’s text by illustrating other animals, not mentioned in the poem. After this vision, Hiawatha cries out to the “Master of Life” and asks, “must our lives depend on these?” On the fourth day, Mondamin, the corn spirit appears before Hiawatha “to warn and instruct” him “how by struggle and labor” to gain what he has prayed for. For three days Hiawatha and Mondamin, wrestle at sunset. On the seventh day:

Like a ring of fire around him
Blazed and flared the red horizon,
And a hundred suns seemed looking
At the combat of the wrestlers.
Suddenly upon the greensward
All alone stood Hiawatha²¹

Eakins shows Hiawatha at this moment silhouetted against the sunset with the defeated Mondamin on the ground before him. In the poem, Hiawatha buries the

²⁰ TE to Earl Shinn, January 30, 1875, Richard T. Cadbury Papers, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

²¹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.), 154.

benevolent spirit, and after careful tending of the grave, cultivates cornstalks, thus introducing corn to his people.

Eakins actually made two identical versions of this scene from “Hiawatha’s Fasting,” one in oil and another in watercolor (destroyed 1940s). Typical of Eakins’s working methods, he probably made the oil as a study for the watercolor, which he told Shinn he intended to exhibit with the American Society of Painters in Water Colors in New York. Artists were often attracted to the subject of this enormously popular poem, especially around the time that Eakins painted his sketch. However, most artists opted to portray either scenes involving dramatic action or the more sentimental plotline relating to Hiawatha’s love for Minnehaha. Eakins instead selected a significant but contemplative moment in the poem—very much in keeping with his portraits of individuals lost in thought. Eakins’s inclusion of Hiawatha’s animal visions in the clouds is unusual, as is the rather warm palette—the most vibrant of his career.

Around the time that he painted *Hiawatha* Eakins, not coincidentally, began writing to Shinn of his interest in the art market, and expressed a keen sense of competition with artists in New York and Paris. Eakins’s letters suggest a means of understanding his interest in historical subject matter. In the same letter in which Eakins wrote to Shinn about Hiawatha he also expressed his desire to visit New York to show his own pictures to “three or four principal N.Y. dealers” and to see a painting by Bonnat in a private collection.²² After showing his pictures in New York, he planned to send them on to Gérôme in Paris. Although little remains of their correspondence, Eakins remained in touch with both Bonnat and Gérôme throughout

²² TE to Earl Shinn, January 30, 1875, Swarthmore College.

this period, seeking their approval and advice on the management of his blossoming career. He boasted of his talent to Shinn, proclaiming that he could paint a better figure than “any one in N.Y.”²³ Unlike the seemingly more reclusive Eakins of later years, at this point he felt that “there is no particular harm done by exhibiting if it calls attention to my name or causes any expectations of me, or will bring me in a little money of my own.”²⁴

In these years Eakins wanted his work to be seen and history subjects figured as an important part of his exhibiting strategy. Even in the face of his subsequent troubles Eakins’s continued placement of historical subjects in important exhibition venues throughout his career suggests that these works remained as significant to him as the more familiar realist scenes of doctors and rowers championed by twentieth-century scholars.²⁵ Eakins hoped that his scenes of modern life, portraits of important professionals, *and* his historical subjects would distinguish him as a “big painter,” like Bonnat or Velazquez.

Eakins’s historical subjects were part of his effort to receive recognition for his talent and to further his reputation as an artist. Though he abandoned *Hiawatha* at this time, he did not give up on the idea of crafting an American history painting. Eakins struggled with two other American history subjects before completing his picture of William Rush. Unlike *Hiawatha*, these two projects, depicting Christopher

²³ Eakins compared himself with New Yorkers in at least two instances, writing of one of his rowing subjects he noted that “the long sweeps are all better expressed than I see any New Yorkers doing,” TE to Earl Shinn, March 26, 1875, Swarthmore College. When the work was inexplicably returned to him unexhibited he maintained that it was “a much better figure picture than any one in N.Y. can paint,” undated [April ? 1875], Swarthmore College.

²⁴ TE to Earl Shinn, March 26, 1875, Swarthmore College.

²⁵ The critical event of Eakins’s career was his forced resignation from the Pennsylvania Academy in February 1886. He also periodically faced rejection by exhibition juries. In March 1895 Eakins lost a teaching position at the Drexel Institute.

Columbus and Confederate General Robert E. Lee, did not develop beyond the surviving preliminary sketches. Of the two subjects, the Civil War image (figure 4) remains among the most enigmatic of his career.²⁶ It shows Lee's surrender at Appomattox and represents the most recent event of all of Eakins's history subjects. Eakins would return to Civil War subject matter, with questionable success, in his work in the 1890s for the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial in Brooklyn.

As with his sketch of Lee, the Columbus study (figure 5) depicts a talented man in decline. Like *Hiawatha*, Eakins's subject came from a literary source: Washington Irving's *History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* published in 1828. Rather than illustrating one of the many heroic stories in the life of the celebrated explorer, Eakins chose to depict Columbus after he was unfairly imprisoned in Spain following his third voyage to America. In this little sketch, an aged Columbus appears seated on the floor of his cell contemplating the ball shackled to his leg—a probable metaphor for his discoveries.²⁷ The no less than ten images of the explorer on display at the 1876 Centennial Fair attest to the popularity of Columbus as a subject in this period.

Eakins appears to have had Columbus in mind around the time of the Centennial, at roughly the same moment that he was completing his painting of William Rush. The two works have more in common than their general use of historical subject matter. For both paintings Eakins explored the art historical

²⁶ There are two sketches for this project but Carol Troyen suggests that Charles Bregler may have cut a single composition to make the two images. There is no way to securely date the image, however, the owners of the works: the Museum of Fine Arts and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, date the sketches to the late 1870s. Eakins's politics are also unclear, he was likely a Republican in the 60s and 70s but later became a Democrat.

²⁷ Though the sketch is now only approximately 6 x 7 inches, many of Eakins's sketches were cut down from larger canvases by his student Charles Bregler. Eakins often sketched multiple subjects on the same canvas—Bregler separated many of these scenes to create individual works.

tradition, examining American works to aid him in his depictions of both Columbus and Rush. In a sketchbook that he took with him to Washington in the fall of 1877, while he was painting a portrait of President Rutherford B. Hayes, Eakins copied Columbus's figure from three well-known compositions in the Capitol building. Two came from Randolph Rogers's bronze doors at the east entrance of the Capitol, including one from Rogers's representation of Columbus in chains (figure 6). Eakins made another sketch from John Vanderlyn's large painting, *The Landing of Columbus* in the Capitol rotunda.²⁸ The Washington sketchbook also includes a number of early-nineteenth-century costume studies made for the Rush painting, measurements for Rush's sculptures, and sketches of props used in the 1877 painting.

Eakins burgeoning interest in the *American* art historical tradition informed his decision to paint William Rush. By choosing Rush as his subject Eakins asserted an idea that was just gaining ground in the 1870s, namely, the notion that America had an artistic past worthy of study. In abandoning his *Hiawatha* and *Columbus* paintings, Eakins rejected two fashionable subjects that might have sold. In turning to William Rush, he selected a theme at once more obscure but also more epic in relation to the ideals he sought to uphold throughout his professional life. To Eakins, this was "big painting."

America's Old Masters

Eakins's contemplation of the art historical past first took hold of him at the Prado, where he found works that were so "free from every affectation" that he

²⁸ Also in the sketchbook now in the Bregler Collection, PAFA is a list of texts relating to navigation that Kathleen Foster suggests may relate to the Columbus project. On the verso of this sheet are notes regarding early-nineteenth century costumes probably taken for the Rush project. See Foster, 384-393.

declared “it stands out like nature itself.”²⁹ Unfortunately, the “big painting” of Europe, was, by and large, not to be found in the United States. Nor did Americans pay much attention to their own “Old Masters.” However, by the 1870s a few significant events foretold a slowly growing interest in a native artistic tradition. Though as early as 1834 William Dunlap’s *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* provided an in-depth, albeit anecdotal, guide to the lives of the artists of the United States past and present, it was not to be followed by significant writings in the field until the 1860s. Henry Theodore Tuckerman’s *Book of the Artists* of 1867 picked-up where Dunlap left off and urged American artists to consider native subject matter. Like Dunlap, Tuckerman’s work was largely biographical. Despite this limitation, the book provided invaluable reference material for the more critical evaluations of the field that succeeded it. By the time Eakins began his painting of William Rush, several such early histories of American art were available.³⁰

There were also increasing opportunities to see historical examples of American art. In 1872 the Brooklyn Art Association held what it called “The First Chronological Exhibition of American Art,” which attempted to present “a history of art in this country from the earliest period . . . to the present time.”³¹ Though American exhibitions frequently included older works, the more than two hundred and fifty paintings in the Brooklyn show reflected an early effort to present a

²⁹ TE to BE, December 2, 1869, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

³⁰ Elizabeth Johns, “Histories of American Art: The Changing Quest,” *Art Journal* 44 (Winter 1984): 338-344. David B. Dearing, “An Introduction to the History of American Art Criticism to 1925” in *Rave Reviews: American Art and Its Critics, 1826-1925*, ed. David B. Dearing (New York: National Academy of Design, 2000), 16-29.

³¹ Annual Meeting of the Stockholders and Members of the Brooklyn Art Association, April 22, 1872, Minutes of the Brooklyn Art Association, Brooklyn Museum Library. See also: Kate Nearpass, “The First Chronological Exhibition of American Art,” *Archives of American Art Journal* 23 (1983): 21-30.

historical survey of American art in a single exhibition. The works in the show spanned a broad historical range, from John Smibert to John Kensett, yet it remained far from comprehensive. The eclectic nature of the exhibition resulted from an imperfect selection process that borrowed extensively from the collections of a relatively small group of private lenders and institutions.³² Another problem of the show's presentation of American art history was that, in spite of the title of the exhibit, the arrangement was not chronological—making a progressive visual survey impossible.

Closer to home, Eakins had access to the growing collection of the Pennsylvania Academy and possibly even the private collections of the institution's patrons and friends, such as John Sartain, Fairman Rogers, James Claghorn, and Joseph Harrison. However, the Academy was closed, with much of its collection in storage, in 1875 when Eakins began working on his painting of William Rush. Once the Academy re-opened in 1876 in its new building on Broad Street, Eakins did use its art collection and its archival resources to complete his painting.³³ Apart from the Academy, Eakins visited at least two other permanent collections in Philadelphia, located in the Union League Club and Independence Hall, which offered him the ability to study a range of American art extending back to the eighteenth century. Though neither had an overtly artistic mission, both institutions, particularly

³² The lenders to the show included: Yale, Harvard, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, John Taylor Johnston, Samuel P. Avery, John Falconer, Henry Ward Beecher, and the Claghorn and Harrison collections of Philadelphia.

³³ He probably used Rush's self-portrait in the Academy's collection as the basis for his portrait of the sculptor. He also he made costume sketches from John Lewis Krimmel's *Fourth of July in Centre Square* (PAFA). A few years later Eakins familiarity with PAFA's history was explicitly outlined in a letter to Charles M. Kurtz in which he extracted information from "the old minutes of the Academy." TE to Charles M. Kurtz, February 20, 1881, Charles M. Kurtz Papers, Archives of American Art, Reel 4804.

Independence Hall, had through the accretion of gifts obtained a historical collection of American art, including works by the Peales, Thomas Sully, and William Rush.

As host to the Centennial Exhibition of 1876, Philadelphia also had another less permanent showing of historical examples of American art in the galleries of Memorial Hall. The organizers of the Fine Art exhibit at the Centennial, headed by Eakins's friend, John Sartain, included a selection of historical American art, fulfilling the Fair's mission to celebrate one hundred years of American progress. This display suffered from the same problems as had the earlier show in Brooklyn and, in fact, borrowed many of the same works from the same handful of collections. Yet following the Brooklyn show by only four years, the Centennial display seemed to confirm that America had an artistic tradition worthy of appreciation. It also included a small exhibit of historical American sculpture, insufficient for constructing any history of the medium, but notable for its inclusion of work by William Rush.³⁴

Through its exhibits celebrating the progress of the nation from its wilderness origins to the growth of industrial urban centers, the Centennial offered Eakins an opportunity for reflecting upon the important people and events of the country's first one hundred years³⁵ The commemoration of the anniversary of the nation's founding

³⁴ Kimberly A. Orcutt, "Canonicity and Modernity: Building an American Art History at the Centennial," unpublished paper, 2004. In her forthcoming dissertation Orcutt discusses the development of the American canon at the Fair.

³⁵ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Novick studies the foundation of the discipline of American history in American universities. He finds that Americans misinterpreted Ranke's idea of objectivity, which they infused with a scientific empiricism into an unrealistic quest for absolute facts devoid of subjective interpretation. Historians additionally adopted the taxonomic structure introduced by Georges Cuvier. This continues to influence art history, particularly in its organization by period, style, and school.

also cultivated a general interest in American history.³⁶ This trend coincided with a larger movement towards professionalization that fostered its own specialized historical studies in a variety of disciplines intent on demonstrating their professional progress.³⁷ Likewise, several of the Fair's exhibits offered an opportunity for skilled trades to highlight modern advances that distinguished them from their earlier and humbler origins.

American artists were at a similar crossroads—having once suffered from inadequate training, artists like Eakins now had access to academies at home and abroad that offered a systematic means of preparing students for professional careers. As the first International art exhibition to be held in the United States the Centennial itself marked a turning point in American art history. Though many critics complained of the mediocrity of the art on view at the Fair, American artists hoped that their contributions would rival those of their European counterparts. The display of older paintings and sculpture provided the context for understanding the progress that had been made by contemporary American artists. It also sparked interest in the history of American art and helped romanticize the hardships suffered by artists in the past. In 1872, Eakins's friend Earl Shinn took the occasion of the demolition of the old Pennsylvania Academy building to document the history of Philadelphia's Academy. Praising the foresight of its founders, Shinn also wrote of the difficulty young artists faced in extracting even a modicum of artistic training from the

³⁶ Indeed, George Bancroft's epic *History of the United States* was among the first "modern" histories of the United States completed just before the Centennial year. Although Bancroft's meandering and subjective text was in many ways a more modern approach to history than many of its antecedents, it actually proved a lightning rod for historians who espoused the German model.

³⁷ Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle-Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1976).

fledgling institution. Well-known stories circulated about the difficulties artists, including Pennsylvanians like Benjamin West and Thomas Sully, had in finding the opportunity to study.³⁸

As the Fair's host city, Philadelphia anticipated the Centennial by several years—providing the city an opportunity to reflect upon its own history, as well as that of the nation. Several of Philadelphia's artistic and cultural treasures benefited from the preparations for the Centennial. Independence Hall, for example, reinstalled and documented some of its collections prior to the Fair.³⁹ As the proposed site of the exhibition, Fairmount Park received greater attention in the years leading up to the Centennial. The Fairmount Park Art Association was founded at this time with the mission of acquiring additional sculpture for the Park. William Rush's *Nymph*, having been moved to Fairmount decades earlier when the waterworks relocated to the banks of the Schuylkill, was cast in bronze in 1872 as part of a series of improvements made to the Park.⁴⁰

The newspaper *The Centennial Gazette* also began publication in the years before the exposition, offering its readers a preview of the Fair's exhibits, as well as countless opportunities for personal involvement. The paper called upon individuals

³⁸ E(arl) S(hinn), "The First American Academy, First Paper," *Lippincott's Magazine* 9 (February 1872): 143-153. E(arl) S(hinn), "The First American Academy, Second Paper," *Lippincott's Magazine* 9 (March 1872): 309-321. See also Lifton, 345-351. Lifton discusses Eakins' interest in William Rush in tandem with Eakins's friend, the physician, S. Weir Mitchell's admiration for his professional predecessor, Dr. Benjamin Rush (a cousin of the sculptor).

³⁹ *A Catalogue of the National Portraits in Independence Hall* was published in 1871, with extended entries on several of the works in the collection, including an entry on a portrait of William Rush now attributed to Rembrandt Peale. The Philadelphia Committee on the Restoration of Independence Hall issued several reports in the 1870s as well.

⁴⁰ The Annual Report of the Chief Engineer to the City Councils on January 30, 1873 indicates that the Rush sculpture was cast in Philadelphia by Robert Wood & Co, see *Nymph and Bittern* curatorial file, Philadelphia Museum of Art. At the time of the Centennial both the original wooden *Nymph* and its bronze replica stood in Fairmount Park. In one of his textual descriptions of his painting of William Rush, Eakins described the process of cleaning and casting the sculpture in sufficient detail to suggest that he may have witnessed some of it.

to search their attics for family treasures, including artwork. The *Gazette* printed stories about people, places, and events of the past one hundred years. Among these articles were several about artists, including one about a William Rush sculpture and another about the eighteenth century artist, John Watson, which the paper dubbed “America’s First Painter.”⁴¹

With all of this emphasis on history, it is not surprising that Eakins began to take an interest in American art history around the time of the Centennial, becoming particularly concerned with Philadelphia’s lengthy artistic tradition. In these years he compiled a list of seventy-five Philadelphia artists from both past and present, the purpose of which remains unclear. A curious document, the list is not comprehensive for either time period, yet it includes some little-known artists, such as the obscure portrait painter, Edward Dalton Marchant, whose work Eakins could have seen at the Union League Club of Philadelphia.⁴²

Eakins expanded his study of American art in the fall of 1877, while he was at work on *William Rush* and preparing his *Columbus* sketch, when he made his trip to Washington, DC, to begin his portrait of President Hayes for Philadelphia’s Union League. During this visit to the Capital, Eakins studied the art of that city—making sketches of the works he saw at the Capitol and elsewhere. In addition to the sketches he made for the Columbus image, Eakins studied works by Gilbert Stuart, Chester

⁴¹ “The National Emblem,” *Centennial Gazette* 2 (April 1874): 8. This article described the presentation of a carved eagle by “the celebrated William Rush” to Independence Hall. “John Watson, First American Painter,” *Centennial Gazette* 3 (1875): n.p.

⁴² Foster, 388-389. Foster notes that the list oddly does not include his good friend, William Sartain, nor his father, John Sartain, whose letter of introduction helped Eakins gain entrance to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. She suggests the possibility that the list may relate to the writings and lectures of Eakins’s friend, Earl Shinn. Shinn spoke at the Pennsylvania Academy on “The History of Aesthetics” in October 1876. For Marchant see: Andrew L. Thomas, “Edward Dalton Marchant’s *Abraham Lincoln*,” in *Philadelphia’s Cultural Landscape: The Sartain Family Legacy*, ed. Katharine Martinez and Page Talbot (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 62-71.

Harding, and Thomas Sully that have no direct relationship to any of his projects of the period. While these sketches lack the textual descriptions found in the “Spanish notebook” that he filled during his visits to the Prado, there is a similar sense of observation and technical interest throughout both. Although Eakins probably completed the William Rush painting only a few months after his return from Washington, some of the studies he made on this trip appear to have contributed to his development of the picture.⁴³ They also reflect the honing of Eakins’s interest in American historical subjects to the specific interest in American art history that resulted in *William Rush*.

William Rush in Eakins’s Philadelphia

However, the question remains: why did Eakins select the sculptor William Rush as his subject? According to Johns’s research, William Rush had become an obscure figure by the 1870s, a point that seems validated by the fact that Eakins felt it necessary to exhibit the painting in the late 1870s and early 1880s with extended textual descriptions of the image and, in one case, with a schematic visual key to its contents.⁴⁴ Scholars have interpreted these texts as evidence that Eakins hoped to revive the reputation of the little-known sculptor with his painting.⁴⁵ However, a closer reading of Eakins’s texts reveals that they offer an idiosyncratic rather than

⁴³ Kathleen Foster has suggested that Eakins sketched Houdon’s sculpture of George Washington in the Capitol as a study for some of the details in his painting of Rush. She describes Eakins’s sketches of Federal-era portraits as costumes studies for Rush. Foster, 384-393.

⁴⁴ There are several versions of these texts, the longest can be found in the Bregler Collection at the Pennsylvania Academy. Eakins published a shorter version, in the catalogue for the Society of American Artists exhibition in 1879. Another text appeared, along with the schematic drawing of the image, in the catalogue for the PAFA exhibit, see: *Illustrated Catalogue: Exhibition of Paintings, Nov. 1st to Dec 26th, 1881*, (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1881).

⁴⁵ Goodrich was the first to propose this. See also Johns, 95. Eakins’s wife Susan also suggested this in interviews with Lloyd Goodrich.

comprehensive biography for Rush, suggesting that he wanted to do something more specific than revive interest in Rush. In fact, Eakins used his written descriptions of *William Rush* to reinforce facets of the sculptors's career that were of greatest concern to his own work, ignoring more general biographical details.

Eakins similarly maintained this selective focus in choosing the array of Rush sculptures depicted in his painting, which though chronologically broad, only feature public works. The continuing visibility of these sculptures in late-nineteenth-century Philadelphia offers another means of considering Rush's place in the history of American sculpture in terms of public recognition of his *work* rather than his name. Even though Rush's preferred materials—wood and terracotta—were inherently fragile, his work had endured to Eakins's day. And several of these sculptures remained well-known. The Nymph that became the subject of Eakins's painting and the statue of Washington (figure 7), which Eakins also included in the background of his painting on the right, were frequently mentioned in travel accounts and guidebooks.⁴⁶ Eakins also included *Allegory of the Waterworks* (figure 8) in the background of his painting, another highly visible public sculpture, one of two allegorical figures that Rush carved for the entrances to the millhouse of the new waterworks in Fairmount in 1825. Eakins studied these works, making numerous pencil sketches of several of Rush's public sculptures.

In addition to the continuing presence of Rush's public sculptures, Eakins personally encountered Rush's legacy in other ways throughout his own negotiations of the city of Philadelphia. Eakins would surely have felt Rush's presence at the

⁴⁶ The Nymph and waterworks were always major tourist attractions in Philadelphia, whether in their original location in Centre Square or after they relocated to the banks of the Schuylkill River in 1829. The Washington sculpture became a fixture of Independence Hall after the city acquired it in 1831.

Pennsylvania Academy. As a founding member of the institution, Rush's name appeared throughout Academy records and was part of Academy lore. The Academy's art collection included the largest sampling of Rush's work available, being particularly rich in his bust-length portraits of leading Philadelphians. Rush was also buried conspicuously close to the Eakins family plot in Woodlands Cemetery, where the artist's mother was interred in 1872. Rush remained sufficiently "present" in Philadelphia that once Eakins decided upon painting the subject, he was able to visit the site of Rush's old Front Street shop. There, he "found some very old people who still remembered it and described it" for him.⁴⁷ From an elderly woodcarver, Eakins borrowed one of Rush's old sketchbooks, which may have provided the imagery for the ships scrolls that appear in the final painting.

For his descriptive texts, Eakins must have rounded out his knowledge of Rush by reading several brief biographical accounts of the sculptor's life.⁴⁸ Most of these biographies described how William Rush rose from the ranks of the middle-class to become a leading figure in the civic life of Federal-era Philadelphia. The son of a shipcarver, he began assisting his father as a child. He received no formal artistic training save what he learned from his father and from another carver, Edward Cutbush, to whom he was apprenticed in his teens.⁴⁹ He opened his own shop around 1774. After serving with a militia during the American Revolution he returned to Philadelphia and re-opened his business. Rush quickly became the city's most

⁴⁷ Typescript copy of a document written in Eakins's hand, labeled "William Rush, copy of original writing by Thomas Eakins," Bregler Collection, PAFA.

⁴⁸ Much of the language that Eakins used in his text echo that of some of the better accounts of Rush's life in histories of Philadelphia.

⁴⁹ As several scholars have noted, this aspect of the Rush biography paralleled Eakins's. Eakins learned penmanship from his father, who was a writing master. Penmanship, an artisanal trade, was closely linked with drawing in this period.

successful carver of figureheads and scrolls for merchant and naval vessels until restrictions on American exports to England in 1807 diminished the demand for new ships. Accordingly, Rush began to devote increasing time to carving freestanding allegorical figures and portrait busts.⁵⁰

As early as 1794 Rush became involved with plans to found one of the first artist organizations in the United States, known as the Columbianum. While this initial effort failed, he did become one of the founding members of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and served as a director of that institution for all but one year from 1805 until his death in 1833. Though he continued working in wood, he also began modeling with terracotta and exhibited these works in the Academy's annual exhibitions. Many of his large allegorical works adorned major Philadelphia landmarks, including bridges, theaters, and churches. Ironically, even the Masons employed Rush to carve wooden figures for their grand lodge on Chestnut Street.⁵¹ Apart from his work as a sculptor, Rush also held positions on the city's Common Council and on various City Council committees throughout his lifetime. By the time of his death, he was rightly perceived, not as a simple artisan, but rather as a gifted artist and a distinguished citizen.

Rush's posthumous reputation seems to have faltered by the mid-nineteenth century as a generation of neoclassical sculptors gained ascendancy, but he was never entirely forgotten.⁵² Philadelphians and others continued to recall Rush's

⁵⁰ The two essential sources on William Rush are: Henri Marceau, *William Rush 1756-1833: The First American Sculptor* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1937) and Linda Bantel, ed. *William Rush, American Sculptor* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1982).

⁵¹ The Rush sculptures owned by the Masonic Temple were relocated to the new structure completed in 1873 on Broad Street near the Pennsylvania Academy.

⁵² Johns summarizes Rush's decline, noting his diminished status as "a mere figurehead carver" by 1875. Johns, 95-99.

international-renown, citing instances when British admirers flocked to view Rush's figureheads when American ships came into port. In 1830, when the sculptor was sixty-eight, the Philadelphia historian, John Fanning Watson, declared that Rush "surpasses any other American, and probably any other ship-carver in the world!" Though by this point Rush had long distinguished himself as a sculptor of freestanding works, he remained for Watson the carver whose work excited "admiration in foreign ports." To Watson, this international recognition was a virtue for a humble American, who had reached the pinnacle of his career some thirty years earlier when an English firm commissioned Rush for two figureheads.⁵³

Rush first appears as an *artist* in William Dunlap's *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*. Unlike Watson, Dunlap focused on Rush's portrait busts and full-length figurative works and downplayed his career as a shipcarver, which Dunlap perceived as a time-consuming obstacle to Rush's attainment of skill as a stonecutter. Dunlap belabored the issue that Rush had never turned to marble as the defining flaw of his career. Dunlap also published what is perhaps the only scrap of evidence to support Eakins's belief that Rush studied from life. According to Dunlap: "Mr. Rush was observing in his study of the human figure" and quoted the sculptor as saying, "When I see my boys bungling in the carving of a hand, I tell them look at your own hands—place them in the same position—imitate them and you must be right. You always have the model at *hand*."⁵⁴

As Johns has powerfully demonstrated, Eakins's painting and his accompanying text had a profound impact on later nineteenth-century interpretations

⁵³ John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey and A. Hart, 1830), 350-352.

⁵⁴ William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, Volume 1*, reprint of the original 1834 edition (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 315-316.

of Rush and his career. Eakins without question raised Rush's profile. However, he also became so closely identified with Rush that aspects of his own troubled biography erroneously began to permeate stories about Rush and his sculpture. Given the malleability of Rush's biography I would like to revisit Rush's reputation, both before and after Eakins's "re-discovery" of the sculptor—specifically, examining what biographical details Eakins chose to emphasize in his texts.

In the longest of his texts, Eakins effectively transformed the construction of William Rush's reputation through a skillful synthesis of the types of narratives promulgated by Watson and Dunlap. In Eakins's hands, Rush became a shipcarver who gained the commission for the Centre Square Nymph *because* of the international renown of his figureheads. In other words, Eakins believed that Rush's solid reputation as a talented artisan was rewarded with commissions, echoing the personal ambitions he shared with Earl Shinn that by exhibiting good work he would call attention to his name and attain success.

While Rush made the leap from carver to sculptor in Eakins's text, Eakins blurred any sense that this represented a significant professional advance by returning to a discussion of Rush's shipcarving shop before shifting back again to the other freestanding sculptures included in his picture. In this version of the text, Eakins completely ignored the portrait busts that Rush exhibited regularly at the Academy, speaking only of Rush's public projects: "figure heads, scrolls for vessels, ornamental statues and tobacco signs called Pompeys."⁵⁵ Eakins elevated anything in Rush's *oeuvre* that had been in public view—linking tobacco signs and ship's scrolls with

⁵⁵ William Rush typescript, Bregler Collection, PAFA. When Eakins exhibited the painting to the Academy he did mention PAFA's collection of Rush portrait busts.

“high art.” In doing so, Eakins failed to acknowledge the nineteenth-century hierarchy, which asserted that the intellectual accomplishments of artists were superior to the mere manual labor of artisans like shipcarvers. Yet Rush could not be so easily defined—he was, unlike many neoclassical sculptors, both a skilled manual worker *and* a creator of images. Since there is evidence that Eakins disliked the idea of having his own sculpture translated by a stonecutter, he would have appreciated Rush’s self-reliant ability to work his materials on his own.⁵⁶

Rush and the American Sculptural Tradition

By the 1860s, Rush’s place as a first-rate American artist was compromised by the very artisanal origins that first gained him fame.⁵⁷ Given his work as a craftsman in wood, the question deserved to be raised as to whether or not he was a sculptor at all. An 1867 publication was typical in its praise of Rush’s sculpture of George Washington as “a monument of the aspiration for native art awakened by the new national life,” while at the same time proclaiming that, “no American sculptor of ability had [yet] risen” in this period. The author further noted that, “It was not until about 1830 or 1840 that works of sculpture began to appear which proved that ere long a rich harvest in this department of art was to be the growth of American soil.”⁵⁸

In the 1870s, as American sculptors were again rethinking their medium and shifting

⁵⁶ Eakins never worked in marble. He strenuously objected to the idea of having his first relief sculptures, the *Knitting* and *Spinning* panels, cut by a stonecarver.

⁵⁷For discussions of Rush as an artisan and the relationship of artisanal work to Eakins see: Fried, 19-21; Emily Dana Shapiro, “Machine crafted: The image of the artisan in American genre painting, 1877-1908 (Thomas Eakins, George de Forest Brush, Charles Ulrich, Jefferson David Chalfant),” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2003), 123-160.

⁵⁸ G.W. Samson, *Elements of Art CriticismDesigned as a text book for school and colleges, and as a hand-book for amateurs and artists.* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co, 1867), 362.

from marble to bronze, Eakins challenged the assumption that American sculpture began with marble, a material he never used himself.

The history of sculpture in the United States was in many ways more complicated than that of painting. Sculpting materials in the early Republic were rare and costly, the opportunities for training, few and inadequate. Such obstacles led John Trumbull to warn the sculptor John Frazee in 1816 that “sculpture would not be wanted here for a century.”⁵⁹ Although most American art history texts of the 1860s and 70s acknowledged antecedents like Rush or the wax sculptor Patience Wright, Frazee, as a stonecutter, typically held the position of founder of the American school of sculpture. Yet Frazee’s untutored work was usually presented as an “interesting” and somewhat primitive prelude to the neoclassical sculptors. Most studies credited Hiram Powers, Horatio Greenough, and their Italian-trained neoclassical cohort as the first significant native school of sculpture.

However, neoclassical sculpture had fallen out of favor by the 1870s, causing some critics to reevaluate the state of sculpture in the United States. Shifting tastes, political strife in Italy, and the emergence of a younger generation of Parisian-trained sculptors all contributed to the decline of the Italianate neoclassical style. The Italian and French schools of sculpture were viewed as being in opposition to one another not merely in terms of geography and materials but also along philosophical lines. The Beaux-Arts trained sculptors were regarded as realists in contrast to the ideal work of their neoclassical predecessors. One writer hit at the heart of the matter by arguing that the neoclassical sculptors worshipped foreign models instead of working

⁵⁹ S.G.W. Benjamin, “Early Attempts at Sculpture in America,” *Daily Evening Transcript* (Boston), (March 18, 1879): 4.

from nature. He decried the “the absurdity of the attempt” of neoclassical sculptors to “produce something equal to the Quoit-thrower of Myron or the Apollo Belvedere” and went so far as to question whether the neoclassical sculptors should even be considered Americans, declaring them to be “denationalized” because their subjects “are strange to the people, and the workmanship foreign.”⁶⁰ Although Eakins admired Phidias, he never advocated emulating his work and felt that the Greek sculptor’s talent was the product of his adherence to nature and that nature remained a better model than following “another man that run after nature centuries ago.” Eakins, who hated stylistic “affectation,” would likely have despised the neoclassical sculptors.

Eakins also voiced a pronounced bias against marble. During his first visit to the Louvre, he complained that the marble statues there made him “shiver.” He abhorred the idea that a stonecarver would be able to accurately translate another artist’s work. Eakins’s opinions on the subject became apparent during a debate that erupted between him and Augustus St. Gaudens over the posthumous casting of Edmund Austin Stewardson’s *The Bather* for the collection of the Pennsylvania Academy. St. Gaudens argued that marble was a more appropriate medium since it had been the artist’s intention to carve the piece. But Eakins believed that, following the artist’s death, bronze would be best because it most faithfully recorded the artist’s hand. Eakins felt that even the most “expert workman in the country” would “ruin [the sculpture’s] refinement.”⁶¹ Years earlier, during a controversy over Eakins’s reliefs, *Knitting* and *Spinning* he had already made clear his mistrust of stonecarvers,

⁶⁰ Charles Akers, “Sculpture in the United States,” *Atlantic Monthly* 22 (November 1868): 558-59.

⁶¹ TE letter (July 7, 1892) in *Edmund Stewardson* (Philadelphia: privately printed, 1893), 45-46. For a general discussion of the controversy over *The Bather* see Susan James-Gadzinski and Mary Mullen Cunningham, *American Sculpture in the Museum of American Art of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 143-146.

writing to his patron: “how can any stone cutter unacquainted with the nude follow my lines? . . . How could the life be retained?” He then asked that the panels be cast “in iron or bronze . . . so that good work and good money may not be thrown away.”⁶²

In turning to the subject of William Rush, Eakins was not only reclaiming Rush’s reputation but also asserting a new starting point for American sculpture. He placed Rush at the beginning of a native sculpture tradition that did not emulate foreign models or rely on foreign workmanship. Although Rush’s allegorical Nymph was, in fact, influenced by the classical tradition, Eakins made the point of clarifying that it represented a Philadelphian subject, the Schuylkill River, and not “Leda and the Swan” as “the idle and unobserving have . . . now generally so miscalled” her. The only influence that Eakins acknowledged in Rush’s work was that of French art, “whose influence was powerful in America.”⁶³ By connecting Rush with a French tradition, Eakins linked the woodcarver with the new Beaux-Arts trained artists. In showing Rush engaged in lifestudy, Eakins further allied him with the Beaux-Arts tradition—placing Rush at the head of this school and bypassing the neoclassical tradition altogether.

No Smirking Goddess

Of course, William Rush is not the only subject of Eakins’s painting. In order to make life study the focus of the work, Eakins gave equal, if not greater, emphasis to the sculptor’s nude female model. Yet as a student in Paris, confronted with Salon paintings of nude women, many of them based upon Greek subjects, Eakins felt he

⁶² TE to James P. Scott, June 18, 1883, Lloyd and Edith Havens Goodrich Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

⁶³ William Rush typescript, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

could “conceive of few circumstances wherein I would have to make a woman naked.” He complained of the contrivances that artists used to reveal the body under the guises of “Phrynes, Venuses, nymphs, hermaphrodites, houris & Greek proper names.” He additionally decried the artists’s “mutilation” of these “smiling smirking goddess”—presumably through the idealized elimination of pubic hair, also a common practice of neoclassical sculptors. Significantly, when Eakins painted his first nude figure in *William Rush* he portrayed her not as one of these “smirking goddesses” but as a flesh and blood woman posing for an artist.⁶⁴

Although William Rush was a member of the Columbianum’s life committee and a Pennsylvania Academy director when it instituted its first life class in 1813, he probably did not have many opportunities—if any—to study nude female models. Finding men willing to pose partially draped was difficult enough in the early Republic, if female models existed, they must have been extremely rare.⁶⁵ In spite of this, Eakins made life study the crucial point of *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* by giving Rush’s model the most conspicuous place among the painting’s three figures. Though Eakins emphasized Rush’s action with his title, the inactive model dominates the work. While Rush toils in the darker recesses of the painting, the model stands with her left side in full illumination, her discarded

⁶⁴ TE to BE and Caddy Eakins, May 9, 1868, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel W. Dietrich II, Phoenixville, NY. William Innes Homer transcription.

⁶⁵ Several sources recount how the first life model at the Columbianum was a young baker who fled under the scrutiny of the artists. Another anecdote describes how Charles Willson Peale stripped to the waist because no other models were available. See Maria Chamberlin-Hellman, “Thomas Eakins as a Teacher,” (Ph.D. diss, Columbia University, 1981), 9; Shinn, “The First American Art Academy—First Paper,” 145; Felix Régamey, *L’Enseignement du Dessin Aux États-Unis* (Paris: Librairie Ch. Delgrave, 1881), 65. Chamberlin-Hellman also notes that female models remained rare into the 1860s. Chamberlin-Hellman, 45. The first evidence that PAFA models posed nude dates to the 1850s, documented in drawings of female models by Christian Schussele and Peter Frederick Rothermel. However it remains possible that these images may also record private modeling sessions in the artists’ studios. Bregler Collection, PAFA.

clothing prominently occupying the center foreground of the composition. Moreover, just as Eakins hoped to revive interest in Rush with his textual accompaniments, he was equally intent on restoring the identity of model. In the longest of his texts he all but gave her name, referring to her as “the daughter of [Rush’s] friend and colleague in the water committee, James Vanuxem, an esteemed merchant.”⁶⁶ Although he stopped just short naming the model, he unambiguously stated her class origins.

Tradition holds that James Vanuxem’s eldest daughter Louisa was the model for the Nymph.⁶⁷ Eakins’s painting cemented this tradition but it also embellished upon it. By the late nineteenth century and continuing well into the twentieth, versions of the modeling story circulated that had Vanuxem creating a public scandal by posing for Rush in the nude.⁶⁸ Yet aside from Eakins’s painting, there is no indication that anyone prior to 1877 believed that Vanuxem had posed nude. If Vanuxem, as a young, unmarried woman from a respectable family, had posed nude, the scandal would surely have tainted Rush and his work in addition to ruining her reputation. Although a heavily embroidered version of the story, popular in the early twentieth century, went on to include the sculpture as part of the scandal, the notion that the Nymph was regarded as a salacious work is easily dispelled by the praise the figure received when it was installed in Centre Square. Admired for its “graceful attitude and attire,” the sculpture became a major tourist attraction, visited by

⁶⁶ William Rush typescript, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

⁶⁷ The first mention I have found of Louisa Vanuxem serving as Rush’s model is in: Charles S. Keyser, *Fairmount Park* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Emsen, and Haffelfinger, 1871), 14. Eakins’s friend, Earl Shinn, also mentioned Vanuxem in this connection in his article, “The First American Academy—Part I,” 151. Neither indicates that Louisa Vanuxem posed nude.

⁶⁸ By 1937 the story had evolved to such an extent that Henri Marceau could write: “The recital of the criticism which arose when the figure was placed in Centre Square is too well known to bear repetition here.” Henri Marceau, *William Rush, 1756-1833: The First Native American Sculptor* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Museum of Art, 1937), 28.

everyone from Fanny Trollope to devout Moravian sisters. Further, Krimmel's *Fourth of July in Centre Square* (figure 9) clearly illustrates that the sculpture was not shunned by women and children.⁶⁹ As Elizabeth Johns has demonstrated, the majority of the stories that circulated about Rush and his model grew out of Eakins's image and the scandals of his later career.

Vanuxem's nude modeling would not only have been considered immodest, it would have been highly unusual due to the scarcity of female models in this period. Additionally, it might not even have been necessary given Rush's methods. In the final sculpture, the nymph is fully clothed in a simple gown. Although there are some effective "wet drapery" passages around the breasts and the thighs, the anatomy of the nymph's midsection remains obscured by swathes of heavy drapery folds. While Beaux-Arts trained sculptors, like Eakins, often sculpted their figures nude before clothing them to ensure anatomical correctness, Rush would not have been able to apply this modeling technique to the subtractive method of woodcarving. Rush may have wanted to consult a model for proportion in the planning stages of his work but he would not have *carved* the final sculpture from a nude model. Eakins, on the other hand, would work directly from life for his later sculpted works—fashioning clay models that he could easily alter before casting into bronze. Rush's more direct

⁶⁹ *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (August 18, 1809) quoted in Charles Coleman Sellars, "William Rush at Fairmount" in *Sculpture of a City: Philadelphia's Treasures in Bronze and Stone*, Fairmount Park Art Association, eds. (New York: Walker Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), 10 Fanny Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the American People*, Pamela Neville-Sington, ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 203. In 1810 Sister Catherine Fritsch wrote about the sculpture, which she referred to as "Rush's exquisite art creation of a nymph" during a visit to Philadelphia with another Moravian sister, see: A.R. Beck, ed., "Notes of a Visit to Philadelphia, Made by a Moravian Sister in 1810," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 36 (July 1912): 358. A positive description of the sculpture appeared in the short story, "Gertrude; or, The Fatal Prophecy," by Joseph R. Chandler in *Godey's Lady's Book* 26 (May 1843): 231. Set in 1812 when the nymph still stood in Centre Square, Chandler wrote of "Rush's finely carved female figure" and the popularity of Centre Square as a place of "much resort," where "thousands flocked" and children played.

method did not allow for this flexibility. Eakins again edited Rush's story by suggesting that he employed a modern method used in his own time.

Eakins may well have invented the story of Rush working from a nude life model to assert "the legitimacy of [his] own artistic methods," but his identification of the model went beyond this necessity. For Eakins, Louisa Vanuxem—perhaps, even more than Rush—asserted the legitimacy of his method of life study through her respectability and class background. As Earl Shinn lamented, Rush's "Philadelphia had no Piazza di Spagna with groups of professional models."⁷⁰ Until the Gilded Age, America lacked a class of professional artist models and the amateurs usually came to the profession out of desperation. The women who posed as life models in Rush's day, as well as during Eakins's early career, were women with questionable reputations, who often came from working-class backgrounds or worse, earned their living as prostitutes.

By 1879 things had improved but it still remained difficult to find female models. The report of the Academy's annual stockholders meeting described the situation: "not more than a score of people [male and female] make a living by posing before the classes. The female model is not easy to obtain, at least such ones as present good studies of the human form divine."⁷¹ Two years earlier, Eakins had urged the Director's to consider adopting new methods for attracting more respectable women. He proposed that the Academy's Committee on Instruction advertise in the *Public Ledger* for "Female Models for the Life Schools. . . . Applicants should be of respectability and may on all occasions be accompanied by

⁷⁰ Shinn, "The First American Art Academy—First Paper," 145.

⁷¹ "Academy of Fine Arts: Annual Meeting of Stockholders," *The Times* (Philadelphia) (February 4, 1879): unpaginated.

their mothers or other female relatives.” In order to make his case, he disparaged the previous method of acquiring models from “low houses of prostitution” as not only “degrading” but attracting “flabby, ill formed & unfit” women who did not make good models.⁷² While there is no evidence that the Academy advertised for models, other schools did.

Writing in 1883, Charlotte Adams, an artists’ model, described the progress made since the period just prior to Eakins’s painting, writing, “it is little more than ten years since models were something of a rarity even at the Academy of Design,” but that “by means of advertising” and enhanced competition “a number of models were brought together.”⁷³ These women came from varied backgrounds but such “amateur” female models attained a degree of respectability and even celebrity, unknown by their predecessors. The typically sensational tabloid, *The National Police Gazette* even ran stories vouching for the modesty and professionalism of these “ladylike” women.⁷⁴ The morality of the nude figure was still called into question in the late nineteenth century, but several of the women who posed for artists were willing to have their names published in the press. In spite of the apparent increase in women willing to pose for artists and art schools—*professional* artists’ models remained a questionable group, linked with shopgirls, actresses, and dancers as women of suspect morals.

⁷² TE to the Committee on Instruction, January 8, 1877, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Archives.

⁷³ Charlotte Adams, “Artists’ Models in New York,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* 25 (February 1883): 569.

⁷⁴ “The Nude Models: Who They Are, and How They Act in the Studios,” *The National Police Gazette* 44 (August 9, 1884): 6; “The Trilby’s of Boston,” *The National Police Gazette* 65 (February 9, 1895): 6.

Throughout his career Eakins avoided professional models almost entirely. He relied instead on amateurs that were close at hand—often using family, friends, or students. The anecdote of Rush’s invitation to the daughter of a colleague and peer to pose for his nymph provided a neat analogue to Eakins’s own penchant for asking family friends to pose. Taking things a step further, the painting itself provided a reflection of Eakins’s preferences the model who posed for Vanuxem was Nannie Williams, a family friend and schoolmate of Eakins’s sisters. Williams, who later went on to become a school teacher and director of Philadelphia’s public kindergartens, represented more than just Vanuxem’s body but also her respectability.⁷⁵

Ironically, many perceived Eakins’s desire to use “respectable” women instead of prostitutes as lascivious behavior. Encouraging such a woman to expose herself before an art class was an act of degradation. Life study had become a recognized part of an artist’s training but Eakins’s practices challenged accepted limitations about *who* should pose nude.⁷⁶ Although the Academy never overtly sanctioned Eakins’s ideas about nude modeling, the large number of nude photographs taken by Eakins and his students illustrate its peculiar importance to his art and teaching. Throughout his career he aggressively asked many of his female friends and acquaintances to model nude for him—most of them refused. Eakins also

⁷⁵ “The Women Who Served as Models for the Coins,” *New York Times* (12/15/1907). Nannie Williams also posed around the same time for the Morgan dollar. Nannie Williams’s modeling for the Morgan dollar became known shortly after she posed for it.

⁷⁶ Life study remained controversial but became a common practice in most American art schools. Concerns were raised about the damage that exposure to the nude inflicted upon young morals. Eakins felt the effects of this concern when a mother complained that the Academy curriculum was corrupting her daughter in 1882: “R.S.” to James L. Claghorn, April 11, 1882, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Archives. Eakins’s convictions about students posing and his frequent requests that acquaintances pose for him was highly unusual and transgressed class boundaries.

made the act of modeling an important part of his pedagogy by encouraging his students to pose nude for one another instead of hiring professional models. He strongly believed that anyone in a life class should be willing to pose. Practicing what he preached, Eakins offered his own body as an example, in one instance lowering his pants before a student to show “the movement of the pelvis.”⁷⁷ Eakins’s tenacious insistence that respectable individuals pose proved one of the most controversial methods that he introduced to the students at the Academy.

Phryne and “The Sculptor’s Model”

In challenging ideas about *who* should pose, Eakins confronted a very old art historical tradition—particularly associated with sculpture. Nude models had been equated with loose women since antiquity. In fact, the first model identified in the western tradition was the notorious courtesan, Phryne, who posed for Praxiteles’s late classical sculpture the *Aphrodite of Knidos* (figure 10). Regarded by art historians as the first monumental freestanding female nude sculpture, Praxiteles’s famed rendering of the goddess of love stood in her Temple at Knidos until it was carried off to Constantinople in the fourth-century A.D., where it likely perished in the fire that destroyed the Lauseion. The composition of the Knida, known from coins and textual references, survives in later Roman copies. The fame of the sculpture was such that it spawned several variants that further explored the possibilities of the female nude.

Phryne was identified as Praxiteles’s model sometime in the second century A.D., centuries after the Knida was carved. Echoing the myth of Pygmalion, Phryne was similarly characterized as Praxiteles’s lover. Stunningly beautiful and capricious,

⁷⁷ TE to Edward Hornor Coates, September 12, 1886, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

Phryne is also known from ancient anecdotes that describe two instances in which she displayed her naked form publicly. The best known of these tales had the alluring prostitute successfully using her nude body as a defense in a trial for a capital offense. The identification of the sacred Knida with the profane courtesan Phryne had decided implications for later understandings of the sculpture and the female nude in general.⁷⁸

Although regarded as a religious work, several ancient stories also presented the Knida as an object of lust. As early as the first century A.D. Pliny the Elder claimed that the Knida bore the stain of where she had been soiled by a man unable to resist the seductive power of the statue. There were also stories that the temple had a second entrance “for those who wish to see the goddess directly from the back.”⁷⁹ By the time Phryne came to be associated with the statue, new types of nude Aphrodites loosely based upon the Knida had developed that had more obvious sexual connotations. In this way, Praxiteles’s Knida gradually came to be associated with male lust. And it was this notion of the statue and its model that held greatest sway in the late nineteenth century when Eakins’s painted Rush and his model.⁸⁰

Nineteenth-century scholars of Greek art denigrated Praxiteles’s “genius” because of his identification with the first female nude. In comparison with Phidias, whose work was perceived as elevated and noble, Praxiteles was thought to appeal to

⁷⁸ Christine Mitchell Havelock, *The Aphrodite of Knidos and Her Successors* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). Aileen Ajootian, “Praxiteles,” in *Yale Classical Studies, Volume XXX: Personal Styles in Greek Sculpture*, Olga Palagia and J.J. Pollitt, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 91-129. J.J. Pollitt, *The Art of Ancient Greece: Sources and Documents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁷⁹ Lucian, quoted in Havelock, 11.

