

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX OR “IT MUST BE SAID”: CHARLES DEMUTH’S *MY EGYPT* RECONSIDERED

Jonathan Frederick Walz, Master of Arts, 2004

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*My Egypt*, 1927, is one of the largest, best known, and arguably most misunderstood works by American modernist Charles Demuth. Past interpretations of the painting have focused on the visual similarity of the depicted grain elevators to architectural wonders of the ancient world and/or on the ironic juxtaposition of image and title. Building upon these analyses, this thesis proposes three nexuses of inquiry that illuminate *My Egypt*. Deriving from recent critical theory on gender and phenomenology, the first section of the thesis reads the image as a performative self-portrait. The second section considers the underexamined religious tradition of the artist as important to elucidating the picture’s meaning. Finally, the third section investigates the artist’s relationship to Egypt and the early twentieth-century phenomenon of Egyptomania, using seven associative connotations for the African country to explain the complexity of Demuth’s masterpiece.

THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX OR “IT MUST BE SAID”:  
CHARLES DEMUTH’S *MY EGYPT* RECONSIDERED

by

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gift is giving. this we learn. hard to learn. recompense we dont understand. hence talk, effort, search, research.  
in the Whitney museum is a painting by Charles Demuth called "MY EGYPT." it represents gift - giving. it is small, obscure, delicate—a study of factory buildings—dextrous, acute, perhaps the finest sense of a modern age that has been expressed. this painting has a history. its history may some day be known. a slow process, this knowing, knowing history. hard to know. the painting may then be seen, be received. hard to see, to receive.  
the American Indians express what they know by means of dance. within their dance occurs a gesture, simple gesture—body in balance, slight almost imperceptible step forward, shoulders dropped, elbows flexed, wrists and hands in constant rhythmic motion—palms out—palms in. it makes one wonder if giving and receiving—giving and seeing—are not the same thing.

"It Must Be Said," a statement about *My Egypt* that originated at Stieglitz's gallery, An American Place, November 1935<sup>1</sup>

In 1927 Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Charles Demuth completed *My Egypt* (fig. 1).

An oil painting on composition board that is nearly square, the image is one of the largest works ever created by the artist. Nevertheless, the panel is relatively small, measuring 35 3/4 x 30 inches. The sway it exerts, however, whether one considers its actual physical presence or its cumulative effect on (art) historical memory, is large indeed. Much of *My Egypt*'s power is due to its sphinx-like enigmatic qualities—the "whatever" that has puzzled critics and scholars alike for almost a century.<sup>2</sup>

Scholarship to date has generally considered *My Egypt* as a visual conflation of southeastern Pennsylvania architecture with the ancient monuments of the Nile River valley and/or as an intentionally unsolvable Dadaist conundrum. These interpretations have been set forth by various art historians, who each implicitly claim to have discovered the single key that would unlock *My Egypt*'s secrets once and for all. While

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Farnham, *Charles Demuth: Behind a Laughing Mask* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 161. The non-standard capitalization, punctuation, and spellings of this statement have been retained. The source remains unidentified; see correspondence from Dorothy Norman to Lloyd Goodrich in the Whitney Museum of American Art's object files.

<sup>2</sup> Karal Ann Marling, "My Egypt: The Irony of the American Dream," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 1980, 39. This article currently remains the only published in-depth examination whose sole focus is *My Egypt*.

finding substance and weight in each of these interpretations, I take exception, however, to the analytical approach with which past scholars have approached the painting. By suggesting three avenues of sustained investigation—performance and embodiment, religion and religious interpretations, and Egypt and Egyptomania—this thesis proposes to see Demuth’s masterpiece as open-ended and many-layered, rather than as a reductive equation with only one right answer. Not unlike Jan van Eyck’s *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait* or Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*—both iconic paintings surrounded by mystery—Charles Demuth’s masterpiece invites ekphrastic contemplation and multiple readings.

A word about my methodology is appropriate here. Demuth’s painted oeuvre is not large and only a small portion of the artist’s written record remains, the majority of which is correspondence that has only recently been edited by Bruce Kellner for the Demuth Foundation and published by Temple University Press. The circle of art historians devoting scholarly attention to Demuth’s output has also been a rather select group. While Emily Farnham and Alvord Eiseman both independently documented Demuth’s corpus for their dissertations (in 1959 and 1976, respectively), at present no published catalogue raisonné of high quality, color reproductions accompanying current provenance information exists. The confluence of these facts has meant that in the secondary literature several biographical details and amusing anecdotes have been repeated over and over and the same few familiar images appear in article after article on the artist. It has been my intent to build respectfully upon past publications on Demuth, while also attempting to avoid retracing already well-worn intellectual paths. On a practical level this means two things. First, although the primary topic of this paper is



one of the best known images by Charles Demuth, I endeavor, when appropriate, to call the reader's attention to less well-known works by the artist that are equally worthy of consideration. Second, I make an effort to expand the discourse on Demuth by intentionally thinking creatively at times. Evidence for various points may be documented, historical facts; however, I occasionally engage in associative and imaginative speculation in order to elicit an underlying significance or avenue for possible future investigation. My purpose is not to mislead the reader. I desire instead to point out connections between things that previously have been overlooked in Demuth's life or possibilities that might lead to new understandings about this important American modernist.

\* \* \*

In many ways *My Egypt* is an embodiment of the artist. Scholars often link the image to Demuth, to the extent of considering it emblematic of him. Several factors explain this intimate association of image and artist: the painting depicts a site in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the region where Demuth was born and lived most of his life; the possessive pronoun of the title—*My Egypt*—adds a personal resonance to the work, much different from the usually detached and ironic titles the artist gave to his other images (for example, *Buildings*, *Lancaster* or *In the Province*); and Demuth created the picture during the late 1920s, a time when he was engaged in producing a series of “poster portraits” of fellow American modernists. *My Egypt* then shares the same time frame as his other abstract representations of such artists and writers as Georgia O’Keeffe (fig. 2), John Marin (fig. 3), and Arthur Dove (fig. 4). In addition, *My Egypt* possesses virtually the same dimensions, the same materials and physical support, and the same

conceptual complexity and degree of finish as *The Figure 5 in Gold* (fig. 5), Demuth's poster portrait of the poet William Carlos Williams. All of these contributing factors lend weight to my new interpretation of *My Egypt* as a heretofore-unrecognized self-portrait.