⁸⁰ Havelock traces how the Knidas’s degraded reputation developed in the nineteenth-century.

“less refined sympathies . . . undecorous fancy and prurient tastes.”⁸¹ In her study of reception of the Aphrodite of Knidos, Christine Mitchell Havelock attributes much of the negative perceptions of the Knida in the nineteenth century with Phryne’s reputation as a prostitute. Given his own thoughts about prostitute models, it remains possible that Eakins shared the opinions of his contemporaries with respect to Praxiteles. Of all of the classical sculptors, Eakins certainly held Phidias in the highest regard and never even mentioned Praxiteles or any of his works—unusual for an artist so devoted to the study of the nude.

Phryne had become a popular subject with artists in the later nineteenth century. Perhaps more than any other classical figure popularized in the period, Phryne was depicted as an object of unvarnished lust, possessing no ennobling qualities beyond her physical charms. Gustave Boulanger’s large-scale, *Phryne* (figure 11) placed the nude courtesan in a distinctly erotic context on a disheveled bed, fingering her necklace and distractedly holding a mirror, a symbol of her vanity, as she provocatively gazes at the viewer.⁸² Similarly, Eakins’s teacher Jean-Léon Gérôme’s *Phryne before the Tribunal* (figure 12) depicts the climactic scene in Phryne’s trial when her body is exposed before the judges. In Gérôme’s rendering of the subject, Phryne shields her face, becoming merely an exquisite body displayed for the delectation of her exclusively male audience. Gérôme exhibited the painting in 1867 at the Universal Exposition in Paris while Eakins was studying in his atelier.

Eakins may have intended *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* as a defense of his use of nude models at the Pennsylvania

⁸¹ Richard Westmacott, Jr. quoted in Havelock, 50-51.

⁸² It should be noted that Boulanger occasionally took over Gérôme’s classes at the Ecole. In his letters home, Eakins notes a brief period in which he studied with Boulanger.

Academy but the painting also challenged the older tradition that the female nude was morally bankrupt. Neither Louisa Vanuxem nor Nannie Williams, suggest the temptresses associated with the nude model—in either Ancient Greece or the modern world. Eakins’s consciousness of the negative connotations of the female nude is suggested by a newspaper article, “The Nude in Art,” which he clipped from *The Evening Telegraph* in 1878, shortly after he completed *William Rush*.⁸³ Precipitated by public outcry over the exhibition of Lawrence Alma-Tadema’s *The Sculptor’s Model* (figure 13), the article argued in favor of the nude as “the noblest and most elevating of all subjects that art can treat.”

Alma-Tadema took as his subject a nude female model posing in a sculptor’s studio in ancient Greece. The model stands with her elegant form facing the viewer, as the sculptor admires her from behind.⁸⁴ Defending the work from the charge that it was likely to cause “mischief” for young men, the author felt the work a healthy example of ideal feminine beauty unaltered by modern fashion, such as binding corsets and high-heels. The author acknowledged that “in French art, there have been questionable nude figures exhibited: but the fault was not that they were nude, but that they were the portraits of ugly immodest women.”

Eakins would have agreed with the defense of the nude in art but Alma-Tadema’s painting in many ways reiterated the less-savory connotations of the female nude that Eakins opposed. The pose of Alma-Tadema’s model was based upon a recently excavated Greek statue of Venus. Though the authorship of this sculpture remained in dispute at the time of his painting—the notion of a classical Greek artist

⁸³ The clipping was found in Charles Bregler’s collection of Thomas Eakins’s papers, now in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

⁸⁴ The pose derives from the *Venus Esquilina* (Musei Capitolini, Rome).

admiring his “Venus” from behind echoed the stories of Praxiteles’s Knida and Phyrne. Eakins’s *William Rush* set out to confront these associations with the female nude. Eakins’s model does not possess the smooth, marmorean contours of Alma-Tadema’s. Indeed, as many critics of the painting noted, Nannie Williams’s form did not resemble the Greek ideal but rather reflected an actual body that was both beautiful and imperfect.

Further, Alma-Tadema’s tight composition implies an almost too intimate relationship between artist and model. Alma-Tadema placed the model close to the picture plane, effectively blocking the area to the left, which contains her marble counterpart, with the palm held by the woman. She stands exposed and alone with the admiring sculptor behind her on the right. In spite of the defense of the work in press, *The Sculptor’s Model* contains at least a kernel of the prurient tendencies of which critics and moralists complained. Eakins, on the other hand, used several means to make the relationship between the model and the sculptor thoroughly professional and therefore, chaste. First, he made the correlation between woman and statue markedly clear—Rush, in the act of carving, does not gaze at Vanuxem’s body outside of the professional context in which she poses. Indeed, Rush appears so intent upon his task that he barely notices the nude woman. Additionally, Rush stands at some remove from Vanuxem’s nude form. Situated in the deepest corner of the composition, Rush is not only spatially distant but physically separated from Vanuxem by his own work—Rush carves with the statue situated between him and the model. Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, Vanuxem does not stand alone

before the sculptor. At her side, more proximate to her than Rush, sits the industrious matron who acts as her chaperone.

Through these compositional choices Eakins affirmed the professionalism of both artist and model. *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* did not merely advocate the legitimacy of nude modeling as an artistic practice but further asserted its propriety. In doing so Eakins contended with a tradition, rooted in antiquity but equally present in his own day, that models were sexually available women. Here, the soberly-clad chaperone provided a critical buffer to counter any talk of scandalous behavior on the part of either artist or model. Her serious mien and her absorption in her knitting suggest that she feels no concern that her charge is being morally corrupted by posing for the sculptor. Eakins used the chaperone figure, the model being another family friend, in several other compositions—making studies of her in watercolor, oil, and bronze for his colonial revival series.

It seems fitting that *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* began Eakins's exploration of historical subject matter. In its look backward, the painting confronted the traditions, as well as the modern concerns of his profession in a period when American art history came into being. In this painting Eakins fashioned an American "Old Master" as the progenitor of the Beaux-Arts methods that he himself followed. As Eakins pursued his vocation as an artist he turned to history for a subject that asserted the professionalism of his calling, while simultaneously drawing attention to the role of the model. Rejecting the entrenched

view of the female nude as inherently lascivious, Eakins recast life modeling as a noble and virtuous occupation.

CHAPTER TWO

EAKINS AND THE COLONIAL REVIVAL

Between 1876 and 1883 Thomas Eakins produced about a dozen colonial revival images, all of which focus on women.¹ Young and old, pretty and plain alike, Eakins's colonial women engage in a range of largely industrious tasks. Several are absorbed in the archaic activity of spinning flax, others knit or sew, while yet another handful are merely lost in thought. Eakins approached the theme with deliberation, studying his models from one angle for one image, and then shifting his viewpoint of the same model in another. He worked in a wide range of media, producing paintings, sculpture, and photographs relating to the series. Spanning six critical years during which Eakins's professional standing radically changed, his interests and intentions in the series likewise evolved.

By 1876 Eakins had already painted several of his best-known realist masterpieces, among them the manly rowing subjects and the grisly portrait of Dr. Samuel D. Gross. Following this ambitious start, Eakins's exploration of colonial revival subjects in the second half of the 1870s has been viewed by many twentieth-century scholars as an almost inexplicable disappointment. Lloyd Goodrich granted these images only a page of comment in his magisterial two-volume study of the

¹ The phrase "colonial revival" is used here in the broad sense of the term to define the movement in the fine and decorative arts. This usage embraces not only the colonial period but also that of the early Republic, continuing up to around 1830. Among the Eakins works that I include in this category are: *In Grandmother's Time* (oil, Smith College Museum of Art), *Fifty Years Ago* (watercolor, Metropolitan Museum of Art), *Seventy Years Ago* (watercolor, The Art Museum, Princeton University), *Homespun* (watercolor, Metropolitan Museum of Art), *Spinning* (watercolor, private collection), *A Quiet Moment* (watercolor, lost), *Courtship* (oil, Fine Art Museums of San Francisco), *Retrospection* (watercolor, Philadelphia Museum of Art; oil, Yale University Art Gallery), and the sculptures, *Knitting* and *Spinning* (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts). There are also several sketches, at least one of which Eakins exhibited, and numerous photographs.

artist, assuring his readers that “this temporary focusing on the past involved no loss of the authenticity that marked his contemporary subjects.”² Sylvan Schendler was more emphatic in his dismissal of Eakins’s colonial revival subjects, referring to them as “works of emasculation.”³

These images have been marginalized in most accounts of Eakins’s career. Their unabashedly feminine subject matter was popular with his contemporaries, challenging the familiar notion that Eakins’s interests were both thoroughly masculine and independent of other artists.⁴ Yet in their time, Eakins’s colonial revival paintings were among his most critically successful works. As Marc Simpson has shown, Eakins exhibited these images with great frequency during the years 1877-1883, indicating “that Eakins considered his visions of the past integral to his professional advancement.”⁵ Whether in Philadelphia, New York, Brooklyn, Boston or Springfield, Massachusetts, the critics praised these works as examples of “fine drawing” and “charming” composition. The positive reception of these images is almost unparalleled in Eakins career.

Eakins also received his first professional honor with the series, when he took a silver medal at the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association exhibition in

² Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1:158.

³ Sylvan Schendler, *Eakins* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 64.

⁴ Notable exceptions to this line of scholarship are: Marc Simpson, “Eakins’s Vision of the Past and the Building of a Reputation,” in Darrel Sewell, ed., *Thomas Eakins* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2000), 211-223; and Sally Mills, “*The Spinner*,” in John Wilmerding, ed. *Thomas Eakins* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 94-96.

⁵ Simpson, “Eakins’s Vision,” 211. It is also important that Eakins exhibited these works widely, at first concentrating on the three major artistic centers of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, before branching out to Long Branch, Cincinnati, Chicago, Louisville, Providence, St. Louis, Utica, New Orleans, and Denver. It is also significant that many of the biographical dictionary entries for Eakins that appeared later in his career continued to note his “many small pictures of domestic life in the early days of America.” See, for example, *Appleton’s Cyclopedia of American Biography* (1888) or *Who’s Who in America, 1899-1900*.

1878 for the watercolor *Fifty Years Ago*.⁶ The swift purchase of three of the colonial revival paintings, an otherwise infrequent occurrence in Eakins's career, also reflects the positive response accorded these works. In 1878, *Seventy Years Ago* sold to R.D. Worsham while it was on view at an American Water Color Society Exhibition in New York. His friend Dr. Horatio C. Wood also acquired the unfinished oil *The Courtship* directly from the artist. But the crowing achievement of his success came in 1879 with the acquisition of *In Grandmother's Time* by Smith College, which became the first of Eakins's paintings to enter a public collection.

Eakins's interest in the colonial revival is intriguing given his concurrent and well-established interest in "modern life." Yet, despite their historical details, one can view these works as intimately related to modern life, being as much about the present as about the past. Perhaps inspired by the great Centennial Exposition of 1876, these images bear the influence of Eakins's own family history, his teaching at the Pennsylvania Academy, and his contact with other artists, particularly in New York. Interweaving national, local, and personal histories, the colonial revival series is more complex than it first appears.

Significantly, these images do not mark "a temporary focusing on the past" but rather a continuing engagement with history that Eakins began with *William Rush* and would pursue throughout his career. The colonial revival, in other words, did not abruptly disappear from Eakins's art. In his final studies of the theme Eakins gradually took the subject in two different but related directions by supplanting the colonial elements with either an overt classicism or a generalized aestheticism. One

⁶ The award was granted for his watercolor entries to this exhibition, which also included *Study of Negroes (Negro Boy Dancing)* and a rowing subject, *Turning the Stake*.

end I would argue, lies in the Arcadia series of the 1880s. Another rests with *The Artist's Wife and his Setter Dog*, where the subtle transformation of the colonial into cosmopolitan aestheticism reflects Eakins's close contact with fellow artists, as well as his conflicting ideas about women's education. Like so many of his works, though informed by outside influences, these images are also a reflection of Eakins's own complicated personal history.

The Centennial and a National History

Although artists had certainly depicted American historical subjects before Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition of 1876, scholars often regard the Fair as the watershed event that invigorated interest in American's past and fostered a revival of colonial imagery by America's artists. Indeed, the hundredth anniversary of the nation offered a tangible opportunity for reflection upon the past. Eakins was almost certainly influenced by this event, taking place in Fairmount Park, one of his favorite spots for recreation. Although no record survives of what Eakins saw at the Fair, we know that he not only exhibited there, but he also frequently visited the fairgrounds.⁷

While many of the Fair's exhibits celebrated progress, the event also conjured a nostalgic sense of history through small but popular displays of antique "relics." Relics at the fair ranged from such genuinely colonial artifacts as John Alden's desk to Revolutionary-era objects, like George Washington's camp equipment. The Exposition also presented objects of iconic rather than historical significance such as countless "liberty bells" fashioned from a wide range of materials, or the numerous

⁷ Eakins's exhibitor's pass from the Fair is in the collection of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. It indicates which dates Eakins gained admission to the fairgrounds.

objects made from the Charter Oak. These objects, often literally referred to as “relics” in the second half of the nineteenth century, helped shift the emphasis from events to things.⁸ Through such displays, the Fair, and the numerous anniversary celebrations that followed it, encouraged an appreciation for anecdotal history, driven by incidents rather than grand events. Whether or not Eakins saw these objects, the historical moment of the Fair clearly had an impact on his art, for he began his look backward with the colonial revival series in the Centennial year.

The recent trauma of the Civil War helped to shape the colonial revival into a more domestic and anecdotal interpretation of the past. Following the war, images of the colonial era focused not on the Revolution or the events that led to the earlier conflict with the British, but instead on the more pleasing notion of the peaceful harmony found within the colonial home.⁹ The genre scenes painted by Eakins and his contemporaries, mostly comprised of intimate domestic subjects, exemplified this trend. These works also embraced a fluid sense of the historical past, rarely imaging a truly accurate depiction of a singular moment in time. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s tremendously popular poems of the previous three decades offered a guide for such fictive historical representation. As Michael Kammen has observed, Longfellow’s cultural significance lay in taking “inchoate traditions” and transforming “them into memorable poetic narratives that millions mistook for history.”¹⁰ Artists, including Eakins, embarked on a host of nostalgic domestic subjects derived not from history itself but from Longfellow’s *The Courtship of Miles*

⁸ Relics were not only exhibited but also sold and collected, particularly at the Sanitary Fairs that preceded the Centennial.

⁹ Karal Ann Marling describes the phenomenon as the “domestication” of colonial history. See Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 56-57.

¹⁰ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 82.

Standish and *The Old Clock on the Stairs*.¹¹ Such quasi-historical evocations of the domestic past proved safe subjects, especially as the Art Committee at the Fair officially urged artists not to depict scenes of the recent conflict.¹²

But the nostalgia in evidence at the Fair was only the most flamboyant and national example of a movement that had antecedents in the Sanitary Fairs of the 1860s—suggesting a direct link between the war and the colonial revival.¹³ During the Civil War and after, the colonial era became a symbol of unity and nationhood. The appeal of a reunited country celebrating a common past cannot be underestimated, particularly in Philadelphia, where loyalties were very much divided by the war. As one journalist put it:

If the Centennial celebration in 1876 were to serve no other purpose than that of bringing the people of the North and South together again in friendly relation, every dollar spent, and every hour devoted would be invested in a cause as glorious as the mind of man ever conceived. . . . Past issues are dead and the opportunity is now offered to sink them for ever in oblivion. We meet the people of the South on the Anniversary of the Birth of Our Country, which is theirs, too, as men who were brave as foes and ever generous and kind as friends.¹⁴

The colonial revival offered to bring “the people of the North and South together again in friendly relation” by highlighting their common history.

Eakins’s political opinions regarding the Civil War are ambiguous. Although several of his friends served on the Union side, he did not enlist. Instead, his father

¹¹ Artists as diverse as John Rogers and Thomas Wilmer Dewing depicted Priscilla and John Alden. Edward Lamson Henry exhibited his 1868 *Old Clock on the Stairs* at the Centennial Exhibition. It was a subject that Eakins’s wife Susan also painted during her student days at the Pennsylvania Academy and for which she received an award.

¹² Clearly exceptions were made, most notably in the inclusion of Peter F. Rothermel’s enormous *The Battle of Gettysburg*.

¹³ Eakins definitely visited Philadelphia’s Sanitary Fair. In a letter to his father he mentioned having seen the pictures at the Fair. Thomas Eakins to Benjamin Eakins, January 16, 1867, Charles Bregler’s Thomas Eakins Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

¹⁴ “A Re-United Country,” *Centennial and Journal of the Exposition* 2 (August 1874): 1.

bought him out of service in the Union Army for a nominal fee. Whether or not this inaction reflected Eakins's opposition to the war or merely his family's desire to protect their only son is unclear.¹⁵ Eakins was probably a Republican, but the vehemence of his political opinions are difficult to ascertain since he only occasionally discussed American politics in his letters. In these instances, he was critical of Andrew Johnson and noted his hatred for the Copperheads, whom he called "blackguards." In a rare statement of his political beliefs, Eakins complained of his vote being "lost to the Republican party" while he was living abroad during the 1866 election.¹⁶

The only work that Eakins undertook that directly related to the war was the sketch that he made for his unrealized painting *The Surrender of Robert E. Lee* . Strangely, the somber work appears less a celebration of Union victory than a tribute to the nobility of the Southern general. Although Eakins completed an important Union War Memorial later in his career, he received the commission under the auspices of Democratic politicians and Eakins collaborated on the project with a Confederate Army veteran. With his own complicated history regarding the war Eakins likely looked upon the Centennial with the same anticipation as other Americans who wanted to move beyond the war—or perhaps, more accurately, to return to a time *before* the war.

¹⁵ Eakins's family have sometimes been characterized as Democrats—see Sylvan Schendler, *Eakins* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 13. This may have derived from interviews with friends and family after Eakins's death. Susan identified Eakins as a Democrat but did not say when—the Democratic party being quite a different animal in the 1860s from that of the 1910s. "SME—Conversations," Lloyd and Edith Havens Goodrich Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Box 1, file 14.

¹⁶ TE to BE, October 13, 1866, Bregler Collection, PAFA. Eakins may have been speaking of the Pennsylvania governor's race, held on October 9, 1866. The *Bulletin* was reporting Republican John W. Geary's victory as early as October 11.

Philadelphia's Nostalgia for the Colonial Past

Philadelphia, as the birthplace of the nation, was particularly eager to celebrate its past. Although nothing equivalent to a historic preservation movement existed, a consensus began to build by the mid-nineteenth century that treasures such as Independence Hall should remain standing. The fabric of the old city, though tattered in places, was still unavoidable in Eakins's Philadelphia. Although little is known of Eakins's personal interest in the physical remnants of old Philadelphia, he clearly visited Independence Hall in preparation for his painting of William Rush. Independence Hall and other significant reminders of Philadelphia's colonial past would become increasingly visible in the years leading up to the Centennial's celebration of the nation's birth.¹⁷

The city's Sanitary Fair of 1864 in Logan Circle laid the groundwork for some of the displays that would be incorporated into the great Fair over a decade later. A popular feature of the Sanitary Fairs, including the one in Philadelphia, was the "Colonial Kitchen" (figure 14). These kitchens, precursors to modern living history displays, offered homey recreations of colonial hearths with costumed women cooking and often serving visitors hearty "colonial fare." Women, the driving forces behind these kitchens, used them to raise money for the Union cause. Virtually every Colonial Kitchen included a woman seated before the hearth spinning at her flax

¹⁷ See Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory* and Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here* for general information about the Centennial and the Colonial Revival in Philadelphia. Several studies touch on Philadelphia architecture and the colonial revival, two which are particularly helpful in discussing pre-Centennial material are: Kenneth Finkel, "Vintage Views of Historic Philadelphia: Antiquarian Photography, 1853-70," *Nineteenth Century*, 6 (Summer 1980): 52-56 and W. Barksdale Maynard, "'Best, Lowliest Style!' The Early-Nineteenth-Century Rediscovery of Colonial American Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59 (2000): 338-357. Finkel discusses several photographers (some of whom Eakins knew), who began documenting colonial architecture for a handful of patrons with antiquarian interests. Maynard discusses pre-Centennial interest in a number of geographically dispersed colonial structures but includes several Philadelphia buildings in his study.

wheel, or what one scholar has described as “that quintessential symbol of colonial times.”¹⁸

In anticipation of the Fair, the *Centennial Gazette* newspaper made its appearance in 1873 and remained in print until after the opening of the Fair three years later. Its pages, filled not only with news of the coming Fair, also contained historical stories, recollections of octogenarians, frequent pleas for unlocated relics, and pure Philadelphia boosterism. Although the majority of the Fair’s exhibits would highlight modernity and progress, the *Centennial Gazette* celebrated history. Many of its pages echoed the work of Philadelphia’s indefatigable chronicler, John Watson Fanning, whose *Annals of Philadelphia* similarly touted Philadelphia’s past through the anecdotal recollections of eyewitnesses.¹⁹

The *Gazette* also recorded the fundraising efforts of several ladies’ groups in Philadelphia and elsewhere, many of which involved the “re-creation” of a colonial atmosphere. One of the most successful of these events was the “Centennial Tea Party” in December 1873, for which over 9,000 tickets were sold. The proceeds went toward the Centennial restoration of Mount Vernon and to purchase coal for the poor of Philadelphia. This otherwise philanthropic event was an opportunity for Philadelphia society, especially its ladies, to don colonial costume and entertain. Exhibit tables, staffed by costumed “Martha Washington” aides, exhibited “relics . . . [that] attracted a constant throng of youthful hero-worshippers,” and “many reverent admirers” stood before “a quilt made of pieces from the dresses which Martha

¹⁸ Rodris Roth, “The New England, or ‘Olde Tyme,’ Kitchen Exhibit at Nineteenth-Century Fairs,” in *The Colonial Revival in America*, edited by Alan Axelrod (New York: Norton for the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1985), 165.

¹⁹ John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey and A. Hart, 1830).

Washington wore at State receptions.”²⁰ News of the success of the tea party encouraged women in other states to plan their fundraising events upon the Philadelphia model. More superficially, the countless tea parties hosted by ladies groups throughout the country spawned a fleeting vogue for “colonial” dress among fashionable women.²¹

The Centennial’s most overtly colonial exhibit was the much-admired New England kitchen of the Massachusetts Pavilion (figure 15). Characterized by one writer as a structure with “realism about it,” this log-dwelling provided a demonstration of outdated technology that could be contrasted with an adjacent modern kitchen. Yet the colonial kitchen became a popular attraction due to its charm and nostalgia. Outfitted with old furnishings, the kitchen had “the added attraction of two or three buxom girls in old-time costume, to loll in the rocking chairs, and twirl the spinning-wheel.”²² William Dean Howells offered an eloquent description of his encounter with the kitchen:

Massachusetts, through the poetic thoughtfulness of one of her women, had done far better in the erection of the Old Colony House of logs, which we found thronged by pleased and curious visitors. . . . at the corner of the deep and wide fire-place sat Priscilla spinning—or some young lady in a quaint, old fashioned dress, who served the same purpose. I thought nothing could be better than this, till a lovely old Quakeress, who had stood by, peering critically at the work through her glasses, asked the fair spinster to let her take the wheel. She sat down beside it, caught some strands of tow from the spindle, and with her long –unwonted fingers tried to splice the broken thread; but she got the thread entangled on the iron points of the card, and there was a breathless interval in which we all hung silent about her, fearing for her success. In another moment the thread was set free and spliced, the good old

²⁰“Local Affairs: The Centennial Tea Party,” *The Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), December, 18 1873, 1.

²¹ See the *Centennial Gazette* v. III, n. 11 (February 1876): 7 for a discussion of a Washington, DC ladies tea party, modeled on the earlier one in Philadelphia. The author notes “the mania” for old clothing “with a number of Washington ladies.” See also C.C.H., “Fashions of our great-grandmothers,” *Art Amateur* 8 (1883): 96.

²² Donald G. Mitchell, “In and about the Fair,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 12 (September 1876): 747.

dame bowed herself to her work, and the wheel went round with a soft, triumphant burr, while the crowd heaved a sigh of relief. That was altogether the prettiest thing I saw at the Centennial.²³

Howells's account not only documents the interest of Centennial visitors in the colonial display and particularly its coterie of spinners, but it also highlights the fact that at least a few aged practitioners of spinning still remembered this "colonial" tradition well into the 1870s.

Artists and the Colonial Revival

Eakins and his contemporaries would have had some difficulty avoiding colonial revival imagery, especially in its most palpable form in the Colonial Kitchen. The "buxom girls" and the "lovely old Quakeress" described in the press, in fact, reflect the types of women depicted by artists in the colonial revival genre subjects popularized by the Centennial. Whether young or old, representations of colonial women were typically regarded as "quaint" or "picturesque." A writer for *Appleton's Journal* felt that the tasks themselves had an appeal of their own: "Sewing, knitting, netting, spinning, are all most graceful occupations. They are sweet, quiet, happy-looking things; they give a man rest even to think of them."²⁴

Despite their old-fashioned subject matter and the inherent conservatism of the theme, many colonial revival images adorned the walls of progressive art organizations, including the American Watercolor Society and the Society of American Artists. While conservative genre artists with antiquarian interests, like Enoch Wood Perry and Edward Lamson Henry (figure 16), filled their colonial

²³ William Dean Howells, "A Sennight of the Centennial," *The Atlantic Monthly* (July 1876): 100-101.

²⁴ M.E.W.S., "Arachne and Penelope," *Appleton's Journal* 4 (January-February 1878): 62.

revival images with antique knick-knacks, a younger group of artists also embraced the theme. These younger, foreign-influenced, New York artists, William Merritt Chase, J. Alden Weir, and Thomas Wilmer Dewing (figure 17) among them, pared down the anecdotal detail and focused on costumed figures and aestheticized still-lives.²⁵ In his colonial revival subjects, Eakins's work resembles that of these younger painters, making the images some of the most fashionable he would ever make.

Eakins chose to debut his colonial revival paintings at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1877, with the two watercolors, *Fifty Years Ago* and *Seventy Years Ago*. In comparison with Henry or Perry's work, Eakins's interiors are spare. *Fifty Years Ago* (figure 18; 1877, Metropolitan Museum of Art) depicts a contemplative young woman in a high-waisted dress of the 1820s standing in a spartan interior; the primary "antique" prop used to establish the setting is a Philadelphia tilt-top table behind her on the right. In the left foreground is a geranium, an imported plant associated with eighteenth-century Philadelphia horticulture.²⁶ In *Seventy Years Ago* (figure 19; 1877, The Art Museum, Princeton) an elderly woman knits in a Chippendale chair. Behind her to the left is a spinning wheel, while the same tilt-top table figured in *Fifty Years Ago* appears on the right. Though not intended as visual pendants—*Fifty Years Ago* is much smaller than its counterpart—the titles certainly imply a relationship between the two.

²⁵ Thomas Wilmer Dewing's *The Spinner (or Priscilla)* (1880, Brigham Young University collection) is a good example. See also William Merritt Chase's *Ready for the Ride* (1877, Union League Club, New York) and J. Alden Weir's *Still Life in the Studio* (ca. 1878, Yale University Art Gallery) or Edwin Austin Abbey's unlocated watercolor, *A Rose in October*, exhibited at the 1878 American Water Color Society exhibition.

²⁶ For a discussion of geraniums see Ellen G. Miles, "Rubens Peale with a Geranium," in *American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century, Part II*, Robert Wilson Torchia et al (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1998), 51-52.

As Marc Simpson has suggested, “the use of the word ‘ago’ impos[es] a sense of process, of both now and then, on the spectator.”²⁷ Indeed, it is unclear if Eakins intended us to view these images as historical recreations in the present, or if we are to perceive these works as windows on the past.²⁸ In either case, the ambiguity engenders a sense of remembrance, of memory, a process that is by nature “both now and then.” In his selection of these titles Eakins echoed language that appeared in newspapers and magazines in the years just before and after the Centennial. These featured countless stories of life a hundred years ago: from *The Centennial Gazette’s* “A Hundred Years Ago” to the more specific articles in *Appleton’s Journal* dedicated to exploring specific topics, such as literature and love, as they were “A Hundred Years Ago.”²⁹ While these articles suggested a sense of progress, they also expressed nostalgia for a simpler time. Indeed, the notion that the past was less complicated than the present resonated with Eakins during this period.

Eakins and Ancestry

²⁷ Simpson, “Eakins’s Vision,” 212.

²⁸ Several artists gave their works titles that indicated that they were costume pieces of present day women, an example is Francis Davis Millet’s *Lady in Costume of 1740*, exhibited at the Centennial. It depicts a woman ‘in the dress worn by her great-great grandmother . . . on the occasion of her wedding in 1740,’ cited in Marling, 60.

²⁹ See: Charles H. Woodman, “Love A Hundred Years Ago,” *Appleton’s Journal* 15 (March 25, 1876): 390-394; Margaret Hunt, “Literary Success A Hundred Years Ago,” *Appleton’s Journal* 9 (November 1880): 432-437; Mary Chase Granger, “One Hundred Years Ago,” *The Ladies’ Repository* 29 August 1875): 151-155. Simpson in “Eakins’s Vision” indicates that Eakins’s title was inspired by the article, “An American Lady’s Occupations Seventy Years Ago,” which appeared in *Lippincott’s Magazine* in April 1875, see Simpson, 404, fn. 15. However, the language was so common both in the press and even among artists in the period that it is difficult to distinguish a singular source. Eakins’s friend William Sartain exhibited a work at the National Academy of Design in 1879 also with the title, *Seventy Years Ago*.

Though the Centennial Fair influenced Eakins's colonial images, they also grew out of his earlier depictions of female friends and family members in interiors. At the same moment Eakins was painting rowers and Dr. Gross, he was also making images of women deeply absorbed in simple tasks. *Kathrin* (figure 20; 1872, Yale University Art Gallery), completed in the midst of the rowing series, is a good example of this genre. In this painting, Eakins figured his fiancée Kathrin Crowell with her full attention directed at a kitten in her lap. Her dress, with its bows, lace, and ruffles is supremely feminine, her form romantically lit, with the accessory of the open fan adding an aesthetic touch. Eakins's colonial revival subjects are similarly feminine and absorptive but carry allusions to a different era.

Although *Fifty Years Ago* and *Seventy Years Ago* were the first colonial revival images that Eakins exhibited, he inaugurated the series in 1876 with *In Grandmother's Time* (figure 21). For this, his first historical genre painting, Eakins depicted an elderly woman costumed in antiquated dress spinning at a flax wheel. Completed in the Centennial year, the image provides a neat visual analogue to Howell's "lovely old Quakeress." As with *Kathrin*, the woman is wholly absorbed in her task but there is also a difference between the presentation of the contemporary woman and that of her colonial counterpart. In his images of contemporary females, Eakins maintained the scrupulous delineation of the material surroundings of the sitter for which he was well-known. Eakins's settings in the colonial series were, by contrast, intentionally vague.

The figure in *In Grandmother's Time* is more precisely rendered than her surroundings, a visual strategy that re-emerges throughout the colonial revival series.

Eakins's illumination of her figure ensures the beholders' attention is directed at her, and not toward the details of the room. A Boston critic recognized this when he noted that the figure was "admirably drawn" but to him the interior remained "a whirl of indefiniteness." Unlike Eakins's rowing pictures or even his depictions of contemporary domestic scenes, where every background element is precisely rendered, Eakins allowed ambiguity to creep into these historical themes, as if he deliberately attempted to visualize remembrance. As with his use of the term "ago" for his watercolors, his technique in this painting suggests that we are trapped between past and present—caught, like memory, between the two.

The use of the term grandmother in the title evokes the notion of ancestry, a subject of great interest during the Centennial years and not unknown to Eakins's art. Around 1874 Eakins painted *The Artist and his Father Hunting Reed-Birds*, inscribed "BENIAMINI EAKINS FILIUS PINXIT." With this inscription the artist acknowledged his origins as the son of Benjamin Eakins. Eakins used the same inscription on *The Chess Players* (figure 22), a painting that includes references to all of the men who made his success as an artist possible, indeed, it is an assemblage of Eakins's father figures. In this painting, Benjamin Eakins stands in the center. Eakins was very close to his father, who encouraged him to become an artist. On the right sits the artist George Holmes, who was probably Eakins's first art instructor. On the left sits Bertrand Gardel, Eakins's French teacher, whose lessons helped ease the artist's transition to life in Paris. Hanging on the wall between Gardel and Benjamin Eakins is a print of *Ave Caesar; Morituri Te Salutant* by Eakins's master Jean-Lion Gerome. In this painting made just prior to the Centennial, Eakins, like so many other

Americans, was thinking of his own ancestry—an ancestry that he associated with his father, not his mother.

Benjamin Eakins moved to Philadelphia in the 1840s to earn a living as a writing master.³⁰ But he was born and raised near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, the son of a Scots-Irish tenant farmer, whose primary trade was weaving. The manufacture of homemade cloth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often involved several family members as it took much work to prepare the fibers for use. While the men often did the weaving and finishing of the cloth, the women typically spun the wool or flax into yarn.³¹ Therefore, it is likely that Benjamin’s mother and sisters were themselves spinners. While Eakins never knew his paternal grandparents, who died before he was born, he surely knew of them from his father who expressed nostalgia for the places of his youth in a letter to a childhood friend in 1874: “Last week I took a long walk all around Valley Forge for 9 hours. I sauntered along all by myself over much of the ground we traveled some years gone by.”³²

Lloyd Goodrich indicated that the costumes in Eakins’s colonial revival paintings “were brought down from trunks in the attic,” therefore implying that they had been worn by some of the artist’s forebears.³³ It is entirely possible that the spinning wheel was also a family relic that came down from the attic at this time.

³⁰ By 1843 Benjamin Eakins was working as a “teacher” and living with William Fife, a writing master at 10 Sergeant Street. This may have constituted a form of apprenticeship. It is also likely that Fife was a relative of Benjamin’s since Fife was Benjamin’s mother’s maiden name. The trade of writing master seems to have afforded Benjamin a certain upward mobility. In October of that year Benjamin left Fife and moved into the home of his mother-in-law, “Margaret Cowperthwait, gentlewoman” at 4 Carrolton Square.

³¹ Adrienne D. Hood, “The Gender Division of Labor in the Production of Textiles in Eighteenth-Century Rural Pennsylvania (Rethinking the New England Model),” *Journal of Social History* 27 (Spring 1994): 537-562; and Adrienne D. Hood, “The Material World of Cloth: Production and Use in Eighteenth-Century Rural Pennsylvania,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 53 (January 1996): 43-66.

³² Benjamin Eakins to Henry Huttner, July 29, 1874, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

³³ Goodrich (1982), 1:158.

Benjamin Eakins's father's meager estate included both a "Loom and Geers" and "Wheels and Reel," along with an unspecified quantity of yarn.³⁴ In a manner of speaking, Eakins "claimed" the spinning wheel as his own by signing *In Grandmother's Time* on the wheel itself. Given the Eakins family history, it seems likely that Eakins's depictions of spinners reference the colonial revival not only in terms of a national history, but also a personal one. By this I do not suggest that the grandmother of *In Grandmother's Time* was ever intended to be Eakins's own. She is instead a figure to whom memories could be attached, both in a collective and an individual sense, which is perhaps why she appealed to the critics and to patrons.

In Grandmother's Time became the first of Eakins's pictures to enter a public collection and was a notable early success in his career. In 1879 Laureus Clarke Seelye, Smith College's first President, acquired the painting for the school's newly founded art museum. It was one of Seelye's first purchases for the women's college, where he hoped to assemble "an unequalled collection by American artists."³⁵ The painting's acquisition by a women's college raises intriguing questions about what viewers brought to this image with regard to gender and suggests new ways for viewing Eakins's relationship to his mother.

Mania

Eakins's colonial revival is almost exclusively a feminine world. Only in *The Courtship* (figure 23) is a male present and in this instance, as the title suggests, he is

³⁴ Alexander Eakins's will, "Inventory of the Estate September 13, 1839," Chester County, Pennsylvania.

³⁵ Undated 1879 article in the *Springfield Republican*, quoted in Linda Muehlig, "Introduction" in *Masterworks of American Painting and Sculpture from the Smith College Museum of Art*, Linda Muehlig, ed. (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1999), 8.

there courting a woman who happens to be seated at a spinning wheel. In most of the paintings and sculptures that Eakins completed on this theme, female figures appear alone and nearly all are engaged in some industrious pursuit related to clothing manufacture: spinning, knitting, or sewing.³⁶ In this way, the colonial revival subjects again differ from Eakins's depictions of contemporary women. In his paintings of his sisters and their friends, including that of his fiancée Kathrin Crowell, the women are typically engaged in middle-class leisure activities. Whether they are playing with a pet or playing the piano, the women in his contemporary domestic scenes are not participating in "useful" labor.

This distinction is an important one, as part of the appeal of the colonial revival was the subtle valorization of "old tyme" feminine labor. If only from a relativist viewpoint, middle and upper-class women of the 1870s and 1880s were in the dangerous position of not having enough to do, unlike their colonial ancestors. The medical profession regarded these new circumstances as dangerous because in extreme cases they could—or so the theory went—produce mental illness or outright madness. In June 1872 Eakins's mother, Caroline Cowperthwait died from "exhaustion from mania," an ailment that appeared with growing frequency among women of the middle and upper classes. Eakins acutely felt the impact of his mother's disease, as a family friend noted in April 1871. "Tom Eaken has been at home since July 4th. Since early autumn he has never spent an evening from home as it worried

³⁶ *Fifty Years Ago* is an exception but depending on how you define the series it may be considered the sole exception. *Retrospection* (Yale University Art Gallery) is another, however, the setting is so stripped down that one cannot categorize it as colonial. It has the feeling of Thomas Wilmer Dewing's later paintings of contemporary women in interiors and has been most closely identified in Eakins's oeuvre with the painting *The Artist's Wife and his Setter Dog*.

his Mother... they never leave her a minute.”³⁷ This was the first of Eakins’s several encounters with mentally-ill women and no doubt one that had a great impact on him.

At some point during the development of the colonial revival series, Eakins became friendly with Horatio C. Wood and Silas Weir Mitchell, two physicians famous for their treatment of this type of mental illness.³⁸ The condition, termed “neurasthenia” by Dr. George M. Beard in 1869, was thought to be a direct consequence of modern life. As Beard wrote: “Both anemia and neurasthenia are most frequently met with in civilized, intellectual communities. They are a part of the compensation of our progress and refinement.”³⁹ Mitchell and Wood both published extensively on the topic of “mental exhaustion,” which each related to the stresses of modern life. The Centennial’s frequent reference to progress was a reminder of these stresses. Yet, as a celebration of the anniversary of the nation, the Fair was not unrelated to the diagnosis and treatment of mental exhaustion in its nostalgia for a simpler past.

Mental collapse could be linked to a seemingly diverse array of causes. On the one hand, over-work in men could lead to breakdown. In these cases, the stresses of business, combined with a lack of sufficient physical activity, triggered the disease. In women the situation was similar but slightly more complex. Doctors argued that

³⁷ Rebecca Fussell to her daughter, April 2, 1871, quoted in Goodrich (1982), 1: 76. Caroline Eakins may have suffered with her condition for several years. In January 1867 Eakins wrote to his sister Fanny, “why I haven’t I got [Mommy’s] photograph. I cant help worrying when I hear of something strange.” TE to Frances Eakins, January 8, 1867, Bregler Collection, PAFA. This cryptic exchange suggests that Eakins worried about his mother even during his student days in Paris.

³⁸ Eakins’s contact with the doctors began very early in his career. Wood studied penmanship with Eakins’s father and during the Civil War Mitchell collaborated with Dr. William W. Keen, who would become the instructor for anatomy at the Pennsylvania Academy. Mitchell owned Eakins’s painting *Negro Whistling Plover* by 1877.

³⁹ G.M. Beard, “Neurasthenia, or Nervous Exhaustion,” *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 3 (April 29, 1869): 217.

excessive mental stimulation should be avoided, particularly in the developmental stages of puberty when menstruation and physical development allegedly strained the mind and body. Although thinking too much could also lead to breakdown, a lack of activity could do the same. However, women had to be careful since too much activity could be as detrimental as none.

Wood and Mitchell prescribed two related treatments to combat “mental exhaustion.” Wood believed that only a radical removal from city living could accomplish the successful recovery of frayed nerves. Known as the “camp cure,” Wood’s treatment required that the patient leave behind modern stress and comfort to live outdoors in a rural setting. Eakins probably underwent Wood’s cure himself when the doctor arranged for him to spend several months at the B-T Ranch in North Dakota in 1887 following his removal from the Pennsylvania Academy. Mitchell also advocated the “camp cure” but became best-known for his “rest cure.” The most extreme form of the rest cure required the patient’s isolation from family and friends and a complete lack of activity. Massage, electric stimulation, and a high-fat diet were also prescribed to address the physiological causes of the illness. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Mitchell’s most famously unsatisfied patient, wrote a vivid description of Mitchell’s methods in the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper.” Gilman’s disturbing tale of a woman’s descent into madness *because* of Mitchell’s treatment, offers an alternative perspective to the success stories touted by Mitchell himself, who specialized in treating women.

An intriguing aspect of Eakins’s friendship with these doctors is that both men had links to his colonial revival paintings. Wood offered unequivocal support for the

colonial revival series by purchasing Eakins's painting, *The Courtship*, in 1878. According to his son, James, the doctor was so eager to acquire the painting that he "took the painting away from Eakins before it was finished, fearing that he would spoil it."⁴⁰ As previously noted, this image features a young woman spinning at a flax wheel with a male admirer gazing at her, lost in thought. Eakins again signed his work on the wheel itself. As the only image in the series to include a male figure there is a curious tension in the painting absent from the others, although the emphasis remains on the industrious female.

The painting also suggests a greater narrative dimension than other works in the series and has been related to Longfellow's poem *The Courtship of Miles Standish*.⁴¹ It is unclear whether or not Wood commissioned the work but his interest in the subject finds a parallel in his treatment of mental disease. In his book *Brain-Work and Overwork* of 1880, Wood contrasted colonial vigor with the sedentary complexities of modern life, writing: "Stern Miles Standish, at the head of his Puritan bands, roaming the wild woods in search of the wilder savage, no doubt would have smiled grimly had any one suggested that recreation of some sort is a necessity for the highest development of man."⁴² From the perspective of the 1880s, the colonial era, while fraught with physical danger, seemed a salutary period for mental health.

⁴⁰ *Courtship* file, Goodrich Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art. In her retrospective diary Susan Eakins remembered the purchase as happening in 1889. However, Eakins exhibited the sketch for *Courtship* in 1878 at the Social Art Club in Philadelphia suggesting that he was working on the painting in that year. Wood's son's account of his father's snatching the unfinished canvas from the artist remains the accepted version of the story. Bregler Collection, PAFA.

⁴¹ Kathleen A. Foster, *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 394; and Roger Stein, "Gilded Age Pilgrims," in *Picturing Old New England: Image and Memory*, William H. Truettner and Roger B. Stein, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 47.

⁴² Horatio C Wood, *Brain-Work and Overwork* (Philadelphia: Presley Blakiston, 1880), 85. Eakins's friend William W. Keen was the editor of this series.

Similarly, Mitchell, in his writings, also referred to the colonial past as an ideal era from the standpoint of mental health. In *Wear and Tear or Hints for the Overworked*, Mitchell noted that “the settlers, here as elsewhere, had ample room, and lived sturdily by their own hands, little troubled for the most part with those intense competitions which make it hard to live nowadays and embitter the daily bread of life.”⁴³ Although Mitchell did not purchase a colonial revival painting from Eakins, he did collect “relics” from the period, including furniture and letters.⁴⁴ He also wrote several novels, mostly historical romances set in the revolutionary or early national periods. As his contribution to Eakins’s series, Mitchell lent the artist a Chippendale chair, which appears in several of Eakins’s paintings, sculptures, and photographs. In gratitude for this loan, Eakins intended to give Mitchell a “gelatine cast” of one of his colonial revival projects, the sculpture *Knitting* (figure 24), which features Mitchell’s chair.⁴⁵

Beard, Mitchell, and Wood all tied the causes of mental deterioration to progress, urbanization, and industrialization. In this way, the very achievements that the Centennial celebrated were also held responsible for fomenting mental degeneration. Mitchell viewed this as an urban problem, for he found that “the maladies of the nervous system are increasing rapidly in the more crowded portions

⁴³ Silas Weir Mitchell, *Wear and Tear or Hints for the Overworked* (New York: Arno Press, 1973; reprint of J.B. Lippincott’s fifth edition of 1887), 8.

⁴⁴ At least two sales of Mitchell’s collections were held at Wm. D. Morley’s art galleries in Philadelphia. The first sale of the “Library of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell” was held on May 19, 1941 and included “books, autographs, prints, and historical relics.” The second sale of “Selected, Choice and Labeled Early American Furniture, Silver, Lowestoft, Paintings, Etc. from the Biddle, Newbold, Roberts, Earnshaw and Mitchell Families” was held on May 28, 1942. This second sale included a reproduction “Philadelphia Chippendale-Style Carved Mahogany Side Chair” copied after a chair retained by the Mitchell family. Mitchell specialized in collecting revolutionary-era material, including, for example, documents autographed by Signers, Washingtoniana, and a diary kept by Benedict Arnold.

⁴⁵ TE to James P. Scott, June 18, 1883, Goodrich papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Transcription made by Goodrich.

of the United States.”⁴⁶ Using statistics from Chicago, Mitchell went on to claim that “the industry and energy which have built this great city on a morass, and made it a vast center of insatiate commerce, are now at work to undermine the nervous systems of its restless and eager people.”⁴⁷ The subtext of his argument was that these problems were not part of our past but the consequence of modernity.

In terms of mental health, Mitchell extolled the virtues of the past, praising its home-based economies, agrarian trades, physical labor, and limited opportunities for intellectual exhaustion. It seemed to Mitchell that our ancestors lacked “the thousand intricate problems to solve which perplex those who struggle to-day in our teeming city hives.”⁴⁸ The implicit nostalgia of this philosophy manifested itself in the colonial revival art of the period, which celebrated domestic cloth production as the fruit of skilled physical, but not intellectual, labor. The therapeutic value of such domestic handicraft was widely acknowledged. The needle was even likened by one writer to a lightning rod in its power to act as “a conductor off for concealed disturbance.”⁴⁹

The condition of female mental health was especially imperative to Mitchell because, he felt, “if the mothers of a people are sickly and weak, the sad inheritance falls upon their offspring.”⁵⁰ One wonders if Eakins had any anxiety regarding his own mental health in wake of his mother’s illness—or, if he felt any concern for his three sisters, who often served as his models. And, what of his increasingly prominent role as an educator with a growing female student body? Art education at the

⁴⁶ Mitchell, 22.

⁴⁷ Mitchell, 28-29.

⁴⁸ Mitchell, 8-9.

⁴⁹ M.E.W.S., “Arachne and Penelope,” 63.

⁵⁰ Mitchell, 30.

Pennsylvania Academy uniquely offered women the same opportunities as those given to the male pupils. Yet the progressive nature of the program led to tensions between Eakins and his students. In the years prior to his 1886 dismissal from the Academy, the school received complaints about Eakins's teaching—these complaints came from female students or their parents.⁵¹

Mitchell believed that women's growing access to education contributed to the increasing number of nervous breakdowns he witnessed through his practice. He wondered: "Does any physician believe that it is good for a growing girl to be so occupied seven or eight hours a day? Or that it is right for her to use her brains as long a time as the mechanic employs his muscles?"⁵² Further in the text, as if to answer his own questions, Mitchell observed, "the cases I see of breakdown among women between sixteen and nineteen who belong to normal schools or female colleges are out of all proportion larger than the number of like failures among young men of the same ages."⁵³ Not only were "city-bred" women generally failing "to fulfil all the natural functions of mothers," but their "future womanly usefulness" was being compromised by education.⁵⁴ Mitchell again asserted that this epidemic stemmed from progress in that the educational demands made upon women were "vastly more exacting" than those made "half a century ago," re-establishing the

⁵¹ Academy President, James L. Claghorn received one letter dated April 11, 1882 and signed "R.S.," identified as a parent of one of the female students, which complained of Eakins's methods. In 1884 Diana Franklin, an Academy student launched a protest over the use of male models in the Schools. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Archives.

⁵² Mitchell, 36.

⁵³ Mitchell, 44. It is also interesting that one of Eakins models for the series, Nannie Williams was just the sort of woman that Mitchell was concerned about. She attended the Girls High School, graduating in 1874 "to teach" according to the Record Books of the Girls High School, Nannie Williams file, Eakins Archive, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Miss Williams became head of a department at the High School and later went on to become Directress of the Public Kindergartens in Philadelphia. See "The Women Who Served as Models for the Coins," *The New York Times*, (December 15, 1907): n.p.

⁵⁴ Mitchell, 33, 36.

sense that things were “better” in the past.⁵⁵ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has studied this tendency in Victorian culture, writing: “Society, late-nineteenth-century physicians warned, must protect the higher good of racial health by avoiding situations in which adolescent girls taxed their intellectual faculties in academic competition. Pointedly, they compared the robust fertility of early-nineteenth-century women with the relative barrenness of their granddaughters—New Women.”⁵⁶

Given the implication that female accomplishments were putting women at risk, perhaps it is not mere coincidence that William Dean Howells followed his glowing description of the “lovely old Quakeress” spinning at her wheel with a much less enthusiastic discussion of the exhibits in the Fair’s Woman’s Pavilion. As Howells wrote, “It seems not yet the moment for the better half of our species to take their stand apart from the worse upon any distinct performance in art and industry.”⁵⁷ Howells also recognized and praised female talent, but others remained far more critical. Ostensibly intended to show the progress of female workers in a range of spheres, including the domestic one, the Woman’s Pavilion provided skeptics with a confirmation that women were doing too much.

So what then attracted Laurenus Clarke Seelye, President of Smith College to Eakins’s colonial revival image, *In Grandmother’s Time*? One likely factor was that Seelye knew the sorts of arguments against women’s higher education put forth by

⁵⁵ Mitchell, 47.

⁵⁶ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 258. Rosenberg cites the work of another physician writing in this period, William Goodell, whose *Lessons in Gynecology* of 1879 was part of a series edited by Eakins’s friend, Daniel G. Brinton. As Goodell wrote: “Our great-grandmothers got their schooling during the winter months and let their brains lie fallow the rest of the year. They knew less about Euclid and the classics than they did about housekeeping and housework. But they made good wives and mothers, and bore and nursed sturdy sons and buxom daughters and plenty of them at that.”

⁵⁷ Howells, 101.

Mitchell and others. In *Wear and Tear* Mitchell made his concerns clear by naming Vassar as an example of a women's college that while "careful" in "guarding the health" of its students still upheld a dangerous standard for "health and endurance" that did not acknowledge the limits of feminine life.⁵⁸ Smith would have raised even greater concerns for Mitchell since as a college it endeavored to raise the standards for admittance of its pupils to equal those held by male colleges. Unlike many of its sister institutions, Smith did not water-down its curriculum or offer preparatory courses to compensate for a lack of adequate training. Instead, in its first class, the college admitted only the few female applicants who could meet its stringent requirements.

On account of these policies, Smith was subject to intense criticism in its early years, forcing Seelye to explicitly acknowledge the fears regarding women's health and mental labor in his annual report for the landmark women's college in 1875-76. While stating that during the course of the term none of his students appeared "as yet, to have been injured by study," he recognized the need for caution, stating that, "in this respect, however, they need greater care than young men." He admitted that his charges were "more disposed to study and less inclined to exercise," and outlined the measures he had taken to ensure that the young women were not "shirking physical exercise." This environment cultivated New Women while acknowledging the commonly held belief in their physical and mental limitations. Seelye felt that their growth was possible only with considerable care but that under these circumstances

⁵⁸ Mitchell, 44.

women would prove to “have both the mental and physical ability to gain a high intellectual culture.”⁵⁹

Though President of a progressive women’s institution, Seelye took care not to alarm anyone with grand rhetorical statements regarding the limitless abilities of female students. Instead, he chose a relatively conservative and pragmatic approach. In this context, the selection of *In Grandmother’s Time* seems entirely fitting. The image celebrates the ideal balance of body and mind for women according to the dictates of Mitchell, Wood, and Beard and yet, its pastness prevents it from being too assertive a model for young women of the late nineteenth century.

Colonial Revival at PAFA

As a professor at the Pennsylvania Academy, Eakins’s position was not unlike Seelye’s—his female pupils being largely subject to the same requirements as the men. Yet Eakins taught at an institution that, unlike Smith, accepted a good number of dilettantes to help pay its bills. Eakins’s cautiously progressive opinions about women’s education apparently did not apply to them—making his tolerance of female students at the Academy more ambiguous than it first appears.

In his youth, Eakins’s behavior toward women, particularly his own sisters, was exasperatingly both patronizing and sympathetic.⁶⁰ But his thinking seems to have evolved during his tenure at the Academy, where he had a good number of

⁵⁹ Office of the President. Annual Report, Smith College, 1875-76. For additional information about Smith College and Seelye see: Harriet Seelye Rhees, *Laureus Clark Seelye* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929) and L. Clark Seelye, *The Early History of Smith College, 1871-1910* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923).

⁶⁰ According to Margaret McHenry, as a young man, Eakins strongly disapproved of higher education for women to the extent that he discouraged his talented eldest sister Frances from attending high school. Margaret McHenry, *Thomas Eakins, Who Painted* (Oreland, Pa: Privately printed, 1946), 29.

female students, several of whom became life-long friends. As Eakins observed, “although professional privileges are more tardily accorded to women than to men, and with reason, yet there is a decided advance making with respect to the education of women especially in America.” Although he did “not believe that great painting or sculpture or surgery will ever be done by women,” he did feel that “good enough work is continually done by them to be well worth doing.”⁶¹

Although these statements clearly place Eakins in a highly progressive position in terms of late-nineteenth-century instruction, it fell short of a wholehearted endorsement of women’s abilities. Given his qualification that women’s education had lagged behind men’s “with reason” and his less-than-forceful acknowledgement that women only did “good enough work,” it appears he had continued ambivalence toward the accomplishments of his female pupils. Further, if we continue in the letter, Eakins qualified his comments, writing “as the population increases, and marriages are later and fewer, and the risks of losing fortunes greater; so increases the number of women who are or may be compelled at some time to support themselves, and figure painting is not now so dishonorable to them.” This, along with other comments in the letter, indicate that he was speaking primarily of unmarried women. Eakins distained “lady painters” and hoped to train women to become self-supporting professional artists. Yet this training did not come without a price, for he wholeheartedly believed that any woman seeking a career as an artist could not expect to live “the conventional life.”⁶²

⁶¹ TE to Edward H. Coates, September 11, 1886, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

⁶² Eakins’s attitudes toward his female students may also be acknowledged in the Art Student’s League of Philadelphia that was organized by PAFA students after Eakins’s dismissal from the Academy. The ASL was a predominantly male enclave, with very few female students in attendance. Of the names

In this context it is perhaps significant that the colonial revival theme coalesced in Eakins's art during the early years of his teaching at the Academy and his increasing involvement with female students. Additionally, if we recall that the male-dominated subjects that Eakins painted just prior to and during his work on the colonial revival images—doctors, rowers, hunters, and fishermen—are of men who are “doing,” his colonial women seem all the more unusual and reactionary. It is therefore intriguing that Eakins's female students both embraced the colonial revival as a subject in their own work and served as models for some of Eakins's own paintings on the theme.

None of his female students in this period was more talented or more susceptible to Eakins's influence than his future wife, Susan Macdowell. Of all of Eakins's students, Susan's work was most like her teacher's. Susan's paintings showed more than a stylistic resemblance to Eakins's, she sometimes used the same models and illustrated the same subjects as her teacher. For example, her painting, *Spinning* (figure 25) gives us a slightly different vantage point on Eakins's model for the painting *In Grandmother's Time*. Seated at the flax wheel in identical dress, the figure was clearly based upon Eakins's image. Similarly, her painting, *Chaperone* (1879), focuses on the chaperone figure in Eakins's painting of William Rush.⁶³ *The Old Clock on the Stairs* (figure 26; lost), the best-known of her more independent works, commissioned by Academy director Fairman Rogers derived from Longfellow's nostalgic poem of the same title. The painting depicted an “old-

listed in a record book of attendees kept by Edward Boulton, only three women who were not related to Eakins are listed. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

⁶³ David Sellin, “Eakins and the Macdowells and the Academy,” in *Thomas Eakins, Susan Macdowell Eakins, Elizabeth Kenton* (Roanoke, Va.:North Cross School, 1977), 27-28.

fashioned mansion, with an old-fashioned standard clock on the landing above, and with a youth and a maid seated on the steps.”⁶⁴ An impressive foray into the colonial idiom, Susan received the Charles Toppan prize for the painting.⁶⁵

Susan also served as a model for Eakins. She noted in her diary for June 15, 1881 “that group of infant waist dressed Acad. girls taken in Trot’s yard.”⁶⁶ In this entry Susan referred to a group of outdoor photographs attributed to Eakins. These depicted several female Academy students, including Susan and her sister Elizabeth, dressed in Empire costume (figure 27). The haphazard arrangements of the figures and the lack of cropping of the obviously 1880s details of the backyard in which they were taken indicate that Eakins meant these photos to function as studies for some unrealized project or for teaching. The women pose singly or in groups, dancing, conversing, or standing. The group is related to a series of photos that Eakins took of his youngest sister Caddie, also outdoors and in Empire costume (figure 28). The act of using students as models, while fulfilling a utilitarian necessity for good models, in the case of his female pupils, forced them into the more traditional role granted women in the arts—that of subject or muse. By dressing them in outdated costume, Eakins further negated the complex identity of the female artist.

Colonial Revival and Aestheticism in New York

⁶⁴ Undated clipping, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

⁶⁵ This award was given by the Academy for accurate drawing. In 1879, Susan won the Mary Smith award for her painting *The Rehearsal*, given for the best painting by a woman native of Philadelphia.

⁶⁶ Susan Eakins’s Retrospective Diary, Bregler Collection, PAFA. It is interesting that these photos were taken two weeks before Susan completed the sketch for *The Old Clock on the Stairs*, which she records on July 1, 1881.

The images “taken in Trot’s yard” also provide a compelling link with the aesthetic preferences of Eakins’s artistic peers, particularly those artists working in New York and exhibiting at the most progressive venues. Among the photos of the Academy girls is one where Susan holds a Japanese parasol (figure 29)—a less historically appropriate attribute that reminds one of the Asian motifs popular in Aesthetic Movement paintings. Among these, J. Alden Weir’s painting, *Still Life in the Studio* (figure 30), which features Asian objects and a spinning wheel, is one of the few to similarly pair the colonial with the Orient.

Eakins’s interest in the art market is often underestimated but, particularly in the promising years of the 1870s and 1880s (before his dismissal from the Academy), Eakins was concerned with acceptance by the cosmopolitan art world. As early as 1875 he wrote to his friend, the critic Earl Shinn, bragging that his painting *The Schreiber Brothers*, which had been rejected by the National Academy of Design, was “a much better figure picture than any one in N.Y. can paint.”⁶⁷ In the same letter he expressed an ambitious exhibition strategy by suggesting his intention to send the rejected painting to London, for “in selling things on merit only your object is to put them in comparison with the best ones in the largest market. I think by this course I will gain in this end.” Eakins was confident that his talents would be recognized if he exhibited his best work in the best places.

The 1881 photos mark the beginning of an extended series of photographs of women in costume, which became ever more like the works of his peers as his contact with New York increased. Beginning in the fall of 1881 and continuing through 1885,

⁶⁷ TE to Earl Shinn, undated letter [1875], Richard T. Cadbury Papers, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

Eakins began commuting twice weekly to teach at The Brooklyn Art Guild in New York. This regular and extended contact with New York raises questions about the long held belief that Eakins somehow “isolated” himself in Philadelphia and remained virtually unconscious of the workings of the art market. In Brooklyn, and in his increasing participation in New York exhibitions, Eakins would certainly have been aware of the emerging artistic trends and developed an eye for what saleable art looked like. Perhaps toward this end, Eakins continued to photograph women (many of them students) in historical costumes following the vogue for colonial revival art.

Some of the photos are incredibly contrived, unlike the seemingly impromptu outdoor studies “in Trot’s yard.” In one, Susan’s sister, Elizabeth appears in a more elaborate, eighteenth-century gown with a decorative patterned drape behind her (figure 31). In another, a woman in a similar eighteenth-century dress is seated in an almost narrative arrangement, looking across a small table (figure 32). She is poised, as if in conversation with an unseen visitor, her teaspoon hovering above her teacup. Yet despite the pains taken to construct the “old tyme” mood, the detritus of the modern artist’s studio provides the backdrop behind the woman. Here, these elements seem intended to suggest the bohemian aesthetic environment, not merely a “workshop” as he once referred to his studio, but as an “atelier.”⁶⁸ Even more obviously aestheticizing are Eakins’s photographs of Blanche Gilroy, who reclines in vaguely classical costume, incongruously juxtaposed with a modern banjo (figure 33). The arrangement of figure and objects in these images recall the work of the Pre-

⁶⁸ See Foster, 13 for a discussion of Eakins’s studio as a workshop and the artist’s identification with an artisan tradition. Another photo, *Female Model Spinning while Man Watches* also links the bohemian with the historical. In this image the man wears contemporary “artsy” garb, while the woman appears as a “colonial” figure.

Raphaelites, a rather anti-Realist reference for Eakins but one that was obviously deliberate.

Although Goodrich's suggestion that Eakins's colonial revival subjects constituted a "temporary focusing on the past" was made prior to the discovery of these photographs, it has to some extent prevailed. These works have been little considered in terms of Eakins's larger career, giving the false impression that they constitute a dead end. Yet Eakins did take the images in two distinct directions that had greater implications for his art.

The Artist's Wife

Although few of Eakins's photographs of women in costume yielded finished paintings, they did inform his work of the period. One important correspondence exists between photographs of a woman in a laced-bodice dress (figure 34) and Eakins's painting of his wife, *The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog* (figure 35).⁶⁹ In the photos, the model clearly wears a historically inspired costume, a long gown, which laces through the bodice. Eakins carefully arranged a setting for her even if he left it somewhat incomplete. The woman sits in a Queen Anne chair that has been positioned on an old carpet; behind her is a sofa with a damask print, behind which hangs a patterned drape. Sleeping at the woman's feet is the artist's dog, Harry. The

⁶⁹ A similar photograph of Eakins's sister Caroline (Caddie) served as the basis for Elizabeth Macdowell's painting *Day Dreams*. In both the painting and the photograph a prominently placed spinning wheel was one of the primary props.

woman holds an unidentifiable book in her hand. The use of old-fashioned props and patterned fabrics link this painting with Eakins's interest in aestheticism.

Eakins used this photograph as a basic model for his painting *The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog*. However, in the painting he rearranged the elements, turning the figure to the left instead of the right and clothing Susan in an entirely different gown, one that looks more like the Empire dresses in which she posed "in Trot's yard." The setting is also different, being the interior of Eakins's own private studio on Chestnut Street. But the basic notion of the image remains: a woman with a book seated in a Queen Anne chair, with a dog at her feet, and a patterned drape behind. It is significant that Eakins began with such an overtly historicizing aesthetic image as the basis for a contemporary portrait of his new wife and former pupil. Although he stripped down the historical elements for the painting, the two objects most closely associated with Susan—the chair and the dress—remain historically grounded.

Eakins had begun the process of bringing his colonial subjects into the present with the painting, *Retrospection* (figure 36), which also shares compositional similarities with his painting of Susan. In the painting, Eakins seated his model, a Mrs. Perkins, in Mitchell's Chippendale chair facing right. The setting is non-existent, yet defined as a space by Eakins's unusually intense use of chiaroscuro. Eakins exhibited this work several times under various titles but occasionally as *Study (Mrs. Perkins sitting on Dr. M's chair)*. With this title Eakins identified his sitter as a contemporary and suggested she not be viewed as a figure from the past. Likewise, his abbreviated mention of Mitchell indicates that this is a Chippendale chair in 1880,

not 1780. The moodiness of the lighting lends a melancholy air that, if we follow Mitchell's line of argument, could also be related to her inactivity. Unlike most of the other images in the series, the woman in *Retrospection* is both unproductive and distinctly of the present, despite her dress.

Eakins similarly cast a melancholy cloud over the painting of his wife, noticeably heightened after he reworked Susan's face after 1886, making her seem older, more tired and frail than she initially did.⁷⁰ In this way, it bears the hallmarks of Eakins's least marketable qualities, his aggressive and unattractive realism. Yet Eakins also clearly intended the painting as a highly aestheticized work. The colorful Japanese book in Susan's lap overtly refers to the Japonisme then fashionable with his contemporaries and its central placement in the composition makes the image unavoidably present.⁷¹ Two of the artworks behind Susan can be loosely identified. On the right is his classically-inspired sculpture, *Arcadia*, while to the left is an unidentified work that is related to the colonial revival series, depicting a seated woman, who is sewing or knitting. That Eakins chose to figure these historical works, rather than his boldly realist portraits or his modern hunting and rowing subjects tell us something about his intentions: if critics viewed the painting as harshly unattractive, they missed that Eakins was hoping for marketability. This is Eakins's most aestheticized painting.

⁷⁰ A discussion of the changes to the image can be found in: Ellwood C. Parry, III, "The Thomas Eakins Portrait of Sue and Harry; Or, When Did the Artist Change His Mind?," *Arts Magazine* 53 (May 1979): 146-153.

⁷¹ Susan also collected Japanese books, some of which are in the Bregler Collection, PAFA. Other Japanese items owned by the Macdowell sisters are in the collection of the Museum of Western Virginia in Roanoke.

The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog has often been compared with William Merritt Chase's paintings of women in his own studio and to his *Portrait of Miss Dora Wheeler* (figure 37).⁷² Indeed, there are very clear affinities between Chases's works and Eakins's painting of his wife. The yellow drape, the turn of the chair, Susan's outward gaze and basic pose echo Chase's portrait of Wheeler, who was *his* pupil. Yet there is also a very clear difference. Chase's portrait asserts his student's presence as an individual. She appears confident and self-possessed, unlike Susan, who seems small and withering by comparison. Wheeler is also fashionably dressed in contemporary clothing, surrounded by rich objects that were hers, for the setting is Wheeler's own studio.⁷³

By contrast, Eakins did not depict Susan as an artist, much less his best pupil. Rather, she appears as a possession among the artist's own things: his dog, his paintings, his props. Although *The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog* was not Eakins's title for the painting, it was the one that Susan gave when the Metropolitan Museum of Art purchased the painting from her.⁷⁴ Her own preference for the possessives in the title may provide a context for viewing the image. Although Susan continued to work as an artist after her marriage, her work was less than secondary within their

⁷² Roger B. Stein, "Artifact as Ideology: the Aesthetic Movement in its American Cultural Context," in *In Pursuit of Beauty* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 41 and Marc Simpson, "The 1880s," in *Thomas Eakins*, Darrel Sewell, ed. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 116.

⁷³ Karal Ann Marling, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: Miss Dora Wheeler," *The Bulletin of The Cleveland Museum of Art*, (February 1978): 47-57. Marling identifies the setting as Wheeler's studio.

⁷⁴ Susan Eakins to Bryson Burroughs, quoted in Natalie Spassky, et al, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume II* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 11.

partnership; she rarely exhibited and early in their marriage worked primarily as a copyist.⁷⁵

It is perhaps Susan's talent as a painter that accounts for the difference between Eakins's portrayal of her and Chase's of Wheeler. Although Wheeler aspired to become a figure painter, she was far less capable than Susan. Wheeler instead became primarily linked with the decorative arts. Through her mother Candace's firm, Associated Artists, Dora designed a number of tapestries. In her role as a successful creative artist, Dora ultimately did not contest the importance of household industry. Dora perpetuated the link between women and handicraft through her production of high-end needlework.

With its origins in the colonial revival series, *The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog* again raises questions about Eakins's thoughts about women's education and the specter of mental illness. Susan's anachronistic dress places her either in the past or in the role of a studio model, neither of which acknowledges her more progressive role as a woman artist. Despite the dress, Susan is not the industrious worker of the colonial revival images (including the one behind her)—instead, her hands rest inactively upon the book. That she is seated with a book in a contemporary setting and further, that we know that she is Susan Eakins, pupil of Thomas Eakins, heralds her as a New Woman, and yet she appears enervated and inert. Eakins's reworking of the painting increased the shadows on Susan's face, making her seem more worn and frail—leading some to suggest that she appears ill and dejected, rather like a

⁷⁵ Susan's Retrospective Diary in the Bregler Collection at PAFA lists several entries for her copy commissions, including one on June 26, 1880 "finished copying old portraits for Dr. S. Weir Mitchell."

neurasthenic.⁷⁶ Was Eakins on some level, representing the consequences of female education in his representation of Susan?

Susan's appearance echoes S. Weir Mitchell's descriptions of modern "city-bred" women as weak and "merely pretty to look at," whose unfortunate "destiny is the shawl and the sofa, neuralgia, weak backs and the varied forms of hysteria."⁷⁷ Although Susan was by most accounts a good-natured soul, not prone to mental illness, her work as a professional artist put her at risk. I do not mean to suggest that Eakins consciously depicted his wife as a neurasthenic but that his ambivalence about educated professional women, especially those who married, made it impossible to represent her as a confident individual. By the time Eakins altered his wife's appearance in the painting it must also have been clear that she would not bear him any children, placing her in the same category of women who, according to Mitchell, were unable "to fulfill all the natural functions of mothers."⁷⁸ In his student years, Eakins espoused similar views regarding motherhood, writing, "the noblest & most beautiful sight in the world is the father and mother of strong children & the most ignoble & contemptible a bride & bridegroom." He continued, "if ever I marry it will be only for the delight of raising children."⁷⁹

Maggie

If *The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog* represents one terminus for Eakins's colonial revival series, another revolves around two watercolors, *Homespun* and

⁷⁶ See Sarah Spies, "Figuring the Neurasthenic: Thomas Eakins, Nervous Illness, and Gender in Victorian America," *Nineteenth Century Studies* 12 (1998): 84-109.

⁷⁷ Mitchell, 32.

⁷⁸ Mitchell, 33.

⁷⁹ TE to William Crowell, September 21, 1868, Betsy Wyeth Collection, Brandywine River Museum.

Spinning, which show Eakins's favorite sister Maggie at a spinning wheel (Figures 38 and 39). Maggie was a robust example of modern womanhood. Intelligent, but not bookish, Maggie was also a superb athlete. She acted as Eakins's "manager," assisting her brother with correspondence and keeping the record of his exhibitions. In this way, she ideally helped her brother without threatening him, or compromising her sex.

Eakins depictions of Maggie at the wheel differ from his other works in that she is not quite in colonial dress. In fact, her garb is often characterized as "classical."⁸⁰ Indeed, her dress most closely resembles the costumes worn in photos that Eakins took of women posing with classical casts and with his own classically-influenced *Arcadia* sculpture. Although Goodrich felt that there was "no loss of authenticity" in these images, Eakins was mixing historically incongruous styles. As in his earlier colonial revival works, the room is modestly furnished with only the essentials necessary to establish the setting. The focus is on Maggie and her actions at the wheel. Since Maggie so dominates our impression of this American interior, her dress is all the more curious. Eakins was moving in a new direction and would soon embark on a classical series, which may have had their origins in these later colonial revival subjects.

There was precedent for linking the colonial past with the classical. In 1809 one "Will Homespun," published an article in *The Aurora* in which he advocated domestic cloth production over the importation of foreign goods. As he wrote, "the daughters of Columbia will feel a virtuous pride in taking up the spindle and the loom

⁸⁰ H. Barbara Weinberg, "Thomas Eakins and the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* v. 52, n. 3 (Winter 1994/95): 25; Foster, 96; Simpson, "The 1880s," 109.

when they reflect that they are imitating the example of the virtuous Penelope, wife of the sage chief of Ithaca.”⁸¹ Penelope’s talent as a weaver was often intertwined with the notion of yarn production through spinning. Following the Centennial, *Appleton’s Journal* published an article entitled, “Arachne and Penelope” which focused on women’s handicraft, encompassing sewing, lace-making, spinning, and weaving. The article suggested that the modern Penelope could trace her roots back to “great-grandmamma”⁸² In other words, the classical and the colonial were linked by the inherent moral value of women’s work.

Eakins pushed the subject just a bit further when he reused the composition from *Homespun* for the sculpture *Spinning* (figure 40). The work was commissioned through the architect Theophilus Chandler, as decorative sculpture for a mantel in the house of sugar refiner James P. Scott. *Spinning* was to be paired with *Knitting*, a sculpture whose composition derived from his earlier colonial revival painting, *Seventy Years Ago*. However, by the time Eakins began work on the sculptures, Maggie had died and he had to reconceive the image with another model, chosen from the ranks of his female pupils. But he kept the costume in the same classical vein.

In both of the watercolors, as well as in the *Spinning* panel, there is a greater emphasis on the motion of the spinning wheel itself than in some of the earlier colonial revival images. By the time Eakins painted her, Maggie had gained a deft competency at the spinning wheel. After Maggie’s death he had to train his new

⁸¹ Will Homespun, *The Aurora* (August 16, 1809): 2.

⁸² M.E.W.S. “Arachne and Penelope,” 63. Another classical connection can be found in Diego Velazquez’s painting, *Las Hilanderas* (Museo del Prado, Madrid), which features women at the spinning wheel and alludes to Arachne’s competition with the goddess Athena. Eakins admired this painting during his visit to the Prado as a student.

model, Ellen Ahrens, to use the wheel. As he explained to Scott, “In the spinning panel after I had worked some weeks, the girl in learning to spin well became so much more graceful than when she had learned to spin only passably, that I tore down all my work and recommenced.”⁸³ Eakins had similarly depicted the whirl of spoked wheels in his painting, *A May Morning in the Fair* (1879, Philadelphia Museum of Art), which showed Fairman Roger’s four-in-hand coach in motion in Fairmount Park. By 1881 he had developed a distinct interest in motion. As we shall see in Chapter Three, this interest also became linked with classical art.

Although the two sculpted panels share formal similarities with eighteenth-century mantel designs, the shift to sculpture may have further inspired Eakins to move in a classical direction and to leave the colonial behind. As Eakins wrote, “[Chandler] wished me to undertake myself the ornamentation of the chimney piece and easily induced me, for the work was much to my taste.” Coming at the end of the colonial revival series, it was clearly not the subject matter alone which was “to his taste” but the medium. Eakins averred, “relief work too has always been considered the most difficult composition and the one requiring the most learning.”⁸⁴

When Scott balked at Eakins’s price for the works, Eakins consistently referred his patron to classical Greek works as his benchmark for both sculptural accomplishment in general and for what he was attempting in his own panels. To affirm the value of his colonial revival panels, Eakins directed Scott to “stop at the Academy of Fine Arts” so that he might “examine there casts of the most celebrated reliefs in the world, those of the frieze of the Parthenon.” He continued, making

⁸³ TE to James P. Scott, June 18, 1883, Lloyd Goodrich transcription, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

⁸⁴ TE to James P. Scott, June 18, 1883, Lloyd Goodrich transcription, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

reference to his own works, “Now this frieze, just twice as large as mine (linear measure), was placed on the temple nearly 40 feet high while my panel is not I think more than 3 feet above the eye. Hence to view the frieze at as favorable an angle as my panel you would have to go 12 times as far off.”⁸⁵ In this passage Eakins suggested a rather odd formal comparison between Phidias’s great antique work, done in a relatively low relief, with his own colonial revival panels, which use a much higher relief, circumscribed by an insistent sense of perspective. The comparison makes no sense unless we understand that Eakins already considered his work as entering a classical phase, an idiom that he would fully embrace with the Arcadia series.

⁸⁵ TE to James. P. Scott July, 11, 1883, Bregler Collection, PAFA. Eakins continued the comparison with Phidias’s work, writing that: “To make an analogy then, my panels should be finished 12/2 just 6 times as much as the Phidias work.” He also recommended that Scott look at “some little Greek reliefs at the Academy” as well

CHAPTER THREE

REENACTING THE ANTIQUE

In 1886, Thomas Eakins wrote to Edward Hornor Coates, Chairman of the Committee on Instruction at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Describing his recent sculptural projects, he characterized them as being made “after the Greek methods of relief.”¹ The works he referred to: *Youth Playing the Pipes* (figure 41), *An Arcadian*, and *Arcadia (Pastoral)* depict nude and classically draped figures, some playing antique-styled pipes. The reliefs otherwise in no way resemble Greek sculptures, all three panels being small, intimate scenes of roughly modeled individuals who do not possess the idealized physiques preferred by ancient sculptors. Never intended for marble, all three works survive as plasters made for bronze castings. What then did Eakins mean by “Greek methods?”²

As a teacher at the Pennsylvania Academy, Eakins objected to his students working too long copying from plaster casts made after antique sculptures. His opposition to this long-held artistic tradition became a well-known and ultimately controversial part of Eakins’s pedagogical philosophy. In place of study from classical casts, Eakins advocated extended study of the life model. Eakins’s emphasis on life study went well-beyond that of any other American art academy of the period—so much so that critics and students complained that Eakins’s program fell short in

¹ Thomas Eakins to Edward H. Coates, late February 1886, Charles Bregler’s Thomas Eakins Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

² The most classical aspect of *Arcadia* is the emptiness of the background, which resembles that of the frieze of the Parthenon. Eakins knew the frieze only through the casts at the Pennsylvania Academy but the arrangement of the frieze on the walls of the Academy gallery was incorrect and out of sequence, creating disjointed figural groupings. This inaccurate arrangement created an effect similar to the detached groups of figures seen in *Arcadia*.

other areas, primarily landscape painting.³ However, this attention to the life model was what Eakins meant by “Greek methods.” Eakins felt certain that ancient artists, such as his hero Phidias, produced their great works only through similarly scrupulous life study.

Eakins paid homage to this link between life modeling and the classical tradition in *Swimming* (figure 42), a painting commissioned by Coates in 1884. In this image, Eakins carefully studied a group of models, nearly all of whom were his own students, outdoors at Dove Lake, near Bryn Mawr. While the models are so exactly delineated that each one’s identity has recently been documented, several of them stand in rigid formation, echoing the poses of classical pedimental sculptures.⁴ The relationship between this image and Eakins’s Arcadian series has often been noted, yet the reasons why Eakins took such an interest in classical subject matter or why he crafted *Swimming* in such a curiously static manner remain unclear.

Eakins began his Arcadian series, which also includes two unfinished paintings and several photographs, shortly after he was made Director of the Academy’s Schools in February 1882. Following years of precarious employment by the Academy, this promotion afforded Eakins the opportunity to take the artistic program fully in hand and craft it according to his personal artistic vision. In doing so, Eakins applied the pedagogical theories of the French teacher Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran. Both the Arcadian series and *Swimming* provide visual evidence of the

³ Leslie W. Miller, “Art: The Awards of Prizes at the Academy,” *American*, November 7, 1885, 45.

⁴ Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash, eds., *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996).

influence of Lecoq's theories through their emphasis on classical themes and the use of nude models outdoors.⁵

Arcadia

Eakins's attraction to classical subject matter grew out of his popular colonial revival series. Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, toward the end of the colonial revival series the images became increasingly anachronistic as Eakins's introduced figures wearing classical costumes into his early American interiors. The colonial revival series also provided Eakins his first opportunity to work in sculpture, a medium he would continue to explore with the Arcadian series. As with his colonial revival subjects, these classically-inspired works reflected a contemporary vogue for this kind of subject matter. With their moody, almost tonalist landscapes, and idyllic figures, the Arcadian paintings resemble those of his contemporaries. Yet Eakins chose not to reap the benefits that might have come from exhibiting such timely works.

Since most of the Arcadian works were never exhibited, remaining virtually unknown during Eakins's lifetime, they have often been regarded as an experimental phase in his career, an artistic dead end.⁶ If true, this would have been remarkable, for although Eakins occasionally abandoned individual works (such as *Hiawatha*), the

⁵ Lecoq's influence on Eakins has been briefly discussed in: Kathy Foster, "Paris and Philadelphia: Thomas Eakins and the Beaux-Arts" (M.A. Thesis, Yale University, 1972), 16-18; Elizabeth LaMotte Cates Milroy, "Thomas Eakins' Artistic Training, 1860-1870" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1986), 168; and Anne McCauley "'The Most Beautiful of Nature's Works:' Thomas Eakins's Photographic Nudes in their French and American Contexts," in Susan Danly and Cheryl Leibold, eds, *Eakins and the Photograph* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 49-50.

⁶ Lloyd Goodrich referred to the Arcadian works as forming "a curious interlude in Eakins' art" and Gordon Hendricks considered them "among the artist's least successful projects." Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1982), 1: 230. See also: Gordon Hendricks, *The Life and Work of Thomas Eakins* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1974), 188.

Arcadian subjects would be the lone example in his *oeuvre* of an entire series failing to bear fruit. Furthermore, Eakins had invested several years of his time in this seemingly profitless pursuit. In order to explain why Eakins chose not to finish and exhibit the Arcadian subjects some scholars have suggested that he cast aside the Arcadian subjects when he received the more important commission for *Swimming*. An alternate theory postulates that Eakins's increased teaching duties during this period curtailed further development of the theme.⁷

In either case, since the Arcadian pictures directly precede *Swimming* they have usually been viewed as inchoate precursors to the later image. Indeed, most discussion of the Arcadian works has surfaced in studies of *Swimming*. But a division also exists in the scholarship that highlights perceived differences between Eakins's "realist" works and those that are ideal. *Swimming* has been deemed a canonical realist work because the figures are identifiable as specific individuals situated in a verifiable location outside of modern Philadelphia—the picture is "real." Scholars have regarded the more lyrical Arcadian works in an entirely different light, often as anomalous, since they appear to be an unsuccessful venture into an alien romantic mode of painting.

As easy as it is to dismiss the Arcadian subjects, they were not only critical to the development of *Swimming* they also held some special importance for Eakins. His ambition for the group is apparent from the way that he pursued the subject over three years in different media, creating two large works in oil, three relief sculptures, and numerous photographs. The largest of the Arcadian oils, notably larger than many of

⁷ Marc Simpson, "Thomas Eakins and His Arcadian Works," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 1 (Fall 1987): 71-95.

his exhibition oils, including *Swimming*, suggests that Eakins intended it for exhibition. Although it remained unfinished, he did think highly enough of the painting to give it to the artist and teacher, William Merritt Chase. The Arcadian nudes also represent Eakins's most daring foray into the study of the nude figure, since only in these works do nude figures of both genders interact in the same setting.⁸

The largest of Eakins's three Arcadian reliefs, *Arcadia (Pastoral)* (figure 43), provides further evidence of the importance of the series to Eakins. This relief has the most complex composition of the entire Arcadia series, including six figures, a dog, and elements of a landscape setting. In October of 1883 Eakins sent the sculpture to New York where he exhibited it as *Sketch in Plaster (Pastoral)* at the American Art Association's Second Annual Exhibition of Sketches and Studies. This sole exhibition generated little contemporary criticism that might give an indication of how the Arcadian images would have been received by a nineteenth-century audience.⁹ But Eakins must have felt confident about his progress on the relief to exhibit it publicly, especially in New York.

The work again appeared before the public, albeit indirectly, when Eakins exhibited the painting *Portrait of Lady and Dog (The Artist's Wife and His Setter*

⁸ Eakins's "troubles" almost always involved transgressions of gender boundaries—the removing of the loincloth of a male model in a class that included women is the most well-known. Nudity itself was not the issue that destroyed Eakins's career at the Academy, rather opportunities for the mixing of both genders in a sexualized environment led to his dismissal. During his tenure as the Chairman of the Committee on Instruction Fairman Rogers acknowledged the acceptability of the nude in a single-sex environment when he stated: "the male figure is more familiar to the male students . . . through opportunities afforded in swimming and the like." This suggests to me that the content of *Swimming* with its all-male subjects would have been less controversial in the 1880s than it is today. See Fairman Rogers "The Schools of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts," *The Penn Monthly* (June 1881): 456.

⁹ The few reviews that mention the Arcadia relief do not include aesthetic evaluations of the work. One reviewer called it "clever" but that is the extent of the nineteenth-century reception available. See "Fine Arts: A Display of Studies and Sketches," *New York Herald* (October 20, 1883): 5.

Dog) in 1887.¹⁰ In this painting, the *Arcadia* relief is one of a handful of works displayed in the studio interior, appearing to the right of Eakins's wife Susan. Eakins exhibited *The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog* during his lifetime three times in New York (1887, 1892, 1915), once in Chicago (1889) and once in Paris (1891). The painting was also reproduced as a photogravure in Mariana van Rensselaer's 1886 volume *The Book of American Figure Painters*. Eakins's figuration of the relief within another of his works is highly unusual and underscores the important place that it held in his *oeuvre*. Eakins also gave replicas of the relief to some of his students and friends.¹¹ That he photographed classically costumed models posing with the relief in his studio further attests that Eakins did not consider the sculpture a failure.

The *Arcadia* relief has been subject to a wide range of interpretations in recent years. Lloyd Goodrich saw *Arcadia* as a reflection of Eakins's "admiration for Greek art, particularly Phidias and the sculptures of the Parthenon" and also as an affirmation of his pedagogical insistence upon the study of the nude figure.¹² Elizabeth Johns read the work as an extension of Eakins's interest in music but "removed from the ephemeral trappings of contemporary life." In the relief she found evocations of larger "truths about human life," represented within the panel as both the ages of man, as well as the states of solitude, friendship, and passion.¹³

¹⁰ Eakins exhibited the painting under several variants of this title. Susan Eakins gave the painting its modern name when it was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹¹ Samuel Murray and Frank Linton were among those who owned a plaster. The relief also appears in the home of Lucy and Anna Lewis in Susan Macdowell's painting, *At Home (The Lewis Sisters)*.

¹² Goodrich, 1: 230.

¹³ Elizabeth Johns, *Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 129-30.

Marc Simpson has written the most extensive study of *Arcadia* in which he discussed a range of iconographic sources for the panel, citing works by Phidias, Ghiberti, and Thomas Wilmer Dewing as influences. Simpson explained the series by relating the relief to the death of Eakins's sister Margaret in December 1882.¹⁴ Maggie's death no doubt influenced Eakins's work in 1883 and the mood of *Arcadia* is somber. Yet Eakins chose not to include overt references to death despite contemporary precedents for memorial works. Eakins's title, *Pastoral* is also more benign than contemporary funerary images like Elihu Vedder's explicit 1879 *In Memoriam*.¹⁵

Aside from Eakins's shift to classical subject matter, the Arcadian works also reflect the significant changes that Eakins made in his working methods during the early 1880s. Perhaps the most unusual practice that he integrated into his work in this period was the use of nude models outdoors. Eakins began taking models outside with *Crucifixion* but here his model, J. Laurie Wallace, presumably wore a drape covering his genitals. Eakins also studied fully clothed figures both on the rooftop of his studio as well as on the Gloucester shore for a series of paintings that he made of New Jersey fishermen, among them *Shad Fishing at Gloucester on the Delaware River* and *Mending the Net* (figure 44). Unlike these earlier efforts, *Arcadia* marked the first time that he had taken entirely nude models outside. For the Arcadian works, Eakins studied his models, mostly Academy students in a variety of poses: some seemingly

¹⁴ Simpson's conclusion that the "Arcadian theme is essentially elegiac" is based partly upon the head on hand gestures of two of the figures, which he links with classical mourning iconography. Although this pose is melancholic, Simpson compares it with that of the first century *Pudicity* (Vatican Museum), which displays an entirely different gesture than that seen in the Eakins panel. *Pudicity* is shown tugging at her veil, a pose that is found on Attic grave stelai that typically has marital associations.

¹⁵ At the sale of the William Merritt Chase estate the *Arcadia* oil was titled, *Idyl*. Whether or not Eakins used this title himself is not known.

candid, others staged to resemble classical sculptures, and still others engaging in classicizing athletic feats ranging from boxing to tug-of-war and, ultimately, swimming.

We know that Eakins studied these models outside because he documented many of these sessions with photographs.¹⁶ Indeed, the Arcadian series also marked a dramatic increase in Eakins's use of photography for his work. Kathleen Foster has noted that the "remarkable abundance" of the Arcadian photographs and the variety of sizes and processes that Eakins used "seem to demonstrate an affection for these images as photographs, quite apart from their use in painting."¹⁷ More specifically, Foster and others have reasonably postulated that Eakins's preference for certain negatives is revealed by the greater numbers of prints of those images and the use of the more expensive platinum process in printing them. Interestingly, most of the Arcadian photographs were not used directly in the creation of art, nor did Eakins's "affection" for specific photographs reflect a preference for those that led to a successful composition.

In addition to the outdoor photos of nude models, Eakins also continued the practice that he had begun with the colonial revival series of photographing models indoors—this time with a decidedly classical theme. Indoors, Eakins photographed more athletic nudes, as well as nude models posing as sculptures. He additionally photographed costumed models in full classical dress. In many of these images, the

¹⁶ Probably to ensure privacy he visited more than one location in the areas surrounding Philadelphia: the marshes around Gloucester, his sister's farm at Avondale, and Dove Lake on the Main Line.

¹⁷ Kathleen A. Foster, *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 117. I consider the Arcadian photos to extend beyond merely those images that formed the basis of Eakins's Arcadia painting and sculpture projects. I would include not only those photographs that specifically reference antiquity but also those that include a historical framework of any period since this would also adhere to the tenets of Lecoq's system.

models pose with the ancient casts in the Academy's collection arranged behind them. Through these images Eakins seems to have been making a comparison between living models and ancient sculpture—a theme he would pursue in *Swimming*.

In spite of this juxtaposition, Eakins's Arcadian models retain their modernity and individuality throughout the photographs. Even in instances where the models' poses reference specific antique sculptures, they do not appear to have been selected for their ideal classical form. Eakins's flirtation with the past was about method and not the appropriation of an aesthetic style. Although Eakins used photographs to craft his Arcadian paintings, the fact that many more classicizing photographs were not used for any of his Arcadian projects suggests that these images served some other purpose.

If a large proportion of the Arcadian photos were not made as compositional studies, they also did not function as independent art objects. Although Eakins lived in one of the great centers of amateur photography he steadfastly avoided adding his images to this culture. Despite his apparent fondness for these photographs he chose never to exhibit them. Of course, in the case of the nudes, there may have been an issue of the models being publicly identified. However, among the negatives that Eakins favored were several featuring fully clothed models in classical dress. Some of these subjects loosely resemble the aestheticized photographs of early pictorial photographers like Julia Margaret Cameron. Had Eakins cared to tidy up his studio to create a more consistently historical setting with greater aesthetic appeal he could surely have exhibited these with some success. That he chose not to pay greater

attention to the settings indicates that, as one would expect of Eakins, the models themselves interested him more than the medium.

But what did Eakins do with all of these photographs? Why did he make them?¹⁸ By 1883, Eakins had begun using photographs in his teaching at the Academy, photographing nude models in standardized poses for what has become known as the “Naked Series.” Eakins had these photos mounted on cards to enable his students to study a wide variety of body types assuming the same stances. Since Eakins gave several of the Arcadian images to his students, it seems that these photographs were not just the mimetic records of modeling sessions but that they also served a pedagogical purpose. Furthermore, when Eakins left the Academy in 1886 he took many of the photos from the Arcadia and Swimming modeling sessions with him. Significantly, these photographs adorned the walls of Eakins’s private Academy, the Art Students League of Philadelphia (figure 45), where he taught in the later 1880s and 90s. Their significance to his teaching is underscored by his distribution of these images to his students. He must, for example, have given prints from the swimming session to his student, the photographer Eva Watson, since she lent two Eakins photographs both entitled *Bathers* to the Loan Exhibition of the Camera Club of New York in December 1899.

It is interesting that Eakins turned to photography, the most modern of media, to create some of his most overtly historicized imagery. Through these photographic studies Eakins abandoned the process of historical research that he used earlier to plan for a history painting. His careful preparations for his William Rush painting

¹⁸ Kathleen Foster has suggested that the reason for multiples of certain images reflects Eakins’s experimentation with development processes. Foster, 117.

involved the acquisition of “authentic” furnishings, sketches from paintings contemporary with the subject, costume studies taken from fashion plates, interviews with people who recalled the period, and finally, extensive study of Rush’s sculpture. For Arcadia, Eakins instead, resorted to a kind of reenactment of the antique, rather than an extended study of the period. The change in method suggests a larger shift in Eakins’s thinking. This shift marked not only Eakins’s use of “Greek methods” but also the integration of modern teaching practices into his program based upon the curriculum developed by Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran. If Eakins abandoned the Arcadian series in favor of his commission for *Swimming* he did not discard the new methods he developed for the series—*Swimming* marks the fullest integration of Lecoq’s theories into his art.

Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran, Memory, and the Photograph

Though little-known today Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran (1802-1897) was an influential art teacher in Paris when Eakins studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in the late 1860s. Lecoq had himself entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts as a student in 1819. Throughout the 1830s he exhibited portraits and religious subjects at the French Salon. Although he continued to paint until his death at the age of ninety-five, he stopped exhibiting altogether in 1844 to devote himself to teaching. In 1847, while teaching at the Ecole Gratuite de Dessin, known as the “Petite Ecole,” Lecoq introduced an experimental method of artistic training whereby he required his students to reproduce images from memory as a supplement to the school’s standard drawing instruction. The students were given graduated exercises, starting with the

reproduction of simple lines and progressing to complex compositions, with the most proficient students finally advancing to drawing from moving figures outdoors. Lecoq believed that the practice of memory training would help artists record the fleeting effects of light, weather, motion, and color. He detailed the success of his memory experiments at the Petite Ecole in his 1847 pamphlet *L'Éducation de la mémoire pittoresque*.

Since Lecoq undertook his first experiments on students of the decorative arts he initially emphasized form. But in 1862 he expanded his text to include sections on memory studies of color and light, leading Viollet-le-Duc to suggest its implementation at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The latter hoped that Lecoq's method would act as a corrective to a system of art education that he felt only encouraged pupils to perpetuate their master's style. In a second pamphlet *Coup d'oeil sur l'enseignement des beaux-arts*, published in 1872, Lecoq similarly argued that the Ecole had forgotten "that the great masters, whose example it was continually quoting, were not satisfied to merely accept tradition as handed to them by their predecessors, but sought to combine it with the living elements of their own age, and thus become creators in their turn."¹⁹ While the Ecole never adopted the program, several artists experimented with the system, including Henri Fantin-Latour, Léon Lhermitte, Auguste Rodin, Jean-Charles Cazin, and the Régamey Brothers: Félix, Guillaume, and Frédéric.

¹⁹ Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran, *The Training of the Memory in Art, and the Education of the Artist*, trans. L.D. Luard, (London: Macmillan, 1911), 85. For the sake of clarity I have used Luard's English translation of Lecoq's three texts. Luard simultaneously reprinted the texts in French in 1911. Possibly due to his work on the two publications simultaneously, Luard's English translation adheres closely to the French.

When Eakins began his studies at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 1866, Lecoq had just become director of the Petite Ecole. Following his appointment, Lecoq proceeded to reform the curriculum of the school according to the tenets of his system. Lecoq's ideas received their greatest notoriety in 1867 when he presented them before the Education and the Fine Arts committees at the Exposition Universelle. These two bodies, in turn, formed a committee to carry out tests of Lecoq's method at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.²⁰ Although criticism of Lecoq's method eventually forced his resignation from the Petite Ecole in 1869, he remained influential and continued to teach both privately and at other institutions. He published a final pamphlet *Sommaire d'une methode pour l'enseignement du dessin et de la peinture. Lettres à un jeune professeur* in 1876, which outlined his teaching methods for an imagined student embarking on his own teaching career.²¹ Lecoq's three texts, each of which expands upon and complements the others, were united in a single volume in 1879.