Demuth conceived and executed *My Egypt* while he was artistically investigating how to portray likeness through non-literal means. Demuth's poster portraits were "closely related to the tradition of symbolic, experimental portraiture that [Alfred Stieglitz] had sponsored and nurtured since his exhibition of Marius de Zayas' abstract caricatures at 291 in 1913."<sup>3</sup> Indeed Demuth's poster portraits, as Robin Jaffee Frank has noted, correspond to the output of other significant practitioners of modernist symbolic portraiture—Gertrude Stein, Marsden Hartley, Francis Picabia, as well as de Zayas—a trend that includes "Stein's use of abstract language in stream-of-consciousness word-portraits, and Hartley's Synthetic Cubist paintings dedicated to the memory of [Karl von Freyburg]."<sup>4</sup>

With the exception of *The Figure 5 in Gold*, the scale of *My Egypt* is unique in Demuth's output from the 1920s.<sup>5</sup> During this decade the artist was struggling with debilitating diabetes; creating large works in oil was an activity he often did not have the energy to accomplish. As Karal Ann Marling observes:

In contrast to [Demuth's] decorative flower pieces and studies of colonial architecture, where motifs float upon the indeterminate void of blank paper, the artist systematically took possession of the entire working surface in his oils of the late 1920s, the largest and most fully resolved of which is *My Egypt*. Emily Farnham...goes on to posit that after 1922 his rapidly failing health necessitated a careful selection of medium. Thus

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Brock, "Charles Demuth: A Sympathetic Order" in *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries*. Sarah Greenough, et al. (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2000), 368.

<sup>4</sup> Robin Jaffee Frank, *Charles Demuth: Poster Portraits, 1923–1929* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1994), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Demuth's last oil painting, *After All*, from the 1930s, is also the same size; see fig. 34.

when Demuth chose to undertake large-scale oil paintings, in contrast to watercolors and temperas “which extracted a relatively small toll from his slight reserve of strength,” his decision can be taken as a clear mark of the importance of the endeavor.... *My Egypt* of 1927 assumes fresh meaning in this context: it is painted in oil, it is nearly a yard in height, and it is possessed of a ponderous presence unmatched in Demuth’s corpus of work.<sup>6</sup>

The “ponderous presence” that Marling observes is tantamount to the physicality of the painting and the imbricated body of the artist. It is important to remember that Demuth devised and created visual embodiments—portraits—during the 1920s, a period when he was hyper-conscious of his own corporeal presence from his experience of fluctuating weight from diabetes and its treatment through starvation diet and then insulin therapy. Demuth’s personal investment in *My Egypt* and his fervent commitment to completing the picture only strengthen then the correlation between him and this work. I will argue that the painting becomes synonymous with the body of the artist.

The emphatic bilateral symmetry of *My Egypt* supports the reading of the iconic grain elevators as a double for Demuth’s corporeal presence. This tenuous balance, together with the frontal viewpoint, strong geometries, and radiating lines suggest a kind of strange, industrialized Vitruvian man. The subtle yet profound shift from a pencil sketch for *My Egypt* (fig. 6) and the finished painting suggest that Demuth consciously chose to stress the symmetry of the final composition. It is easy to anthropomorphize the buildings, seeing the various structures as a conglomeration of body parts, comparable to a reorganized human figure by Pablo Picasso (fig. 7). In Demuth’s oil painting the storage tanks may be interpreted as swollen legs, the four ventilator shafts above as extended fingers, and the top central window as an all-seeing, Cyclopean eye. Alternately, the structure might be read as the capacious back of a torso, similar to the

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<sup>6</sup> Marling, 27.

one depicted in a John Coplans photograph (fig. 8). This kind of blurring of boundaries between humans and machines—what Haskell calls the “ironic impulse that had motivated many of the mechanomorphs of the Dadaists”<sup>7</sup>—is also expressed in Constantin Brancusi’s sculpture *Torso of a Young Man* (fig. 9), a work that shares *My Egypt*’s cylindrical forms, sublimated libido, equilibrium, tranquility, and power.<sup>8</sup> Another important precedent is Charles Sheeler’s *Self Portrait* (fig. 10), 1923, wherein the artist melds his own reflection with a telephone. Alfred Stieglitz, too, participated in this impulse, expressing the cool, meticulous, and mechanistic side of Demuth, by developing out a portrait of the Lancaster artist (fig. 11a) on the opposite side of a photograph of a piece of glinting, metallic equipment (fig. 11b).

*My Egypt* does not literally portray Demuth’s features; however, its mode of composition encapsulates major aspects of his character. The symmetry of the painting resonates powerfully with several of the extant portrait photographs we have of Demuth, but most especially with Alfred Stieglitz’s platinum print of 1915 (fig. 12). Here the Lancaster artist stares intently out at us in full frontal view, chin lowered slightly to emphasize his deep-set eyes. The part in Demuth’s brillantined hair, just to the proper right of his widow’s peak, seems to be an element of the cubist charcoal drawing by Picasso immediately behind the painter.<sup>9</sup> Both Stieglitz’s photograph and *My Egypt* are studies of impenetrable façades with minor variations on either side of a vertical division to create a dynamic balance.

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<sup>7</sup> Barbara Haskell, *Charles Demuth* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1987), 194.

<sup>8</sup> Demuth may have seen this work in New York or known about it through his close friend Marcel Duchamp, who purchased the piece in 1926. See Friedrich Teja Bach, et al., *Constantin Brancusi: 1876–1957* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1995), 192. Demuth explicitly quotes Brancusi’s sculpture *Princess X* in his watercolor *Distinguished Air*, 1930.