Eakins could have become acquainted with Lecoq's ideas at any time during his studies in Paris. His fluency in French gave him advantages that other Americans lacked. On occasion, he even read French artistic texts in their original language.²² He was also friendly with a number of the French students in Gerome's atelier, some of whom may have been knowledgeable about the activities at the Petite Ecole. Eakins certainly must have heard of Lecoq's controversial methods through his close friend William Sartain, who studied at the Petite Ecole sometime in 1869, the year in which

²⁰ Luard, 95. Bellenger and Lhermitte were part of this demonstration.

²¹ The text was actually written with Charles Cazin in mind but published so that it could be used by other fine arts professionals.

²² Eakins purchased a copy of Thomas Couture's *Méthode et entretiens d'atelier* in 1868. TE to Benjamin Eakins, March 17, 1868, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

Lecoq was fired.²³ Additionally, it seems likely that Eakins either witnessed or heard about the demonstration at the Ecole in 1867 for in that year he began to discuss memory in his letters home.

Eakins first alluded to the influence of Lecoq's system of memory training in a letter he wrote to his father in 1867, while he was a student at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, in which he says: "I see much more ahead of me than I used to, but I believe I am seeing a way to get at it & that is to do all I see from memory."²⁴ A few months later, in January 1868, Eakins was still working from memory, writing again to his father, "after painting a model I paint it from memory."²⁵ During this formative period Eakins also outlined a notion of picture-making that had memory and imagination at its heart, writing that if a painter "makes a hot day he makes it like a hot day he once saw or is seeing, if a sweet face a face he once saw or which he imagines from old memories or parts of memories and his knowledge."²⁶ This often quoted letter parallels a passage in *L'Éducation de mémoire pittoresque*: "Except in our memories, how can we ever hope to reconstruct nature's endless happy groupings once they are broken and scattered."²⁷

That Lecoq's theories had more than a passing interest to a young Eakins is clear from letters written by Susan Macdowell Eakins after her husband's death. In one dating from the 1930s, Susan wrote to Mrs. Lewis R. Dick about Eakins's student

²³ In one of several drafts of William Sartain's autobiography he listed the "professors of the 'Petit Ecole where I go.'" His list includes twelve professors who regularly taught at the school in the late 1860s and into the 1880s. 1904 William Sartain manuscript in Gordon Hendricks Papers, Box 2, Folder 7, Archives of American Art. Original at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Museum Archives. Eakins and Sartain intermittently shared a studio at this time.

²⁴ TE to BE, November 30, 1867, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

²⁵ TE to BE, January 17, 1868, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Lloyd and Edith Havens Goodrich Thomas Eakins Research Collection.

²⁶ TE to BE, March 6, 1868, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

²⁷ Luard, 18.

years in Paris, recalling that: “When weary from class study, he would stop his painting in the school, and try to memorize the work he had been doing in the school, working alone in his lodging room. He considered this a good tax for the mind.”²⁸ In another letter to her niece Peggy Macdowell, Susan wrote of her husband’s training: “He also studied independently of anyone, and often reviewed by memory in his little living room, what he had done in the schools. Memory work was excellent he said, good for the mind. He advised strain your brain more than your eyes.”²⁹ Since Eakins did not know Susan Macdowell during his years in Paris he must have recounted his experiences to her years later. The fact that he mentioned study from memory to his wife suggests that it held a important place in his training. Eakins’s continuing concern with memory reemerged later in his career in the advice he offered to a student in 1906 to “frequent the life schools and reproduce from memory what you do there at home.”³⁰

After his years in Paris, Eakins’s interest in Lecoq’s work was likely revived by his contact with Félix Régamey, one of Lecoq’s most devoted pupils.³¹ Régamey worked in the United States from 1873 to 1877 as an illustrator for *Harper’s Weekly*. He visited Philadelphia’s Centennial Exhibition for *Harper’s* in 1876. Perhaps more significantly, in June of that year Régamey attended a meeting of the Philadelphia

²⁸ Kathleen A. Foster and Cheryl Leibold, *Writing about Eakins* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 298-299.

²⁹ Gordon Hendricks Collection, Archives of American Art, Box 2, Folder 14, undated manuscript. The dictum “Strain your brain more than your eyes” appears in Charles Bregler’s notes on Eakins’s teaching. Susan’s use of it here in regard to memory suggests a more specific context for its application to Eakins’s pedagogical method.

³⁰ TE to Edmund Clarence Messer, 3 July 1906, Archives of the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

³¹ Régamey published an appreciation of his teacher, entitled *Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran et ses élèves: Notes and souvenirs*. (Paris: Champion, 1903). This is one of the few sources of information about Lecoq’s life and his teaching methods apart from his own texts.

Sketch Club, where Eakins was teaching.³² As an acknowledged Francophile, Eakins would have been eager to meet this progressive Frenchman while he visited his hometown. That they did meet, probably in the fall of 1879, is established by the 1881 publication of Régamey's *L'Enseignement du Dessin Aux Etats-Unis*. In preparation for the book, which discussed the curricula of several art schools in the United States, Régamey visited the Pennsylvania Academy where Thomas Eakins had recently been made a professor following the death of Christian Schussele.³³

Since Eakins traveled little after his return to the United States, few letters exist from the critical period of his artistic maturation to establish his knowledge of contemporary theories. New discoveries about Eakins's technique, particularly his use of photographs, indicates that Eakins did not always document his methods and even went to some effort to hide them. The works, therefore, must themselves be used as evidence. The Arcadian series and *Swimming* offer the best proof of Lecoq's influence on Eakins, but there are indications that Lecoq's work had an impact even earlier in Eakins's career.

Douglass Paschall has recently suggested that Eakins used memory in his painting *Mending the Net*, a mature work of 1881, which he considers "Eakins's reconstruction of a scene that must have transpired much earlier" rather than as "a glimpse of a contemporary encounter."³⁴ Although Paschall does not link the painting

³² Régamey visited the Sketch Club on June 15, 1876, Sketch Club Records, Archives of American Art, reel 3665.

³³ Felix Régamey, *L'enseignement du dessin aux Etats-Unis* (Paris: Delagrave, 1881). In his book Régamey used statistics for the Academy's 1878-79 season but named Eakins as "le directeur actuel" of the school, a position he could only have claim to after September 1879. In his account, Régamey also mentions the first exhibition of the Society of Artists in November 1879, further pinpointing the date of his visit to the Academy.

³⁴ W. Douglass Paschall, "The Camera Artist," in Darrel Sewell, ed., *Thomas Eakins* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 247.

with Lecoq's theories, Eakins's extensive use of photography in the creation of *Mending the Net* provides a clue about Eakins's evolving relationship with artistic memory. Eakins relied on a range of traditional preparatory methods throughout the 1870s, including oil sketches, meticulous perspective drawings, and even three-dimensional models. But by the 1880s he had become increasingly dependent on photographs.

Lecoq did not incorporate photography into his method, but Eakins's use of photographs in *Mending the Net* conforms to one of the memory techniques described in his texts. Eakins constructed the painting's composition from several photographs taken at different sites, which he then projected onto his canvas.³⁵ The painting, therefore, represents a composite of details from these individual photos. In order to create a coherent whole, Eakins had to literally transcribe the individual elements of the photos to his canvas, while simultaneously subjectively reconfiguring these elements into an entirely new compositional arrangement. Lecoq encouraged this approach, writing, "Memory and imagination are so closely linked that imagination can only use what memory has to offer her, producing, like chemistry from known elements, results completely new."³⁶

In *Mending the Net*, Eakins assembled his "known elements" from photographs to create a "completely new" composition. Picture-making, not mere mimesis, was the ultimate goal of Lecoq's memory training. In fact, he hoped that the subjective nature of memory would be of help in filtering out extraneous and

³⁵ Eakins's method is detailed in Mark Tucker and Nica Gutman, "Photographs and the Making of Paintings," in Darrel Sewell, ed., *Thomas Eakins* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 225-238.

³⁶ Luard, 21.

distracting details. In *Mending the Net*, as in the Arcadian works that followed, Eakins's photos act as something more than *aides-mémoires*; they actually substitute for memory itself. Eakins, who was always interested in finding scientific solutions to the imprecision of perception and cognition, used photography as a shortcut for Lecoq's training of memory.

While memory was at the heart of Lecoq's method, several other aspects of his program would have appealed to Eakins. In fact, the course of study that Eakins implemented at the Pennsylvania Academy had several points of direct correspondence with Lecoq's texts. An exploration of the correlations between Lecoq's writings and Eakins's program illuminates the reasons behind Eakins's attraction to Lecoq's theories. Further, the seemingly disparate themes that informed Eakins's art in the 1880s, manifesting themselves fully in the Arcadian series and *Swimming*, can also be found in Lecoq's texts. A careful comparison of these themes in the work of both Eakins and Lecoq is critical to understanding Eakins's art and his pedagogical practices prior to his dismissal from the Academy in 1886.

Anatomy and Motion

Although anatomy played a vital role in the French artistic curriculum, both Lecoq and Eakins advocated a central position for it in artist training that exceeded what even the Ecole offered its students. Lecoq asserted that anatomical study should be "the basis of all teaching in all schools, and should come before any specialization, for it is the parent-stem of all branches of art." Lecoq believed that "a knowledge of

the structure of the human body” was the “resume of all the forms in nature” and thus, “should be considered a sort of syntax for the art of drawing, and as such should be learnt by heart.”³⁷ Eakins similarly proclaimed the relationship between anatomy and art analogous to that of grammar to poetry.³⁸ The human body formed the basis of his instruction at the Academy. As an 1882-83 circular for the school, probably written by Eakins, unequivocally declared: “The course of study is believed to be more thorough than that of any other existing school. Its basis is the nude human figure.”³⁹

In order to understand the human body, Lecoq encouraged his students to attend dissections and thoroughly learn the names and functions of every muscle group. This would give the student a general understanding of human anatomy, which could then be taken into account when studying an individual model. As Lecoq warned, “the deltoïd of every model is somewhat different in appearance, and it is the infinite variations of this individual character which the student must always be ready and able to express.”⁴⁰ This echoes a comment by Eakins that “a man’s hand no more looks like another man[’]s than his head like another’s.”⁴¹

Eakins made dissection and anatomical study essential to the curriculum at the Academy. Lectures on anatomy, given by the physician, Dr. William W. Keen, complemented student work in the dissection room. Eakins also made plaster casts of flayed human body parts for his students to use in their study of anatomy. To those

³⁷ Luard, 16-17.

³⁸ W.H. Brownell, “The Art Schools of Philadelphia,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 18 (September 1879): 745.

³⁹ Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *Circular of the Committee on Instruction, 1882-83* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1882), 3.

⁴⁰ Luard, 136 from the 1876 *Lettres*.

⁴¹ Goodrich, 1: 141—from a letter dated June 13, 1877 to Geo. D. McCreary.

who thought this grim work seemed anti-aesthetic, Eakins defended the practice, by saying “to draw the human figure it is necessary to know as much as possible about it, about its structure and its movements, its bones and muscles, how they are made, and how they act.”⁴²

Expert knowledge of anatomy was critical to Lecoq because the students who mastered this “syntax for all drawing” would advance to studying both humans and animals *in motion*, quickly reproducing actions and forms from memory. Although Lecoq felt that traditional life study remained an important building block in an artist’s development, he also understood its limitations. Static models quickly lost “all the movement and expression of the pose” causing “the muscles to lose their shapeliness.”⁴³ A posed life model only approximated life; a moving figure, by contrast, remained true to nature in revealing the fluidity and functionality of the body.

Eakins would undoubtedly have been interested in an artistic method that espoused greater truthfulness to nature and involved the study of movement. Perhaps the most conspicuous element of *Swimming* is its one diving figure, hovering in mid-dive above the water. This frozen diver culminated Eakins’s years of study of bodies in motion. By 1879 Eakins had become deeply invested in the representation of motion through his contact with Fairman Rogers and Eadweard Muybridge. Rogers, a civil engineer, amateur photographer, and coaching enthusiast, headed the Committee on Instruction during Eakins’s least-controversial years at the Pennsylvania Academy.

⁴² Brownell, 745.

⁴³ Luard, 34.

The two men were on friendly terms and shared a number of common interests, motion photography among them.

In 1879 Eakins undertook a commission from Rogers to depict the patron's four-in-hand coach in motion. From the studies Eakins made at Rogers's Newport home, it seems likely that the commission was more collaboratively conceived than Eakins's later arrangement with Coates. In any case, Rogers graciously accepted the finished painting, *May Morning in the Park* (figure 46), which shows Rogers and his wife, along with two other couples, coaching in Fairmount Park. Eakins accurately rendered the horses's legs in their differing phases of motion, a conceit that owes a debt to Muybridge's photographs of horses in motion.⁴⁴ Perhaps more obviously indicative of forward motion are the blurred spokes of the wheels of the coach. As with *Swimming*, critics found the overall effect a failure—paradoxically the painting has no convincing sense of motion. But time, more than motion, makes the painting so curiously out of synch. Eakins attempted to render what was known through photographs but impossible to witness with the naked eye. In order to “fix” the image, which he constructed from his awareness of scientific evidence, Eakins fashioned a painting that was photographic in its timing—precisely the sort of image that required a good artistic memory.

Eakins started making his own photographic studies of human locomotion, alongside Eadweard Muybridge at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1880s. Undertaken at the height of his teaching career at the Academy, Eakins also began to

⁴⁴ Muybridge's work was published in several journals worldwide and also became available in the photographic portfolio *The Horse in Motion* (1878). According to the annual report of the Academy for 1878, Rogers donated a set of Muybridge photographs to the school, Pennsylvania Academy Minutes, February 3, 1879, Archives of American Art, Reel P44.

think about the uses of motion photography in his role as a teacher.⁴⁵ According to one Academy student, Eakins made a zoetrope available to his students that could be used to animate motion photographs of “men walking and horses galloping.”⁴⁶ The impact of Eakins’s interest in motion on his Academy students is difficult to assess. However, in 1881 the members of the Philadelphia Sketch Club, many of whom were Eakins’s students, began proposing moving subjects at their evening sketches. In this year, the Sketchers abruptly switched from more evocative subjects such as “Reverie” and “A Quiet Nook” to sketches of single figures undertaking very specific movements: “A Boy Jumping,” “A Man Pulling a Stake from the Ground,” “A Man in His Undershirt Looking Under the Bureau”—hardly the typical themes of high art but, in fact, very similar to the sorts of images that Muybridge would eventually produce.⁴⁷

The 1883-84 circular for the school included a report on the previous season that indicated Eakins had also begun photographing models from the life class “in cases in which the model was unusually good or had any peculiarity of form or action which would be instructive.”⁴⁸ Ellwood C. Parry III has taken this to refer to the so-called “Naked Series,” the photographs that Eakins took of models in seven standardized poses.⁴⁹ But the static poses of the Naked Series do not convey “action.” The circular must have been referring to another group of photos.

⁴⁵ Eadweard Muybridge gave two lectures on animal locomotion at the Pennsylvania Academy in February 1883. In the years following, Eakins’s interest in motion photography grew. He observed Muybridge’s continued experiments at the University of Pennsylvania and even devised a camera and method for producing motion photographs of his own.

⁴⁶ Adam Emory Albright, “Memories of Thomas Eakins,” *Harper’s Bazaar* (August 1947): 139.

⁴⁷ Sketch Club Records, AAA.

⁴⁸ Pennsylvania Academy Records, Archives of American Art.

⁴⁹ Ellwood C. Parry III, “Thomas Eakins’ ‘Naked Series’ Reconsidered: Another Look at the Standing Nude Photographs Made for the Use of Eakins’s Students,” *American Art Journal* 20 (1988): 53-77.

Around this time Eakins and his students took just such a group of action photos for the Arcadia series and *Swimming*.⁵⁰ Distinctly different from the Naked Series and his later motion studies, Eakins photographed nude men, probably students, engaged in a range of athletic activities including boxing, wrestling, swimming, and playing tug-of-war. Although the models performed for Eakins's camera, their poses were not pre-determined as in the Naked Series. Focused on their tasks, these men became less conscious of the camera's presence than Eakins's inactive subjects. Like *Swimming's* diver, the men in these photos have been arrested in motion, with the shutter of the camera freezing the action more effectively than Eakins's brush. An analogous stoppage of movement appears in Lecoq's writings. In order to help his students mentally capture an image, Lecoq allowed them to stop the moving model and "beg him to stay in some chance attitude that struck us all."⁵¹

Eakins also, on occasion, deliberately photographed this kind of arrested movement. One series of photos in the Bregler Collection (figure 47 and figure 48) contains shots of two different male models, each stopped in the act of carrying or throwing stones.⁵² Unlike the photos of athletes, these images do not convey the sense of spontaneous movement—instead, they appear to be studies of specific actions frozen prior to the clicking of the shutter. These images may, in fact, relate to one of the exercises given by Lecoq in his *Lettres à un jeune professeur*. In this passage, Lecoq describes the disadvantage of observing an artificially posed figure instead of one undertaking a real action:

⁵⁰ Eakins and his circle seem to have a collective authorship of these photos, making it virtually impossible to determine who was behind the camera but Eakins seems to have directed the activity.

⁵¹ Luard, 29.

⁵² See Leibold and Danly, 192: Cat. Nos. 363-365.

Instead of saying to a model, for instance, Take the pose of a man carrying a stone, we shall say, Carry this stone from here to there. The students who are observing him, as he crosses the room, will be watching a series of movements always real, and because they are natural and right, almost always beautiful. In fact the model will lift the stone with exactly the effort it demands, will walk as a person walks when carrying a burden of that size and weight, and his action will necessarily be true again when he puts the stone down at the required point.⁵³

Eakins's photographs are strikingly similar to the exercise proposed by Lecoq. They also resemble the frozen poses of the men in *Swimming*.

While the primary interest of many of these photographs appears to be the study of movement, the athleticism of the figures and their nudity also recalls antique statuary. Taken around the time that Eakins was working on the Arcadian series and planning *Swimming*, the photos engage the same themes as these works and should be considered part of the same intellectual project. The photos recall a passage in *L'Éducation de la mémoire pittoresque*, in which Lecoq describes the symbiotic relationship between anatomical study and working from moving models: "what could be more useful in the study of anatomy, or more in accordance with tradition, than the close observation of nude models at exercise *in imitation of the ancient athletes*?"⁵⁴

Outdoor Study and Antiquity

The most startling aspect of Eakins's photos from this period is that many of them were taken outdoors using nude models, hardly a common practice in the 1880s. In *L'Éducation de la mémoire pittoresque*, Lecoq's first text, he indicated that once

⁵³ Luard, 159.

⁵⁴ Luard, 35, emphasis mine.

his pupils had mastered the basics of memory training, they should be taken outside to continue their work with life models. By moving outdoors his students would be relieved of the monotonous conditions of studio life study. As Lecoq wrote of one outdoor excursion: “The poor hirelings of the life-class were transfigured, as it were by their splendid living setting. Here were no stiff, fagged models perched on the traditional throne, weighing heavily on the traditional stick or string; here was man, the chosen of life’s creatures, in all his strength.”⁵⁵ Once outdoors, Lecoq’s students faced models in fluid moving poses, seen under variable natural lighting conditions, which also created subtle changes in color over time—all factors requiring a quick memory to render.

Instead of relying on memory alone, when Eakins followed Lecoq’s method and ventured outdoors with his unclothed models for the Arcadia series he took his camera with him. The figures in the two largest Arcadian paintings, *Arcadia* (figure 49) and *An Arcadian* (figure 50), derive from specific photos, replicating the method he had used in *Mending the Net*. These two paintings contain lush, verdant landscapes, populated by incongruously crisp, precisely rendered people. The precision of the figures reflects Eakins’s reliance on photography as a replacement for Lecoq’s memory training.⁵⁶ As with *Mending the Net*, each of the models in the Arcadian series posed at different times, possibly at different sites.

For *Arcadia*, Eakins used at least three sets of photographs to construct the final image. The reclining boy with the pipes derives from a photo of Eakins’s

⁵⁵ Luard, 30.

⁵⁶ The disjointed nature of the human and landscape elements is not unlike that found in Eakins’s more realist paintings, such as his rowing subjects. Here, the effect may be complicated by the unfinished state of the works, as Eakins often added a toning layer to his finished works that would likely have unified these compositions.

nephew Ben Crowell (figure 51).⁵⁷ Similarly, Eakins modeled the reclining woman in *Arcadia* from photos of his fiancée, Susan Macdowell (figure 52). Eakins also used photographs of his student J. Laurie Wallace, as the model for the piper in *Arcadia*. However, here his transcription from the photo was far less exacting, the painted piper is leaner, more youthful, and positioned slightly differently than Wallace appears in the photo (figure 53). Although Wallace clearly served as the model and the painted figure retains much of the feel of the photographs, the resulting figure does not resemble Wallace. It appears that Eakins employed the synthesis of memory and imagination described by Lecoq.

These Arcadian photos are simpler and less candid than Eakins's depictions of athletes and probably predate them. Most are single figure studies using a limited and close-knit group of models, consisting primarily of family, with Wallace the only student. Eakins himself appears in some of the photos posing, like Wallace, with pipes. Resembling the more static figures in *Swimming*, all of the figures in these photographs are posed and still. There is no suggestion of motion, arrested or otherwise. Also like the figures in *Swimming*, some of the poses in the Arcadian photos are based on specific classical types. For example, one of the rock-throwing models also posed for a standing adaptation of the Greek *Spinario* (*Thorn-puller*) (figure 54). Likewise, a few of the images of Wallace deliberately evoke the antique sculpture *Faun with Pipes* (figure 55), a cast of which was in the Academy's collection. The pose is not identical since it was based upon memory of the sculpture.

⁵⁷ Kathleen Foster has noted that a platinum print of this image in the Bregler Collection has been enlarged to the same scale as the figure in the painting, which may suggest that Eakins used this photograph directly for his transfer to the canvas. See Foster, 183.

But the inclusion of the stump at Wallace's side (figure 56), a common supporting device used in marble sculpture, makes the allusion unmistakable.

Eakins's overt reference to Greek sculpture may seem curious in light of his well-known objection to extended study from plaster casts. While Eakins argued against the second-hand knowledge of the body acquired by sketching from the antique, he also admired classical sculpture, which had a distinct place in his teaching. He felt that the best way to emulate the classical masters was through life study, not mimicry of classical compositions. Therefore, the overt classicism of the Arcadian images should not be regarded as antithetical to, but rather, as a vital element of his realism. In the Arcadia series, Eakins consciously set out to reenact "the Greek method" through the use of the living figure.

Lecoq believed that careful observation of nature would keep students from affected imitation of other artists.⁵⁸ Only through this method would a student develop his or her own style, following the same path as the old masters. Both Lecoq and Eakins cited Phidias as the paragon of realist originality, with Lecoq writing: "As one admires the cavalry of the Parthenon frieze one feels sure that Pheidias [sic] watched them passing through the streets of Athens."⁵⁹ Eakins produced two sketches (figure 57) that visualize Lecoq's example. Each of these undated oils shows the Greek sculptor working on the Parthenon's cavalry frieze outdoors with live horses and models before him—in fact, echoing the same approach that Eakins would later use for his own sculptures of horses for the Brooklyn Arch. Eakins had also explicitly articulated this idea in an 1879 interview with William Brownell, "The Greeks did not

⁵⁸ Both Eakins and Lecoq were opposed to awarding prizes to art students. Lecoq believed that prizes stifled innovation by teaching students to conform to a style that pleased conservative juries.

⁵⁹ Luard, 85.

study the antique: the ‘Theseus’ and ‘Illyssus’ and the draped figures in the Parthenon pediment were modeled from life, undoubtedly. And nature is just as varied and just as beautiful in our day as she was in the time of Phidias.”⁶⁰

Lecoq’s writings abound in references to the antique. In his outdoor sessions he frequently found his models transformed into Greek gods and many of the exercises he proposed revolved around classical themes. For example, in a passage from his *Lettres*, Lecoq indicated how a student should go about preparing to depict “a faun playing with a goat” by studying the model in various poses outdoors, testing “the movement he has imagined” for the figure, followed by life study of a goat. Then, “equipped with his recollections of them both, alone with his own ideas, his own feelings and methods of expression, he should work out his composition, which must of necessity be original, because it comes entirely out of himself.”⁶¹ This is certainly suggestive of Eakins’s own method of posing Wallace, Susan Macdowell, and Ben Crowell for the Arcadian paintings.

In addition to outdoor study, Lecoq advised that moving costumed figures should be observed in grand interiors to make historical subjects more vivid. For this purpose Lecoq made use of the Palais du Justice prior to its opening to the public. Of this opportunity Lecoq wrote: “It is difficult to imagine the noble effect that was made by the figures in fine draperies as they passed through the great doorways, leaned upon the balustrades, or stepped majestically down the monumental stair.”⁶² He advised his students to study models wearing “garments of different styles and

⁶⁰ Brownell, 742.

⁶¹ Luard, 152-153.

⁶² Luard, 32.

periods, so as to serve in the study of old costume. The attention and interest aroused by antique draperies will be keenest when the models are in action. For then the young artists looking on will see how the absence of restraint, and naturalness of the movements, cause the folds to fall into happy lines that give rise to admirable motives at every moment.”⁶³ Lecoq continually reminded his readers that “the artists of all great periods of art, whether of ancient Greece or Rome, or at the time of the Renaissance, had continually before their eyes, in the habits, costumes, and all the circumstances of the civilization in which they lived, scenes to inspire their genius, as the strong influence of such sights upon their works distinctly shows us.”⁶⁴ Or, as Eakins had put it to Brownell: “the Greeks did not study the antique,” but rather, “modeled from life.”

Eakins’s Arcadian photographs of costumed figures indoors reflect this aspect of Lecoq’s program.⁶⁵ Many of these photos depict students in classical dress, some posed with casts of antique sculpture. Eakins began his costume studies in 1881 with the colonial revival series with the photos of female students “in Trot’s yard.” The photos from this session are informal, yet the models seem more self-conscious of their activity than in the later sessions of nude athletes. Later images show male students dressed in togas and women wearing classical dress as well as eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century costumes. Some of these photographs, including one of the singer Weda Cook in classical dress (figure 58) show models in such hastily constructed settings as to make clear that these were conceived as studies, not fine art objects. In

⁶³ Luard, 159.

⁶⁴ Luard, 39.

⁶⁵ The Academy owned a large collection of costumes.

the photos of Cook, for example, a wrinkled cloth hangs unceremoniously behind her. Eakins had not invested in creating an aesthetic environment—instead, he placed the emphasis on the figure.

In other photographs, the architecture and the Academy's cast collections seem integral to the images. In one, dramatically lit male models, clad in togas, pose with the casts of the Academy galleries arrayed behind them. In other photos costumed female models pose alone with classical busts or torsos. In these images, the more direct pairing of a live model with an antique cast again suggests a comparative relationship, illustrating Eakins's belief that classical works derived from life study.⁶⁶ The photos of women posing with antique casts resemble those Eakins took of two women with his own *Arcadia* relief (figure 59). In these images Eakins presented two models in classical dress, as modern, living Arcadians, situated next to his relief, a modern sculpture based upon "the Greek method" of life study.

Another Look at Swimming

Eakins was still immersed in the Arcadian subjects when Edward Hornor Coates, chairman of the Committee on Instruction at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, commissioned a painting from him in 1884.⁶⁷ Eakins undoubtedly hoped that the resulting picture, *Swimming*, would mark the beginning of a long and collegial relationship with Coates. This seemed assured when Coates "confidentially" told Eakins that he hoped that this painting "might someday become part of the

⁶⁶ Eakins took the theme a step further and painted a sketch of one of these compositions, known as *Sketch of Woman with Torso* (private collection).

⁶⁷ According to Eakins's account book (Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel W. Dietrich II), he hired an unnamed model to pose for a work he called "Panel Piper" from June 1884 to late December 1884. This is likely one of the smaller Arcadian reliefs now known as *A Youth Playing the Pipes*.

Academy collection.”⁶⁸ Therefore, Eakins must have been disappointed when Coates politely declined *Swimming* shortly after its debut at the Academy. Offering to adhere to their bargain, Coates suggested that, in place of the unwanted painting, he would accept the oil *The Pathetic Song* (figure 60), which he considered “more representative” of Eakins’s work.

Twentieth-century scholars have often regarded Coates’s rejection of *Swimming* with its six male nudes in favor of a genre painting with fully-clad figures as evidence that nineteenth-century audiences might have found the nude subject indecorous. While there is no evidence that Coates requested this subject from Eakins, he must have known what the artist had in mind. In May 1885, months before *Swimming*’s unveiling at the Academy that October, the journal *Art Age* reported that Eakins’s painting of “The Bathers, ordered by a Director of the Academy of Fine Arts” was “already well advanced.”⁶⁹ Further, as Kathleen Foster has noted, nude subjects, including bathers, had appeared on the Academy walls before.⁷⁰ Indeed, in the very exhibition in which Eakins showed *Swimming*, the artist Alexander Harrison exhibited without controversy his *Bord de Mer* with a “party of urchins” “denuding themselves” for an ocean bath.⁷¹ And Eakins’s swimmers, carefully arrayed to avoid the depiction of their genitals, appear arguably more chaste than the eroticized

⁶⁸ Edward H. Coates to TE, November 21, 1885, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

⁶⁹ “Philadelphia Art Notes: Studio Notes,” *Art Age* 2 (May 1885): 159. Since some of them posed for the picture, Eakins’s students clearly knew the subject of the painting as well. Thomas Anshutz (who did not pose for the painting) wrote to J. Laurie Wallace on August 25, 1884: “Eakins is painting a picture for Mr. Coates of a party of boys in swimming.” Goodrich typescript of Anshutz letter from the Joslyn Museum Collection, Goodrich Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

⁷⁰ Kathleen A. Foster, “The Making and Meaning of *Swimming*” in Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash, eds., *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1996), 26.

⁷¹ “Pennsylvania Academy Exhibition,” *Art Amateur* 14 (December 1885): p. 5. Harrison’s painting was destroyed by fire in 1886. Critics also praised John Singer Sargent for his *Neapolitan Children Bathing* (1878), featuring four nude boys on a beach, which he exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1879. Over a decade earlier a remarkably similar composition had even appeared in the pages of the London *Art Journal*, complete with diving figure.

academic female nudes that already hung on the Academy's walls.⁷² Coates's rejection of *Swimming* could not have been solely on account of its nude figures.

If, for now, we take Coates's rejection at face value—that he wanted something “more representative”—his decision is understandable. In looking at *Swimming*, one is struck by Eakins's use of conflicting compositional strategies. The self-conscious evocation of the antique, established through the fussy triangular placement of the figures to the left of the center, seems at odds with the artist's equally self-conscious interest in the modern study of motion evidenced by the diver. Some of the figures, such as the red-haired boy in the water are reasonably naturalistic. Others, like the reclining man on the rocks, seem like static references to classical art. These juxtapositions—real and ideal, movement and stillness, and modern and classical subjects—are central to Eakins's conception, but they also lend a jarring artificiality to the painting that is absent from *The Pathetic Song*. *Swimming* was not “representative” insofar as it appeared unlike anything Eakins had painted before.

Although Coates said that he did not “depreciate” *Swimming* and encouraged Eakins to send it “to exhibitions in N.Y., Boston & Chicago,” Eakins exhibited the

⁷² I do not contend that Eakins's images are devoid of eroticism, but rather that his works are far less explicit than other imagery of the period. Eakins had access to two landmark examples of the erotic female nude at the Academy: Cabanel's *Birth of Venus* and Vanderlyn's *Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos*. Both were owned by Philadelphia collectors and eventually entered the Academy's collection. Cabanel's work was exhibited at the PAFA annual in 1877 along with Vanderlyn's *Ariadne*, which also appeared in the annual of the following year. In each, the figure is on erotically-charged display. Eakins's own exploration of the female nude, *William Rush Carving his Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*, first shown at the Boston Art Club in January 1878, in contrast, turns her back to the viewer. Some scholars have suggested that Eakins's similar discretion in *Swimming* was intended to protect his models. Yet only two men in the painting are clearly seen—Eakins and the reclining man identified in the Amon Carter show as Talcott Williams. None of the figures identified as Eakins's students show their faces, making the obscuring of their anatomy unnecessary.

painting only twice more during his lifetime following its Academy debut.⁷³ Consequently, *Swimming* remained virtually unknown in the artist's studio until his death in 1916. Since that time it has become one of Eakins's best-known realist masterpieces. As such, the painting has been subject to intense scrutiny, with much recent scholarship taking a psychosexual bent. Among the more controversial studies have been Whitney Davis and Michael Hatt's speculations upon Eakins's sexuality and the extent to which *Swimming* reveals the presence of male desire.⁷⁴ Toward the other end of the spectrum, the 1996 exhibition *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, organized by the Amon Carter Museum, contextualized the work down to a minute level. The show identified each of Eakins's models, examined the circumstances of the commission, and pinpointed the location of the setting. All of this analysis has added to our understanding of this complex painting, yet few scholars have attempted to unravel Eakins's intentions in creating such an unusual work. Or, more precisely, why Eakins thought that presenting a Director of the Academy with a painting depicting himself and his students in the nude was a good idea? Given the importance of the patron and Coates's intention to give the work to the Academy, the selection of this subject must have been carefully considered.⁷⁵

⁷³ Edward H. Coates to TE, November 21, 1885, Bregler Collection, PAFA. After its PAFA debut *Swimming* was shown at the Southern Exposition in Louisville, Kentucky (1886) and the Inter-State Industrial Exposition in Chicago (1887).

⁷⁴ Whitney Davis, "Erotic Revision in Thomas Eakins's Narratives of Male Nudity," *Art History* 17 (September 1994): 301-341; and Michael Hatt, "The Male Body in Another Frame: Thomas Eakins' *The Swimming Hole* as a Homoerotic Image," in *Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts: The Body* (London: Academy Editions, 1993): 9-21. See also Randall C. Griffin, "Thomas Eakins' Construction of the Male Body, or 'Men Get to Know Each Other Across the Space of Time,'" *The Oxford Art Journal* 18 (1995): 70-80.

⁷⁵ The importance of *Swimming* is also suggested by the update on the painting's progress that appeared in *The Art Age* in May 1885, which emphasized the patron: "Mr. Thomas Eakin's [sic] picture of The Bathers, ordered by a Director of the Academy of Fine Arts, is already well-advanced." The short article went on to note that Eakins's "leisure moments are devoted to investigations in animal locomotion."

Much of what has been written about *Swimming* is rooted in the knowledge of Eakins's "fall from grace" shortly after its completion. Nonetheless, though Eakins would face scandal prompting his forced resignation from the Academy in a matter of months, he had every reason to feel confident about *Swimming* when it made its public debut in October 1885 at the Academy's Annual exhibition. Indeed, at the time of the commission, Eakins was more professionally secure than he would ever be again. In February 1882 the Academy made Eakins Director of its schools, enabling him to restructure the curriculum with the unfailing support of Coates's predecessor, Fairman Rogers. Eakins also held a regular teaching post at the Brooklyn Art Guild in New York, a position that he used as leverage at the Academy. He continued to exhibit widely in the United States and Europe and had finally achieved successes both artistically and as a teacher. But most importantly, his labors resulted in commissions. Eakins conceived *Swimming* at the peak of his career, arguably at the height of his artistic powers. He was stubborn and impolitic but Eakins would not have intended *Swimming* to shock or disappoint Coates. To the contrary, he had hoped to impress him.

Unfortunately, the tendency to read Eakins's future backward onto the painting has focused attention exclusively on the one aspect of the work most relevant to his decline at the Academy, his obsession with the nude. As a result *Swimming* is often regarded, along with *William Rush Carving his Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*, as Eakins's manifesto on the primacy of the nude in the Academy's program. Undoubtedly, Eakins hoped that his choice of a nude subject would confirm that Coates supported this aspect of his program as much as Rogers's had, but

Swimming is not just about the nude. The painting also reflects Eakins's growing interest in classical art, his study of nude figures outdoors, and his documentation of human motion—all of which formed an integral part of Lecoq's program.

Indeed, *Swimming*'s compositional strangeness stems from Eakins's attempt to reconcile the different strands of Lecoq's writings into a single image. Significantly, critics of the painting complained not about the nude subject matter but of faults with the composition. The most specific charge was that the work was marred by a diving figure that failed to suggest motion. This failure was attributed to Eakins's effort "to show the results of instantaneous photography," a reference to his experiments with photographic motion studies undertaken at the University of Pennsylvania during the planning of *Swimming*.⁷⁶ Although Eakins did not use these studies in preparation for the painting, motion photography probably did influence his decision to include his student, George Reynolds, arrested in mid-air, perpetually frozen in the act of diving. Eakins had faced similar criticism when he exhibited *May Morning in the Park*. Here, Eakins's attempt to accurately render the forward momentum of a coach drawn by four horses also resulted in a paradoxically static image. Although a few critics marveled at his efforts, others remained skeptical of Eakins's attempts to reconcile scientific concerns with the enterprise of picture-making.

⁷⁶ "At the Private View. First Impressions of the Autumn Exhibition at the Academy of the Fine Arts," (Philadelphia) *Times* (October 29, 1885): 2. For the diving figure, Eakins created a sculptural wax model that he suspended on a string to give the impression of being in mid-dive.

While critics could dismiss *May Morning in the Park* as a scientific painting, *Swimming*, with its references to antiquity, undeniably referred to artistic tradition.⁷⁷ Yet the influence of “instantaneous photography” added an incongruous reference to modernity that critics perceived as eccentric. What was not apparent was that Eakins’s addition of this moving figure into what is essentially an Arcadian subject represented the fullest integration of Lecoq’s ideas into his work. This painting gave Eakins the opportunity to publicly present his adaptation of Lecoq’s work before the Academy. With *Swimming* Eakins solicited Coates’s support for more than just the use of nude models—he hoped to make additional changes to the Academy’s curriculum based upon the pedagogical theories of Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran. By the time Eakins painted *Swimming* he felt himself in a position to implement this program—a step that posed problems for Coates.

Although *Swimming* has been compared to the poetry of Walt Whitman and James Whitcomb Riley, Lecoq’s description of his first outing with his students provides the best textual corollary for Eakins’s image:

It was agreed that master and pupils should meet in a most beautiful spot, a sort of natural park. The deep shadows thrown by the great trees in full leaf contrasted sharply with the blaze of light with which the open glade was flooded. A pond full of reflections lay at their feet. It was a perfect place, offering endless backgrounds for the human figure, with every possible effect and range of light and shade, exactly satisfying the purpose I had in view. The models I had hired for the occasion had to walk, run, sit, and stand about in natural attitudes . . . naked like the fauns of old⁷⁸

⁷⁷ *Arcadia* is the title given to both the largest oil and relief in the series by Eakins’s wife after his death. She called another related work *An Arcadian*.

⁷⁸ Luard, 29.

In this statement we see the full expression of Lecoq's method. Students would reach this goal only after having completed numerous memory exercises increasing in complexity. Lecoq's description reveals the realist philosophy that underlies the classicism of *Swimming* or the Arcadian works. The "fauns of old" appear to Lecoq through a reenactment of the Greek method.

In another of Lecoq's outdoor sessions his students were similarly struck by the transformation of one model, "a man of splendid stature, with a great sweeping beard," who "lay at rest upon the bank of the pond, close to a group of rushes, in an attitude at once easy and beautiful. The illusion was complete—mythology made true lived before our eyes, for there before us was a river-god of old, ruling with quiet dignity over the course of the waters."⁷⁹ This recalls *Swimming*, with its own reclining figure, resembling, but not replicating, the pose of the Parthenon's *Ilissos* or the *Nile* of the Vatican collection.⁸⁰ Although he calls to mind the classical tradition he is, like the figures in the Arcadia relief, clearly a modern individual.

The three male figures on the rocky outcropping similarly suggest classical pedimental sculpture, with the reclining figure at the declining end of a compositional line that rises to its conclusion with the standing nude youth with his back to us. Below the standing youth is the problematic diving figure. But most importantly Eakins has included the easily recognizable portrait of

⁷⁹ Luard, 31.

⁸⁰ Since Eakins situated the figure next to a body of water it is probable that he had classical river gods in mind. These were also the source images for William Rush's *Allegory of the Schuylkill River in its Improved State*.

himself swimming in the water towards the outcropping. If we consider the painting as evidence of Eakins's ambition to bring Lecoq's theories to the Academy his placement within *Swimming* seems essential.

Eakins based his painting, in some part, on the nude photographs he had taken of his male students at Dove Lake. But, unlike the works in the Arcadian series, none of the extant photos can be said to be the exact source for any of the figures in the painting. It seems unlikely that he saved other photos from the session but destroyed the ones he used to construct the image itself. The awkwardness of the composition suggests a more synthetic approach—photos provided guidance, an access point to memory but they were not used according to the same one-to-one method seen in *Mending the Net*. For *Swimming*, Eakins may have taken Lecoq's work to its farthest conclusion and derived his composition from a variety of sources, allowing his "imagination . . . [to] use what memory has to offer her."

Lecoq acknowledged that finding opportunities to study the nude outdoors would be difficult. Therefore, he counseled that only "a great school of art" could implement his method. That "in the name of art it would have no difficulty in getting placed at its disposal parks and public buildings" where it could carry out the study of the nude in the manner he had outlined.⁸¹ Eakins use of his students in a painting for the Chairman of the Academy's Committee on Instruction suggests that he was trying to get official support for just such a move. Unfortunately Eakins's dismissal from the Academy in February 1886 intervened. While Eakins continued lecturing at art

⁸¹ Luard, 66.

schools on anatomy and perspective he never again achieved a position to implement Lecoq's program at "a great school of art."

Lecoq's method had proven similarly controversial in France. Shortly after his appointment he was ousted from the "Petite Ecole." Both Eakins and Lecoq continued to pursue their unconventional methods through private instruction with a loyal core of devoted students. After his departure from the Academy, a group of his students organized the Art Students League of Philadelphia with Eakins at its head. Nude photography sessions continued both indoors and out but the League's impact and resources were limited—the tiny League would not transform art education in America. Eakins never painted another work quite like *Swimming* because the goals he celebrated in this image were no longer possible for him to achieve. This perhaps explains why he stopped exhibiting *Swimming*—more than any of his works it represented failure.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEHOLD THE MAN: EAKINS'S *CRUCIFIXION*

During the summer of 1880 Thomas Eakins began work on *Crucifixion* (figure 61), his largest history painting and the only overtly religious work he undertook. This unusual life-size rendering of one of the central devotional subjects in Christian art has few parallels in American art history. Most American crucifixions appear in religious contexts and those that exist outside of these settings treat the subject on a smaller scale and without Eakins's directness of presentation. Following his colonial revival subjects and contemporary genre scenes, *Crucifixion* was entirely unexpected.

Eakins's selection of this subject has puzzled art historians who, unable to reconcile what appears to be an anomalous religious image by a reputedly agnostic artist, have generally ignored the painting.¹ Those few who have interpreted the painting at all have often related it to Eakins's interest in realism by divesting the image of its religious content. Lloyd Goodrich, for example, considered this illustration of Christ's suffering completely devoid of "religious sentiment" and suggested that Eakins intended it simply as a realist study of the male nude body.² As

¹ The first extended discussion of the painting came only in 1989, with Elizabeth Milroy's, "'Consummatum est . . .': A Reassessment of Thomas Eakins's *Crucifixion* of 1880," *The Art Bulletin* 71 (June 1989): 269-284. The pre-1989 literature often mentioned the painting but typically as a curiosity. As Milroy has noted, the Philadelphia Museum of Art (which owns *Crucifixion*) did not even include the painting in its 1982 exhibition of Eakins's work. Since Milroy's article the painting's significance has been acknowledged, yet it remains a difficult work to integrate into Eakins's career.

² Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), I: 196. Similarly, the catalogue entry for the sketch for *Crucifixion* in *The Hand and the Spirit*, reads, "it is quite certain that it was done without reference to any religious body or beliefs." See Jane Dillenberger and Joshua Taylor, *The Hand and the Spirit: Religious Art in America, 1700-1900*. (Berkeley, CA: University Art Museum, 1972), 156.

a result, art historians have frequently associated *Crucifixion* (like *Swimming*) with Eakins's strong interest in anatomy and the nude.³ No doubt, these interests informed the painting, but it seems unlikely that Eakins selected the most symbolically-loaded image in Christian iconography simply to exercise his skill at rendering the nude figure.

In 1989 Elizabeth Milroy reestablished *Crucifixion's* pivotal place in Eakins's career in a seminal article in which she situated the painting within the context of contemporary French art and convincingly declared that Eakins regarded the work as his reception piece. Milroy also addressed the painting's religious subject matter by linking *Crucifixion's* meaning with a precise moment in the Catholic liturgy, the *Consummation* of the Good Friday service. Milroy further suggested that Eakins hoped to court Catholic patronage with his painting. Yet Eakins's well-known ambivalence about organized religion, at times, bordering on outright hostility, raises questions about this aspect of Milroy's interpretation.⁴

Eakins created his reception piece, asserting his mastery of his craft, at an optimistic point in his career, when professional recognition must have seemed tangibly close. Indeed, in terms of his professional accomplishments, the years 1879 and 1880 proved pivotal. Eakins began *Crucifixion* in the midst of his successful colonial revival series, which yielded his first work to enter a museum collection.

³ The link with anatomy was affirmed as recently as the 2001 Eakins retrospective at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Although Marc Simpson's catalogue essays nicely handle the religious content of the painting, in the exhibition itself, viewers found the painting displayed next to bronze anatomical casts that Eakins used for teaching. It was also one of the few major paintings in the exhibition that was hung without any wall text.

⁴ Milroy, 269-284. Milroy uses the absence of the wound in Christ's side to establish the moment depicted as the *Consummation*. Kristin Schwain also discusses Catholic influence on the painting in "Figuring Belief: American Art and Modern Religious Experience" (Ph.D. diss, Stanford University, 2001).

During these years Eakins continued to pursue an aggressive exhibition schedule, sending work as far a field as Louisville, Cincinnati, and Chicago, in addition to major venues in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. In this period he also published illustrations for the popular *Scribner's Monthly*, enabling him to reach an even wider audience with his art.

Upon the death of Christian Schussele, Eakins also finally attained a permanent position at the Pennsylvania Academy. Shortly thereafter, in September 1879, *Scribner's* ran "The Art Schools of Philadelphia" by William C. Brownell, a piece that helped to publicize the progressive program at the Academy under Eakins.⁵ Then in May 1880, perhaps in recognition of these accomplishments, the Society of American Artists elected Eakins to its membership just as he set out to paint *Crucifixion*. All told, Eakins's visibility in the art world greatly increased during these two years: between his exhibitions, illustrations, numerous press notices, and teaching, he seemed to have "arrived."

As a reception piece, the means by which an artist asserted his or her status as a professional to the arts establishment, *Crucifixion*, like his painting of William Rush, refers to artistic tradition. By choosing the crucifixion as the subject of his reception piece he further engaged the art historical canon by reinterpreting a classic theme in a distinctly modern manner. In this way, *Crucifixion* continued Eakins's dialogue with the art historical past while remaining grounded in the present.

Prepared for accolades and perhaps even some controversy, Eakins sent the painting to major exhibition venues around the country, where it generated considerable

⁵ Although Eakins had yet to make changes to the Academy curriculum, Brownell's article highlighted interviews with Eakins (done in the previous season, before Eakins was made professor at the Academy), implying that it was his vision that guided the institution.

discussion. Although *Crucifixion* faced some vituperative criticism, the painting also won important admirers who defended the painting in the press. Whether loved or hated, *Crucifixion* received greater critical notice than any other Eakins painting. The significance of the painting is further heightened by Eakins's personal belief that it represented his "best" work.⁶

Though completed in 1880 and widely exhibited in the years following, much of *Crucifixion's* exhibition history actually comes after Eakins's 1886 ouster from the Academy. If Eakins used the painting as a reception piece prior to 1886, the work surely acquired a different meaning after his disgrace. Colored with bitterness and irony in the immediate aftermath of his dismissal, *Crucifixion* briefly came to have darker associations for the artist. As the painting's meaning evolved for the artist, it also did for its critics: as time went on the painting was accepted without controversy to major venues, including the World's Columbia Exposition in 1893 and the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco.

As much as the painting refers to artistic tradition and Eakins's standing as a professional artist, it also unavoidably addresses religion. Scholars who view the painting through the lens of Eakins's realist identity have tended to view anticlerical statements made by Eakins in his youth as evidence that he was irreligious—lending credence to Goodrich's assertion that *Crucifixion* lacks "religious sentiment."⁷ When scholars have addressed the religious content of the image they have usually read the

⁶ TE to John W. Beatty, September 25, 1900, Carnegie Institute, Museum of Art Records, Archives of American Art. Eakins wrote to Beatty: "I think I shall send my *Crucifixion* which is probably my best painting."