<sup>9</sup> The drawing is *Head of a Man*, 1912, ex-collection Alfred Stieglitz and now owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The balanced asymmetry of *My Egypt* links the image in general to the human body, but this same structure in the painting relates in understated but profound ways to Demuth and his own body. Substantial evidence exists to document the fact that Demuth had an irregular gait due to an abnormality in his pelvis.<sup>10</sup> This disability occurred sometime in his early childhood, around the age of four, and remained with him the rest of his life. While it affected Demuth's mobility to some extent, former Pennsylvania Academy classmate, art critic, and family friend Helen Henderson remembered in retrospect that

Slender and of medium height, [Demuth] walked with a limp which he never allowed to hamper his activities. He walked, danced, swam, did all those athletic things as well or better than the other boys. His bearing was distinguished....<sup>11</sup>

After treatment for his hip condition, Demuth “wore built-up shoes [and] carried a cane.”<sup>12</sup> Gradually turning difference into advantage, the artist later in life incorporated his necessary walking stick within a dandified persona, even appearing with the accoutrement in photographs (fig. 13). “[H]e used it so elegantly,” notes Wanda Corn, “that people rarely noticed his lameness and assumed that he merely affected the cane.”<sup>13</sup> In Florine Stettheimer's full-length *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz* (fig. 14), the cane becomes a synecdoche for the Lancaster artist, shown entering from the left. The artist himself may have seen himself as synonymous with his own walking stick, as evidenced in *Study for “Poster Portrait: Marsden Hartley”* (fig. 15), 1923–24, where the artist's initials are

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<sup>10</sup> The cause of this disability has been the subject of much conjecture and debate in the secondary literature, with theories ranging from an accident to polio or a tubercular hip. Without more forensic evidence, it is probable we will never know for certain, although Barbara Haskell's hypothesis that Perthes' disease was responsible for Demuth's lameness is currently the leading theory. See Haskell, *Charles Demuth*, 12–13.

<sup>11</sup> Farnham, *Behind a Laughing Mask*, 52.

<sup>12</sup> Haskell, *Charles Demuth*, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Wanda M. Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 195.

superimposed exactly over the head of the depicted cane in the lower left of the drawing. Returning once again to *My Egypt* then, the tall, dark smokestack shoring up the right side of the composition rhymes exceedingly well with a cane, both in shape and in structural function. The appearance of this form within the painting adds further weight to the reading of this image as an embodied self-portrait of Demuth.

An additional link connects body to picture as well. In her biography of the artist, Emily Farnham states that “Like his father, [Charles Demuth] was born with a cast in one eye.”<sup>14</sup> William Carlos Williams, in an interview with Farnham, corroborated this point: “due to [Demuth’s] being cross-eyed, one eye sometimes looked at his nose, and he never looked right at you.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed a few period photographs record the more-than-usual asymmetry of the artist’s countenance (fig. 16 and fig. 11a). Looking at himself in the mirror each morning, the artist couldn’t help but be aware of this corporeal attribute, just as he must have had heightened sensibility to his shortened leg and limping step. Demuth’s face was slightly irregular, sometimes appearing lopsided, a characteristic shared with the composition of *My Egypt*. While on a basic level most artistic output can be considered a physical manifestation of its creator, *My Egypt*, with its close associations to Demuth and his corporeal presence, incarnates, to an unusual extent, traces of the artist’s body and face.

*A Prince of Court Painters (after Watteau)* (fig. 17), a watercolor from 1918 and part of an extended series of illustrations to literary texts, is an earlier work that, like *My Egypt*, embodies the artist through corporeal presence, projection and identification.

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<sup>14</sup> Farnham, *Behind a Laughing Mask*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. This physical feature may explain the angle of Demuth’s head in Stieglitz’s 1915 photograph of the artist. See fig. 12.

According to Farnham, Demuth was a “great admirer” and “ardent student” of Watteau.<sup>16</sup>

The artist “did not copy Watteau’s paintings,” she continues, “but absorbed the spirit of Watteau and translated it into some of his early flower and figure paintings....”<sup>17</sup>

“Demuth saw himself reflected in Watteau,”<sup>18</sup> according to Farnham, because

[l]ike his idol..., as described in the word portrait by [Walter] Pater which Demuth illustrated, he had “been a sick man all his life. He was always a seeker after something in the world that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all.”<sup>19</sup>

In *A Prince of Court Painters (after Watteau)*, with its emphasis on costume, display, presence and absence, Demuth identifies strongly with the rococo master through the performance of homage. The artist later returned to these strategies, though even more obliquely, in *My Egypt*.

*A Prince of Court Painters (after Watteau)* manifests an important link to Demuth and his resonance with the eighteenth century. The period was a time when tastemakers began to establish and regulate complex codes of manners and comportment. These performed behaviors not only outwardly confirmed the rank and position of knowledgeable aristocrats, but also allowed lower class social climbers to assume, through observation and imitation, the conduct of their superiors. Inevitably, blurring of boundaries occurred. This fact was acknowledged—even celebrated—in masked balls, where identity was fluid, permitting further mixing of the social classes and abetting sexual license.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Farnham, “Charles Demuth’s Bermuda Landscapes,” *Art Journal*, vol. 25, no. 2, winter 1965/1966, 136.

<sup>19</sup> Farnham, *Behind a Laughing Mask*, 62–63. The full-sentence quotation from Pater appears as an inscription in the bottom right-hand corner of Demuth’s watercolor.

Masks are a frequent and persistent trope in Demuth's oeuvre. The motif appears explicitly in the singular 1918 watercolor *The Triumph of the Red Death* (fig. 18), an illustration for Edgar Allan Poe's "Masque of the Red Death," as well as implicitly in another watercolor, *Te Nana (Nana before the Mirror)* (fig. 19), where Emile Zola's eponymous title character observes her abject skull-visage by reflection. Farnham notes the prevalence of the subject of masks in Demuth's work during the years 1927–28 by citing four works: *Longhi on Broadway* (fig. 20), 1927; *Love, Love, Love (Homage to Gertrude Stein)* (fig. 21), 1928; *Costume Sketch (Bal Masque) #1: La Rose Noire (Costume for Black and White Ball)*, 1928; and *Costume Sketch (Bal Masqué) #2: Costume after Beardsley (for Black and White Ball)*, 1928.<sup>20</sup> To this evidence can be added two earlier works that contain masks, *Study for "Poster Portrait: Wallace Stevens"* (fig. 22), 1925–26 and *Stockbridge Stocks* (fig. 23), 1926, in addition to a drawing related to *Costume Sketch (Bal Masqué) #2* and now in a New York private collection: *Dancers Number Two (Black and White Ball)* (fig. 24), 1928. All these documents substantiate the fact that Demuth, from 1925 to 1928, was particularly preoccupied with the theme of masks and masking. That this exploration parallels the artist's sustained series of "poster portraits" and their concomitant investigations into identity and representation should not be overlooked.

Farnham saw the mask and the related motifs of façades, disguises, duplicity, and concealment as an organizing principle in the life of the Lancaster artist. Indeed, she named the published version of her dissertation *Charles Demuth: Behind a Laughing Mask*. This title epitomizes her overarching thesis that "Demuth possessed a complex, enigmatic personality, which, like his art, was replete with contradictions and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 7.



subterranean subtleties.”<sup>21</sup> The threads of perversion and marginalization run throughout Farnham’s 1971 biography, strands she names as “all of Demuth’s burdens (lameness, tuberculosis, diabetes, homosexuality, and social disapproval).”<sup>22</sup> It is for these reasons, she implies, that Demuth maintained a stolid, aloof front and led something of a double life of which the mask is exemplary signifier.<sup>23</sup>

Masks and the theater have a long association in Western culture, dating back at least to the ancient Greeks. And Demuth himself was no stranger to the stage. In the 1910s he not only produced images but he also authored fiction and short plays, even “present[ing] himself to Gertrude Stein in 1912,” according to Haskell, “as more interested in writing than in painting....”<sup>24</sup> Late in this decade the artist created six watercolor illustrations for the German dramatist Frank Wedekind’s *Lulu* plays; he concurrently produced a sustained and intensive visual investigation into the world of vaudeville, circus, and night club performers in such works as *Negro Jazz Band* (fig. 25), 1916 and *In Vaudeville, the Bicycle Rider* (fig. 26), 1919.

Demuth first vacationed in Provincetown, Massachusetts in 1914 and subsequently during four summers—1915, 1916, 1918 and 1920. He originally met the playwright Eugene O’Neill in 1916 at the seaside town (fig. 27), where both participated in the activities of the fledgling company, the Provincetown Players. In the autumn of that year, the thespians reorganized in Greenwich Village and Demuth assisted with the physical transformation of a Victorian house-*cum*-restaurant on Macdougall Street into a

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>23</sup> Demuth lived at a time when homosexuality was considered socially unacceptable. Gay men and lesbians in early twentieth-century America could not openly express their same sex affection without fear of reprisal. Farnham’s reliance on the concept of deviance and/or perversion to describe Demuth throughout her biography now seems dated and overdetermined.

<sup>24</sup> Haskell, *Charles Demuth*, 35.

proper theater for the troupe.<sup>25</sup> While Demuth played a more behind-the-scenes role in the group, Barbara Haskell does document Demuth's presence on stage in at least two 1916 Provincetown productions: George Cram Cook's *Change Your Style* and Mary Heaton Vorse's *A Girl on the Wharf*.<sup>26</sup>

Demuth's acting, however, was not limited to the theater. Performance, as recent critical theory has demonstrated, is not exclusive to the artificial worlds of stage and screen, but is a subtle part of everyday life, most of the time so naturalized as to go unnoticed. In her influential book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler asserts that even "gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be."<sup>27</sup> Gender, she continues,

ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*.<sup>28</sup>

It is within this nexus of inquiry where we may find evocative connections to Demuth's self-consciously constructed persona. In *Speaking for Vice* Jonathan Weinberg has usefully catalogued several of the artist's mannerisms:

How did Demuth present himself? Most of his friends agree that he was extraordinarily discreet about private matters.... [However,] rather than try to "pass" [as heterosexual], the evidence suggests that Demuth adopted several of the prevalent stereotypes of homosexuality. According to [Marsden] Hartley, because of his lameness he adopted "a special sort of ambling walk." His dealer, Charles Daniel, noted his taste in neckties: "Ah, Demuth. He was a rare one. I can tell you this right now—he wore the most beautiful neckties in New York. He must have the tie that he liked, and he liked the best. That was Demuth. It came out of his

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<sup>25</sup> Frank, 83.

<sup>26</sup> Haskell, *Charles Demuth*, 55. Bruce Kellner also states that Demuth appeared in Provincetown plays in 1915 and 1916, but does not name the works. See Bruce Kellner, ed. *Letters of Charles Demuth, American Artist, 1883–1935*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), note 2, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 33.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

sensitivity. It had to be good. He was very vain; and wore unusual colors. His hands were the most extraordinary hands that I have ever seen. They were alive. Yet he was never affected; was without any pose.” Another friend, Susan Watts Street, told Farnham: “Demuth was extremely vain and dressed extremely well. I remember for instance, that he had a Donegal Tweed jacket that was perfectly handsome. And at Provincetown when everybody else was looking sloppy, Demuth would appear wearing a black shirt, white slacks, a plum-colored scarf tied around his waist, and black laced shoes, highly polished.... He had a high, squeaky voice and a high giggle that sounded like the whinny of a horse.”<sup>29</sup>

Demuth’s highly developed consciousness about identity construction—and his willingness to playfully expose social norms as “nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original”<sup>30</sup>—are taken to the extreme in his September 19, 1926 letter to Alfred Stieglitz (a document to which we will return several times in this essay), where he reveals his wish to wander about New York City, “masked, as in 18<sup>th</sup> century Venice.”<sup>31</sup>

While we have no evidence that Demuth ever performed this particular public action, the artist sublimated and expressed the force and substance of this idea within the composition of his masterwork, *My Egypt*. Here it is important to foreground the careful boundaries between figurative and architectural imagery that Demuth maintained throughout his career. Portraits are rare in Demuth’s oeuvre, and those that exist, such as *Edward Fisk Reclining* (fig. 28), 1912, cluster early in his career. Further, as Betsy Fahlman, among others, has observed: “No human figures appear in any of the architectural works....”<sup>32</sup> Neither did Demuth paint building interiors, concentrating

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<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Weinberg, *Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 47–48.