⁷ Theodor Siegl reiterated Goodrich's argument in *The Thomas Eakins Collection* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art), 88-90. Kathleen A. Foster also examined the realist influence in the painting in *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 45. Foster frames her discussion with a thoughtful comparison of Bonnat's painting *Le Christ*.

influence of Catholicism onto *Crucifixion*, based upon Eakins's much later acquaintances with Catholic clergy at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Overbrook, Pennsylvania. Yet it remains unclear that Eakins made any concessions in the image on behalf of Catholic viewers. While Eakins's largely Protestant audience no doubt associated the subject with Catholicism, Catholics would likely have had problems with Eakins's painting.

Eakins's criticism of organized religion should not be viewed as a reflection of the absence of religion in his life, but instead, deserves further consideration as an expression of his belief. An examination of Eakins's thoughts regarding religion reveal that he probably intended a very specific reading of *Crucifixion*, one that was both religious and not Catholic. In fact, nineteenth-century critics debated the religious implications of the painting in very specific terms. A review of Eakins's beliefs, coupled with the reception of the religious content of *Crucifixion*, suggests that Eakins's painting argues for a particular interpretation of Jesus as a strictly human figure, and not a divine one. In this way, Eakins's *Crucifixion* is not irreligious, rather it reflects liberal theological debates roughly contemporary with the painting.⁸ An exploration of Eakins's content choices in *Crucifixion* make clear his desire to revise the iconography of the crucifixion for a modern audience, but also elucidates the reasons for the painting's initial critical shortcomings.

Tradition

⁸ Marc Simpson discusses the painting with respect to the writings of Ernest Renan in his essay "The 1880s," in Darrel Sewell, ed., *Thomas Eakins* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 108-109.

Crucifixion had its beginnings in the summer of 1880 when Eakins took his sixteen-year-old pupil, J. Laurie Wallace on a trip across the Delaware River to southern New Jersey, near Pensauken Creek. There, the artist found “a secluded spot” where he erected the wooden cross that he had made for the occasion.⁹ Wallace then disrobed and climbed into position on the cross, wearing a crown of thorns that Eakins had also made and brought with him to the site. A sketch for *Crucifixion* (figure 62), showing the effects of natural light, probably resulted from this outdoor session. According to Wallace, Eakins also took photographs at the site, none of which have survived. However, a pencil grid beneath the paint surface indicates that he probably transferred the image from a complete compositional sketch, and it remains possible that several other steps in the preparatory process for this large and ambitious painting have been lost.

Despite the seclusion of the Pensauken site, hunters interrupted the two men forcing Eakins to finish the modeling sessions at his home and studio on Mt. Vernon Street in Philadelphia. According to one version of the story, Eakins erected the cross on the roof of his studio in order to continue studying the effects of natural light on his model, leading Goodrich to wonder, not unreasonably, what his neighbors might have thought of such a display.¹⁰ As improbable as this scenario sounds, Eakins used the roof of his home as part of his working practice on several occasions.¹¹ In 1881, for example, Eakins painted two children in *Mending the Net* from a photograph of family members taken on the roof earlier that year.

⁹ Goodrich, I:190.

¹⁰ Goodrich, I:191.

¹¹ Foster, 169. Foster also mentions Eakins’s use of the rooftop to study models of rowers that he made for the rowing series. Even earlier, Eakins studied his models on the roof of a building in Spain for his painting *Street Scene in Seville*.

The story of Wallace on the cross, whether indoors or out, became legend among Eakins's students and even warranted mention in the press.¹² But it also echoed a story told about Eakins's teacher, Léon Bonnat's use of a cadaver for his own painting of the crucifixion, *Le Christ* (figure 63). Although Bonnat completed this painting years after Eakins left Paris, it gained notoriety as part of a polemical debate regarding naturalism and religious art in France. American artists and critics also took note, providing Eakins with ample opportunity to consider the painting. The *Magazine of Art* even included a small reproduction of Bonnat's image in 1879, the year before Eakins's painted *Crucifixion*.

The artist, J. Alden Weir, gave a compelling eyewitness account of Bonnat's model:

After the lecture I went into the dissecting room and saw Mr. Bonnat and Prof. [Gérôme]. They had just received a subject, and at the opposite side of the room I saw an immense cross, but thought nothing. Bonnat said he had not much time to stay and wanted the gendarme to hurry up, so two of these soldiers and a hired man took the subject out of the room, brought the cross out and laid it on it. It was then whispered about that Bonnat had a commission to paint a crucifixion, had bought the subject and had the cross fixed, so as to be able to study the action of the muscles. Some of the students, hearing what was up, crowded in; this attracted Bonnat's attention, and he got the gendarme to close the door and lock it. We went back to the lecture room where we draw the bones, and while sitting there we heard the nails driven in. We finished; Mr. [Walter] Blackman and myself went out together after all had gone. At the door we met a guardian and bribed him to let us see the subject, which he did, and standing up against the wall was the large cross and the subject crucified on it, a horrid sight; but it shows how those French artists believe in truth."¹³

¹² The story was also told in the press when the painting made its debut at the Society of American Artists exhibition. The critic for *The Art Amateur* wrote "We are told that Mr. Eakins painted his picture out of doors, his model having been suspended in a cross erected on the roof of the artists's house in Philadelphia," v. 7 (June 1882): 2. The same version of the story was mentioned in *The New York Daily Tribune* (May 17, 1882): 5. Clarence Cook wrote for both journals and it is probable that the two reviews reiterating this story are by him.

¹³ Julian Alden Weir to his father, postmarked February 21, 1874 in Dorothy Weir Young, *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960; reprint, New York: Kennedy Graphics and DeCapo, 1971), 30-31.

Eakins's students later conflated this story with the one of Wallace on the cross, "I was told by a friend of his that 'Tommy' took a corpse on the roof and nailed it to a wooden cross he had made, and then painted it with a thorough realism."¹⁴ The general contours of the story surfaced again when Eakins's student, Samuel Murray (1869/70-1941), asked a young ambulance driver to hang "from his hands from a chain" attached to a cross that he had constructed in his studio in order to model a crucifixion for Harrisburg, Pennsylvania's St. Patrick's Cathedral.¹⁵

Each of the stories regarding these artists's heroic efforts at realism broadly recalls an older artistic tradition, of which the famed competition between the ancient Greek painters Xeuxis and Parrhasios recorded by Pliny the Elder may be the earliest. In the well-known story, the two painters each sought to paint a more realistic work than the other. Although, perhaps with regard to the images of the crucifixion, an apocryphal story told by Seneca provides a more fitting parallel. According to Seneca, Parrhasios purchased a slave for the express purpose of torturing him in order to study his agony. The unfortunate slave thus unwittingly became Parrhasios's model for a painting of Prometheus.¹⁶ While gruesome in its details, the story provides a model of artistic integrity, reiterated again and again in the art historical tradition. As

¹⁴ J.M. Nugent to Arthur B. Wilder, June 11, 1935, Arthur B. Wilder Papers, Archives of American Art.

¹⁵ "Zealous Soldier Reproduces Tragedy of Golgotha," *Public Ledger*, April 13, 1919, clipping in the Philip R. McDevitt Papers. Box 6, Folder 4, J.W. Shanahan Memorial Archives, Diocese of Harrisburg.

¹⁶ The *Public Ledger* article about Murray's commission compares Murray's methods with a version of the story of Parrhasios: "What followed is, in many respects, reminiscent of the story of Parrhasios, one of the greatest painters of ancient Greece, Most readers undoubtedly are familiar with the poem which tells of how Parrhasios, portraying on canvas the agony of an aged slave who had been nailed to a cross, implores him for forgiveness for making this use of his agony. But although his own heart is pierced with grief and horror, Parrhasios does not for an instant lose sight of his purpose." I have not been able to locate the poem mentioned in this text. Nathaniel Parker Willis wrote a poem titled "Parrhasios," but it essentially recounts the story as found in Seneca and does not involve a crucifixion.

that tradition evolved the story became particularly associated with the subject of the crucifixion.¹⁷

The progression of crucifixions from Bonnat to Murray suggests a degree of inter-generational artistic competition between these men. One detects Eakins and Murray each embracing the subject in friendly rivalry with their teachers, following another theme of artistic biography, also found in antiquity, of the student who surpasses his or her master.¹⁸ If this Oedipal desire at all influenced Eakins he had adequate reason for selecting the crucifixion as the subject of his struggle. Although a strong relationship exists between Bonnat and Eakins's paintings, particularly with respect to realism, Eakins may also have been confronting the work of his other master, Jean-Léon Gérôme.

During Eakins's student days at the École, Gérôme painted two versions of the crucifixion scene, both now titled, *Consummatum est. Jérusalem*. (figure 64).¹⁹ Influenced by his travels to the Middle East, Gérôme's treatment of the subject places the emphasis on archaeological accuracy in the depiction of a panoramic Holy

¹⁷ Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 114. Kris and Kurz discuss how the story became attached to two Crucifixions by Michelangelo, as well as works on the same theme by other artists. Alisa Luxenberg in her dissertation, "Leon Bonnat (1833-1922)" (Ph.D. diss, New York University, 1990) says that the cadaver story derives from the tales surrounding Michelangelos's work. While the long-standing artistic legend no doubt informed the story, Weir's account would suggest that Bonnat did use a cadaver. Luxenberg stresses that the cadaver story only emerged in later biographies of Bonnat and did not surface at the time of the painting's exhibition in 1874. Similar stories surrounded Caravaggio's *Death of the Virgin*, which told of his use of a drowned corpse as the model for the Virgin Mary.

¹⁸ Pliny credits the painter Apollodoros with the epigram "Xeuxis stole the art from his very teachers, and carried it off with him." Quoted in J.J. Pollitt, *The Art of Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 149. Interestingly, the *Public Ledger* article about Murray's work in no way acknowledges Eakins's treatment of the subject, yet several of the articles about Eakins's painting mention Bonnat. This, to some extent, reflects the goals of the two men. While Murray's work was so closely linked with Eakins's for much of his career, especially in terms of subject matter, he understandably, desired more credit for his work. Eakins to the end acknowledged his debt to his teachers and seems to have relished the comparison with them.

¹⁹ The painting was exhibited at the Salon under the title *Jerusalem*. It was included in exhibitions at the National Academy of Design (1876) and the Union League (1875) as *Crucifixion*.

landscape with the city of Jerusalem in the distance. Gérôme, perhaps wisely, avoided the depiction of the body of Christ by having the three crosses and the forms of Jesus and the two thieves appear only as shadows in the lower right portion of the landscape. Gérôme exhibited the original at the Salon of 1868, while Eakins was still studying in his atelier in Paris. Gérôme also sent the painting to the United States, where it hung in at least three New York City venues, including an exhibition at the National Academy of Design. While Eakins's composition more closely reflects Bonnat's work, it will also be important to keep Gérôme's treatment of the subject in mind.

Eakins certainly did not emulate Gérôme's reluctance about depicting the body of Christ. In his painting of the subject, Jesus dominates a barren landscape, appearing alone with relatively few of the narrative details that traditionally accompany the scene. Only the scroll above his head identifies him as the "King of the Jews." Although he wears the crown of thorns, he significantly, lacks a halo. Additionally, Jesus's head slumps downward in shadow, without the least suggestion of holy light. The otherwise brightly illuminated composition hides none of the attenuated body's flaws. The positioning of Jesus's body—close to the picture plane and on a diagonal—is also unusual.²⁰ Rather than placing the body frontally in the center of the canvas, as Christ appears in so many crucifixion scenes, Eakins turned the body with its right side toward the viewer. This approach to Jesus's figure accentuates his three-dimensionality, highlighting his physical presence.

²⁰ Artists such as Delacroix and Rubens also turned the Cross but with a greater sense of dramatic potential that was heightened by other compositional choices, like the darkened sky or the inclusion of emotional onlookers. Eakins loathed Rubens's work, making him an unlikely model for his composition.

Several critics found Jesus's body disturbing and used terms like "ghastly" or "repulsive" in describing it. Eakins's selection of a slender, sixteen-year old model added to the consternation of those who found the painting unpleasant. Eakins further complicated his representation of an unidealized Christ by placing him in a position that stressed his weakness. By turning the crucifix on a diagonal Eakins made Jesus's thin body appear even more vulnerable. The blood streaming from his wounds and the claw-like contraction of his hands further emphasize the physical nature of his suffering. Eakins approached Christ entirely from the perspective of his human frailty and eliminated any suggestion of his omniscient strength.

Eakins would have considered each of these choices carefully. By the time he painted *Crucifixion* Eakins was well-acquainted not only with the crucifixions done by his teachers but also with the long art historical tradition of the subject. At the Pennsylvania Academy he had access to a collection that included European prints and reproductions of great works of art from European collections. This included James Claghorn's well-known collection of European engravings, which in the 1870s hung in the Lecture Room and the Director's Room at the Academy.²¹ Perhaps more importantly, as a student in Europe, Eakins visited numerous Catholic churches, including the Vatican, where he would have seen striking examples of European devotional art.²² He also visited art museums in France, Italy, Germany, and Spain.

²¹ The contents of Claghorn's collection are documented in several sources, for example, the catalogue for the Forty-ninth Annual Exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy (1878) included a full list of the Claghorn prints on display. Among the prints were several religious subjects, including scenes of The Passion, with at least seven Crucifixions among them. The Baltimore Museum of Art now owns most of the Claghorn collection. See Catherine Stover, "James L. Claghorn: Philadelphia Collector," *Archives of American Art Journal* 27 (1987): 4-8.

²² Eakins's sister Frances kept a diary a visit she took with her father to visit Eakins. The three spent much of August 1868 traveling through Italy and Germany seeing for example, "numerous churches and picture galleries" in Venice.

His trips to the Museo del Prado in Madrid seem to have been particularly influential. Eakins recorded his thoughts about many of the works that he saw there, taking special note of paintings by the Spanish Baroque master, Diego Velázquez.

Although Eakins chose a distinctly different manner of presentation, his *Crucifixion* reflects the influence of Velázquez, whose *Christ on the Cross* (figure 65) he likely saw on one of his visits to the Prado. Velázquez's earthy materialism made him increasingly popular with nineteenth-century painters, including realists like Manet. But he also merited high esteem from more conservative artists, such as Eakins's teacher, Bonnat, who encouraged his students to study the work of the Baroque master. Bonnat's own *Le Christ* shows the distinct influence of Velázquez's *Christ on the Cross*. The solidity of Velázquez's Christ would have appealed to Eakins, who aimed at a similarly material presence in his own work. However, Velázquez's masterful painting also presents a traditional view of the crucifixion, set against a dark background without "even a hint of earth," which allows "the radiant Christ" to appear "suspended in time and place for all eternity."²³ As much as Velázquez influenced Eakins's treatment of the body of Christ, Eakins had no interest in replicating this sense of eternity in his own work. Instead, Eakins's Jesus seems palpably present in his historical moment.

Although the works of Bonnat and Velázquez influenced Eakins, both artists, in actuality, approached their paintings of the crucifixion from an entirely different perspective than Eakins had. Unlike Eakins, for whom this was his sole religious painting, both Bonnat and Velázquez produced an impressive body of religious art,

²³ Jonathan Brown and Carmen Garrido, *Velázquez: The Technique of Genius* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 70.

often for church patrons. While each introduced realist elements that challenged more traditional artistic conventions, neither artist invested their work with Eakins's skepticism of religious doctrine. This was largely because Bonnat and Velázquez were both Catholic. In fact, each created their paintings for display in Catholic contexts. Velázquez's *Christ on the Cross* originally hung in the Sacristy of a convent. Bonnat's painting, commissioned by the Catholic-leaning French government for the Palais du Justice, served as a reminder to convicted sinners of Christ's sacrifice and the possibility of redemption.²⁴ Following iconographic tradition, both artists situated their Christ figures frontally in the center of the canvas. Velázquez revealed the Divine presence through the aureole of light emanating from behind Christ's head, while Bonnat similarly allowed an unnaturalistic light to fall from above onto the uplifted face of his Christ.

In another significant departure from Bonnat's and Velázquez's works Eakins chose to set his *Crucifixion* during the daytime—a decision that many of the critics felt added to the brutality of his image. Typically crucifixions appear as if they are night scenes, with the cross set against a miraculously darkened noonday sky. This tradition derives from three of the Gospel texts, which each record that the afternoon sky blackened from the sixth through the ninth hours of the crucifixion and that Christ died in the ninth hour. By depicting Christ against a bright day-lit sky Eakins deliberately rejected the supernatural event of the darkened sky. In fact, conservation evidence suggests that Eakins originally painted a very bright blue sky, which he later toned-down, perhaps in an effort to temper criticism.

²⁴ Bonnat, a devout Catholic, had close ties to the Church establishment. His aunt was the mother superior of a convent and he even considered entering the priesthood himself.

Following in the footsteps of great European painters, like Velázquez and his own teachers, Eakins selected this well-known religious theme to assert his own place in the art historical tradition at a point when his career seemed to be flourishing. However, his substantial deviations from the conventional iconography of the subject added a shocking new element to the story. Eakins signaled his work as a distinctly modern take on a traditional subject by exhibiting it first at the progressive Society of American Artists exhibition in New York in 1882. Although many critics commented on the painting's brutally realistic treatment of the subject, Eakins's iconographic choices should not be discounted as merely part of his adherence to a realist artistic doctrine. Eakins could have chosen any number of subjects as the basis for a realist reception piece but instead he chose to depict Jesus, for religious as well as artistic reasons.

The Divinity of Jesus

Eakins's emphasis on Jesus's human physicality and his denial of any of the supernatural or extra-human traits that marked him as the Son of God reflect Eakins's own beliefs about the divinity of Christ. Although regarded as an agnostic with a caustic disrespect for organized religion Eakins, like many of his rationalist contemporaries, thought about religious issues. Despite his claim as a young man that he belonged to "no church" he was raised in the Protestant tradition.²⁵ As an adult he

²⁵ TE to Caroline Cowperthwait Eakins, October 1, 1866, Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Eakins's religious background is fairly complex: his paternal grandfather (Alexander Akins) was Presbyterian, which also seems likely for his paternal grandmother (Frances Fife), his maternal grandmother (Margaret Jones) was Episcopalian, and his maternal grandfather (Mark Cowperthwait) was a Quaker, who was written out of meeting for eleven years for marrying "out of unity" and later reinstated. Eakins's parents were married at the Methodist Protestant Church at Wood and 11th Streets.

continued to read the Bible and friends remarked upon his fondness for the New Testament.²⁶ Unfortunately, few of his letters reveal much about his thoughts on religious issues beyond his general mistrust of the clergy, an important point to which we shall return shortly.

In one notable instance, however, Eakins compared Christ to the prophet Muhammad, contrasting Muhammad's human relationship with God to that of the "three in one & one in 3" of "the contemptible Catholic religion," writing "There's no God but God & Mahomed [sic] is his prophet. . . . How Christ like."²⁷ This statement reveals a significant distinction in Eakins's thinking: he did not deny the existence of God but rejected the Trinity. In its stead, Eakins perceived a Unitarian Godhead and identified Jesus as his human prophet. Years later he clarified his position by explicitly telling his friend Cardinal Dougherty that he did not believe in the divinity of Christ.²⁸ While Eakins did not accept Christ's divinity, neither did he reject his important role within the Christian faith. His references to Jesus in personal correspondence are always respectful, even reverential, as in his "How Christ like." Eakins acknowledged Jesus's exemplary status, even while limiting his powers to the terrestrial sphere.

Much has been made of Eakins's rejection of religion, yet he made clear on several occasions that he objected to organized religion largely because he could not accept the role of the clergy as mediators between man and God. He lamented that

²⁶ Eakins's Bible reading habits are recounted in Margaret McHenry, *Thomas Eakins, Who Painted* (Oreland, Pa: privately printed, 1946), 129.

²⁷ TE to Caroline Cowperthwait Eakins and Frances Eakins, April 1, 1869, Eakins Papers, Archives of American Art.

²⁸ D. Card. Dougherty to Sir Shane Leslie, April 10, 1948, Lloyd and Eakins Havens Goodrich Collection, The Thomas Eakins Research Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

“such a fact as simple as the religion of Jesus Christ” had been so complicated by men.²⁹ While he admired individual priests for their learning, he developed a decidedly anticlerical stance when it came to larger religious questions. He especially despised the fundraising efforts of “nasty low priests” within the church itself, making him “think of Christ kicking the money changers out of the temple.”³⁰ What little we know of Eakins’s reading habits further allies him with anticlerical movements in France. He enjoyed Rabelais, “a writer priest doctor of medicine and hater of the priesthood.”³¹ He also read Voltaire and Victor Hugo, both of whom were associated with anticlerical thought in France. Additionally, he periodically sent copies of *Charivari*, an anticlerical journal, home to his family.

Eakins envisioned a religion without ministers or priests, a concept that he briefly associated with Islam. Using Gérôme’s paintings of the Near East as the basis for his understanding of Islamic belief, Eakins expressed admiration for the simplicity of Muslim prayer. As he saw it, “their religion a silent prayer to the unknown immense God. The sun is going down. The man of the desert stops his horse, spreads out his little carpet [,] sticks his spear up in the ground [,] takes off his shoes, everything is silent there, he forgets he is of the world & prays to his Allah.” Although Eakins does not explicitly state it, this passage clearly describes Gérôme’s painting *Prayer in the Desert* (figure 66). Using the image as the basis for a broader commentary on religion, Eakins continued, writing that “healthy” religion

will always affect you like a Turk. You would get into the big quiet, the desert or the top of the house. You won’t go to church to see their little parades [,] their gildings & tinsel [,] their little bells [,] to hear the money clinking for the

²⁹ TE to FE, June 19, 1867, Eakins Papers, Archives of American Art.

³⁰ TE to FE, January 8, 1867, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

³¹ TE to BE March 17, 1868, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

Society of Jesus for the new chapel . . . the nasty low priests. . . The Turk don't pray like a Christian. For he don't pay any one to pray for him. We will now sing the 917th Psalm the 1st 3d & 5th verses...³²

Throughout his letters, Eakins argued for a personal, unmediated religious experience but he never denied the existence of God.

In these thoughts Eakins was not alone. Eakins's beliefs and his painting of the crucifixion echo a range of liberal religious texts published in the second half of the nineteenth century that challenged the authority of the clergy by submitting the life of Christ to historical and scientific scrutiny. Eakins surely knew Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus*, which circulated in France shortly before his arrival as a student and was quickly translated into several languages, including English. Taking a decidedly anticlerical stance, Renan argued for "a pure worship, a religion without priests and external observances, resting entirely upon the feelings of the heart."³³ Perhaps, more importantly, Renan claimed that this idea of "pure worship" came from Jesus's early ministry and he declared it among Jesus's most innovative religious ideas.

Influenced by German biblical scholarship of the preceding decades, Renan's controversial book also attempted to recover the historical Jesus, at the expense of miracles and supernatural interventions. Replete with geographical and archaeological details that added life to the ancient story, Renan's text was both innovative in its approach to biblical history and thoroughly readable. Renan became the most famous of a host of liberal thinkers who similarly questioned the accuracy of

³² TE to Caroline Cowperthwait Eakins and Frances Eakins, April 1, 1869, Eakins Papers, Archives of American Art. Eakins bought a cartes-de-viste of *Prayer in the Desert* (published by Goupil & Cie) while he was a student in Europe, Seymour Adelman Collection, Miriam Coffin Canaday Library, Bryn Mawr College. Similarly, Eakins's mention of prayer on "the top of a house" was also derived from a Gérôme painting, *Prayer on the Husetops*.

³³ Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus* (Garden City, NY: Dolphin Books, n.d.), 93. This is a reprint of an 1863 English translation of Renan's text.

the Gospels and sought a more human and historically accurate picture of the events of the Bible. As Daniel Pals has written, “especially after 1860 *Lives of Christ* became in fact a sort of vogue among the Victorians, to which every type of writer—devotional, radical, clerical, or eccentric—was sooner or later attracted.”³⁴

Americans, by no means exempt from this obsession, devoured and discussed the European texts, and produced their own works on the subject. Individual authors applied varying degrees of revision to the Gospel story, the most extreme of which suggested that while well-intentioned, Jesus suffered from delusions, the most egregious being his self-proclaimed status as the son of God. These scholars acknowledged his talent and charisma as a preacher but questioned his Messianic role.³⁵

These texts had an immediate and multi-varied influence on European artists. Gérôme’s interpretation of the crucifixion as essentially a depiction of the Holy landscape, reflects one of the least controversial implications of the new literature. Gérôme’s painting recalls the concerns of many of the new texts with atmosphere and archaeological accuracy in its emphasis on geography and historical authenticity. Eakins did not pursue this trend in his own work but he no doubt knew of it, writing “who that has read . . . the Bible or any traveller’s stories but wants to see the east.”³⁶ Eakins may also have based his generalized Eastern landscape upon those seen in Gérôme’s paintings. Despite the innovation of Gérôme’s approach, his painting did

³⁴ Daniel L. Pals, *The Victorian “Lives” of Jesus* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1982), 3.

³⁵ The American minister and scholar Augustus Blauvelt surveyed this critical literature in a series of articles for *Scribner’s Monthly*. One article in the series is of particular interest for Eakins’s conception of Jesus: “Christ’s Supernaturalism, Scientifically Considered,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 9 (February 1875): 410-425.

³⁶ TE to Caroline Cowperthwait Eakins and Frances Eakins, April 1, 1869, Eakins Papers, Archives of American Art.

not challenge the religious dogma that often influenced artistic treatments of the subject. On account of Gérôme's discretion, the American critic, Susan Nicholls Carter upheld the painting as a model, writing, "In Gérôme's famous picture of the *Crucifixion* our readers will recall how the artist suggests the horror by throwing upon the ground the *shadows* of the three crosses, which do not themselves appear. This is a worthy artistic rendering of a subject too solemn to be realistically treated."³⁷

The rise of realism, or the broader tendency toward naturalism, had a greater impact on French religious art. Although in the minds of its practitioners, artistic naturalism did not necessarily require a concurrent interest in critical religious thinking, critics tended to view naturalistic paintings of Biblical subjects as reflecting the influence of blasphemous critical approaches to the life of Jesus. Church hierarchy sanctioned this belief when Pope Pius IX in his famed *Syllabus of Errors* linked naturalism and rationalism as harbingers of heretical thinking. Along these lines, some critics felt that Bonnat's painting displayed the taint of Renan's thinking, largely because of the intense naturalism of the work.³⁸

Bonnat's painting, *Le Christ* caused a "sensation" at the Salon in 1874 where it faced criticism for its brutal realism. As one critic perceived the painting: "it is more repulsive than touching. It is not the Redeemer emaciated by fasts, nor the Son

³⁷ Susan Nicholls Carter, "Art at the Exhibition," *Appleton's Journal* 15 (June 3, 1876): 726. Carter used the painting as a foil for Rothermel's *Battle of Gettysburg*, which was roundly criticized when it was exhibited at the Centennial. For a similarly positive review see: "Art: The 'Golgotha' of Gérôme," *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature* 15 (March 1872): 381.

³⁸ The most thorough discussion of the religious implications of naturalism in French art is found in Michael Paul Driskel *Representing Belief: Religion, Art, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). In his book, Driskel briefly discusses Bonnat's painting and places it within the context of "the counterdiscourse to the Aesthetics of Ultramontanism." He cites a lack of documentation regarding Bonnat's beliefs as an impediment to understanding Bonnat's intentions, however, in her dissertation on Bonnat, Alisa Luxenberg quotes extensively from Bonnat's correspondence, which indicates that he was a practicing Catholic.

of God suffering but resigned; it is a vulgar man, who has lived a common life, and whose body undergoes tortures in which the soul does not share.” For this critic it could not follow that one who Believed could represent Christ in this fashion and he concluded that “the moral meaning of the subject has assuredly not been understood.”³⁹ This line of criticism based its conclusions solely on Bonnat’s artistic choice of representing Christ as an unidealized individual. It discounted that Bonnat had titled his painting, *Le Christ*, rather than using Renan’s humanizing “Jesus.” More importantly, it ignored the presence of the unnatural light from above in Bonnat’s painting, which affirmed that it is not in point-of-fact the work of an unrepentant skeptic.

Eakins took the subject a step further by eliminating this final vestige of Christ’s divinity. In this way, Eakins went beyond painting just another naturalist depiction of Jesus, he pointedly stripped the figure of its Godliness. This opened him up to criticism, not unlike that handed to Bonnat, but with more directed charges leveled against his decision to render Jesus as a man. Artist and critic Leslie Miller clearly detected the influence of Renan and his kind in Eakins’s work, writing, “I confess that to me it only seems to say ‘Come away and leave him alone in the white sunshine; it was all nonsense that we have heard about the darkness and the heavens themselves being moved. It was cruel to kill him, of course, but it is done now and cannot be helped; the clamoring mob was inhuman, we know, but it was not so very

³⁹ Clara Erskine Clement and Laurence Hutton, *Artists of the Nineteenth Century and Their Works* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1879), 75-76. The authors reprinted this review by René Ménard from the May 1875 issue of *The Portfolio*.

blind after all; there is one less delusion in the world at any rate.”⁴⁰ Another critic called it “a materialistic Savior: a human and not a divine.” Condemning the painting as a spiritual failure, he continued: “There is no divinity in the picture, no mystery. It has no spiritual atmosphere to touch the soul with love and compassion.”⁴¹ A critic in Detroit concurred, writing that “[Eakins] instead of giving us a divinity has revealed a most revolting spectacle in the form of a man with emaciated figure, with wiry hair, and a face anything but God-like.”⁴²

This criticism of the face is unusual. Despite the polemical ambitions of the painting Eakins remained cautious in his depiction of Jesus’s visage. Just as Gérôme avoided the physical description of Christ’s body so too did Eakins evade the depiction of Jesus’s face by placing it in shadow. Some critics charged that Eakins used shadow to intentionally frustrate critics.⁴³ While this may be true, Eakins’s decision may also represent an acknowledgment that despite the efforts of Biblical historians, a lack of credible eyewitnesses made it impossible to ascertain Jesus’s appearance. Frustratingly, the most authoritative texts, the Gospels themselves, contained no physical description of Jesus. This remained the primary stumbling block in any pictorial representation of the historical Jesus. Theologians debated the issue of Christ’s personal appearance for centuries largely on doctrinal grounds, with some arguing for his intense beauty and others for his plainness.

⁴⁰ Leslie Miller, “Art in Philadelphia,” *American Architect and Building News* 12 (November 25, 1882): 252.

⁴¹ Undated clipping (1883) discussing “the devotional chamber” of the Art Loan Exhibition, The Detroit Art Loan Scrapbook in the Detroit Art Loan Association Records Archives of American Art, reel D104.

⁴² Undated clipping (1883), The Detroit Art Loan Scrapbook in the Detroit Art Loan Association Records Archives of American Art, reel D104.

⁴³ The unnamed Detroit critic of the previous note wrote that Eakins “had undertaken to so thoroughly conceal his features in shadow that any attempt to criticize would be baffled.” The Detroit Art Loan Scrapbook in the Detroit Art Loan Association Records Archives of American Art, reel D104

The only historical document describing Jesus, the so-called Epistle of Publius Lentulus, allegedly the work of a Roman eyewitness, in fact dated no earlier than the eleventh century. When subject to scrutiny, the letter's anachronistic language argues in favor of a date significantly later than the first century. Several historical details in the text are also inconsistent with the supposed Roman date. Neither does the description of Jesus conform to Early Christian imagery, rather it reflects the artistic conventions in place at the time of its creation. When viewed less critically, the document provides historical validation for an iconographic tradition that emerged in the centuries after Jesus's death. Following this tradition, Lentulus's Jesus has a beard, reddish-brown hair, and blue-grey eyes.⁴⁴ In spite of the letter's well-known unreliability, some argued that the letter had its basis in an earlier lost text and that the inaccuracies resulted from its transmission by countless individuals through time. The potency of the image described in the letter is witnessed by the currency it still holds today.

In the absence of other texts, the letter and its associated art historical tradition may have influenced Eakins's representation of Jesus. Despite his talent as a portraitist, he curiously chose not to paint a portrait likeness of Wallace on the cross. In his depiction of Jesus's face Eakins altered Wallace's features to conform with accepted notions of Christ's appearance, largely as they exist in the Lentulus letter. If one compares Wallace's face as Jesus with Eakins's portrait of him from 1885 (figure 67) there are some telling differences, most notably that Eakins's changed Wallace's hair color from almost black in the portrait to reddish-brown in

⁴⁴ John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, volume 5 (New York: Harper, 1891): 348-350.

Crucifixion. Eakins further obscured Wallace's features in shadow, making him almost unrecognizable as an individual. This raises an important point, unlike Bonnat's Christ, which critics identified "as a vulgar man, who has lived a common life," Eakins did not want his Jesus to be specific and knowable. Yet he also did not offer the traditional alternative of an idealized Savior. Eakins presented his viewers with an earthbound Jesus and hid his undeniably human features from their gaze.

Audience

Eakins must have known of the controversy caused by Bonnat's painting *Le Christ*. An 1874 letter to his friend, Earl Shinn, indicates his continuing interest in Bonnat's work, and Eakins's life-long friend William Sartain remained a student in Bonnat's atelier during this period.⁴⁵ Eakins most certainly knew of the scandal caused by Renan's book, which figured so prominently in the press in the years prior to his painting. Given that he had already faced criticism for the realism of his own portrait of Dr. Samuel Gross, he must have known that a realist representation of Christ would be even more controversial. It seems likely that he even counted on it.

Crucifixion did not create controversy solely because Eakins determined to show a man rather than a God, but also because he displayed the painting before a largely Protestant audience already uncomfortable with the image of the crucifixion. While American Protestants did not disapprove of religious imagery, far from it, they tended to avoid certain themes, among them the crucifixion. Jesus appeared in other Protestant images but rarely in the crucifixion. Protestant renderings of the theme

⁴⁵ TE to Earl Shinn, April 2, 1874, Richard T. Cadbury Papers, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

either diminished Christ's presence or absented him altogether. Elihu Vedder, for example, painted several works featuring the base of the cross, without offering a glimpse of Christ's body.⁴⁶ Robert Walter Weir similarly painted, *Evening of the Crucifixion* (figure 68; unlocated), which showed mourners leaning upon a cross without the body of Christ.⁴⁷

Protestants understood more traditional depictions of the crucifixion as symbolic of the Catholic tradition. The critic for *The New York Times* implied as much when he called Eakins's *Crucifixion* "an unnecessary picture" and asked, "Will the devoutest Roman Catholic be moved by it? Hardly." In a survey of "The Cross in Art," a writer for the *Ladies Repository* briefly traced the history of the representation of the cross from symbol to crucifixion. What at first seems a casual survey of the tradition quickly becomes invested with sectarian bias as the author laments the introduction of the crucifixion in the seventh century as representative of "a decline of both artistic and religious purity." Examining the methods by which artists associated the cross with its victim, from representations of the lamb at the base of the cross to its culmination in Christ crucified with four nails, the author felt that "the grandeur of the early symbolism" had been replaced in the crucifixion with a "most material and repulsive literalness."⁴⁸ This "material" imagery repelled Protestant

⁴⁶ Jane Dillenberger discusses the absence of Christ's body in "Between Faith and Doubt: Subjects for Meditation," in Joshua C. Taylor, et al. *Perceptions and Evocations: The Art of Elihu Vedder* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), 154-156.

⁴⁷ Kent Ahrens, "The Religious Paintings of Robert Walter Weir," *Antiques* (April 1973): 744-749. For the Protestant use of the cross see Ryan K. Smith, "The Cross: Church Symbol and Contest in Nineteenth-Century America," *Church History* 70 (December 2001): 705-734. Smith traces the Protestant acceptance of the cross as a symbol long associated with the Catholic Church. Although Protestants gradually embraced the symbol of the cross, the crucifixion maintained its association with Popery.

⁴⁸ "Art Notes: The Cross in Art—I," *Ladies Repository* 11 (April 1873): 307-308.

viewers of Eakins's painting, who much preferred Gérôme or Weir's subtler renderings of the subject.

Protestants consumed "material" depictions of the crucifixion featuring the body of Christ in illustrated Bibles, gift books, and prints made after European masters, but as relatively private objects made for personal contemplation these images occupied a different category than Eakins's large canvas. Protestants encountered *painted* crucifixions less frequently. They admired European examples seen abroad but strictly as the products of a foreign culture.⁴⁹ In Europe, Protestants viewed Catholic art while attempting to avoid the taint of the religion. At home, painted crucifixions were typically confined to two environments: the panorama and the sacred spaces of Catholic interiors. The innate theatricality of the panorama prepared the Protestant spectator for the scene. Additionally, the most famous of the crucifixion panoramas to visit Philadelphia, copied from a European example, included a cast of thousands and received praise for its allegedly historically accurate rendering of Jerusalem but the actual scene of the crucifixion comprised a relatively minor aspect of the overall composition.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Henry James's *Italian Hours* or the earlier *French and Italian Notebooks* by Nathaniel Hawthorne are among the most famous works by Protestant writers who record their encounters with Catholic art. Although the two authors were often moved by the religious works that they saw in Italian churches, each maintained a detachment from the culture that created them, assiduously avoiding masses in favor of more secularized moments in which to view the art. Jenny Franchot has examined the complexities of the Protestant attraction to Catholicism in *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1994).

⁵⁰ Karl Frosch, Wilhelm Heine, and August Lohr exhibited a panorama of the Crucifixion in Philadelphia in 1890, overlapping with the exhibition history of Eakins's *Crucifixion*. Frosch, Heine, and Lohr based their composition on that of a panorama of the same subject by Bruno Piglhein, which had earlier completed a successful European tour. See Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 274-285. John Davis also discusses panoramas of the Holy Land in *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in American Art and Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 53-72. A variant on this type of spectacle were three-dimensional wax figures, one such group depicting the crucifixion was rescued from a fire in

The interiors of Catholic churches provided Protestants with an entirely different type of spectacle. The diaries of Eakins's sister Fanny and his wife Susan, indicate that the artist visited a number of Catholic churches in Philadelphia and abroad throughout his life, often to hear musical performances. In 1876 Eakins went to Philadelphia's newly-built Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul for an entirely different purpose: to make sketches inside the church. Although he made no sketches of it, Eakins must have seen the altar crucifixion painted by Italian émigré Constantino Brumidi. Brumidi's *Crucifixion* (figure 69; destroyed) included all of the narrative details that Eakins's painting lacked. In the painting—which no longer exists—Brumidi depicted an iconic Christ, displayed frontally in a flood of holy light, following the traditional iconography. Mourners lamented Jesus below, with angels in the spandrels above, a supernatural feature prefiguring his ascent to the heavens. Several Catholic churches in Philadelphia had similar painted crucifixions over the altar.⁵¹ With Eakins's frequent church visits he would have had ample opportunity to view Catholic altar crucifixions within their religious context.

Although some scholars have suggested that Eakins may have wanted to court Catholic patronage with *Crucifixion* this seems unlikely given his reinterpretation of the subject.⁵² While Eakins's image referenced a Catholic iconography, his

Philadelphia's Temple Theater in 1887 and was reported in "Entertainments," *The Public Ledger* (February 18, 1887): 4.

⁵¹ Holy Trinity, the Church of St. Charles Borromeo, St. Mary's, and the Church of St. Vincent de Paul (Germantown) were among those with altar Crucifixions. See *Historic American Buildings Survey*.

⁵² In her article on the painting, Elizabeth Milroy used the absence of the wound in Christ's side to pinpoint the exact moment depicted as the "Consummatum:" the moment just after Christ cries out "it is finished" and dies, but before the wound is inflicted in his side by Roman soldiers. Milroy associates this episode with the moment of the "Consummatum," a pregnant pause in the Good Friday service, in the Catholic liturgy. While I agree with her identification of the scene itself I find the relation to the Catholic liturgy less likely. I see the image as being more universal and question the notion that Eakins would have wanted to paint devotional subjects for the Church. Kristin Schwain has also related the

presentation of a strictly human Jesus rejected Catholic belief, which acknowledges that both the human and the divine exist in hypostatic union in Christ. Further, Eakins divorced the subject from the Church and placed it in the secular and commercial realm of the art exhibition. Late in his career Eakins lent the painting to the Catholic Seminary of Saint Charles Borromeo at Overbrook, but only after he befriended several members of the clergy at the Seminary, some of whom he also painted. Yet as Milroy recounts, the Seminary seemed at a loss over what to do with the painting, never placing it on public view within their sacred spaces. In fact, the Seminarians hid the painting behind a door, where a doorknob poked a hole through the canvas causing extensive damage.⁵³

If Eakins's Protestant audience viewed his subject in Catholic terms they found his reinvention of the theme doubly troubling. Eakins's friend William Clark wrote, "[Eakins's *Crucifixion*] invites comparisons, such as few of his previous works invite, with the performances of very distinguished painters." As Clark suggested Americans, whether Protestant or Catholic, brought to Eakins's painting their familiarity with Old Master—primarily Catholic—treatments of the theme. Against this unconscious visual memory it was obvious to anyone viewing the painting that Eakins deliberately chose a canon-breaking approach. By selecting such a staple of the Old Master tradition Eakins invited this comparison. His audience found the work

painting to Catholicism in her dissertation, *Figuring Belief*. Schwain provides a very compelling discussion of Eakins's later clerical portraits but I feel that the much earlier *Crucifixion* is less easily defined by his interest in Catholicism, which blossomed later in his career.

⁵³Milroy, 283. The loan is confirmed by a 1911 inventory that Eakins made of his possessions (Bregler Collection, PAFA) and the damage to the painting was noted in Eakins's Paintings Register in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

unlike previous crucifixions not only on artistic grounds but because of his representation of a new Jesus.

The Art of the Crucifixion

What Eakins hoped for with *Crucifixion* was not Catholic patronage but an artistic *succés de scandale*. Toward this end, he carefully orchestrated *Crucifixion*'s introduction to the public. Although he signed *Crucifixion* in 1880, he delayed its exhibition until 1882. What happened to the painting in the intervening year remains unclear. However, the work was nowhere in evidence when the critic Mariana van Rensselaer visited Eakins's studio during the summer of 1881. Van Rensselaer made the trip to Philadelphia specifically to interview Eakins for an article that she planned to write about him for the *American Art Review*.⁵⁴ In a letter to her editor, Sylvester Koehler, Van Rensselaer complained, "he has evidently painted very few pictures as he could tell me of nothing of his that I had not already seen." In reference to the *Gross Clinic* she wrote: "I do not see why it is so much worse than other things that are passed without comment & enjoyed—such as battle scenes to say nothing of crucifixions."⁵⁵ Her reference to crucifixions in this context makes clear that she did not see Eakins's treatment of the subject. If Eakins had his new painting in the studio, he curiously chose not to show it to the critic.

For its debut, Eakins sent the painting in 1882 to the Society of American Artists's annual exhibition. It is significant for the reading of the painting as his reception piece that he chose not send the painting to the National Academy of

⁵⁴ The magazine went bankrupt before Van Rensselaer published her article.

⁵⁵ Mariana van Rensselaer to Sylvester R. Koehler, June 12, 1881, Koehler Papers, Archives of American Art, Reel D191.

Design's annual, which overlapped with the SAA show in its timing. As one of the oldest art institutions in the nation, the NAD's exhibitions were the closest thing Americans had to the French Salons. Yet the increasing conservatism of the National Academy's selection committee led to the founding of the SAA by many of the younger, foreign-trained artists whose works the NAD frequently rejected. Despite its appearance as a sort of self-selecting American Salon des Refusés, the SAA did not actually endorse radical artists and on the whole favored the relatively conservative principles of French academic painting witnessed in the annual Salons of Paris. The French bias gave the SAA shows the veneer of daring, reinforced by the frequency with which its participants represented the figure instead of the NAD's staple of more conservative landscape and genre subjects. Since its inception in 1878, Eakins used the Society's exhibitions to display some of his most challenging and important works. Therefore, it seems likely that Eakins specifically reserved his French-influenced *Crucifixion* for debut at the Society's show.⁵⁶

Initially, the SAA hanging committee rejected *Crucifixion*, along with many paintings by other artists, on account of its large size. Due to the space constraints of the exhibition the Society organized a second showing immediately following the first, which included *Crucifixion*. In anticipation of the show Eakins sent the painting to New York sometime prior to the exhibition to have it framed by C.M. Silleck.⁵⁷

Although the Philadelphia Museum of Art removed this frame (which subsequently

⁵⁶ In 1878 Eakins sent three works to the Society's inaugural exhibition: *William Rush, Carving His Allegorical Statue of the Schuylkill River*, *Spinning*, and a photograph of his painting, *The Gross Clinic*. The following year he was more circumspect, sending only *The Gross Clinic*. This set the tone for the next four years, wherein he sent only one painting each year to the SAA show, which included: *Elizabeth at the Piano* (1880), *The Pathetic Song* (1881), *Crucifixion* (1882), and *The Writing Master* (1883). In 1884 his streak with the SAA was interrupted by the rejection of his two panels, *Knitting* and *Spinning*.

⁵⁷ TE to Frederick Diehlman, March 18, 1882, Diehlman Papers, National Academy of Design.

disappeared), it is known through photographs and has recently been reproduced (figure 70). Eakins often chose fairly standard gilt frames hastily purchased from suppliers with apparently little thought. The Silleck frame is an exception, a highly carved, almost Baroque design, it physically crowns the painting with the importance that Eakins invested in it. Through this frame Eakins linked his modern *Crucifixion* with the Baroque art historical tradition that inspired his interest in the theme.

Although the painting faced substantial criticism, the SAA showing of *Crucifixion* proved to be quite a coup for Eakins. The prominent New York venue assured him extensive press coverage and for once every major review addressed his work and at some length. While critics disagreed over the painting's success, the reviewer for the *Art Journal* deemed it "one of those works, which it is well for an exhibition to be provided with, because it provokes discussion."⁵⁸ Many critics did find the painting irreverent and unappealing. However, even those who panned the work often could not help but praise the audaciousness of the subject or the technical skill of the painter. *The Independent*, for example, found the painting "revolting beyond expression," yet conceded that it was "a bold piece of realism, in which there is some good painting."⁵⁹

But the painting did have its admirers. Although he found faults with the religious content of the painting, Clarence Cook began his review for the *Tribune* by characterizing *Crucifixion* as "the most important study of the nude that we remember by an American artist."⁶⁰ Mariana van Rensselaer, one of the most insightful critics of

⁵⁸ "Art Notes," *The Art Journal* 8 (June 1882): 190.

⁵⁹ "Fine Arts: Exhibition Notes," *The Independent* (May 11, 1882): 9.

⁶⁰ [Clarence Cook.] "Society of American Artists: Fifth Annual Exhibition—New Pictures [First Notice]," *New York Daily Tribune* (May 17, 1882): 5.

the Gilded Age, crafted two lengthy and powerful reviews praising the painting. For *The American Architect and Building News* Van Rensselaer acknowledged that while one expected anatomical skill from Eakins, she found the spiritual element in *Crucifixion* surprisingly powerful. She considered the emotional impact of the work appropriate to the subject, displaying “an intensity of pathos touched with horror.” Noting the unusual iconography of the strongly illumined canvas, she praised the technical accomplishment of the daylight scene, which she felt also added “the very spirit of desolation and abandonment” to the subject. “With its aid one receives an impression that is very characteristic of the sentiment that is to be aimed at in such a work.” She concluded, “I can only speak for myself, when I say that after seeing a hundred crucifixions from modern hands this one seemed to me not only a quite original but a most impressive and haunted work.”⁶¹ Van Rensselaer also praised the painting, in more or less the same tone, for the *New York World*, writing that Eakins “succeeded in giving the main features of the idea with distinctness and no little degree of impressive pathos. These ideas are those of sacrifice, desolation, abandonment and the thrice pathetic accomplishment of an unrighteous deed.”⁶²

Despite Van Rensselaer’s suggestion that Eakins invested *Crucifixion* with religious feeling, much of the negative comment argued that it appeared absent. As a result, some of the painting’s harshest critics focused not on the artistic merits of the piece but rather on the appropriateness of the subject. The critic for the *Art Journal*, for example, felt that “in an age tending so strongly toward realism, there are subjects

⁶¹ Mariana van Rensselaer, “Society of American Artists, New York—II,” *American Architect and Building News* 11 (May 20, 1882): 231.