<sup>30</sup> Butler, 41.

<sup>31</sup> Demuth to Alfred Stieglitz in Kellner, ed., 85.

<sup>32</sup> Betsy Fahlman, *Pennsylvania Modern: Charles Demuth of Lancaster* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1983), 19.

instead on exteriors and façades. The artist's architectural subjects, according to Fahlman, seem "highly cerebral, more inward in meaning, and ultimately inaccessible to the casual viewer."<sup>33</sup> All of this evidence suggests that the Demuth overall was interested less in deep, psychological penetration of human sitters than in depicting surface realities, the superficial look of things in the world.

This dynamic of careful compartmentalization and maintenance of appearances creates a kind of public-private axis in Demuth's body of work. The basis for this split is two-fold: both medium and subject matter play important roles. On the one hand, drawing materials—including graphite and watercolor—lend themselves to smaller, more personal expressions. Artists often choose these media, because of their immediacy and (usual) limitation to intimate scale, for works for which the artist is the only intended viewer, such as casual doodles, sketches for larger works, or erotic imagery. Oil paint, on the other hand, lends itself well to large-scale compositions better suited for public exhibition and consumption.

Demuth's personal circumstances certainly impinged upon this tendency in his oeuvre. According to Jonathan Weinberg, "to be a homosexual in America before World War II was to be intensely aware of different modes of presenting the self."<sup>34</sup> Emily Farnham called this dichotomous process in Demuth "the 'dazzling,' 'golden,' 'glitter' of his talent [that] contrasts so absolutely with the dross of his perversity."<sup>35</sup> In her 1971 biography of the artist she illustrated this penchant through an exemplary anecdote:

The *Nana* illustrations, produced during the years 1915–16, were covertly shown by Daniel to a chosen few. McBride made mention of this in the

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<sup>33</sup> Betsy Fahlman, "Charles Demuth's Paintings of Lancaster Architecture: New Discoveries and Observations," *Arts Magazine*, March 1987, 25.

<sup>34</sup> Weinberg, 55.

<sup>35</sup> Farnham, *Behind a Laughing Mask*, 3.

*Sun* in his 1917 review of the Demuth-Fisk show: “There are some watercolors of Mr. Demuth that have not been hung upon the walls. The subjects were suggested by a reading of Zola’s “Nana.” They are kept hidden in a portfolio, and are only shown to museum directors and proved lovers of modern art upon presentation of visiting cards. They are quite advanced in style—....”<sup>36</sup>

In “Glimpsing the ‘Hidden’ Demuth,” a 1976 auction review in *Art in America*, Sanford Schwartz relates an important coda to the story:

When Henry McBride reviewed the large Demuth retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in 1950, he emphasized the fact that much of the work was new to him, especially the illustrations Demuth had done for Zola and Wedekind, and McBride was the perfect person to be surprised since it was widely known that he had been a close friend of Demuth’s. Of course McBride had known that *there were Demuths that Demuth didn’t want to exhibit publicly*; he would occasionally see some in the “back room” of galleries, and he tried to buy them when he could. But he had no idea of their number or importance before the 1950 show, and before he saw, in Andrew Car[n]duff Ritchie’s catalogue, the reproduction of some of the Demuths in the Barnes Collection.<sup>37</sup> [emphasis mine]

This account illustrates Demuth’s deliberate—and participatory—distinction between subsets of viewers for his work. “As Demuth’s art matured,” states Jonathan Weinberg, “his different modes were honed to address specific audiences.”<sup>38</sup> The artist intended certain pictures to be seen by the general public, some to be seen by a select group of cognoscenti, and yet others by the artist alone (or the artist and a very close circle of friends). Within this last category fall Demuth images with explicit homoerotic subject matter, such as his “Turkish Bath” series (fig. 29) from the 1910s, his “Sailors” (fig. 30) from the 1930s, and miscellaneous works on paper compiled in a scrapbook, a portion of which was sold at auction in 1976.<sup>39</sup> Demuth’s private/public practice aligns the artist

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>37</sup> Sanford Schwartz, “Glimpsing the ‘Hidden’ Demuth,” *Art in America*, September/October 1976, 102.

<sup>38</sup> Weinberg, 53.

<sup>39</sup> Schwartz, 102.

with others who worked in a similar way, such as John Singer Sargent, whose civic portraits (fig. 31) contrast markedly with his personal sketches (fig. 32).

This kind of public/private balancing act is encoded in *My Egypt*'s emphatic symmetry, arguably the image's most striking feature. When compared to other industrial landscapes from the last years of the artist's life, for example, ...*And the Home of the Brave*, 1931 (fig. 33) or *After All*, 1933 (fig. 34), *My Egypt*, in contrast, appears equilibrated, solid, and quiescent. Rather than being a dynamic design of forms meant to move the viewer's eye through the composition, *My Egypt* instead hinges on a central axis in the middle of the painting, with very carefully positioned minor differences on either side. This symmetry is in fact heightened by the rays of light and the lines of force that triangulate the composition, adding a bit of variety to the image's otherwise staid visual organization.

As a design strategy, "[s]ymmetry...is an obvious way of creating a sense of balance and stillness, as in a pair of scales balancing two equal weights."<sup>40</sup> In Western visual culture, artists have often infused symmetry with spiritual significance, for example, the *East Pediment from the Temple of Zeus* at Olympia (fig. 35) or the *Triptych of John Donne* by Hans Memling (fig. 36). The sense of peace, order, and harmony conveyed by such works alluded to the implicit cultural understanding that God or the gods were benevolently in control of the universe and that the divine and the material realms were in consonance.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, poets, playwrights, composers, and visual artists in the West began self-consciously to express the

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<sup>40</sup> Benjamin Martinez and Jacqueline Block, "Symmetry," in *Visual Forces: An Introduction to Design* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), 22.

excitement and anxiety of the perceived passing of this old worldview. Painters experimented with non-traditional techniques and innovative materials. Subject matter shifted from Greek and Roman mythology, the Christian scriptures, and historical narratives to everyday life, the exotic “other,” and deeply individuated spiritual experiences. Artists as diverse as Edgar Degas (fig. 37) and Juan Gris (fig. 38) in Europe and Everett Shinn (fig. 39) and Edward Hopper (fig. 40) in the United States participated in this tendency. “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold,” wrote poet William Butler Yeats in 1919/1921 and, indeed, destabilized and/or fragmented visual compositions became one of many signifiers for modernity during this period.<sup>41</sup>

One American modernist, however, purposefully chose to reject this asymmetrical formal arrangement as part of his visual repertoire.<sup>42</sup> Throughout his career the artist Joseph Stella (1877–1946) looked back to pre-modern Italian sacred images and their symmetrical compositions (fig. 41) as a way to depict the new “religion” of modernism. His well-known paean to Gotham, *New York Interpreted (The Voice of the City)* (fig. 42), borrows the form of fourteenth century multi-panel altarpieces.<sup>43</sup> Here industry, skyscrapers, electric lights, and that technological marvel, the Brooklyn Bridge, replace saints, angels, Christ, and the Madonna.

Barbara Haskell notes the spiritual connotations of the “Eighth Wonder of the World” in her 1994 monograph on Stella:

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<sup>41</sup> William Butler Yeats, “The Second Coming,” in *The Yeats Reader: A Portable Compendium of Poetry, Drama, and Prose*, revised edition. Richard J. Finneran, ed. (New York: Scribner, 2002), 80.

<sup>42</sup> American modernists Marsden Hartley and Georgia O’Keeffe also employed highly symmetrical compositions to evoke spiritual states.

<sup>43</sup> Stella later abandoned urban subject matter to pursue intricate images based on a highly idiosyncratic mix of Roman Catholicism and pantheism. His pairing of formal symmetry with spiritual concerns, however, remained constant, finding expression in such works as *The Birth of Venus*, 1925, *The Crèche*, c. 1929–1932, and the masterpiece *Tree of My Life*, 1919–1920.

Structurally, the [Brooklyn Bridge] offered a visual synthesis of the spiritual and the material, the romantic and the mechanical. Its weblike steel cable system was modern and ethereal; its massive granite piers, with their historicized materials and details that recalled a more spiritual era, were rendered even more ecclesiastically allusive by virtue of their pointed Gothic arches. The stylistic schism between these two antithetical features—the cable system and the piers—gave the bridge a dynamic tension which was not lost on Stella or other observers.<sup>44</sup>

Karen Tsujimoto further observes that

[a]lthough the Brooklyn Bridge was actually completed in 1883, it reigned supreme for over fifty years as the most magnificent, if not technically the largest, suspension bridge in the world. ... [I]t became the internationally acclaimed symbol of American progress and inspired the work of...Stella...and a host of other American painters, writers, and photographers, including Walker Evans, Edward Steichen..., George Luks, Joseph Pennell, and Hart Crane, to name only a few.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, the metaphorical power exerted by the structure—as bridge from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century, as bridge from the old to the new paradigm—loomed large in the collective psyche of Americans. John Marin painted an important series of watercolors of the bridge (fig. 43) and Georgia O’Keeffe depicted the structure at least twice (fig. 44 and fig. 45). Joseph Stella, however, is the artist mostly closely associated with the span; its grip on the artist’s imagination was deep and long lasting. The Brooklyn Bridge appears repeatedly in his oeuvre, including *New York Interpreted (The Voice of the City): The Brooklyn Bridge (The Bridge)*, 1920–1922 (fig. 46) and *Old Brooklyn Bridge*, c. 1940 (fig. 47).<sup>46</sup>

One reason why Joseph Stella’s images of the Brooklyn Bridge are so compelling is that their form and content are married so well: the subject is a bridge and the artist

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<sup>44</sup> Barbara Haskell, *Joseph Stella* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994), 97.

<sup>45</sup> Karen Tsujimoto, *Images of America: Precisionist Painting and Modern Photography* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 27–28.

<sup>46</sup> Other works include: *Study for “Brooklyn Bridge,”* c. 1919; *Brooklyn Bridge*, c. 1919; *Study for “New York Interpreted,”* c. 1919; *Study for “New York Interpreted,”* c. 1920; *American Landscape*, 1929; *Bridge*, 1936; and *The Brooklyn Bridge: Variation on an Old Theme*, c. 1939.



depicts it in the most visually bridge-like way. Stella chooses the vantage point, which allows the viewer to see—and thus vicariously experience—the function of the structure, to span the distance between one point and another. Cables swoop from the edges of our field of vision, connecting the piers and us to the far side of the Hudson. Framing his composition carefully, Stella takes advantage of the window-like apertures in the bridge’s supports to provide us a glimpse *through*, transporting us from personal experience to the collective one of the metropolis beyond, from the here and now to the imminent future ahead of us.

To better understand Charles Demuth’s *My Egypt*, it is instructive to compare his painting with one of Joseph Stella’s bridge images, for example, *New York Interpreted (The Voice of the City): The Brooklyn Bridge (The Bridge)*, 1920–1922 (fig. 46). Both artists have utilized a low vantage point from which to view their subjects in order to exaggerate scale. The bridge and grain elevators in each painting respectively therefore attain a certain monumentality, inspiring awe in the viewer.