⁶² [Mariana van Rensselaer.] “The Society of American Artists—Conclusion,” *The New York World* (May 15, 1882): 5.

which should be left untouched.” Another felt that “the mere presentation of a human body suspended from a cross and dying a slow death under an Eastern sun cannot do anybody any good, nor awaken thoughts that elevate the mind.”⁶³ The notion that a realist treatment of the subject effectively divorced the painting from any and all religious feeling had parallels with the type of criticism that Bonnat had faced with his painting. Eakins’s painting shocked because of its religious implications, which again suggests that Eakins did not have a Catholic audience in mind.

Eakins’s friend, William J. Clark, wrote at length about *Crucifixion*, directly addressing its religious content. As an Eakins insider, Clark’s interpretation, no doubt reflects Eakins’s own and is worth quoting at length:

whether or not Mr. Eakins’ painting is to be approved . . . would appear to depend on whether the spectator has ever conceived or is willing to conceive of the crucifixion as an event which actually occurred under certain understood conditions. Certainly, if that event meant all that Christendom believes and has for centuries believed it to mean, it would seem that, if it is to be represented at all, the most realistic treatment ought to be the most impressive. It is undoubtedly the case, however, that many who believe themselves good Christians fail altogether to appreciate their religion or the events upon which it is based as realistic: and to such, a picture like this has no message to deliver.⁶⁴

Clark believed that Eakins’s painting had a “message to deliver” and that its realism did not dispense with religious feeling but rather added to it.

Eakins’s “realistic treatment” was “impressive,” even to those who hated the piece. The audacity of the subject, so French in its conception and entirely unique to the realm of American art, garnered Eakins the success for which he had hoped. In the face of some strong criticism, Eakins continued to send *Crucifixion* to major exhibition venues throughout his career. In the years prior to his dismissal from the

⁶³ “The American Artists’ Supplementary Exhibition,” *The Art Amateur* 7 (June 1882): 2.

⁶⁴ “The Fine Arts,” *Evening Bulletin* (November 1, 1882): 5.

Academy the painting traveled from New York to Chicago and then onto Philadelphia, Detroit, and New Orleans.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, as the painting toured the country, provoking comment in every city, Eakins's status as an artist again shifted. In the summer of 1886, when Eakins's sent the painting to the Southern Exposition in Louisville, his career had been derailed by his dismissal from the Pennsylvania Academy earlier that spring.

The Martyrdom of Thomas Eakins

When Eakins sent *Crucifixion* to Louisville, in the painting's first exhibition following his resignation, he had his wife Susan submit the painting under the title *Ecce Homo*.⁶⁶ The change is unusual for the iconography of the *Ecce Homo* differs significantly from that of the crucifixion. The subject of the *Ecce Homo* derives from the Gospel of John, wherein Pontius Pilate presents Christ to the people, adorned with the mock trappings of kingship. Pilate announces Christ by saying "Ecce Homo," or "Behold the Man" and the people then call out for his execution. Artists depicting the *Ecce Homo* typically chose to render the scene in two ways: either as a devotional

⁶⁵ Eakins also valued the painting at the high price of \$1,200 throughout all of these pre-1886 exhibitions. With other works he often lowered his price as time went by, even with his relatively popular colonial revival paintings.

⁶⁶ SME for TE to George Corliss, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Academy, July 14, 1886, Pennsylvania Academy Archives. In the letter Susan wrote: "Please let the bearer have the picture by Thomas Eakins—entitled—'Ecce Homo' for James S. Earle and Sons collectors for Charles M. Kurtz Director of Art Depart. Louisville Ky." Susan was handling some of Eakins's correspondence in this period during which directed his attention to defending himself against the various charges against him. Kurtz visited artist studios in Philadelphia on June 22 or 23 1886, Charles M. Kurtz Papers, Reel 4807, Archives of American Art. In a letter to J. Laurie Wallace, written by Eakins on June 24, 1886 (Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE) he wrote: "I am ashamed to see the date of your letter to me. I was very busy when I received it & so Susie commenced to answer it for me." In this same letter he mentioned having just seen "Mr Kurtz—who takes pictures to Louisville. I had marked down your portrait to go there but since his list came I got a circular from Chicago asking me for pictures. I asked Kurtz therefore to change off your portrait for another of my works & I send yours then to Chicago." This letter makes clear that Eakins had direct contact with Kurtz, suggesting that he probably sanctioned the use of "Ecce Homo" in Susan's letter, for the painting was exhibited under that title in Louisville.

image, usually showing at half-length the scourged body of Christ, or as a narrative subject illustrating the scene as it is described in John. In Louisville, Eakins's new title not only reinforced the corporeal presence of the subject but also pointedly alluded to the injustice of Christ's execution at the hands of an unruly mob, a situation that had parallels with his own.

On February 9, 1886, Eakins submitted his resignation from the position of Director of the Schools to Edward H. Coates, Chairman of the Committee on Instruction at the request of the Directors of the Pennsylvania Academy. In spite of the gravity of such a request, the records of the Academy are notably silent regarding this affair, the circumstances of which can be pieced together only from the numerous letters that Eakins wrote in the wake of his dismissal. The Academy's drastic action, ostensibly precipitated by Eakins's removal of a loincloth from a male model in a mixed sex classroom, actually began with group of disgruntled students, some quite close to Eakins, who initiated a whisper campaign against him.⁶⁷

The Academy's sudden decision left Eakins understandably stunned and anguished. Although his own actions surely contributed to his downfall, Eakins had no warning about the closed-door meeting of the Directors that decided his fate. He railed against the secrecy of these proceedings, writing: "if anything suspicious appeared [to the Academy Directors], they should have told me just what it was, and have asked of me the explanation. The whole conspiracy against me was so secret that I could only guess at my accusers and of what they might have accused me, nor

⁶⁷ The most thorough discussion of the episode appears in Kathleen A. Foster and Cheryl Leibold, *Writing About Eakins: Manuscripts in Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

would any one enlighten me. The subsequent action of the Directors was to my mind cowardly cruel and dishonorable.”⁶⁸

Over the course of the month of February Eakins began to “see many things clearer now than I did when in my first surprise I was stabbed from I knew not where.” He gradually came to realize that among the small group of students who inflicted the most damage were his brother-law, Frank Stephens and Thomas Anshutz, one of Eakins’s closest assistants. Eakins accused those involved in the campaign for his removal of acting in “a petty conspiracy in which there was more folly than malice, weak ambitions and foolish hopes, and the actors in it are I think already coming to a sense of their shame.” Indeed, it appears that Anshutz had acted out of his own self-interest and eventually succeeded to Eakins’s former position at the Academy. But Stephens had not acted out of “folly” but with “malice” and continued to slander Eakins in the coming months.⁶⁹

Stephens and his cohort followed their success at the Academy with an effort to strip Eakins of his honorary membership at the Philadelphia Sketch Club. In March Eakins defended himself in the Sketch Club against what he considered “an organized movement to do me mischief.”⁷⁰ By this time, Eakins had steeled himself for a fight and demanded to know the charges against him. Yet into April he complained that he had “in vain endeavored to get a proper presentation of these charges, but from the character of the correspondence with the committee, from rumor, and from the irregular, secret action instigated by the same party in another

⁶⁸ TE to Edward H. Coates, February 1886, PAFA Archives.

⁶⁹ TE to Edward H. Coates, February 1886, PAFA Archives.

⁷⁰ TE to John V. Sears, March 13, 1886, Philadelphia Sketch Club.

club, I easily conclude the whole affair to be a dastardly attempt to injure me, and to use the club as a cat's paw to further the injury.”⁷¹

Eakins remained deeply embroiled in the scandal in June, when he gave Charles M. Kurtz, Director of the Art Department, a list of the paintings he hoped to send to the Louisville Exposition.⁷² A few weeks prior, Eakins complained in a letter to his sister Fanny of “being cut deliberately on the street by those who have had every occasion to know me” and hoped that “the affidavit my father signed today & Billy's [Fanny's husband William Crowell] letter with his & your affidavit will do much good as undoing some of Frank's harm.”⁷³ Eakins made the decision to send *Crucifixion* to Louisville in the midst of a struggle to combat his accusers and rescue his reputation.

In this context, Eakins developed a visceral sense of identification with his subject after his dismissal from the Academy and his expulsion from the Sketch Club. As part of his defense Eakins publicly changed the title of *Crucifixion* to *Ecce Homo*. Apart from his overwhelming sense of the injustice of his situation, Jesus's story offered other parallels in keeping with his own religious and professional sensibilities. The humanization of Jesus led to an increasing focus on his acts. As a result nineteenth-century writers often acknowledged Jesus's role as a teacher. Yet as a teacher he directly challenged orthodox religion, which necessitated his execution. Eakins could have identified with this behavior and its consequences—just as Jesus's unconventional beliefs led to his death, Eakins's own unconventional teaching

⁷¹ TE to the President and Members of the Philadelphia Sketch Club, April 17, 1886, Philadelphia Sketch Club.

⁷² TE to J. Laurie Wallace, June 24, 1886, Joslyn Art Museum. The list itself no longer exists.

⁷³ TE to FE, June 4, 1886, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

methods led to his downfall. Perhaps most importantly, Eakins felt betrayed by those whom he most trusted. Eakins's students were *his* disciples. The idea that his students would unjustly expose his reputation to an angry mob deeply pained Eakins.⁷⁴

This anger likely influenced his decision to exhibit *Crucifixion* in Philadelphia in February 1887, almost a year to the day after his forced departure from the Academy. Here, again the painting may have taken on poignant significance for Eakins since he chose not only to bring the painting back to Philadelphia but also to show it at the Pennsylvania Academy in the inaugural reception of the Philadelphia Art Club. This newly-founded organization had no official relationship with the Academy and no acrimonious history with Eakins. It must have delighted Eakins that his great painting of Christian sacrifice hung on the Academy's walls but in an exhibition entirely separate from the institution that had shunned him. Eakins's Art Club showing was strong, drawing upon some of his best work of the past decade. He perhaps used the occasion to highlight his versatility for he included a portrait (*Portrait of William D. Marks*), a watercolor genre subject (*Dancing Lesson/Negro Boy Dancing*), two sculptures (his *Knitting* and *Spinning* panels), and his largest history painting (*Crucifixion*).

Although Eakins's unorthodox methods led to the Academy scandal, he clearly felt persecuted. His later characterization of his own so-called honors as

⁷⁴ In Gérôme's atelier Eakins's witnessed a hazing ritual enacted on one student "disliked by all the school." He was "tied to an easel upside down or *crucified* as it is called." (emphasis mine), TE to BE November 1867, Bregler Collection, PAFA. The same treatment happened to Eakins's student Henry Ossawa Tanner while he was studying at the Pennsylvania Academy. See Dewey F. Mosby, *Henry Ossawa Tanner* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 60. There are other important links between Jesus and the artistic profession, which have perhaps less relevance for Eakins. Foremost among these is the relationship between the two, if one accepts Christ's divinity, as creators. There is also the great example of Dürer's *Self-Portrait* in which he appears, for entirely different reasons as Christ. See "The Artist as Christ," in Joseph Leo Koerner's *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 63-79.

“misunderstanding, persecution & neglect” reflects his bitterness over what he perceived as a great injustice done to his career. Although he never again showed the painting under the title *Ecce Homo*, in the context of the Academy scandal *Crucifixion*, his greatest history painting, the European-inspired reception piece meant to crown his career, temporarily took on new meaning for the ruined artist.

Eakins's "Best Work"

Ironically, around this period negative criticism of *Crucifixion* began to subside, to be replaced with greater acclaim. In 1889, William C. Brownell called *Crucifixion* Eakins's “masterpiece.”⁷⁵ Shortly thereafter, Eakins sent the painting, along with two other works, to Paris for exhibition in the annual Salon. For reasons that remain obscure, the Salon of 1890 included only one painting by Eakins, *The Writing Master*. *Crucifixion* appears not have been exhibited at all in France, but Eakins had high expectations for showing his work there as he wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury that he wanted to bring all of his paintings back into the country following their exhibition, “unless fortunately they be sold abroad.”⁷⁶

Undaunted, in the following years, Eakins sent *Crucifixion* primarily to international venues in the United States. In an exhibition of works by Philadelphia artists to be included in the Columbian Exposition of 1893, one critic noted the change in status of both Eakins as an artist and his painting *Crucifixion*, writing that judging from Eakins's paintings “now being on the line,” when in earlier years they

⁷⁵ William C. Brownell, “French Traits—The Art Instinct,” *Scribner's Monthly* 5 (February 1889): 249.

⁷⁶ TE To Secretary of the Treasury, March 11, 1889, Bregler Collection, PAFA. It remains possible that Gérôme placed the paintings with a private gallery when the Salon rejected them but as yet little research has been undertaken in France regarding Eakins's later exhibitions there.

had been rejected altogether, it appeared that “there had come from the good men of Philadelphia a change of heart.”⁷⁷

In part, one could ascribe the “change of heart” to the greater influence of French painting during the decade between the painting’s first appearance and the Columbian Exposition. This was certainly the case, by 1902 when Sadakichi Hartmann used those aspects of the work that had so bothered critics in the 1880s, to tout the painting’s greatness. “[Eakins’s] *Christ on the Cross*, a lean, loan figure set against a glaring sky—austere, uncouth, and diabolically realistic as it is—is a masterpiece of artistic anatomy, in the knowledge of which nobody approaches him in this country.”⁷⁸

Eakins continued to show *Crucifixion* until his death in 1916.⁷⁹ In 1900 Eakins sent the painting along with one of his most compelling male subjects, *Portrait of Mr. Louis Kenton (The Thinker)* (figure 71) to the Carnegie Institute’s Fifth Annual Exhibition in Pittsburgh. The compositional similarities witnessed in this pairing reinforce the humanity of Eakins’s Jesus. Although the austere *Portrait of Louis Kenton* reflects Eakins’s late portrait style, the representation of a single male

⁷⁷ Martin Church, “The Fine Arts: Philadelphia Exhibit of Works for the World’s Fair,” *Daily Evening Transcript* (Boston), January 17, 1893: 6. At the Columbian Exposition itself the painting hung in a prominent location on an exterior wall of the second floor of the Fine Arts Building, visible from the first floor galleries.

⁷⁸ Sadakichi Hartmann, *A History of American Art*, 2 volumes (Boston, L.C. Page, 1902): I: 204. Biographical dictionary entries for Eakins in the 1890s and 1910s also started mentioning the painting as one of Eakins’s major works.

⁷⁹ After 1886 Eakins showed the painting in 1887 at the Philadelphia Art Club and the Boston Mechanics Fair. In 1893 the *Crucifixion* again hung at the Academy in its showing of “Works to be Exhibited at the World’s Columbian Exposition,” before traveling on to the Chicago Fair. In 1900, Eakins sent it to the Carnegie Exhibition. In 1904 it was shown in St. Louis in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Between 1908 and 1914 Eakins’s lent the painting to the Seminary of St. Charles Borromeo at Overbrook, Pa. Finally, Eakins shipped the painting to San Francisco for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915. *Crucifixion* remained in San Francisco in 1916 for a Post-Exposition Exhibit. The 1887 Boston show recently came to light thanks to Col. Merl Moore, which suggests the possibility that there are more exhibitions to be uncovered.

figure turned at an oblique angle to the viewer roughly parallels that seen in the *Crucifixion*. In both works Eakins limited the settings, keeping the viewer focused on the figure. Kenton appears thoughtful, even intellectual, yet we know that he came from a working class background.⁸⁰ He married Eakins's sister-in-law, Elizabeth Macdowell and despite his contemplative appearance, his violent temper led to the dissolution of the marriage. In this deeply flawed individual Eakins did not so much suggest a comparison with Christ, but rather offered the same intense scrutiny of character that Eakins's presented earlier in *Crucifixion*. Eakins's desire to draw forth Jesus's humanity lends *Crucifixion* the strength of his best portraits, even as it evades giving us a likeness.

Eakins made his ambitions for *Crucifixion* painfully clear in a letter to John W. Beatty of the Carnegie Institute: "In all events I think I shall send my *Crucifixion* which is probably my best painting, and which I hope may be acquired by some public gallery."⁸¹ This may have been Eakins goal all along since he painted *Crucifixion* just after *In Grandmother's Time* entered the collection at Smith College. In April 1910 Eakins offered the painting to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The museum declined.⁸² After her husband's death Susan Eakins's difficulty in finding a home for the painting continued. The Philadelphia Museum of Art finally accepted Susan's offer of *Crucifixion* as part of a larger gift of Eakins's work.⁸³ Even then, the

⁸⁰ Kathleen A. Foster, "Portraits of Teachers and Thinkers," in *Thomas Eakins*, Darrel Sewell, ed. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 313.

⁸¹ TE to John W. Beatty, September 25, 1900, Carnegie Institute Museum of Art records, Archives of American Art.

⁸² H. Barbara Weinberg, *Thomas Eakins and the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Museum Bulletin*, 52 (Winter 1994/95): 37.

⁸³ Those interested in seeing the painting at the Philadelphia Museum today are directed not to the Eakins galleries but rather to the European galleries on the other side of the building, where the

context in which Eakins conceived *Crucifixion* was not understood until over a century after he painted it.

painting seems more at home with its French counterparts than among other American works of the period.

CHAPTER FIVE

COLLABORATION AND COMMEMORATION IN PUBLIC SCULPTURE

Although Eakins is usually thought of as a painter, he regarded relief sculpture as the highest measure of artistic achievement. From the start sculpture held a prominent place in his explorations of historical subject matter.¹ In his painting of William Rush he celebrated a sculptor as the model for his own self-definition as an artist. In *Crucifixion* he heightened the sculptural qualities of the figure to further his interpretation of a human Jesus. In the 1880s he made the ambitious small reliefs, *Knitting* and *Spinning*, which concluded his Colonial Revival series and the *Arcadia (Pastoral)* panel, which signaled his emerging interest in classical art. Those who know of his sculpture typically think of these small reliefs, yet Eakins also completed two large-scale Beaux-Arts monuments in the 1890s and quietly continued to assist his protégé, Samuel Murray with his own public sculpture projects until the turn-of-the-century. In these monumental works Eakins hoped to emulate his artistic heroes—William Rush and Phidias—by producing enduring public sculptures. Unfortunately, complications with these commissions led to disappointment.

Eakins's entered the arena of public sculpture through his friendship with New York sculptor William Rudolf O'Donovan (1844-1920). Instead of retiring into obscurity after he had been dismissed from the Pennsylvania Academy and ostracized from Philadelphia's principal art organizations, Eakins collaborated with O'Donovan on the largest Civil War monument of the period, the Brooklyn Soldiers and Sailors

¹ The singular assessment of Eakins's work as a sculptor is Moussa M. Domit's *The Sculpture of Thomas Eakins* (Washington, D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969).

Memorial Arch (figure 72), prominently situated outside the grounds of the newly-created Prospect Park.² Simultaneously, the pair undertook another major sculptural project for the Trenton Battle Monument (figure 73) in New Jersey, erected to commemorate events of the Revolutionary period.³ In these two monuments Eakins finally had an opportunity to pursue his interest in sculpture on a large-scale. Although the sculptures lack the artistic appeal of some his paintings, the shift to sculpture was perhaps the most difficult and ambitious move of his career and completely dominated his artistic output for over three years.⁴

Significantly, both of these projects brought Eakins back into the realm of memory and history. Yet the public nature of these works had decided consequences for the reception of these historical subjects. The reliefs for the Brooklyn Arch, though compositionally less ambitious than Eakins's work at Trenton, proved the more conceptually difficult of the two projects because in them the artists had to address relatively recent historical events. For the Arch, the sculptors ran into difficulties both in negotiating the tricky terrain of collective memory and in satisfying the public demand for hero-worship. The Trenton panels did not face such scrutiny. Yet despite the general satisfaction with these reliefs, Eakins received no further commissions for large-scale public monuments following their completion.

² Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 116. For a discussion of Eakins's work on the Arch see Michael W. Panhorst, "The Equestrian Sculptures for the Brooklyn Memorial Arch," in *Eakins at Avondale and Thomas Eakins: A Personal Collection* (Chadds Ford, Pa.: Brandywine River Museum, 1980), 24-26.

³ The most extensive discussion of the Battle Monument can be found in Zoltan Buki and Suzanne Corlette, eds., *The Trenton Battle Monument Eakins Bronzes* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey State Museum, 1973).

⁴ According to Goodrich's 1933 catalogue raisonné Eakins painted only five dated works between 1892-1894. Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins: His Life and Work* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1933).

The presence of these two monuments in Eakins's *oeuvre* has always seemed a puzzling anomaly within his career. Why did he undertake these projects? And given his continuing interest in sculpture through the work of his pupil Murray, why didn't he produce more on his own? Recently discovered letters at the New Jersey State Archives reveal that Eakins's failure to produce subsequent sculptural work is intimately tied to his relationship with O'Donovan and O'Donovan's network of friends in New York and not solely to the lackluster public reception of the Brooklyn Arch.⁵

Eakins and Sculpture

As a student in Paris, Eakins's first encounter with sculpture did not bode well for his future interest in the medium. Although he found the marble sculptures in the Louvre "much better than the miserable imitations at Philadelphia," they still made him "shiver." He left the sculpture galleries almost immediately, preferring to view the pictures.⁶ Yet as Eakins began his training at the Ecole he grew to understand the value that sculpture held for a young painter. Although he disliked studying from casts, he listed the Ecole's collection of "casts from all the good antique and many modern statues" among a description of "the advantages of the Imperial School."⁷

In March 1868, he decided to undertake the study of sculpture in order to improve his painting and entered the atelier of the sculptor Augustin-Alexandre

⁵ A group of letters relating to the commission sat mislabeled for nearly a century in the New Jersey State Archives. I wish to thank Beth Colosimo at the Archive for allowing me to view the letters in the middle of her effort to catalogue this important collection.

⁶ TE to Frances Eakins, October 30, 1866, Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

⁷ TE to Benjamin Eakins, December 23, 1866, Bregler Collection, PAFA. Eakins was not alone in his dislike of working from casts, in a March 7, 1867, letter to his father he noted that during antique week only about a dozen of "the most studious and peaceful" students attended.

Dumont (1801-1884). As he explained to his father, “I am going to model in clay every once in a while. I think I will thus learn faster. When I am tired of painting I will go to the class and be fresh and I will see more models.”⁸ Months later, Eakins found that his hard work had indeed helped him to “construct my men more solid, springy & strong.”⁹ Although he did not stay long in Dumont’s studio, Eakins continued to use sculpture to aid his painting while living abroad. In April 1869, for example, he bought several casts for his studio and an August 1869 list of expenses includes the purchase of a cast of Houdon’s “Cold Girl” and “modeling wax and tools.”¹⁰

Eakins’s continuing work in sculpture further cultivated his appreciation of the medium as an art. Following his training with Dumont, Eakins began to express admiration for Phidias and for Greek sculpture generally. Phidias had risen so high in his estimation that when he praised the artist Thomas Couture, Eakins curiously referred to him as “the Phidias of painting & drawing.”¹¹ He also took notice of the work of Carpeaux and sent a photo of his sculpture, *The Dance*, done for the Paris Opera, home to his father. Eakins declared that Carpeaux probably modeled “better than anyone in the world” and took pride in the fact that Carpeaux had also attended the Ecole.¹² This appreciation near the end of his stay in Paris contrasts sharply with his first appraisal of sculpture in France and reflects how strongly the Ecole’s training influenced Eakins.

⁸ TE to BE, March 6, 1868, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

⁹ TE to BE, September 8, 1867, Lloyd Goodrich transcription, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

¹⁰ TE to Caroline Eakins, April 14, 1869, Eakins Papers, Archives of American Art. TE to CE, August 30, 1869, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

¹¹ TE to CE and FE, April 1, 1869, Eakins Papers, AAA.

¹² TE to BE, September 28, 1869, Lloyd Goodrich transcription, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

When Eakins returned to the United States he fully integrated the practice of using sculpture into his painting method. For several important pre-1886 paintings Eakins turned to sculptural models to work out compositional difficulties and to solidify his figures.¹³ He also advocated the use of sculpture in his teaching, urging any Pennsylvania Academy student who lost “sight of the solidity, weight, and roundness of the figure” to spend time “across the hall” in “the modeling-room.”¹⁴ Indeed, he believed that “if you do good modeling it follows that you will do good painting.”¹⁵ To aid his students he also made a set of anatomical models and would often “assist and advise the students in the making of plaster casts from life.”¹⁶ In addition to sculpted studies and teaching tools, Eakins began to explore the possibilities of independent relief sculpture at the height of his teaching career.¹⁷

Eakins found the *Knitting* and *Spinning* panels, commissioned by the architect Theophilus Chandler for James P. Scott’s residence, “much to my taste.” Intended to adorn a fireplace in Scott’s Walnut Street home, the panels provided Eakins with his first opportunity to work in relief. He invested the project with an importance that probably surprised his patron, who rejected the panels. Eakins’s defense of his work to Scott expanded into a defense of his craft and of the medium. After elaborating on his training, credentials, and the extent of his labor, Eakins asserted, “relief work too

¹³ Eakins made rough three-dimensional models out of a cigar box and some fabric for his first major painting, *The Champion Single Sculls*. He made more academic studies for *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* and *May Morning in the Park (Fairman Rogers’s Four-in-Hand)*, as well as for *Swimming*.

¹⁴ William C. Brownell, “The Art Schools of Philadelphia,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 18 (September 1879): 742.

¹⁵ Charles Bregler, “Thomas Eakins as a Teacher,” *The Arts* 17 (March 1931): 385.

¹⁶ Charles Bregler, “Thomas Eakins as a Teacher,” *The Arts* 18 (October 1931): 35.

¹⁷ Kathleen Foster has noted the connection between teaching and sculpture in Eakins’s career. She has also been among the few to acknowledge the importance of sculpture to Eakins apart from his teaching. See Kathleen A. Foster, *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 98-105.

has always been considered the most difficult composition and the one requiring the most learning. The mere geometrical construction of the accessories in a perspective which is not projected on a single plane but in a variable third dimension is a puzzle beyond the sculptors whom I know.”¹⁸ Continuing his defense a month later, Eakins compared his own work with that of Phidias. In order to make the case for sculpture and to explain the complexities of his efforts, Eakins invited Scott to “stop at the Academy of Fine Arts” to “examine there casts of the most celebrated reliefs in the world, those of the frieze of the Parthenon.”¹⁹

The comparison is an unusual one given the simplicity of his small single figure subjects and their intended use as decoration in the interior of a wealthy man’s home. Eakins was not merely boasting of his own skills, acknowledging that “no one has ever yet equaled in finish the modelling of those frieze surfaces.”²⁰ But the comparison suggests the elevated status he granted to sculpture in the 1880s. Relief fascinated Eakins not only on account of his admiration for Phidias but because of the intellectual challenges it posed, involving keen mathematical skills to “keep inside” of its limits.²¹ “Relief” he argued “holds a place between a painting or a drawing on a flat surface and a piece of full sculpture.”²² The difficulty arose in applying the principles of painting to a three-dimensional surface, and he warned that “if you make the least error in a relief it won’t look right.”²³

¹⁸ TE to James P. Scott, June 18, 1883, Lloyd Goodrich transcription, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

¹⁹ TE to James P. Scott, July 11, 1883, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

²⁰ TE to James P. Scott, July 11, 1883, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

²¹ Bregler, “Thomas Eakins as a Teacher,” (March 1931), 385.

²² Thomas Eakins Relief Manuscript, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

²³ Bregler, “Thomas Eakins as a Teacher,” (March 1931), 385.

Shortly after his work on the panels for Scott, Eakins began to codify his beliefs about relief sculpture and perspective, writing them down in an unpublished manuscript. Essentially based on his teaching practices, Eakins's manuscript offered his readers detailed rules for working in relief, which he punctuated with occasional aphorisms, such as "the best examples of relief sculpture are the ancient Greek." In contrast, he complained that "modern sculptors do not generally understand the beauty of relief & I have often seen an ear in a profile head as deep as the rest of the head."²⁴ Eakins offered his manuscript as a corrective and illustrated his text with copious examples. It seems likely that Eakins hoped to publish the two together but circumstances never permitted this to happen.²⁵

Within the manuscript Eakins continued to explore his interest in art historical precedents by arguing the merits and disadvantages of the Italian Renaissance master Lorenzo Ghiberti's method as compared with that of Phidias. While Eakins believed that the Greeks produced "the best examples of relief sculpture," he understood that in the Baptistry doors Ghiberti had a more complicated subject than that offered by the Parthenon frieze. He admired Ghiberti's solution of rendering "near figures which are of the greatest interest . . . in full or nearly full relief, and the distant parts" in "a very flat relief." But he cautioned that "a great disadvantage in such relief as Ghiberti's is that when viewed in the light most favorable for showing the form, the near figures throw shadows on the distant landscape and other parts."²⁶

²⁴ Relief Manuscript, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

²⁵ Philadelphia artist Leslie Miller came out with his own perspective book, which may have curtailed Eakins's plans or perhaps the scandal at the Academy led to its being shelved. The illustrations came to light with the recovery of PAFA's Charles Bregler collection. The Philadelphia Museum of Art owns Eakins's texts. An effort is currently underway to re-unite the two in a joint publication by the two museums.

²⁶ Relief Manuscript, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Despite his insistent admiration of Phidias, Eakins never emulated him in his own work, and in the reliefs for the Trenton monument one could argue he even chose a Ghibertian solution to his complex multi-figured compositions. Yet Eakins would claim during his work on the Arcadian subjects that he modeled “after the Greek methods of relief.” Eakins further explained his continuing interest in sculpture after the disappointing rejection of *Knitting* and *Spinning*, by saying the he worked in relief “not on any order or hope of reward but merely to study & gain knowledge & strength; and so has my whole life gone in hard study.”²⁷ For Eakins, sculpture had become the *summa* of the arts, the intellectual plane on which to exercise one’s talent and critical beliefs. Within this context, William Rudolf O’Donovan’s offer to work on two public sculpture projects must have seemed a tremendous proving ground to put all of Eakins’s “knowledge” and “hard study” to work.

Eakins and O’Donovan

Eakins probably met William Rudolf O’Donovan in 1879. In April of that year the directors of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts invited the Society of American Artists to send their recent New York exhibition to Philadelphia. The Society protested when the Academy decided to make changes to the show, notably by consigning Eakins’s *Gross Clinic* to a corridor, while including a work by Thomas Moran that had been rejected for the SAA’s New York show. In response, SAA president Walter Shirlaw wrote to the Academy threatening to withdraw the entire exhibition if changes were not made.²⁸ Six days later O’Donovan and William Merritt

²⁷ TE to Edward H. Coates, n.d. (late February 1886?), Bregler Collection, PAFA.

²⁸ Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), II: 137-138.

Chase visited Philadelphia, as representatives of the SAA. In the end, the two organizations reached a compromise: *The Gross Clinic* would remain in place but the Academy agreed to remove the Moran. Since Eakins was both at the center of the controversy and a fixture at the Academy it seems likely that he met the gregarious O'Donovan at this time.

Although little-known today, O'Donovan achieved success as a sculptor in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, due in no small part to his aggressive self-promotion. Born in Virginia, O'Donovan served in the Confederate army during the Civil War before establishing himself as a sculptor in New York. There, O'Donovan proved especially skilled at cultivating influential friends who helped him gain entry into New York's arts establishment. Through his friendships with several important Academicians he became an associate of the National Academy in 1878, decades ahead of Eakins. He also took an interest in professional organizations, becoming an active member of the Society of American Artists and a founder of the Tile Club. On the merit of his work, he developed a solid reputation as a portraitist, which earned him commissions for war memorials requiring "accurate" depictions of war heroes. Through his professional contacts, O'Donovan shrewdly managed to produce both Confederate and Union memorials in spite of his previously ardent allegiance to the Southern cause.

O'Donovan's friendship with Maurice J. Power, the owner of the National Fine Art Foundry in New York, proved the most important professional association of his career. Aside from his ownership of the foundry, Power was a political

powerhouse with important connections within the Democratic Party.²⁹ An ally of Samuel J. Tilden, and a holder of numerous political appointments, Power served as the head of the Democratic party in New York's sixteenth district. Power's political clout served him well as he negotiated contracts for public art commissions. He also "took an active interest in Celtic organizations," which may explain his patronage of fellow Irishman O'Donovan.³⁰

Early in his career, O'Donovan approached Power about a project for a public monument of Irish leader Daniel O'Connell, fully cognizant of Power's political connections. He described Power's influence in a letter to his sister: "he has had several large contracts from the City Government for Soldiers Monuments . . . it would be a good idea to give him a chance to use his political friends still further in Art Enterprises! . . . I will try to get Powers [sic] to use his influence in this direction."³¹ Thereafter, the two men formed a close working relationship with O'Donovan moving his studio into Power's foundry.

Throughout the 1870s and 1880s O'Donovan sculpted monuments cast by Power's firm. A third Irishman, the New York architect John Hemenway Duncan (1855-1929), joined Power and O'Donovan to work on the Tower of Victory Memorial in Newburgh, New York in 1886.³² The three men worked together again in 1888 on a monument to the Irish Brigade at Gettysburg. Eakins would subsequently

²⁹ For information about the politics behind New York sculpture commissions in the Gilded Age see: Michele H. Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

³⁰ Obituary, *New York Times* (September 12, 1902): 9. O'Donovan often signed his work with a shamrock.

³¹ O'Donovan to Janet O'Donovan Abraham, undated letter quoted in Virginia Baird Kelly, "William Rudolf O'Donovan and the Business, Politics and Art of Sculpture" (M.A. thesis, Syracuse University, 1992), 9.

³² The commission was actually awarded to Power according to David M. Kahn, "The Grant Monument," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 41 (October 1982): 224.

collaborate with all three on the Brooklyn Arch and on the Trenton Battle Monument.³³ Since O'Donovan was the primary sculptor for both commissions, with Eakins assuming a secondary role, it is likely that Eakins met Duncan and Power through O'Donovan. Eakins's Democratic leanings and his Irish ancestry probably aided his cause with Power and Duncan more than any belief in his artistic talent.

Photos of Eakins and O'Donovan, taken in the former's Chestnut Street studio sometime in the 1890s, show the easy camaraderie between the two men (figure 74). In these images a smiling Eakins listens to a gesturing O'Donovan, with glasses of whiskey on the table between them. O'Donovan's bust of Winslow Homer, a gift from the sculptor to Eakins, also appears on the table. In the background sits a bust of their mutual friend Walt Whitman: both O'Donovan and Eakins served as honorary pallbearers at Whitman's funeral in 1891. Although the candid warmth and intimacy of the image suggests it depicts a private moment, it later appeared as a publicity photo in an article about the Brooklyn Arch.³⁴

Despite their friendship, O'Donovan and Eakins were an unlikely pair. O'Donovan demonstrated keen political skill throughout his career, while Eakins's self-righteous independence often put him at odds with the art establishment. Eakins typically labored over his art, particularly his few commissions, in a meticulous effort to produce high-quality work. O'Donovan, on the other hand, took a more expedient view of commissions. Although his portraits attest to his talent as an artist, he could also churn out banal, derivative pieces if necessary. Quality aside, O'Donovan met

³³ At some point Eakins gave Duncan his painting, *Cowboys in the Badlands*, but there is no evidence that the two were friends either before or after the work on the monuments.

³⁴ Several versions of these photos exist. During this period the two men also spent much time together making portraits of one another between working on the sculpture projects. Unfortunately, both portraits are now missing.

deadlines and generally satisfied his patrons' expectations in ways totally foreign to Eakins.

The two also differed in their training. While Eakins's acknowledged his debt to his teachers at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, O'Donovan exploited an age-old theme in artistic biography in the false claim that he was self-taught. He, in fact, possessed an artistic pedigree more common to American sculptors of the previous generation: after an apprenticeship with a stonecutter in his youth, he then trained in New York with the sculptor James Wilson MacDonald. Newspaper accounts mention O'Donovan's intentions to travel abroad on several occasions but it seems that he never actually went. Given O'Donovan's skill at self-promotion it remains possible that he never had any intention of traveling abroad but used these newspaper reports as a means of credentialing himself as a cosmopolitan artist.³⁵ Eakins and he may have gotten along well personally but in many ways they followed opposite professional trajectories.

Despite such differences, the two men seem to have shared similar concerns regarding authenticity in historical representations. While Eakins had often introduced anachronistic details in his own historical subjects, his identification with realism and empirical observation lent an aura of authenticity to his work, particularly in contrast to the countless idealized allegories produced by other Beaux-Arts-trained sculptors. Unlike many of his contemporaries, O'Donovan similarly cultivated a reputation for accurate portraits of historical figures in his public sculpture and

³⁵ On July 31, 1879 the *Evening Post* noted that O'Donovan had "relinquished his studio in the Tenth street building preparatory to his departure for a prolonged stay in Europe." Six months later the *Evening Post* reported that O'Donovan "will go to England in the spring and remain there an indefinite time" (January 30, 1880): 3.

became especially well-known for his depictions of George Washington. O'Donovan established this reputation through his work and by taking aggressive action against critics and competitors over the issue of historical accuracy. In one instance O'Donovan used the pages of the *New York Post* to launch a heated and public debate with Benson Lossing, a historian of the American Revolution, over the authenticity of the Washington lifemask in the possession of his mentor James Wilson MacDonald. His ruthless challenge to Lossing's authority publicly reinforced his self-proclaimed status as an expert on matters related to the Revolutionary era and on Washington in particular.

Despite undertaking several major public commissions of the Beaux-Arts period, O'Donovan never attempted the allegorical female forms popularized by St. Gaudens and his contemporaries. In fact, he aggressively sought to distance his work from that of his successful Beaux-Arts contemporaries. In a series of letters to the *New York Tribune* O'Donovan attacked Clarence Cook over comments that the critic made about the seemingly preferential treatment that O'Donovan's *Bust of Thomas LeClear* received at the expense of Augustus St. Gaudens's work in the 1877 National Academy of Design Annual.³⁶ The ensuing debate eventually degenerated into an attack by O'Donovan on the "art for art's sake" methods preferred by Cook over his own realistic methods. O'Donovan clarified his position in an 1878 article in the *Art Journal* when he criticized Frédéric Bartholdi's *Liberty Enlightening the World* for being an "exotic" allegory and "not an outcome of our civilization." He further explained his reasoning by declaring that: "[Americans] do not think in allegories as

³⁶ *New York Tribune* (May 19, 1877): 6. The debate continued through the month of June. See Kelly, 40-42.

the ancients did.”³⁷ O’Donovan sought to make life study and historical authenticity the hallmark of his work, which he marketed as distinctly American.

By the time O’Donovan invited Eakins to work on the two monuments, the painter had slowly recovered from his dismissal from the Academy and the general rejection by the Philadelphia arts community. He achieved this, in part, by directing his energies beyond Philadelphia and by re-establishing his ties to New York, where he continued to hold a faculty position at the Women’s Art School of the Cooper Union until 1897. By 1891 he resumed an aggressive exhibition schedule, showing more of his work than he had in the years immediately following the Academy scandal. By adding public sculpture to his list of professional accomplishments, Eakins sought to prove himself to his peers, particularly those in New York.

Although the often-troubled Eakins worked well in artistic collaboration with O’Donovan, he found himself unable to adapt his artistic method to the exigencies of a public commission. The political consequences of his failure to meet deadlines led to an inevitable conflict between Eakins, Duncan, and Power. Eakins’s rift with Duncan and Power had the unfortunate consequence of permanently foreclosing any future collaboration with O’Donovan.

The Brooklyn Arch

In 1887 the State of New York authorized the creation of a memorial in Brooklyn dedicated to the soldiers and sailors who fought for the Union cause during the Civil War. The Brooklyn Common Council accepted a proposal for a ninety-foot high shaft adorned with allegorical figures by the German-American sculptor, Henry

³⁷ William Rudolf O’Donovan, “A Sculptor’s Method of Work,” *The Art Journal* v. 4 (1878): 63.

Baerer. However, Brooklyn's new Democratic mayor, Alfred Chapin (term 1881-1891), objected to the design, claiming that he found it too conventional.³⁸ At his insistence the Council held a second competition during the summer of 1888, this time calling for a "memorial arch." Most of the thirty-odd submissions were either Gothic or Romanesque in style.³⁹ An exception was John H. Duncan's winning design, which proposed a Roman-inspired arch, ornamented with relief and freestanding sculptures, similar to the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris. The popular Parisian design also served as the basis for Stanford White's nearly contemporary Washington Square Arch in Greenwich Village.⁴⁰

General William Tecumseh Sherman laid the cornerstone of the arch in an elaborate ceremony on October 30, 1889. With the construction of the monument underway, attention shifted to the sculptural program. Duncan saw to it that the commission went to his friend William Rudolf O'Donovan, who in 1891 was asked to create two life-size bronze equestrian reliefs: one of Abraham Lincoln (figure 75), the other of General Ulysses S. Grant (figure 76). For the Brooklyn project O'Donovan said that he aspired to "show in these two statues real men on real horses." He asked his "old friend" Thomas Eakins to collaborate with him because he wanted a fellow artist "who possessed such expert knowledge of the horse's anatomy as would render impossible any error in the modeling." In that regard, Eakins was supremely qualified.⁴¹

³⁸ It seems likely that Power influenced the awarding of the commission. He clearly knew Chapin, who was an attendee at a political dinner held in Power's honor in February 1888.

³⁹ It is unclear exactly how many proposals were submitted. Newspaper accounts record different numbers in their coverage of the competition, ranging from as many as 46 submissions to as few as 34.

⁴⁰ David M. Kahn provides the most thorough description of John Hemenway Duncan's career as an architect, including an account of the Brooklyn Arch commission.

⁴¹ Cleveland Moffett, "Grant and Lincoln in Bronze," *McClure's Magazine* 5 (October 1895): 420.

An 1895 article by Cleveland Moffett for *McClure's Magazine* documents the collaboration between Eakins and O'Donovan in great detail. The article appeared just months before the unveiling of the bronzes on the arch and features seemingly candid illustrations of the two artists working, including the image of Eakins and O'Donovan socializing in the Chestnut Street studio. Typical of his methods, Power probably orchestrated the piece as a promotional tool. This use of the press was entirely new to Eakins. In consequence, the article offers the most explicit and public statement of Eakins's working methods published during his lifetime.

Moffett's article outlines a clear division of labor for the project: Eakins created the horses, while O'Donovan sculpted the likenesses of the men. Yet it also maintains that the two artists worked very closely on all matters, particularly those relating to the historical authenticity of the work. Together, Eakins and O'Donovan decided against the standard method of "presenting a composite horse, patched together from fragments of many horses, taking the best points of each and avoiding the defects."⁴² Instead, they embarked on a search for two horses possessing all of the qualities that they desired. Although they emphasized realism, the artists, in effect, sought a living ideal for the horses, not as a matter of anatomical interest but of historical appropriateness.

The artists had few concerns about Lincoln's steed, as "any strong mount would do," for the late President "never cared for a showy charger."⁴³ Eakins accordingly modeled Lincoln's horse from his own "cowboy horse," Billy, brought back to Philadelphia following his 1887 trip to the Dakota Territory. Grant, who had

⁴² Moffett, 421.

⁴³ Moffett, 421.

been particular about his horses, posed more of a problem. His statue called for “a charger of ideal proportions, a creature of great strength and race, a splendid animal fit to carry a great commander into battle.”⁴⁴ The search for an appropriate horse took the artists to West Point, where Eakins made instantaneous studies of cavalymen on horseback but they were unable to find an acceptable horse for the General. The artists continued the search for another two months, visiting circuses and horse shows, as well as examining horses at Newport and Long Branch. In the end they selected “‘Clinker,’ a saddle horse owned by A.J. Cassatt, of Philadelphia.”⁴⁵

Working at his sister’s farm, Eakins began the very slow process of sculpting the horses. Although Eakins’s “expert knowledge of the horse’s anatomy” surely informed his work, he did not generalize the figures by relying upon it. Instead, he worked extensively with his equine models to capture the unique details of their appearances, creating portrait likenesses of each. Eakins applied what he learned from Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran’s method to this project, studying the horses entirely outdoors, not in the studio. Working at the farm enabled Eakins to observe the horses in motion, sometimes using nude riders to help him visualize the final composition.

Given Eakins’s preoccupation with Greek sculpture, especially throughout his work on the Arcadian series, it is not surprising that he became wholly absorbed in the creation of these life-size horses. Much as he had with *Crucifixion*, Eakins evoked and challenged his artistic heroes in his work for the Brooklyn Arch. The bronzes

⁴⁴ Moffett, 422.

⁴⁵ Moffett, 423. Alexander J. Cassatt was president of the Pennsylvania Railroad and brother of the artist Mary Cassatt. Perhaps as compensation for his help, Eakins offered to paint Cassatt’s portrait a few years after the Brooklyn project. Cassatt’s letterbook index lists a November 27, 1901 letter received from Eakins. Although the letters no longer exist, the letterbook index records the subject of each of the letters that Cassatt received. Archives of American Art, Reel 3903. The American Philosophical Society owns the original. There is no evidence that Eakins ever painted Cassatt.

reflect Eakins's admiration for Phidias's cavalry frieze for the Parthenon, which he regarded as one of the greatest relief sculptures ever made. Eakins even made sketches of Phidias at work on the frieze for an unrealized painting project.⁴⁶ In these paintings Eakins depicted the Greek sculptor working outdoors from live horses, a method he found reflected in the writings of Lecoq but which he felt sure had its origins in Greek art. According to his student, Adam Emory Albright, the Parthenon frieze stood for Eakins as "one shining example of absolute correctness" in the rendering of the horse, "which gave rise to a speculation by Eakins that Phidias might have dissected horses and made little jointed and movable models from his findings."⁴⁷ Two of the photos accompanying Moffet's article, show Eakins working outdoors, standing in roughly the same pose as Phidias in his sketches of the Greek sculptor (figure 77). In these images, Eakins literally stands in the place of his artistic hero, a theme he would repeat in his reprisal of the William Rush subject in 1908.

Deeply invested in these high-minded artistic ideals, Eakins lavished attention on the bronzes. According to Moffett, Eakins began his multi-step process by making wax models in the field, a method that he adapted from painting. He had used wax models to aid with several of his more complex compositions, notably in *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* and *May Morning in the Park*. At this early stage Eakins "studied every step and movement" as Billy and Clinker were ridden around the farm, "making in wax now and then some quick

⁴⁶ The date of these works is uncertain—they may have been made around the time of the Arcadian series in the early-1880s, but they could also date to the 1890s when Eakins was working on the Brooklyn bronzes.

⁴⁷ Adam Emory Albright, as told to Evelyn Marie Stuart, "Memories of Thomas Eakins," *Harper's Bazaar* (August 1947): 184.

correction with his thumb.”⁴⁸ A roughly modeled one-sixteenth scale wax version of Clinker in the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden shows the horse in essentially the same pose he would assume in the monument. As was often the case with his paintings, it appears that Eakins settled on the final composition in this sketching phase. Also following his painting practice, Eakins squared the study at $\frac{3}{4}$ inch intervals so that it could be enlarged to a quarter-size clay model, which he “finished, also in the field, and cast into permanent plaster form.”⁴⁹

The conditions of the commission stipulated that Eakins and O’Donovan “make quarter-size models, and submit these to the Brooklyn committee for their final acceptance.”⁵⁰ A surviving quarter-size plaster relief of Clinker (figure 78), made from a fully modeled clay study, shows how Eakins added greater detail to the figure at this stage. Intended to reflect the final work as completely as possible, Clinker’s face and muscular structure are fully realized and a saddle has been added to his back. Eakins also fitted his clay horse with a nude male rider, which he subsequently removed. Ghostly traces of the figure remain in the plaster on the saddle and in the background just above it. Once all of the details had been resolved, Eakins squared the quarter-size model for transfer to the life-size version.

Eakins’s entire method was painstaking. He made the cast for the full-size sculpture in ten separate pieces, “constructed of wood . . . and covered with wire netting . . . over this core the sculptor spread his clay an inch deep.”⁵¹ Following this, the modeling of the horses began for the third and final time with Eakins again

⁴⁸ Moffett, 423.

⁴⁹ Moffett, 423.

⁵⁰ Moffett, 423.