Nonetheless the visual and metaphorical strategies in each painting can hardly be more different. Again hearkening back to the Renaissance, this time with the Albertian compositional model of the “picture plane as window,” Stella gives us spatial clues like perspective, overlapping shapes, and approaching and receding colors to create deep space. Demuth’s image, on the other hand, begins more closely to approach the modernist “picture plane as flat wall” strategy in *My Egypt*. Overlapping and chiaroscuro are minimized and perspective is downplayed in the painting, what S. Lane Faison, Jr. calls “Demuth’s break with illusion in his pictorial space...due to the elimination of the

foreground.”<sup>47</sup> Unlike Stella’s bridge, Demuth’s subject is opaque; even the four windows depicted by the artist are dark and they obscure our view inside.<sup>48</sup> Importantly, the grain elevators in Demuth’s image fill the composition and block our vision to what is—or could be—behind or beyond the buildings. “Thus the elevator, pictorially,” states Karal Ann Marling, “bec[o]me[s] a self-sufficient barrier between the observer and the landscape.”<sup>49</sup> Instead of a transparent image, such as Stella’s, that shows us the present and a welcoming vision of the future, Demuth erects a visual wall, rooted in the present and looking backward to the past; it is no coincidence, then, that the title of the work alludes to the beginnings of Western culture.

Critics gathered Demuth and Stella, at various points in their careers, into the loose affiliation of artists under the umbrella term “Precisionists.” According to Barbara Haskell, the painting method was America’s own “version of the classicizing impulse or ‘call to order’ that swept Europe after World War I.”<sup>50</sup> Art historians continue to lump Demuth and Stella into this group; while widely practiced, the style never became a full-fledged movement because it had no manifesto or overarching leader. With the distance history provides, though, we can observe that most precisionist works employ “simplified, hard-edged forms, impersonal paint handling, and geometric structure.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> S. Lane Faison, Jr., “Fact and Art in Charles Demuth,” *Magazine of Art*, April 1950, 124. A recent letter to the Editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine* suggests that Rembrandt was stereoblind due to a lazy eye, a trait he shared with Charles Demuth. This strabismus may help explain the consistent lack of deep space in Demuth’s paintings and his facility with cubist style. See Margaret S. Livingstone and Bevil R. Conway, “Was Rembrandt Stereoblind?” in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 351, no. 12, September 16, 2004, 1264–1265.

<sup>48</sup> It is interesting to note that the subject matter in this painting of obstructed vision, the Eshelman grain elevators, was later razed after sale to the Lancaster Association for the Blind. See Fahlman, “Charles Demuth’s Paintings of Lancaster Architecture,” 29.

<sup>49</sup> Marling, 36.

<sup>50</sup> Barbara Haskell, *The American Century: Art and Culture, 1900–1950* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1999), 145.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

“Precisionists” as a name to describe the artists working in this manner only became standardized after mid-century; previous epithets, originating at the Charles Daniel Gallery where many of these artists showed their work, included the “New Classicists,” or with even more spiritual overtones, “The Immaculates.” Indeed, it has been forgotten until now that the term “precisionist” had previous connotations to reform, spirituality, and America’s beginnings: “precisianism” (spelled with an “a”) was an alternate name for Puritanism, the faction of English religious dissenters, some of whom settled in what is now Massachusetts in the seventeenth century.<sup>52</sup>

Demuth often linked the Protestant past and the industrial future in his oeuvre. While he is probably best known today for his urban landscapes, the artist depicted “religious” subjects concurrently throughout his career. Demuth, like the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian (fig. 48), was broadly interested in the (symbolic and spiritual) interpenetration of earth and sky, painting steeples and bell towers as often as smokestacks and skyscrapers.<sup>53</sup> Steeples as propaganda for Protestant power marked Demuth’s experience almost from the very beginning. The steeple of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, the parish where Demuth was baptized and confirmed, literally overshadowed the family’s home at 118 East King Street. According to biographer Emily Farnham,

Charles painted a curvilinear, eight-pointed star, light against a dark oval ground, onto the ceiling of the lantern located at the center of the steeple [of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church]. As a boy he must have been fascinated by the structure’s interior, which contained a painter’s basket

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<sup>52</sup> <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00186555> (November 25, 2004)

<sup>53</sup> “[O]ne is able to perceive in Mondrian’s series of high-rising towers on a flat ground both a traditional Christian reference to God and a non-Christian symbol of the combination of the male and female principles.” Carel Blotkamp, “Annunciation of the New Mysticism: Dutch Symbolism and Early Abstraction,” in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985*. Maurice Tuchman, et al. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), 98–100.

and a colonial chime console. One of the bells in the tower functioned for years as Lancaster's only fire alarm.

Ferdinand [Charles's father] photographed the steeple [(fig. 49)].

Augusta, a devout church member, willed the church a sum of money (\$16,984.28) on condition that a window be installed in memory of her parents and two sisters, the income from the residue to be used for the regular painting of the steeple. And Charles painted Wren-like steeples all his life, as though they were naturally entwined with his existence. He painted them in other places than Lancaster [also]....<sup>54</sup>

Extant visual evidence, of course, corroborates Farnham's next-to-last sentence:

around a dozen images of steeples are documented, including *The Red State and the Gray Church* (fig. 50), 1919, and *After Sir Christopher Wren* (fig. 51), 1920.

Christianity, and the Lutheran church more specifically, had a significant impact on Demuth's life and art. Barbara Haskell has documented the outlines of this experience in her 1988 monograph on the artist:

August Demuth and her family were highly devout Lutherans, actively engaged in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Lancaster. Demuth was baptized at thirteen and, through Easter of 1915, consistently attended church and took communion. His subsequent failure to take communion while in Lancaster does not indicate a clean retreat from Lutheran teachings, but rather underlines the great emotional and moral conflict that must have been generated by the contrast between his strict upbringing and his family's pious church-going and the decadent life he was living in New York.<sup>55</sup>

Although by 1926 (the year prior to his completion of *My Egypt*) Demuth would declaim to Stieglitz, "At times the 'church' seems the only answer, —but I don't 'feel' religion, so called," nevertheless, over thirty years of participation in Christian ritual and teaching found their way into Demuth's constructed self.<sup>56</sup>

Past interpretations of *My Egypt* have linked the image—because of the proper name "Egypt" in the title—to Demuth and a sense of exile—or servitude. According to

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<sup>54</sup> Farnham, *Behind a Laughing Mask*, 39.