⁵¹ Moffett, 424.

referring directly to the living horses in the field for accuracy. Photos accompanying Moffett's article show both O'Donovan and Eakins at work in Avondale, suggesting that O'Donovan knew the extent of Eakins's meticulous working methods. Working a section at a time Eakins "would copy in clay every curve and muscle and vein of that part of the horse."⁵² He then cast each clay model in plaster and carefully fitted the pieces together to create the entire horse.⁵³

Moffett's article suggests that the production of the bronzes proceeded smoothly and collegially. It did not. Moffett did not mention the tensions that had erupted between Eakins and Maurice Power and John Hemenway Duncan. Power and Duncan became tremendously frustrated with Eakins when he single-mindedly began work on the life-size versions of the horses prior to the acceptance of the quarter-size model by the committee. By this time, the two had also engaged Eakins to complete three relief panels for the Trenton Battle Monument and although the Brooklyn commission came first, the timetable for the Trenton Monument made it a priority. According to Moffett, Eakins finished the life-size model of Clinker in April 1892 and sent it to O'Donovan in New York to fit with his rider. As Eakins continued obsessively working on the other horse into September of 1893, Power sent Eakins an angry letter rebuking him for his unwillingness to switch his attention from the Brooklyn horses to the Trenton reliefs. As we shall see, Eakins's refusal to adjust to the demands of his commissions led to a falling out between him, Power, and Duncan, which his relationship with O'Donovan could not repair.

⁵² Moffett, 424.

⁵³ Neither of the life-size casts of the horses are extant but photos of the plasters, made before they were shipped off to New York, show the seams where the individual casts were fitted together.

The Trenton Battle Monument

The records regarding the commission for the Trenton Battle Monument present a vivid picture of the political maneuverings of Maurice Power and John Hemenway Duncan. In March of 1891 the Trenton Battle Monument Association solicited the advice of Duncan in evaluating three proposals for a monument commemorating Washington's celebrated victory at Trenton. The association favorably received two of the proposals both of which called for Roman-inspired columns. In criticizing the two plans, Duncan dismissed "one as impractical for sculpture and the other suited only as a mortuary shaft."⁵⁴ After eliminating his competition, the Association's design committee invited Duncan to "prepare a plan himself, embodying the best parts of the 2 plans."⁵⁵ Shortly thereafter, the Association hired Duncan as the architect for the monument. While Duncan offered his "advice" to the design committee, Power praised Duncan's work to General William S. Stryker, President of the Monument Association.⁵⁶

Much like his competitors, Duncan loosely modeled his proposal upon Roman victory columns. In its final form the monument called for several reliefs, as well as free-standing figures, which included a statue of George Washington crowning the top of the column. Once Duncan had secured the commission he quickly demanded control over the sculpture, writing to the Monument Association, "I would not be willing to have my name associated with any structure that I could not have a voice in selecting the artist."⁵⁷ For the next several months Duncan consulted with sculptors

⁵⁴ Trenton Battle Monument Association Minutebook, New Jersey State Archives, April 6, 1891.

⁵⁵ Minutebook, April 6, 1891.

⁵⁶ Power does not appear to have any affiliation with the Association at this point.

⁵⁷ John H. Duncan to Commission of the Trenton Battle Monument, March 19, 1891, NJSA .

and foundries, including Power and O'Donovan. As he had done with the architect's proposals Duncan found ways of eliminating all of Power and O'Donovan's competition. The sculptor Frank Edwin Elwell was "too expensive;" Bureau Brothers's Gettysburg Monument was "inferior work," accepted only because of the dedication deadline; and neither Karl Bitter nor Philip Martiny were "the equal of Mr. O'Donovan at portraits." Duncan concluded that the Association could not "obtain as satisfactory a piece of work as at Monmouth for anything like the same price." The Monmouth monument to which he referred, of course, came from Maurice Power's foundry.⁵⁸

In February 1892 Duncan submitted "Messrs. O'Donovan and Eakins's" cost estimates for the Trenton Monument. After some additional negotiations, Duncan told Stryker on March 23, 1892, that he had "sent notices to all sculptors that Mr. O'Donovan has been awarded the commission."⁵⁹ The acceptance of O'Donovan also clearly meant the acceptance of Power, for in the interim Power wrote to Stryker requesting that his firm be the exclusive foundry for the monument. This, Stryker could not agree to as he hoped to receive additional funding for the project from other states whose troops had participated in the Battle. Stryker insisted that he could only offer Power and O'Donovan those sculptures funded by the Association and the State of New Jersey. He could not force another state with the intention of providing its own funds to accept the artists that the Association had selected if it did not approve of them. As we shall see, Power found a way around this. Duncan proceeded with a

⁵⁸ John H. Duncan to General Stryker, February 1, 1892, NJSA. Although the Monmouth Battle Monument was the work of several individuals, Power was fabricator and his National Fine Art Foundry was the founder for the project. Also, in May of 1891 Duncan told Stryker that he would soon be sending him the cost of Mr. Powers work at Monmouth.

⁵⁹ John H. Duncan to General Stryker, March 23, 1892, NJSA

contract “with Maurice J. Power for Messrs. O’Donovan and Eakins in accordance with my recommendation.”⁶⁰

Eakins’s name appears second to O’Donovan’s in virtually all of the correspondence regarding the commission. The minutebook of the Association obliquely explains Eakins’s involvement in the project by the assertion that “a large number of prominent sculptors sent in estimates of their work. Unfortunately . . . many of these men were crowded with orders for sculpture to be exhibited at the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago and we feared that they would do crude and hasty work.” But Duncan brought “to his aid Mr. Thomas Eakins who has for several years been head instructor in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and who is the lecturer on Anatomy in the Academy of Design in New York City, and according to reputation and the Cyclopedia of American Biography . . . stands very high as an artist and as a designer.”⁶¹

The minutebook then outlines Eakins’s specific role: “he is now engaged in preparing some new and if possible some historically accurate sketches of the Crossing of the Delaware, the Opening of the Fight and the Surrender of the Hessians. It is expected that Mr. Eakins in collaboration with Mr. O’Donovan will execute these three relieves [sic].” While the reliefs were to be done “in collaboration” with O’Donovan, the rest of the sculptural program would be carried out by O’Donovan himself. In other words, it was O’Donovan’s commission, with Eakins sharing a supporting collaborative role.

⁶⁰ John H. Duncan to General Stryker, December 5, 1892 NJSA.

⁶¹ Minutebook, December 26, 1892.

Yet as with the Brooklyn Arch, the responsibilities soon became clearly divided, this time to Eakins's great advantage. He was given complete control over the reliefs, with O'Donovan completing all of the freestanding sculpture. Each of Eakins's large (nearly eight feet long) panels was to depict an important historical subject, involving multiple figures on land and water. As much as he labored over the Brooklyn horses, he faced greater compositional challenges in the Trenton panels. Eakins had never even attempted a composition as complicated as the Trenton panels in his painted work. The complex nature of the scenes made Phidias an unsuitable model. Eakins had to integrate his figures into their settings in a much more Ghibertian way. Yet he did not want to duplicate the unnatural shadows cast by Ghiberti's figures onto the background landscape. Eakins finally had a major project to test his own theories of relief.

But it does not appear that Eakins went swiftly to work upon the commission. Although he had shown his sketches to General Stryker in Trenton in February 1893, four months after the awarding of the commission, Eakins had only begun undertaking the preliminary research for the project. On April 5, 1893, Eakins wrote to Stryker requesting that someone guide his pupil Samuel Murray to "the exact place that Washington crossed the Delaware" so that he could photograph the spot for him. His approach to historical research combined the method with which he had tackled his painting of William Rush with the need for direct visual re-creation that had informed his Arcadia series. Eakins wondered if he could "ask the natives" in Trenton for assistance, "trusting to local tradition."⁶² He interviewed his friend General Burd Grubb and other military men about the specifics of the battle and the accuracy of his

⁶² TE to General Stryker, April 5, 1893, NJSA.

conception. But he also had his student Charles Bregler borrow “continental suits from a lodge of Mechanics to which he belonged” so that he could study his models in authentic dress.⁶³

While Eakins deeply immersed himself in artistic concerns, Power, O’Donovan, and Duncan became engaged in political machinations behind the scenes to secure full control of the commission and to provide for additional funding. These tactics were completely new to Eakins, who often either undersold his work or retained possession of pieces because he was not able to secure his asking price. Eakins’s position probably seemed equally alien to Power, whose true talent rested in manipulating commissioning committees.

In February 1893, Power personally lobbied the New York Legislature for an additional appropriation for the Trenton Monument. Power accompanied Stryker’s representatives to Albany to be “nearby in case my advice may be in use—and I will get them letters to the best Republicans and anti-machine Democrats altho’ they should probably only confer officially with the Machinists at Albany.”⁶⁴ Three days later Power “hoped that the application” would not be “delayed too long” and expressed disappointment that Stryker had not taken matters into his own hands by coming to Albany himself. But Power assured him that he would do all he could: “I will see all but the Machine Crowd before next Sunday and get their support for the matter if I can get it.”⁶⁵ The next day Power enlisted the support of Senator McClellan and the Governor and noted that O’Donovan hoped to use his “pleasant acquaintance

⁶³ Margaret McHenry, *Thomas Eakins Who Painted* (Oreland, PA.: privately printed, 1945), 127-128.

⁶⁴ Maurice Power to General Stryker, February 20, 1893, NJSA.

⁶⁵ Maurice Power to General Stryker, February 23, 1893, NJSA.

with Liet. Gov. Sheehan” to their advantage.⁶⁶ After discovering that the Lieutenant Governor had gone “on Holiday,” O’Donovan decided to personally come to Albany to renew his old acquaintance with Governor Flower. By May, with all of their political cards in play, Power reported his success to General Stryker: the appropriations bill in Albany passed the legislature and received the Governor’s signature.

Meanwhile, Eakins was struggling with the commission. His visit to Stryker in February 1893 proved disappointing. Eakins’s sketches were rejected and “an exchange of views on the subject” between Eakins, Duncan, and Power, necessitated arbitration with “those whose judgement [sic] you [Stryker] invite on these subjects.” As Power saw it, Eakins had opted for an unacceptable “pictorial effect while Mr. Duncan has been urging on Mr. Eakins and I think very properly a sculpturesque effect by massing the figures in relief.” Power suggested that a committee meet to come to some agreement on Eakins’s compositions first, followed by a discussion of the issue of the “pictorial effect” of the reliefs. Eakins, unaccustomed to such interference with his work, was reportedly “very much disappointed.” But this only marked the beginning of his conflicts with Power and Duncan. His friend and collaborative partner, O’Donovan, remained silent during all of the ensuing controversies.⁶⁷

Having won relatively few public or private commissions, Eakins rarely worked with deadlines imposed upon him. And although he encouraged his students to please their patrons, he had limited success with this himself. Indeed, his first

⁶⁶ Maurice Power to General Stryker, February 24, 1893, NJSA.

⁶⁷ Maurice Power to General Stryker, February 14, 1893, NJSA.

sculpture commission for *Knitting* and *Spinning* had not gone well. It took Eakins years of protracted negotiations with the patron just to receive payment for his rejected work.⁶⁸ Some of Eakins's sitters expressed similar dissatisfaction with their portraits and either rejected them outright or hid them from view. Most importantly, he had failed to please Edward Coates with *Swimming*. Eakins produced his best work for exhibition or for himself without regard for reception or patronage. It is, therefore, not surprising that his own meticulous and contrarian methods led to conflict with the machinery of Power's system.

Things reached a critical impasse in August of 1893 when Eakins made clear to General Stryker that he would not be able to meet his October deadline. Eakins seems to have utterly failed to understand the urgency of the situation and cavalierly told the General that he was too busy "working at horses now in the country and shall continue to do so until the cold weather." He suggested that they use his sketches and have them enlarged for casting in staff. He also indicated that they should employ Samuel Murray (for a fee of \$275) to complete a plaster of *Opening of the Fight* because, he argued, that "with all the care I am bestowing upon it even if I devoted all my time to it" it could not be done in time.⁶⁹ Eakins's letter prompted a firestorm.

Stryker, Power, and Duncan were outraged by Eakins's irresponsible and unprofessional behavior. Power lambasted Eakins, "I don't think it is fair to the Trenton Committee, or fair to me, that the Trenton work should have been abandoned in the manner in which it has been. . . . It is painful to have so wide disagreements

⁶⁸ Finally in 1885, after arbitration, Eakins received a little more than half of the amount owed him for the commission. The rejected panels were later acquired by Edward Hornor Coates and given to the Pennsylvania Academy. See Theodor Siegl, *The Thomas Eakins Collection* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1978), 99-101.

⁶⁹ TE to General Stryker, August 29, 1893, NJSA.

with you on matters that seem so simple. It is a mortification I did not expect to experience.”⁷⁰ He further told Eakins that if he could not complete the plasters for the commission himself then he should assume responsibility for Murray’s fees. Power assured Stryker that he had written “a most urgent letter” to Eakins stating “that the mortification will be great to the committee and the blame will be his if the monument is not completed” on time. Power continued “I confess I don’t expect much satisfaction from the prospect of his changing his purpose. He is incomprehensible to me.” He also made clear that he had no part in Eakins’s decision to prioritize the Brooklyn horses, “as to the work he is doing on the model of the horse at Avondale, he has been definitely advised on the part of Mr. Duncan and myself that it may be time wasted, unless Duncan and the committee for whom the work is designed, will accept the small model of which this is the large copy, together with another small model which has not been given, and which he and Donovan are to do in collaboration.”⁷¹

Eakins was mystified. In consequence of his failure to adhere to his deadlines, Eakins lost the commission for the monument’s third panel, which Power re-assigned to Charles Niehaus (1855-1935), who agreed to hire his own assistant to quickly meet the Committee’s demands. Eakins’s behavior cost him the possibility of ever working with Power and Duncan again, which meant an end to future collaboration with O’Donovan. His only opportunity to continue in the realm of public sculpture was through the assistance he offered to Samuel Murray throughout his career, but credit for these works always went to Murray. Murray proved himself capable and willing

⁷⁰ Maurice Power to TE, September 4, 1893, NJSA.

⁷¹ Maurice Power to General Stryker, September 5, 1893, NJSA.

to use his own political and social connections to secure commissions but he also ably managed his commitments and met his deadlines, ensuring his future employment.

History, Commemoration, and Reception

In the two life-size horses for the Brooklyn Arch Eakins had an opportunity to challenge his most daunting sculptural progenitor, Phidias. From his work on the William Rush painting onward, Eakins sought to place himself within the grand art historical tradition, even as he failed to achieve the successes of his contemporaries. As time went on Eakins increasingly measured his success, not against his peers, but against ideals established by the Greeks, the Old Masters, and his own revered teachers. In Brooklyn he had an American subject worthy of the Greek tradition, two great dead heroes, whose efforts led to the restoration of the Union. Despite his own ambiguous opinions regarding the Civil War the monument appealed to Eakins as an intellectual project.

Eakins's obsessive labor on the horses reflects not just a keen interest in equine anatomy, but also his belief that he was continuing his work, begun with the Arcadian series, "after the Greek methods of relief."⁷² In many ways the memorial could be seen as an extension of the Arcadia series. His painstaking efforts to study the individual nuances of each of the horses' bodies and the frequent references to his observation of the horses in motion recall the methods that he used for the Arcadian series. The Brooklyn Arch and its prominence in New York also put Eakins in a continuum with the great artists. Yet Eakins's high-minded personal engagement with the historical tradition set him at odds with Power. Power's political influence had

⁷² TE to Edward H. Coates, late February 1886, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

turned his foundry into a veritable factory for public commissions, many of which were not destined for art historical greatness. Neither man understood the other's position. As it turned out, Eakins may have aspired to commune with the greats but he again failed to appease his contemporaries.

The Brooklyn bronzes were finally installed without fanfare in December 1895.⁷³ Shortly thereafter the press began to complain about the reliefs. Much of the comment centered on the figures, but a surprising amount of criticism focused on the horses. One critic felt that the two were inappropriate for their riders and should have been exchanged. Censuring the selection of the steeds, the writer felt that Grant's horse was "tubby in the loins and wobbly in the knees" and Lincoln's too "spunky" and "skittish."⁷⁴ More than one critic felt that the placement of Lincoln on horseback made him "ridiculous." Indeed, among the profusion of Lincoln sculptures, O'Donovan's may well be the only equestrian example. One argument against the Lincoln was that his placement on horseback seemed in itself a misguided effort at idealization, "as offensive to the eye as the Roman toggerly on the bodies of British admirals in the mortuary sculpture of Westminster."⁷⁵

Aside from the problems with the sculptures themselves, their position on the arch was not flattering—they were situated too high and without enough distance between them to view the works properly. The critic for the *Art Amateur* touched on this when he complained that the view of Lincoln offered "for public inspection the interior of a shockingly bad hat." The same critic continued to expound upon the

⁷³ "Arch Bas Reliefs in Place," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 19, 1895): 4. The article also notes that the works faced severe criticism.

⁷⁴ "Dissatisfying Sculpture," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 22, 1895): 6.

⁷⁵ "Dissatisfying Sculpture," 6.

faults of the sculptures, writing that, “if this bit of ‘realism’ was intended to distract attention from the faults of the horse and the figure, it fails of its object. The figure is poorly modelled, and the horse’s legs are notably weak. The Grant figure has one good point: it sits the horse well. But the latter is one of the ugliest beasts we have seen in bronze, and trails his right foreleg like a tired donkey.”⁷⁶

Much of the discussion revolved around a perceived lack of heroism in the two figures, understandable given the subjects and the veristic approach of the two artists. Part of the problem was that Eakins and O’Donovan had to confront recent history, fresh in public memory. As a commemorative work in honor of “the Defenders of the Union” the sculptors faced criticism from individuals who had experienced the war and had opinions about how Grant and Lincoln should be represented. These were not abstract heroes, like Washington; these were men known to the public, a public that still included veterans of the war.

Eakins and O’Donovan therefore faced two conflicting types of criticism: some found the work anti-heroic, while others criticized the accuracy of the reliefs. In some reviews the sculptors found themselves subjected to both types of criticisms simultaneously: “neither in the case of the President nor the general have the sculptors secured either an obvious likeness nor an amending bravery.”⁷⁷ The credibility of the likenesses of the two men was challenged, with one critic complaining that Grant’s head was too large and awkward. All of which must have baffled the sculptors who had taken such pains to render their subjects as “real men on real horses.” It seemed that no matter what criteria were used the sculptures had

⁷⁶ “Public Sculpture in Brooklyn,” *The Art Amateur* v. 34 (February 1896): p. 60.

⁷⁷ “Dissatisfying Sculpture,” 6.

failed in their aim, causing some to urge their removal from the Arch. Despite the general dissatisfaction with the two reliefs they were ultimately accepted under protest by the Park Commissioners. An attempt to withhold the final payment to Power failed when attorneys representing the Borough could find no legal grounds to do so.⁷⁸

Many of the problems with the commission arose from differing ideals on the part of the sculptors and their public. In 1894 Frederick MacMonnies was contracted to produce three additional figural groupings for the project, *Quadriga: The Triumphal Progress of Columbia* (figure 79) to surmount the arch and *Navy: American sailors at sea urged on by the genius of patriotism* and *Army: Genius of patriotism urging American soldiers on to victory* for the piers on the arch's south side. A Beaux-Arts trained sculptor, MacMonnies was a native Brooklynite who spent the bulk of his career living abroad in France. O'Donovan and Eakins approached their work for the Arch from an entirely different perspective than MacMonnies did. When MacMonnies's much-anticipated sculptures finally arrived the press hailed them as masterpieces. Allegorical and idealizing, all three groups were distinctly heroic. Although O'Donovan believed that Americans "do not think in allegories," for MacMonnies, it proved a better solution for commemorating recent history. To those who found Eakins and O'Donovan's reliefs without artistic merit,

⁷⁸ *Thirty-sixth Annual Report of the Department of Parks of the City of Brooklyn*, 36. "M.J. Power is Sanguine," *The New York Times* (February 21, 1896): 5. A year later there was still public debate about the fate of the sculptures and the Brooklyn chapter of the American Institute of Architects issued a report condemning the works as "disreputable examples of the art of sculpture and design" and urging that "the proper authorities should be requested to have them removed." "Local Architects Protest Against the Bronzes in Arch at the Entrance to Prospect Park" *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (January 19, 1897): 16.

MacMonnies's work seemed "as fine sculpture as any in the modern world."⁷⁹

MacMonnies soon became known as *the* sculptor of the monument and Eakins and O'Donovan's works receded from memory, easily overlooked on the interior piers of the arch.

The artist Will Low unwittingly articulated the problem with Eakins's and O'Donovan's work when he praised MacMonnies and his good fortune in coming "upon the scene when our Civil War has left great deeds to perpetuate, when the people of these states have relaxed their toil to look about them and seek to beautify their surroundings."⁸⁰ For MacMonnies and his contemporaries, beauty did not exist inherently in their subjects but needed to be found and enhanced through idealization. It was not merely his allegories, embodied by beautiful young women, that differed from Eakins's approach, even the horses of the MacMonnies's quadriga revealed the contrast. MacMonnies's horses are highly stylized, his interest in motion purely aesthetic. Eakins did not eschew beauty in favor of a gritty reality but rather he felt that unidealized individuals were beautiful. In the case of the Brooklyn Arch, Eakins and O'Donovan miscalculated.

The sculpture for the Trenton Battle Monument did not stir controversy; indeed, critics rarely singled out the works for praise or criticism. One mitigating factor may have been that the monument commemorated less recent history. The history of the Revolution could be disputed, and only in an ideal sense did it exist in public memory. Because the witnesses to the events commemorated were long dead,

⁷⁹ "Dissatisfying Sculpture," 6.

⁸⁰ H.H. Greer, "Frederick MacMonnies, Sculptor," *Brush and Pencil* 10 (April 1902): 3.

Eakins and O'Donovan merely had to prove that they endeavored to be historically accurate.

The Trenton monument is not a standout of the Beaux-Arts period. The relationship between the architectural elements and the sculptures seems awkward. O'Donovan's Washington, which crowns the monument, is a respectable bit of work but virtually identical to several other Washingtons made by him. Two other O'Donovan figures, situated outside the entrance to the Monument appear unnervingly wooden. Duncan's earlier criticisms of Eakins's "pictorial effects" proved correct. In order to avoid Ghiberti's shadows Eakins used a very low relief, much subtler than any of the sculptural work he had done before. While passages of these enormous reliefs show an amazing mastery of form, without the rigidity of some of Eakins's earlier efforts, the decision to employ such delicacy for works that would be placed above eye-level seems misplaced.

The delicacy of the Trenton panels resulted from Eakins's skill as a draftsman. He had relatively limited practical experience with the materials of sculpture and accordingly based much of his theory of relief on his experience as a painter. The subtlety of the effects of the panels could best be seen by the public when Eakins exhibited them in Philadelphia and in New York in 1894-95. Closer to paintings than any of his other reliefs, Eakins's panels demand to be hung on the line. In *Opening of the Fight* (figure 80), Eakins varied the relief, which is never terribly high, to such a degree that the houses in the distance barely project from the panel. Over this entire scene is a delicate haze of smoke from the recently fired cannon. This effect, barely discernable in a clean cast of the panel, is all but lost in the patina of the original.

Eakins's principles of relief sculpture did not take this aspect of his materials into account. Nor did he seem to consider the siting of the panels. For example, in *The Continental Army Crossing the Delaware* (figure 81), the key figure of Washington is placed in the center, but not in the foreground. Washington instead occupies a boat in the middle distance that gets lost from the vantage point of the viewer looking at the monument.

In this panel Eakins contended with the well-known but inaccurate and bombastic image of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* by Emmanuel Leutze. His efforts at historical accuracy corrected some of the obvious flaws of the Leutze work. While Leutze's Washington navigated through a river populated by mini-icebergs in inauthentic boats that would not support their cargo, Eakins placed his men in accurate Durham boats carrying a feasible payload across a realistically icy river. But Eakins also sacrificed some of the dramatic heroism of Leutze's painting by situating the protagonist of the narrative in the distance, lost amidst many more visible figures. In its Philadelphia showing, the panel elicited extended praise from *The Press*, a paper that often supported Eakins: "Mr. Thomas Eakins has a powerful relief of 'Washington Crossing the Delaware,' which breaks loose from all the canons and justifies the act by the result. Here is atmosphere suggested in bronze as it has not been since the earlier Italians, the figure handled with a complete freedom and a sense of movement unrivaled. Such work is to be judged not by rule, but by result."⁸¹

Despite this praise Eakins attempted only one other relief sculpture and that a small portrait, which he did not exhibit. No doubt his experience with Power and the

⁸¹ *The Press*, (December 15, 1894): 4. Eakins's friend Talcott Williams was an editor at *The Press* and was often responsible for the kind reviews the artist received. Williams was also a friend of O'Donovan's.

conflict that ensued, particularly over the Trenton Battle Monument, left Eakins with little taste for this sort of work. Had he been able to mend fences with Power it would not have yielded many commissions anyway as Power increasingly found himself distracted from his foundry by his political career.⁸²

Collaborations with Samuel Murray

While Eakins proved unsuited to managing public commissions he did not seem willing to give up sculpture altogether. Eakins continued to work as a sculptor, assisting his pupil Samuel Murray on projects into the twentieth century. Unlike his work with O'Donovan, Eakins truly seems to have collaborated with Murray. But all of the resulting sculptures derived from commissions secured by Murray and, for the most part, Murray remained the sole sculptor attributed to each of these projects. Eakins's activities as a sculptor are difficult to piece together after the Trenton panels since he was so entirely self-effacing that there are few public mentions of his involvement. It is likely that he assisted Murray in some capacity with all of his larger commissions since he and Murray shared a studio.⁸³

Murray too had assisted Eakins in his own sculpted work. He and Eakins began sharing the Chestnut Street studio in 1892, in the middle of the Brooklyn Arch commission. Murray probably assisted throughout the project and even appears in

⁸² O'Donovan is not known to have completed any public commissions following the Trenton project, although he did continue to make portrait busts, including one of General William Stryker, the man behind the Battle Monument project. In March 1899 he wrote to Talcott Williams (another mutual friend of Eakins) to see if he could assist him with a letter he had submitted to the Fairmount Park Art Association. Whether or not he was seeking a commission is unclear. (Talcott Williams Papers, Archives, Amherst College).

⁸³ Murray's work has been little studied. See Michael W. Panhorst, *Samuel Murray* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982). Panhorst also wrote the M.A. thesis "Samuel A. Murray, Sculptor" at the University of Delaware in 1982

two of the photos accompanying Moffett's article on the Brooklyn bronzes.⁸⁴ Eakins also relied on Murray throughout the Trenton commission, but it remains unclear how much work Murray contributed to those panels. Even when the two did not directly collaborate, they often shared the same models. By the mid-1890s the two had become so close that opportunities began to materialize that included them both.

In October 1895, Eakins wrote to his sister Fanny that, "Murray and I are promised an order for some nude sculpture."⁸⁵ What came of this commission is not known but clearly someone had considered offering both men a project. A few months later Murray received the commission for ten Old Testament Prophets to adorn the Witherspoon Building at Walnut and Juniper Streets in Philadelphia (figure 82). Although he had worked in sculpture before, this appears to be Murray's first public commission. Perhaps the scope and scale (the figures were ten and a half feet tall) of the commission led Murray to ask Eakins for assistance.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ He appears opposite O'Donovan in the photo of Eakins and O'Donovan together at Chestnut Street (the photo is sometimes called *The Consultation*). Murray also appears in the photo captioned "A Nude Pose." Here his face has been retouched, probably to avoid identification, but an undoctored version of the image has surfaced in the Bregler collection, making his identification possible. See Susan Danly and Cheryl Leibold et al, *Eakins and the Photograph* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1994), 199.

⁸⁵ TE to Fanny Eakins Crowell, October 22, 1895, Bregler Collection, PAFA.

⁸⁶ Mariah Chamberlin-Hellman, "Samuel Murray, Thomas Eakins, and the Witherspoon Prophets," *Arts Magazine* 53 (May 1979): 134-39. Chamberlin-Hellman provides the only in-depth study of the sculptures. At the time of her article only three of the ten sculptures were extant, making additional work on the figures difficult. Chamberlin-Hellman argues that Murray and Eakins used their friends and family as the models for the figures. She bases her argument on a comment made by Murray that the model for the prophet Jeremiah was Eakins's father-in-law, William MacDowell. Unfortunately, the surviving photographs of the prophets and prophetesses are not detailed enough to determine with certainty who the artist's used as their models. One possible link to Chamberlin-Hellman's argument is that Eakins's portrait of Franklin Schenck, known as *The Bohemian* (Philadelphia Museum of Art) appears in his painting register (Philadelphia Museum of Art) under the title: "Portrait—Bible Character (Schenck) (The Bohemian)." According to Chamberlin-Hellman, Schenck served as the model for the prophet Samuel. In surviving photographs of the figure, Samuel appears to be based on an older man but it remains possible that Schenck served as a model for one of the figures. Photographs and correspondence regarding the project are in the collection of the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia.

Because of the large size of the works, the two men rented an additional studio on Wissahickon Avenue, which they referred to as the “Tioga studio.” In February 1897, Eakins wrote to Harrison Morris of the Pennsylvania Academy, that he would “be very busy all day tomorrow at the Tioga studio” indicating his active participation on the Witherspoon figures.⁸⁷ As work on the project continued, Eakins wrote to his friend Henry Rowland in October 1897 to explain his slow progress on Rowland’s portrait: “I have been very busy with the big statues for the Witherspoon Building and have not done much to the picture.”⁸⁸ While Eakins, publicly ceded the credit for the prophets to Murray, he did not keep his participation entirely secret.⁸⁹ At least two biographical dictionary entries published during Eakins’s lifetime mention his work on the prophets.⁹⁰

The critic Riter Fitzgerald praised the Prophets as being “full of character, executed with splendid breath and power, . . . in every respect first class Works of Art, worthy to be placed in a more prominent position.”⁹¹ Perhaps on account of his success with the Witherspoon Building, Murray soon began to receive additional commissions. Murray also began to demonstrate a talent for soliciting support for commissions from influential people and following through by satisfying his commitments in ways that Eakins could not. His efforts fell far short of Power and

⁸⁷ TE to Harrison Morris, February 16, 1897, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Archives.

⁸⁸ TE to Henry Rowland, October 4, 1897, Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA.

⁸⁹ Murray, for example, exhibited one of the prophets, *Jeremiah*, in the Pennsylvania Academy’s annual exhibition in 1898. Murray was credited as the only artist for the piece. With so little known of their working methods it remains possible that Murray alone worked on this figure. However Murray acknowledged that Eakins’s father-in-law served as the model, establishing a very personal tie to Eakins, which suggests that he may have had some role in the work’s creation.

⁹⁰ *Men and Women of America, 1910* and *Who’s Who in America, 1908-9*, Smithsonian American Art Museum clippings. Each entry records that Eakins assisted Samuel Murray in modeling “the colossal figures of the prophets” which decorate the Witherspoon Building. The former entry is intriguing in that it only mentions Eakins’s sculpted work and does not address his painting at all.

⁹¹ Riter Fitzgerald, “Superb Statues,” undated clipping in Murray Scrapbook IV, quoted in Panhorst, p. 11.

O'Donovan's aggressive manipulations but he may have learned how to negotiate the system of patronage from O'Donovan's somewhat corrupt Irish clique. Admiral George Wallace Melville, for example, offered Murray extensive support and encouragement, particularly regarding the commission for the Monument to Commodore John Barry.⁹²

Eakins involvement with Murray's projects becomes murky at this point. In 1907, Eakins mentioned his participation in the Barry commission in a letter to a friend: "artistically the statue is I believe the best in the country and I am proud to have assisted Murray in its execution."⁹³ This is the last acknowledgment of his collaboration with his pupil. When Murray received the Barry commission, Eakins also undertook his last independent sculpture, a portrait of Mrs. Mary Hallock Greenwalt (unlocated).⁹⁴ This may well have been Eakins's last sculpted work, for there are no other references to sculpture projects in his letters after this point. Yet as he concluded his work in the medium his thoughts returned to William Rush, and a year after the Barry commission he undertook a re-examination of the Philadelphia sculptor.

The Greenwalt portrait was the only piece of sculpture that Eakins completed that did not have an historical subject. Sculpture had always provided Eakins with a

⁹² Letters in the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden's Samuel Murray collection indicate that Melville offered Murray extensive advice about the commission. Similarly, Dr. Edward Nolan seems to have advised Murray on the commission for a statue of Father Corby for Gettysburg. Nolan corresponded with several people on Murray's behalf. Letters to Nolan in the Murray collection suggest the greatest possibility for corruption in the awards process. In one such letter, John Sullivan assures Nolan that "the contract should be awarded on the basis of ability" but then suggests that Nolan join the Alumni Sodality held at St. Joseph's College "partly to help bring about proper action in this matter." Another letter to Nolan, dated March 15, 1909, from Edward Dooner, states that he "will do all in his power to prevent the award of the Father Corby Monument to anyone but Murray."

⁹³ TE to Mrs. Elizabeth Burton Johnston, June 21, 1907, typescript in Philadelphia Museum of Art.

⁹⁴ According to Susan Eakins's diary, Eakins started the Greenwalt relief on the same day that Murray was awarded the Barry commission. Bregler Collection, PAFA.

reference point in terms of art historical tradition. He identified with William Rush, with Phidias, and Ghiberti, and ultimately these were the men he competed with, not his peers. His high-minded ideas about the nature of sculpture as an art made him particularly ill-suited to meet the demands of public sculpture projects. Yet these projects seemed to hold the greatest potential value to Eakins because, like the Parthenon reliefs and William Rush's public work, civic sculpture had the potential to endure. With all that Eakins invested in the medium, it is not surprising that his best-known student became a sculptor and not a painter.

CONCLUSION

RUSH REVISITED: EAKINS AS OLD MASTER

In 1905 Eakins completed his last independent sculpture, a relief (now lost) of his friend Mary Hallock Greenwalt, whom he had painted two years earlier. Yet the true conclusion of his career as a sculptor seems to have come when Samuel Murray's Monument to Commodore John Barry was unveiled in Independence Square in 1907. Although Murray received the commission and the credit for the work, Eakins expressed pride in the assistance that he had been able to offer his closest student in the completion of this public monument.¹ After decades of interest in sculpture, Eakins's work on three-dimensional projects ceased. Yet he still found himself preoccupied with the idea of sculpture, so much so that he uncharacteristically returned to an old subject: *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*.

Around 1908, Eakins not only revived the 1877 subject but he treated it in a manner that he had never used for any of his finished projects.² Although Eakins's working methods varied throughout his lifetime, he often made rough compositional

¹ He wrote to his friend Elizabeth Burton Johnston, giving an extended description of the sculpture, its unveiling and the following celebratory banquet. Of the work he declared "Artistically the statue is I believe the best in the country and I am proud to have assisted Murray in its execution." Thomas Eakins to Mrs. Johnston, June 21, 1907, typescript, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Eakins Archive.

² The date of the series has been based upon letters that suggest that Eakins hoped to exhibit the Brooklyn picture at the Carnegie Annual in 1908. TE to John W. Beatty, March 30, 1908, Daniel Dietrich Collection, copy at Philadelphia Museum of Art. TE to John W. Beatty, March 23, 1908, Carnegie Institute, Museum of Art Records. TE to August Zeller, April 10, 1908, Carnegie Records. Eakins sent an extended textual description of the painting to the Carnegie, similar to his earlier texts about Rush. Unfortunately, the painting could not be exhibited because the frame was damaged in transit and required repair.

studies in oil for his paintings.³ Almost from the start of his career, the defining characteristic of these sketches was their close adherence to the final painting. The difficult task of assembling the composition appears to have taken place in his head prior to painting. For his return to *William Rush*, Eakins made many compositional sketches, each showing a different variant of the scene. In these sketches Eakins experimented with his subject, modifying not only the configuration of the composition but also the number of characters in the painting. Additionally, he worked up several of the sketches to a much higher degree of finish than in earlier compositional sketches. Never before had he visualized a subject on canvas in so many ways.

Despite their abundance, almost none of the 1908 Rush sketches were used to craft the one full version of the subject that he brought to completion (figure 83). This version of the Rush subject, now in the Brooklyn Museum, though substantially larger than the 1877 painting, represents the least-inspired of his reworkings of the composition. In the Brooklyn painting, Eakins retained most of the elements of the original but he shuffled them into a less logical arrangement. Eakins shifted the positions of the sculptor and the chaperone to opposite sides of the canvas. The models stands without the contrapposto of the 1877 image and seemingly faces the chaperone instead of the artist. The interior of Rush's workshop reads more coherently, but it also seems more mundane. Rush himself appears more workman-like, rather than gentlemanly. Of the substantive changes, the most prominent is the transformation of the chaperone from an elderly white matron to an African-

³ Eakins use of sketches is described in Kathleen A. Foster, *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 72-80.

American woman. Eakins also eliminated the beautiful still life of discarded clothing so prominent in the original. While the painting seems tired, the sketches for the series do not.

In addition to the handful of sketches that relate to aspects of the Brooklyn picture, Eakins also made many sketches for a painting that he never fully realized. This project completely reimagined the exchange between model and sculptor into a more collaborative relationship. The unfinished painting, now in Honolulu (figure 84), is almost identical in size to the Brooklyn painting. This too constitutes a change for Eakins, since he appears to have had at least two large scale versions of the Rush subject in mind in this period. The Honolulu painting shows the sculptor, who previously faced the viewer in earlier iterations, with his back to us as he hands the model down from her stand. The model, this time, is situated frontally. Only in this compositional arrangement of the theme, in all of Eakins's painted work, does he present a nude figure fully exposed to his audience. In the Honolulu picture she seems entirely unaware that she is observed and looking downward, concentrates on her footing. The sculptor and model stand alone in a nearly barren composition, with only the model's pedestal and an enormous ship's scroll to define the studio.

The most complete compositional sketch for the Honolulu painting (figure 85) suggests that Eakins conceived of the image with an additional figure present; a woman standing to the left, who offers the model a gown as the sculptor hands her down. Eakins also studied the model and this other female figure in another sketch—in both instances where this second woman appears she also seems to be nude. The scene has the feel of allegory, with two lovely goddesses standing in the artist's

studio. Yet when Eakins worked the image into the larger version, there was no sign of this figure—no interloper between artist and model. And as many scholars have noted, Rush now very much resembles the elder Eakins.⁴ What are we to make of all this?

In one sense, Eakins may have been reflecting upon the changes in his profession since he painted the first version in 1877, but he also surely must have been thinking of himself—his career, the meaning of his art, his place within the art historical tradition. In the case of his profession, the later Rush images completely change the relationship between artist and model to reflect the realities of 1908. In the Brooklyn painting, Eakins achieves this by altering the race of the chaperone. In early twentieth-century America, let alone the early Republic of Rush's day, the African-American woman would not have been the social equal of the model or the artist. The chaperone's ability to protect the chastity of the nude society belle in her charge diminished considerably when Eakins changed her skin color. In the unfinished Honolulu picture the chaperone disappears altogether as she had in the studios of artists in the 1900s.⁵

When Eakins painted the first Rush oil in 1877 it followed his suggestion that the Academy should hire better models, drawn outside the ranks of prostitutes. In order to get these demure young ladies to pose he recommended that they be allowed to bring their mothers with them. By the turn of the century this idea seemed quaint. When Eakins exhibited the 1877 Rush at "The Exhibition of Contemporary Art" held

⁴ Darrel Sewell, *Thomas Eakins, Artist of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1982), 51.

⁵ Franklin Kelly, "The Chaperone," in Franklin Kelly, et al., *American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century, Part 1* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1996): 185-189.

at the Brooklyn Museum in 1915, the critic for *The New York Times* wrote: “In the foreground stands his model, the true theme of the composition, and near her sits her duenna, a naïve commentary on the period.”⁶ The idea of having a chaperone seemed preposterous in an era when models were becoming celebrities. Indeed, in 1907 *The Times* ran an article called, “The Women Who Served as Models for the Coins,” in which two models, Mary Cunningham and Nannie Williams recounted their experiences posing for artists. Nannie, who served as the model for Lousia VanUxem in Eakins’s 1877 painting, publicly described not only her sittings for the head on the Morgan dollar but her connection with Eakins.⁷

In addition to reflecting the changing status of artist’s models, Eakins’s 1908 Rush series also seems a poignantly personal project. Although he thoroughly contemplated the subject, made elaborate sketches, crafted one large-scale painting, and began another, Eakins never exhibited any of the works in this group. The degree to which he experimented with the subject on canvas also suggests that Eakins had a private interest in these works. As with the chaperone, the artist also undergoes changes throughout the sketches and the more finished paintings. In one version Rush appears as a balding man, dressed in attire that is not as gentlemanly as the 1877 original but also not as workman-like as in the Honolulu painting.⁸ In the Brooklyn picture he becomes younger and more of a workman. In the sketches for the Honolulu composition, Rush is a slender figure. Finally, in the Honolulu image, what we see of Rush’s form looks older and heavier than in the sketches and indeed, resembles

⁶ “Exhibition of Contemporary Art: Art at Home and Abroad,” *The New York Times* (April 11, 1915), Magazine Section: 22.

⁷ “The Women Who Served as Models for the Coins,” *The New York Times* (December 15, 1907), n.p.

⁸ Though the sketch is very loose in the area around the artist, he recalls the figure of Eakins’s father Benjamin.

Eakins in his later years. In 1877, Eakins had highlighted the aspects of Rush's career that most pertained to his own goals as an artist; in 1908 Eakins became Rush. If Eakins considered Rush in the context of the art historical tradition in the 1877 painting; in 1908 Eakins depicted himself in the place of an American Old Master.

By the time he painted the Honolulu oil, the winds had shifted more favorably in Eakins's direction. Starting in the 1890s his work received more positive attention from critics. Commissions also materialized in this period.⁹ In 1896 he had a large one-man show at Earles Galleries in Philadelphia. Five years later he shared another focused show with Samuel Murray. Then in 1902 he was elected both an Associate and an Academician of the National Academy of Design. He received several awards: gold medals at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo (1901), the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis (1904), and the American Art Society of Philadelphia (1907). The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts also awarded Eakins the Temple Gold Medal in 1904. The twentieth century brought Eakins honors, commissions, and praise.¹⁰

Also in this period he began serving regularly on exhibition juries. He became a frequent juror for the Carnegie Institute's Annual exhibitions starting in 1899. He additionally sat on juries in Worcester, Philadelphia, and New York.¹¹ Through these experiences, Eakins interacted with his artistic peers on a regular basis—he also clearly had a keen sense of the sort of work being submitted to these exhibitions. In

⁹ For example, his 1903 commission to paint Robert C. Odgen in 1903 or Jefferson Medical College's commission for a portrait of Professor William Smith Forbes.

¹⁰ For a thorough accounting of Eakins's accomplishments after 1900 see: Carol Troyen "Eakins in the Twentieth Century," in Darrel Sewell, ed., *Thomas Eakins* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 367-376.

¹¹ The Worcester jury was recently discovered. "Art Matters of Note: At Home and Abroad," *The New York Times*, March 31, 1907, X5. The New York jury was for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis.

Pittsburgh, for example, Eakins must have seen the Carnegie's portrait of the violinist Pablo de Sarasate by James A. McNeill Whistler, which he included in the background of his 1904 painting *Music*.¹² Eakins's reinvigorated connection to the art world is also witnessed by the sheer numbers of portraits of artists, dealers, and curators that he painted after 1900. Eakins had often painted his students, especially since they frequently posed as models, but the artist portraits that he began around the turn of the century with his 1899 painting of William Merritt Chase suggest as potent an interest in art professionals as his interest in doctors or the Catholic clergy.¹³

When Eakins painted himself as an American Old Master in the form of the sculptor Rush in 1908, his work was increasingly being compared with that of European Old Masters. That Eakins also began appearing in historical surveys of American art around the turn of the century may have contributed to this trend. In 1901, Eakins made it into Sadakichi Hartman's *A History of American Art*.¹⁴ Though Hartman celebrated the "brutal" realism of Eakins's work, praise that would resonate so profoundly with Depression-era scholars, others suggested that Eakins's work was more a modern equivalent of the masters of the Baroque period. When Charles H. Caffin published his *The Story of American Painting* in 1907, Eakins numbered among the artists mentioned in this study, which was subtitled *The Evolution of Painting in America From Colonial Times to the Present*. While Caffin included Eakins in the section devoted to Realism, the most in-depth discussion of the artist's

¹² The Carnegie acquired the painting in 1896. Whistler died in 1903 and the Copley Society in Boston held a Memorial exhibition in his honor.

¹³ He painted roughly twenty-five portraits of art professionals between 1900 and 1910. As with all of his art, some works are more successful than others. His portraits of Chase, Elizabeth Coffin, Henry Ossawa Tanner, and Frank Linton are among the most appealing that are currently located. Others, like his portraits of the Japanese artist Genjiro Yeto or the American William Lippincott, have yet to be traced.

¹⁴ Sadakichi Hartman's, *A History of American Art*, 2 vols. (Boston: L.C. Page, 1901).

work centered on *The Gross Clinic* and its close ties to Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*.¹⁵

In one sense, the desire Eakins expressed during his student days in Paris to produce only “worthy painting” found its reward in these later accolades. When Eakins received the Academy's Temple Medal for his *Portrait of Archbishop Elder of Cincinnati*, the press hailed it as “a substantial piece of painting,” though one critic felt that the “beautiful and poetic” portrait *The Oboe Player*, which Eakins exhibited at the same time, was equally worthy of the prize. In either case, the critic felt that Eakins deserved the prize not merely for the work itself but because Eakins had the strength to “adhere to those high canons which those who know the history of art are aware last.”¹⁶ In the *Portrait of Archbishop Elder*, a Velasquez-influenced representation of the Catholic archbishop, critics recognized the hand of a master. This type of tribute would continue until the artist's death in 1916.¹⁷ One of the most glowing appreciations of Eakins's work came just a year before his death when he exhibited the unfinished portrait of Mrs. Talcott Williams, known as *The Black Fan*. The *Inquirer* compared the painting with Titian's *Man with a Glove* and declared that Eakins's “place in the history of American painting is of utmost importance.”¹⁸

As Eakins received these tributes and prizes he clearly began to worry about the future of his work. Early in 1910 he wrote to Bryson Burroughs, curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: “I have always felt inadequately represented in the

¹⁵ Charles H. Caffin, *The Story of American Painting* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1907): 230-231.

¹⁶ “Art and Artists,” *The Press* (Philadelphia), February 14, 1904, 6.

¹⁷ When Albert Barnes purchased Eakins's *Dr. D. Hayes Agnew* the artist Robert Henri wrote to Barnes: “I think your purchase of his work is more significant than the purchase of a hundred old masters.” Quoted in Sally Mills, “Dr. D. Hayes Agnew” in John Wilmerding, ed. *Thomas Eakins* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 143.

¹⁸ “Academy Opens Its 110th Exhibition,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 7, 1915, 2.

Metropolitan Museum. Hearing that the Museum was now buying some American pictures I have hopes that something of mine might be included.”¹⁹ Eakins pursued Burroughs over the next several months, meeting him in New York in April of that year, when he suggested that the Metropolitan consider buying *Crucifixion*.²⁰ A few months later he sent Burroughs “a Spanish picture,” one of the very first paintings he ever completed, made when he was in Spain in 1869-70.²¹ Neither painting was acquired.

A year later, ill with influenza, Eakins worried that his *Portrait of Henry T. Rowland* “should be in a public gallery or museum out of the danger.”²² As Eakins embraced his status as an American Old Master, he hoped that his work would find its way into public collections, where it could continue to be seen. Eakins appears never to have fully recovered from this bout with the flu and, in fact, his health would only continue to decline in the remaining years of his life. But just before he died in 1916, he had the pleasure of seeing the Metropolitan Museum purchase one of his works, *Pushing for Rail*, a realist hunting scene. Though he was pleased to see more of his work enter this collection, Eakins expressed his disappointment that the Museum had not “chosen a larger and more important picture.”²³

When the Metropolitan Museum of Art held a Memorial Exhibition for Eakins in November of 1917, it was by no means comprehensive and yet this show did not just portray the realist Eakins. Although Eakins had been heroized in the press for at

¹⁹ TE to Bryson Burroughs, January 12, 1910,

²⁰ For details of Eakins exchanges with Burroughs and the Metropolitan see: H. Barbara Weinberg, “Thomas Eakins and the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 51 (Winter 1994-1995): 5-43.

²¹ TE to Bryson Burrough, June 16, 1910. Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

²² TE to William Henry Holmes, April 19, 1911, Charles Bregler’s Thomas Eakins Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

²³ TE to Bryson Burroughs, April 23, 1916, Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

least a decade, it was not strictly as a realist, but for his status as an Old Master—the painter of *William Rush* and *Crucifixion* as well as *The Agnew Clinic*. In the Memorial Exhibition, *Crucifixion* hung next to *The Pair-oared Shell* and *Portrait of Elizabeth Coffin*. Spinning subjects occupied the same wall with his much-admired portrait of his father, *The Writing Master*. The 1877 version of *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* was there as well. Susan Eakins also lent *Swimming*, which had not been publicly shown since 1887. Nearly all of Eakins’s historical subjects were represented in one form or another, except for sculpture. Though this was a notable omission, it was not forgotten in his obituaries, which remarked upon his “equestrian statues for the Brooklyn Memorial Arch and reliefs on the monument at Trenton, N.J.”²⁴ Eakins was also represented in the show as a sculptor in one other way, through the inclusion of a bronze sculpture of himself by Samuel Murray. While Eakins remained best known for his paintings, Murray’s sculptural work represented the legacy of his teaching.

Although Eakins might not be pleased to find that few art historians would agree with his assessment that *Crucifixion* represents his “best work,” he would, no doubt be happy to see that his name has not been forgotten. From the start of his career Eakins seems to have had a strong desire to make his mark in art history, even if he could not make a fortune with his art. The distinction he made between talent and success was all too clear when he wrote to a young student in 1906: “The life of an artist is precarious. I have known very great artists to live their whole lives in poverty and distress because the people had not the taste and good sense to buy their works. Again I have seen the fashionable folk give commissions of thousands to

²⁴ “Obituary: Thomas Eakins,” *American Art News* 14 (July 15, 1916).

men whose work is worthless.”²⁵ Although there may be a certain amount of bitterness in his letter, there is also the implicit belief that sales did not reflect true worth.

Eakins’s youthful admiration of “big painting” remained with him throughout his career. He came to link such work with a singular method: life study. His notion that this was the basis of all good work, from Phidias to William Rush, is at the heart of many of his historical subjects. In each decade of his career, Eakins undertook at least one of these historical themes, all of which relate to his regard for his profession. A complex amalgam of tradition and modernity, Eakins used these images to assert his deepest held beliefs about art. In his desire to become part of the art historical tradition himself, he numbered these works among his best and hoped that they would continue to speak for him after his death. To Eakins, these were “big paintings.”

²⁵ TE to George Barker, 2/24/1906, Joslyn Art Museum.



Figure 1 Thomas Eakins, *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*, 1877, oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 2 William Rush, *Nymph and Bittern*, 1809, carved and painted wood, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 3 Thomas Eakins, *Hiawatha*, ca. 1876, oil on canvas mounted on wood, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden



Figure 4 Thomas Eakins, *The Surrender of Robert E. Lee*, ca. 1876, oil on canvas mounted on fiberboard, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden



Figure 5 Thomas Eakins, *Columbus in Prison*, ca. 1876, oil on canvas mounted on cardboard, Kennedy Galleries, New York



Figure 6 Thomas Eakins, *Sketches of Randolph Rogers's Columbus Figures for the bronze doors of the United States Capitol*, ca. 1877, graphite on paper, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 7 William Rush, *George Washington*, 1815, carved and painted wood, Independence National Historical Park



Figure 8 William Rush, *Allegory of the Waterworks*, 1825, carved and painted wood, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 9 John Lewis Krimmel, *Fourth of July in Center Square*, 1812, oil on canvas, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 10 Roman copy after Praxiteles, *Aphrodite of Knidos*, ca. 350 B.C., marble, Vatican Collection



Figure 11 Gustave Boulanger, *Phryne*, 1850, oil on canvas, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

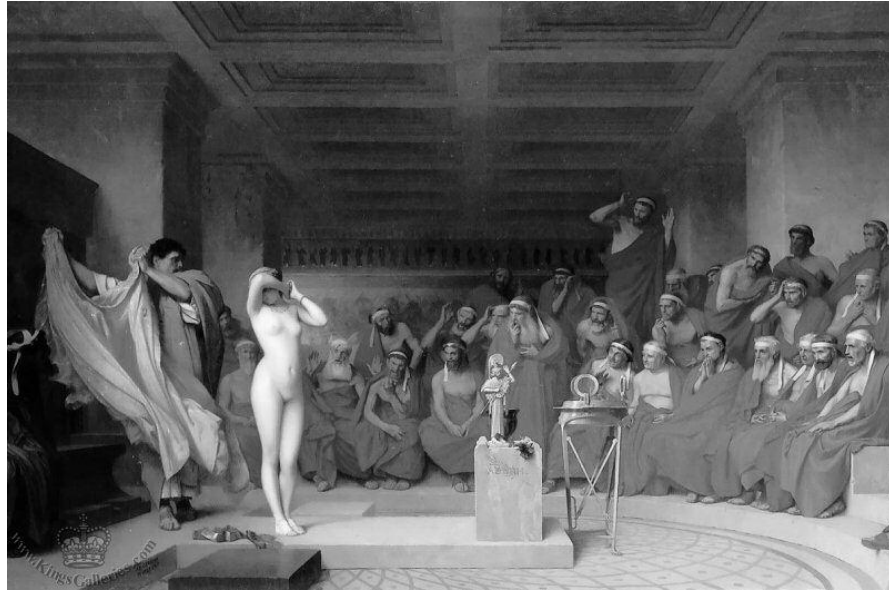


Figure 12 Jean Léon Gérôme, *Phryne Before the Tribunal*, 1861, oil on canvas, Hamburger Kunsthalle



Figure 13 Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *A Sculptor's Model*, 1877, oil on canvas, Private Collection



Figure 14 *Colonial Kitchen, Great Sanitary Fair, Philadelphia, 1864*



Figure 15 *New England Kitchen, Massachusetts Pavillion, Centennial Fair, Philadelphia, 1876*



Figure 16 Edward Lamson Henry *The Old Clock on the Stairs*, 1868, oil on canvas, Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, VT



Figure 17 Thomas Wilmer Dewing, *The Spinner (Priscilla)*, 1880, oil on canvas, Brigham Young University



Figure 18 Thomas Eakins, *Fifty Years Ago*, 1877, watercolor and gouache on paper, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 19 Thomas Eakins, *Seventy Years Ago*, 1877, watercolor on paper, The Art Museum, Princeton University



Figure 20 Thomas Eakins, *Kathrin*, 1872, oil on canvas, Yale University Art Gallery



Figure 21 Thomas Eakins, *In Grandmother's Time*, 1876, oil on canvas, Smith College Art Museum



Figure 22 Thomas Eakins, *The Chess Players*, 1876, oil on wood, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

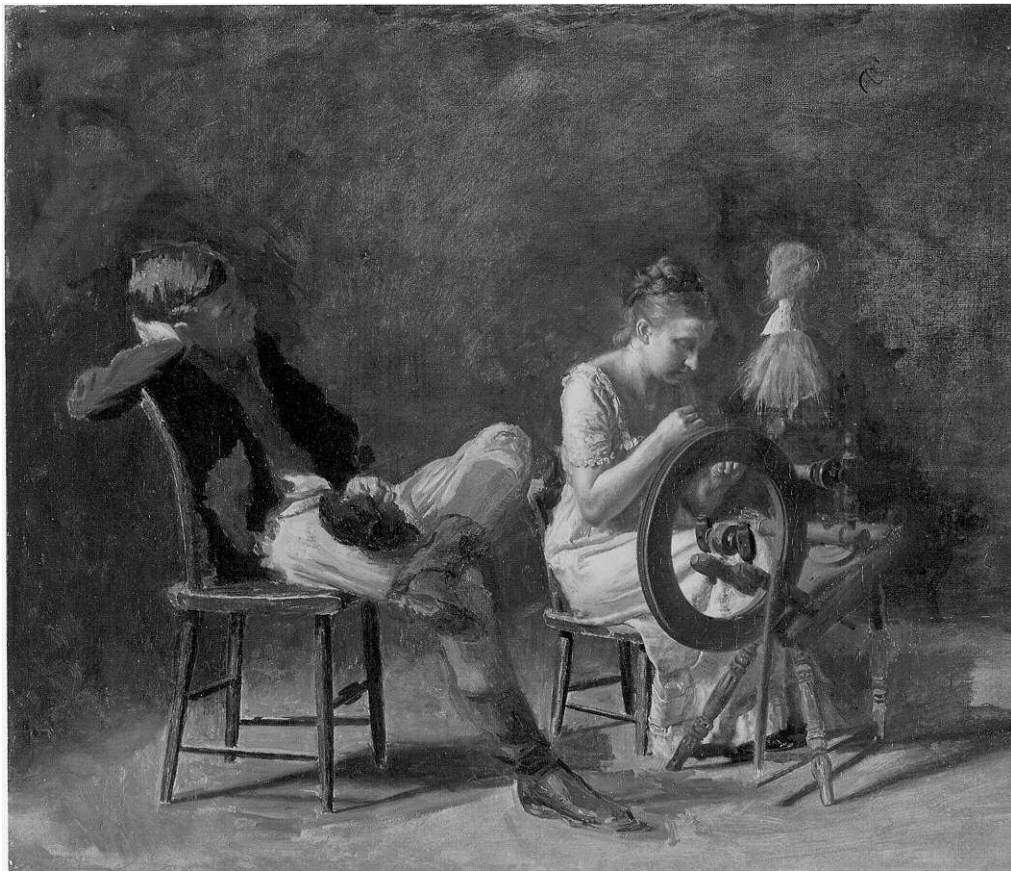


Figure 23 Thomas Eakins, *The Courtship*, ca. 1878, oil on canvas, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco



Figure 24 Thomas Eakins, *Knitting*, 1882, bronze, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 25 Susan Macdowell Eakins, *Spinning*, ca. 1878, oil on canvas, private collection



Figure 26 Susan Macdowell Eakins, *The Old Clock on the Stairs*, 1882, oil on canvas, lost



Figure 27 Thomas Eakins, *Elizabeth Macdowell and Susan Macdowell in Empire Dresses*, 1881, albumen print, Bryn Mawr College Library, Pennsylvania, Seymour Adelman Collection



Figure 28 Thomas Eakins, *Caroline Eakins in an Empire Dress*, 1881, albumen print, Philadelphia Museum of Art

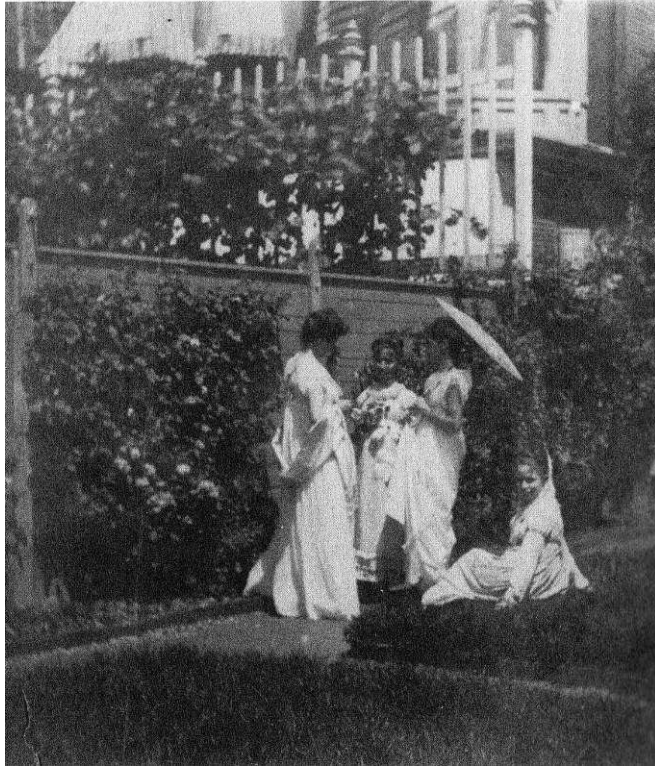


Figure 29 Thomas Eakins, *Four women in Empire dresses in yard*, ca. 1881, albumen print, Charles Bregler Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 30 J. Alden Weir, *Still Life in the Studio*, ca. 1878, oil on canvas, Yale University Art Gallery



Figure 31 Circle of Thomas Eakins, *Elizabeth Macdowell in eighteenth-century dress*, dry-plate negative, ca. 1885, Charles Bregler Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 32 Circle of Thomas Eakins, *Woman in eighteenth-century costume, holding teacup*, ca. 1885, albumen print, Charles Bregler Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

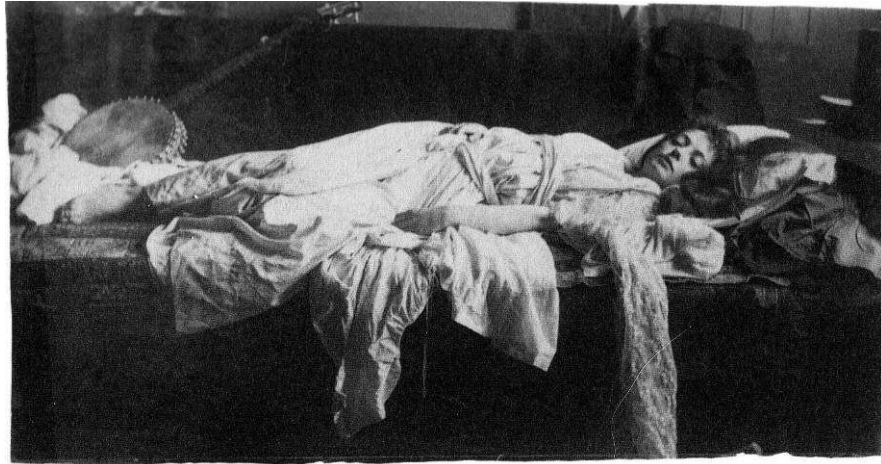


Figure 33 Thomas Eakins, *Blanche Gilroy in classical costume, reclining, with banjo*, ca. 1885, albumen print, Charles Bregler Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 34 Thomas Eakins, *Woman in laced-bodice dress, seated with setter at her feet*, ca. 1883, albumen print, Charles Bregler Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 35 Thomas Eakins, *The Artist's Wife and His Setter Dog*, 1884-89, oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

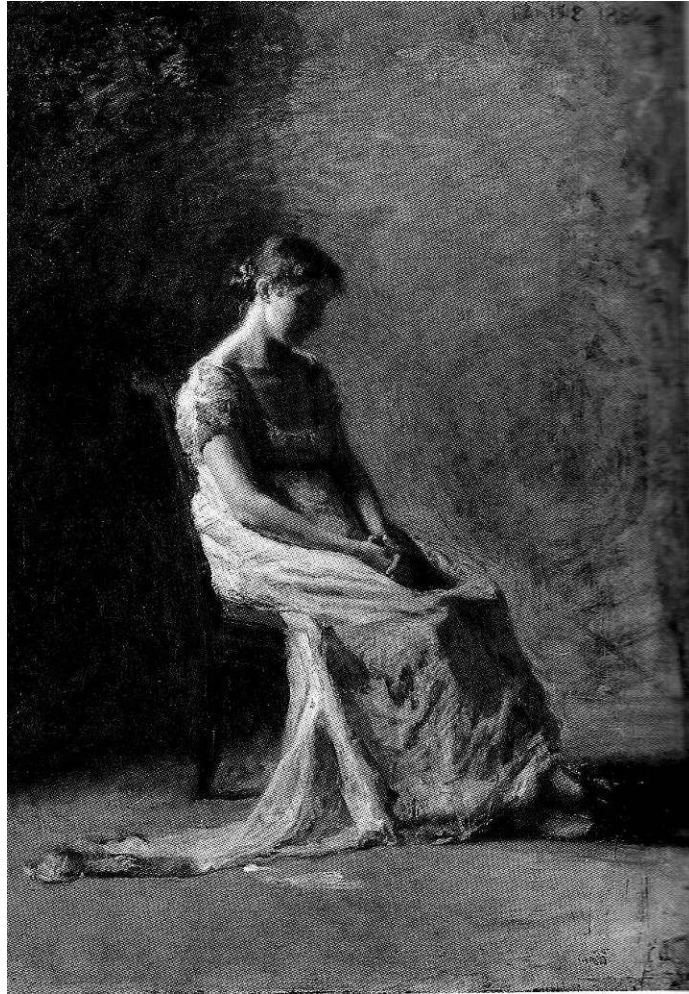


Figure 36 Thomas Eakins, *Retrospection*, 1880, oil on panel, Yale University Art Gallery



Figure 37 William Merritt Chase, *Portrait of Dora Wheeler*, 1882-83, oil on canvas, Cleveland Museum of Art



Figure 38 Thomas Eakins, *Homespun*, 1881, watercolor on paper, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 39 Thomas Eakins, *Spinning*, 1881, watercolor on paper, Private collection



Figure 40 Thomas Eakins, *Spinning*, 1882, bronze, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 41 Thomas Eakins, *Youth Playing the Pipes*, ca. 1883, plaster, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 42 Thomas Eakins, *Swimming*, 1885, oil on canvas, Amon Carter Museum of Art



Figure 43 Thomas Eakins, *Arcadia*, 1883, plaster, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 44 Thomas Eakins, *Mending the Net*, 1881, oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 45 Attributed to Edward Boulton, *Students Posing at the Philadelphia Art Students League (detail)*, ca. 1890, modern print from dry-plate negative, Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Figure 46 Thomas Eakins, *May Morning in the Park*, 1879, oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art

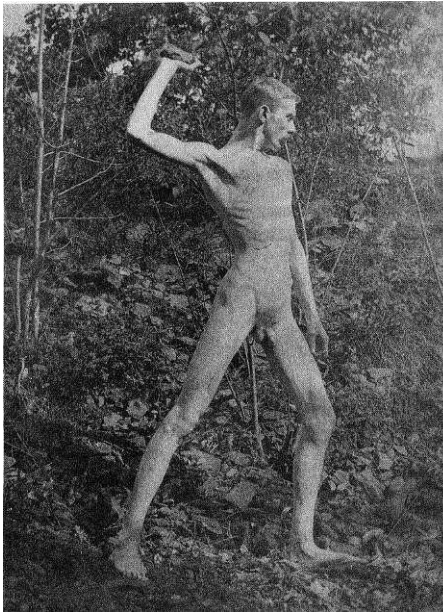


Figure 47 Thomas Eakins, *Male Nude, poised to throw rock*, ca. 1883, albumen print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

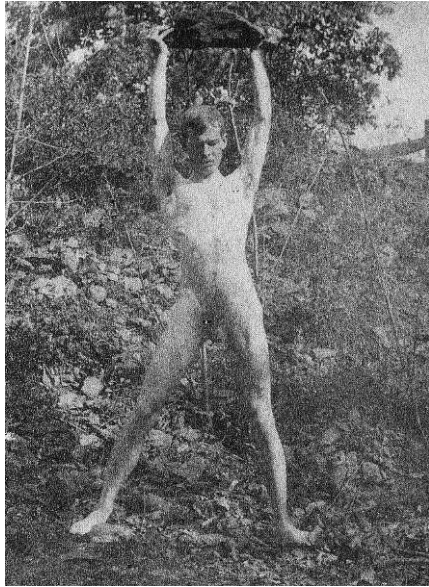


Figure 48 Thomas Eakins, *Male nude, holding large rock above head*, ca. 1883, albumen print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 49 Thomas Eakins, *Arcadia*, ca. 1883, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 50 Thomas Eakins, *An Arcadian*, ca. 1883, oil on canvas, Spanierman Gallery



Figure 51 Thomas Eakins, *Ben Crowell*, ca. 1883, platinum print, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden



Figure 52 Thomas Eakins, *Susan Macdowell Nude*, ca. 1883, albumen print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 53 Thomas Eakins, *John. Laurie Wallace Nude, Playing Pipes*, ca. 1883, glass positive, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 54 Circle of Thomas Eakins, *Male Nude, standing on one leg, in wooded landscape*, ca. 1883, albumen print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 55 Roman copy after Greek original, *Faun with Pipes*, marble, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Figure 56 Thomas Eakins, *John Laurie Wallace, Nude, Playing Pipes*, ca. 1883, platinum print, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden



Figure 57 Thomas Eakins, *Phidias Studying for the Frieze of the Parthenon*, ca. 1883-1890, oil on wood, The Eakins Press Foundation



Figure 58 Thomas Eakins, *Weda Cook in classical costume, sitting in Empire chair*, ca. 1892, platinum print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 59 Thomas Eakins, *Two Women in classical costume*, with *Thomas Eakins's Arcadia relief at left*, ca. 1883, platinum print, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

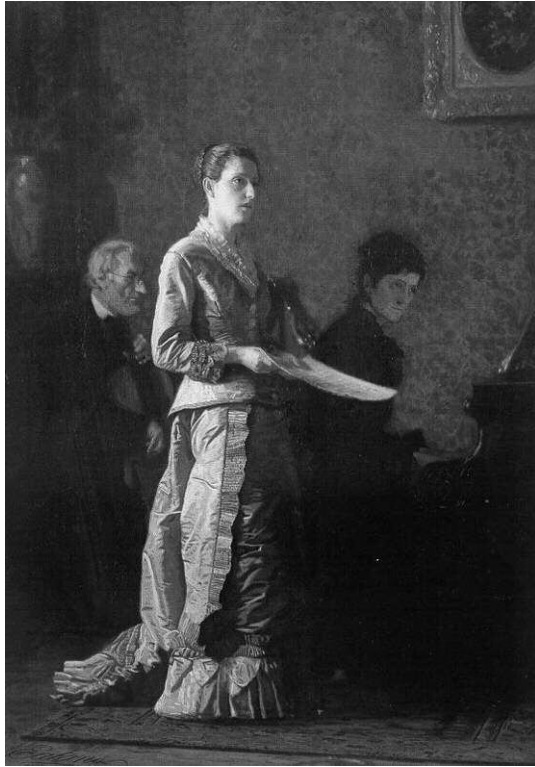


Figure 60 Thomas Eakins, *The Pathetic Song*, 1881, oil on canvas, Corcoran Gallery of Art

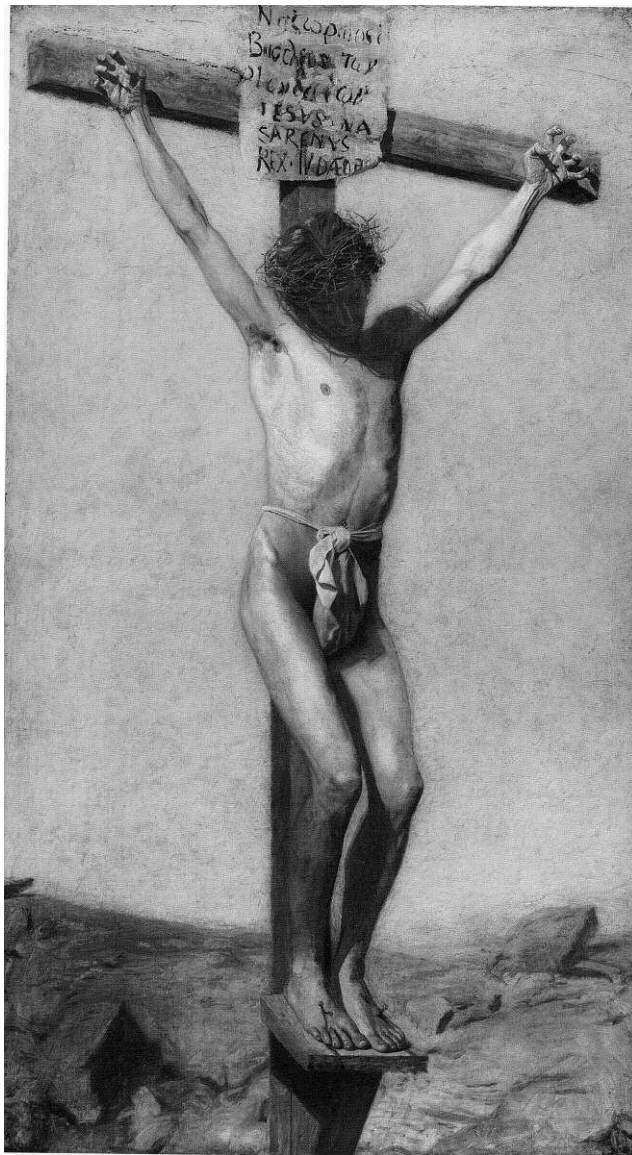


Figure 61 Thomas Eakins, *Crucifixion*, 1880, oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 62 Thomas Eakins, *Sketch for Crucifixion*, 1880, oil on canvas, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

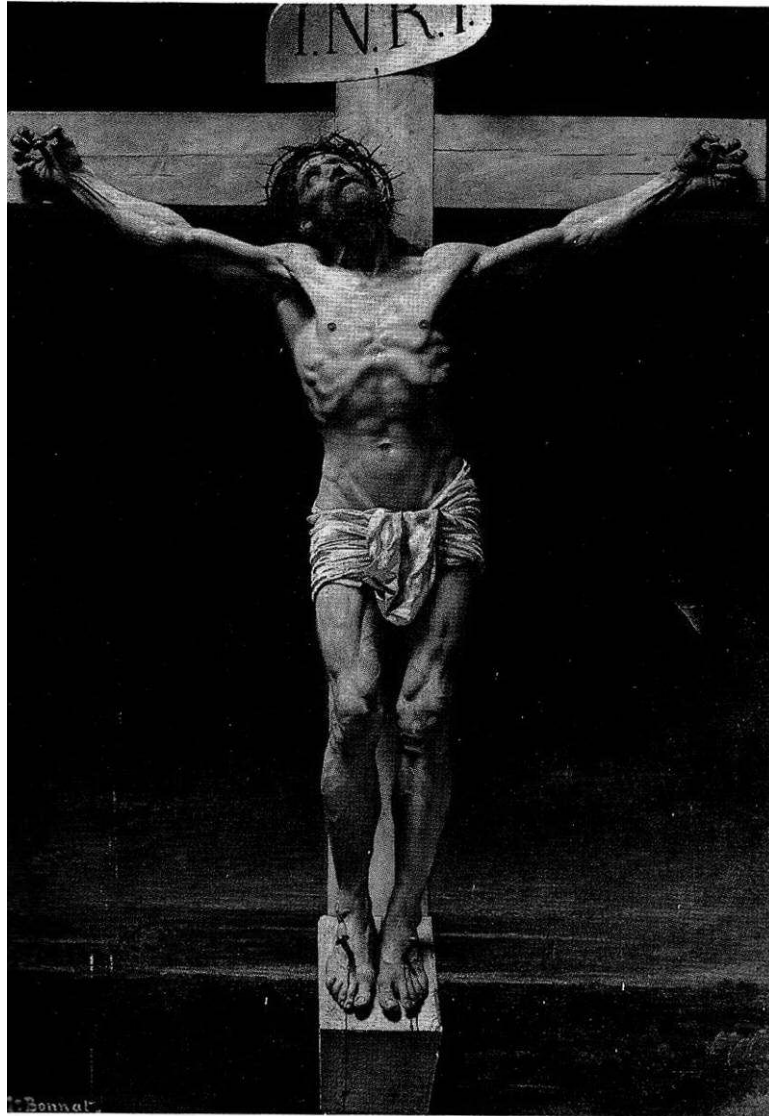


Figure 63 Léon Bonnat, *Le Christ*, 1874, oil on canvas, Musée du Petit Palais, Paris



Figure 64 Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Consummatum est. Jérusalem*, 1867, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

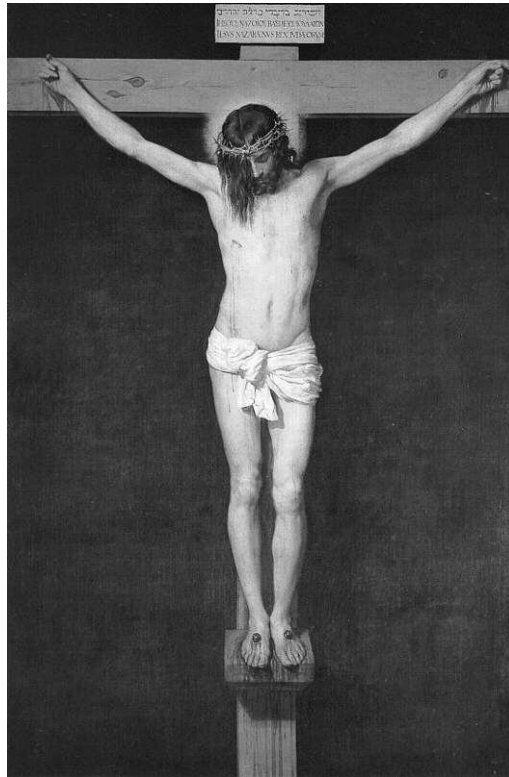


Figure 65 Diego Velázquez, *Christ on the Cross*, 1630, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid



Figure 66 Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Prayer in the Desert*, 1864, oil on panel, private collection

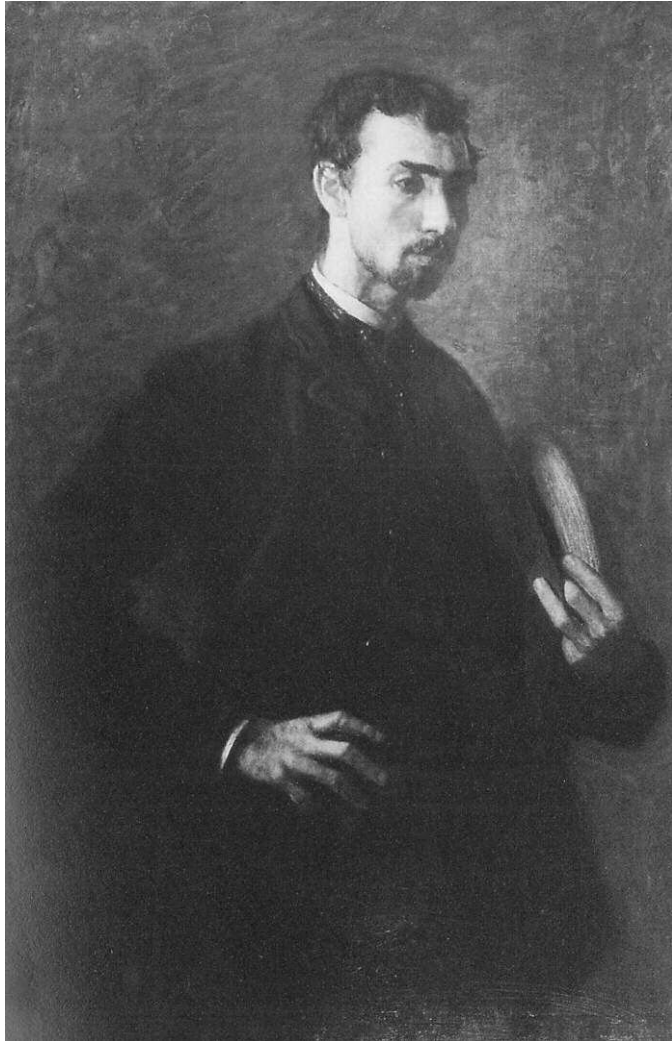


Figure 67, Thomas Eakins, *J. Laurie Wallace*, 1885, oil on canvas, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska



Figure 68 Robert Walter Weir, *Evening of the Crucifixion*, after 1854, oil on canvas, unlocated.



Figure 69 Constantino Brumidi, *Crucifixion*, 1864, fresco, destroyed



Figure 70 Thomas Eakins, *Crucifixion in replica of original frame*



Figure 71 Thomas Eakins, *Portrait of Mr. Louis Kenton (The Thinker)*, 1900, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 72 John Hemenway Duncan, architect; Thomas Eakins, William Rudolf O'Donovan, and Frederick Macmonnies, sculptors, *The Soldiers and Sailors Memorial*, Brooklyn, New York, 1892-1898

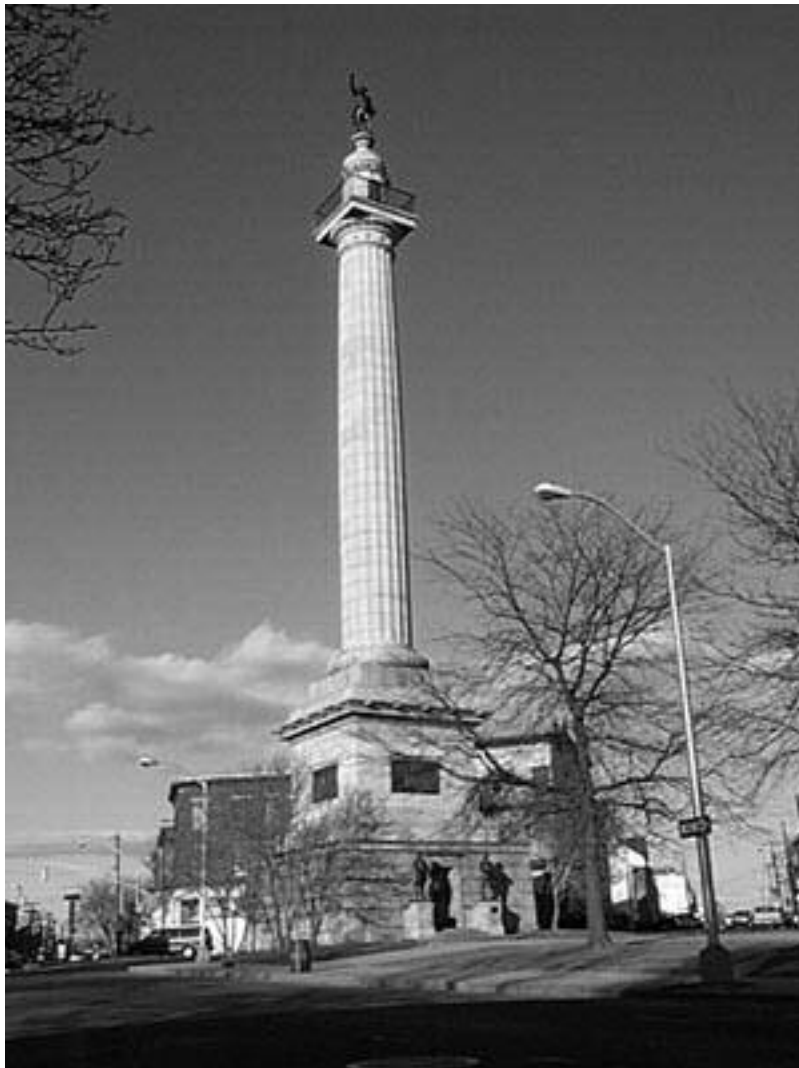


Figure 73 John Hemenway Duncan, architect; Thomas Eakins, William Rudolf O'Donovan, Charles Niehaus, sculptors, *Trenton Battle Monument*, 1893-1895



Figure 74 Attributed to Susan Macdowell Eakins, *Samuel Murray, Thomas Eakins, and William Rudolf O'Donovan, in Chestnut Street studio, 1891-92*, dry-plate negative, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 75 Thomas Eakins and William Rudolf O'Donovan, *Abraham Lincoln on Horseback*, 1893-1894, bronze, Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, Brooklyn, New York

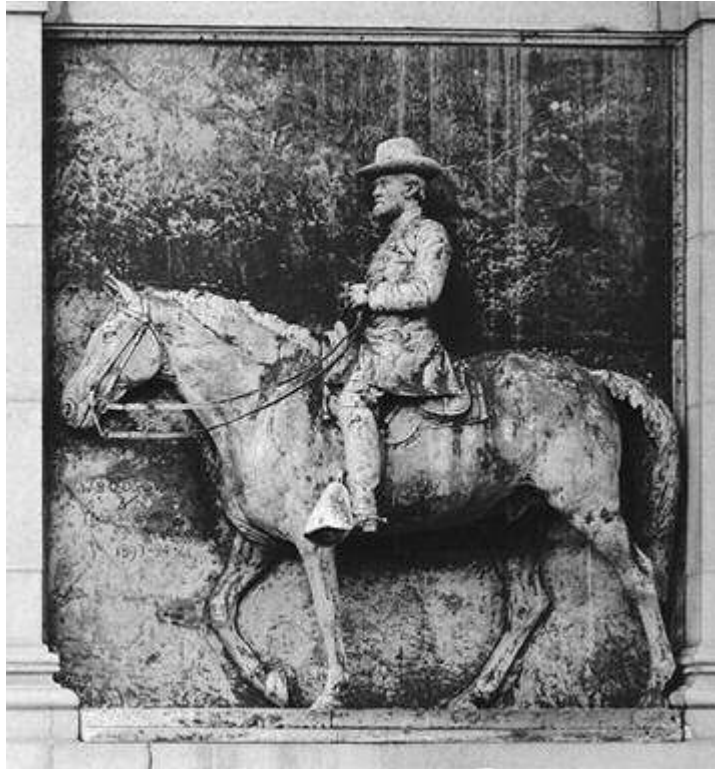


Figure 76 Thomas Eakins and William Rudolf O'Donovan, *Ulysses S. Grant on Horseback*, 1893-1894, bronze, Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, Brooklyn, New York



Figure 77 *Thomas Eakins sketching from Billy as Phidias, ca. 1893, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*

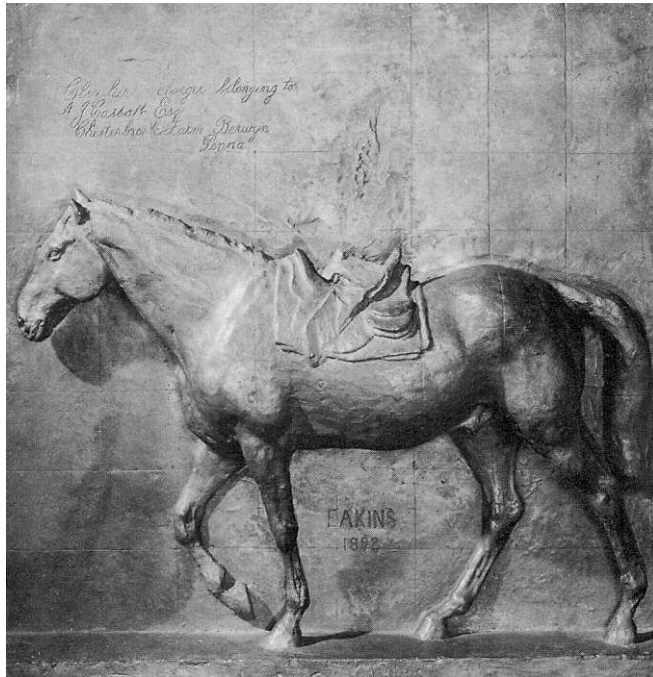


Figure 78 Thomas Eakins, *Clinker*, 1892, plaster, Fleisher Memorial, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 79 Frederick Macmonnies, *Quadriga*, 1898, bronze, Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, Brooklyn, New York



Figure 80 Thomas Eakins, *The Opening of the Fight*, 1893, bronze, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

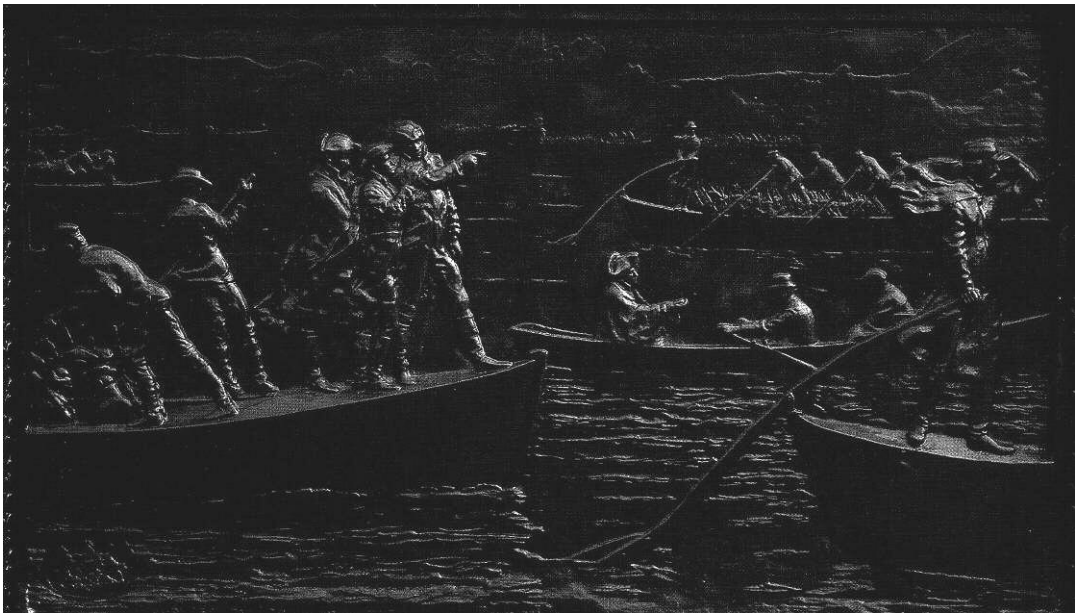


Figure 81 Thomas Eakins, *The Continental Army Crossing the Delaware River*, 1893, bronze, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

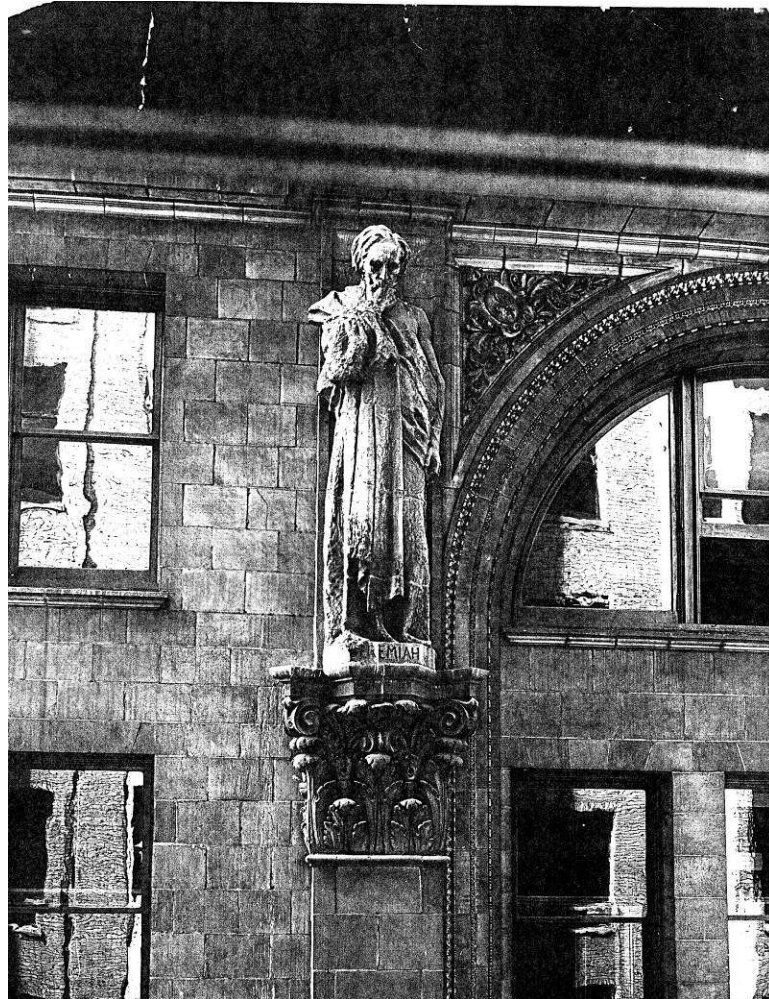


Figure 82 Samuel Murray and Thomas Eakins, *Jeremiah*, Witherspoon Building, 1895-1896, terracotta, destroyed

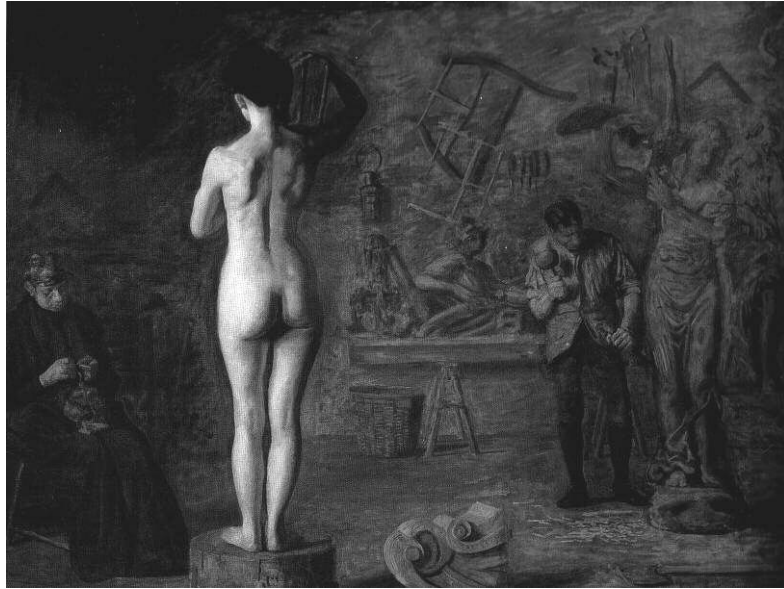


Figure 83 Thomas Eakins, *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*, 1908, oil on canvas, Brooklyn Museum of Art

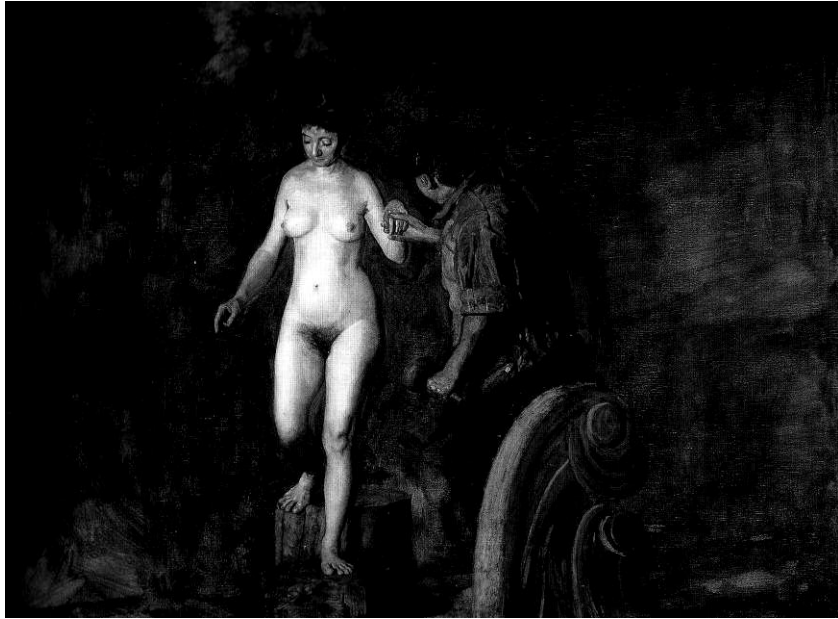


Figure 84 Thomas Eakins, *William Rush and His Model*, ca. 1908, oil on canvas, Honolulu Academy of Arts

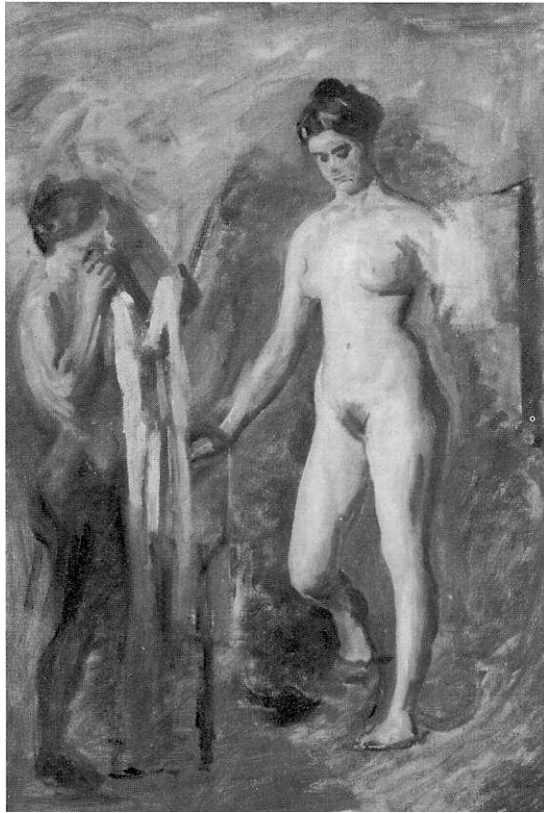


Figure 85 Thomas Eakins, *Study of William Rush and His Model*, ca. 1908, oil on canvas, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

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