<sup>55</sup> Haskell, *Charles Demuth*, 98.

<sup>56</sup> Demuth to Alfred Stieglitz in Kellner, ed., 85.

the 2001 Whitney Museum's permanent collection guidebook, Demuth "intended the title to allude to the slave labor that built the pyramids...."<sup>57</sup> The artist's ongoing struggle with diabetes had made necessary his permanent relocation to the family home under the watchful eye of his mother Augusta. In letters to his friends, Demuth, with typical tongue-in-cheek wit, frequently alluded to his "exile" in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, as being "back in the province."<sup>58</sup> Egypt, however, does not always assume negative connotations. The Flight into Egypt narrative from the Christian tradition—extrapolated from the second chapter of Matthew—is a case in point, where refuge in the African country becomes essential for the salvation of humanity. Images such as Luc Olivier Merson's *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (fig. 52) illustrate this more positive aspect of Egypt. Demuth's feelings about being "trapped" in Lancaster cannot be essentialized; it is this density of meanings that makes *My Egypt* so compelling.

Demuth evokes the sense of being bound—but by a higher authority, rather than physical circumstances or location—in the dominant forms of *My Egypt*. The twinned grain elevators, with their rounded tops and lack of convincing modeling, become in the painting the visual equivalent of the two Tablets of the Law or the Ten Commandments. Variants of these images were, of course, common in American churches and judiciary buildings; they even pervaded popular cultural forms, such as film (fig. 53). Given to Moses by God as a touchstone for the people of Israel seven weeks after their deliverance from Egypt (Genesis 31:18), the tablets pointed a new moral and religious direction for the Hebrews. As metaphorical windows, the stones also contained an implicit and negative glimpse back to their life along the Nile. "Egypt," according to Barbara

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<sup>57</sup> *American Visionaries: Selections from the Whitney Museum of American Art*. Introduction by Maxwell Anderson. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2001), 89.

<sup>58</sup> Demuth to Agnes Boulton and Eugene O'Neill in Kellner, ed., 8.

Haskell, “was at once a symbol of the Jews’ oppression and the point of reference for their self-identity and emergence as a distinct people.”<sup>59</sup> Charles Demuth’s painting *My Egypt* functioned similarly for the artist: as a physical marker of his past experiences, as the quintessence of his present situation, and as the benchmark for future initiatives.

Demuth could have found no vessel more appropriate for working through his concerns with Americanness during the 1920s. Visually the grain elevators not only evoke the deliverance from Egypt and America as the promised land, but the two forms in Demuth’s painting resonate with those often found in Anglican and Puritan churches of colonial America. These congregations, in direct opposition to Roman Catholic imagery, installed texts (fig. 54) above or flanking altars in their respective churches or meetinghouses. Most usually the texts were the Ten Commandments accompanied by the Lord’s Prayer and/or the Apostles’ Creed. While Demuth’s parish church did not display such religious texts (fig. 55), the building does house, however, a large and dominating religious image with rounded top behind the three-tiered pulpit (fig. 56).<sup>60</sup>

Maybe references to Egypt and bondage *are* germane to *My Egypt*, but in a way more complex than previously considered. If we agree with Farnham and Marling that Demuth’s diabetes, finally diagnosed in 1921, had made the artist much more conscious of his mortality in the subsequent years, then the painting can be interpreted, not as a symbol of complete entrapment and despair, but as one containing some hope too. A nearly fatal experience or a dire crisis late in life often heralds a return to the comfort of the religious tradition of one’s childhood. In contrast to the very finality of death, Demuth may have regarded Lancaster as a place of former happiness and well-being.

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<sup>59</sup> Haskell, *Charles Demuth*, 194.

<sup>60</sup> [http://www.trinitylanaster.net/index.php?module=article&view=15&MMN\\_position=39:16:30](http://www.trinitylanaster.net/index.php?module=article&view=15&MMN_position=39:16:30)  
(November 25, 2004)

When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness and weary of having nothing to eat or drink, they reminisced aloud (on several occasions) about their relatively more comfortable days in Egypt:

Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Exodus 16:3b.

Because of his hyperglycemia, lack of food was a subject with which Demuth was intimately acquainted. In 1922 the artist began therapy for his diabetes; he was, as Bruce Kellner describes it, “first treated through a starvation diet—carefully measured amounts of food.”<sup>61</sup> At this time Alfred Stieglitz photographically recorded Demuth’s gaunt physical condition in several images, including fig. 57. Given the multiplicity of facets to the image, *My Egypt* might be read not only as a lamentation but also as a souvenir of better times. According to biographer Emily Farnham,

Diabetes appears to have drained the artist of his creative founts and strength for painting, except when it assumed its most destructive role and threatened imminent death. At such times it seems to have caused the artist to produce prolifically at a high mental and emotional pitch.<sup>62</sup>

Considering his illness and its limiting effects on his life, it should come as no surprise when, in 1929, in response to the query, “What do you look forward to?” Demuth responded tersely: “The past.”<sup>63</sup>

The in-between status of the early twentieth century, with its heady mix of old and new, meant that in the midst of the modern Charles Demuth didn’t have to look far for references to earlier times. At the *fin de siècle*, the leading design mode, art nouveau, coupled progressive techniques and new materials with, at times, revival styles from

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<sup>61</sup> Kellner, ed., note 3, 41.

<sup>62</sup> Farnham, *Behind a Laughing Mask*, 150.

<sup>63</sup> Demuth, “Confessions,” *Little Review*, vol. 12, no. 2, May 1929, 30.

decorative arts of the past. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, artists and designers were already mining the rich vein of motifs from Egypt to such an extent that

Jean-Marcel Humbert states:

Il est difficile d'apprécier l'impact sur les arts plastiques de la découverte, en novembre 1922, du tombeau de Toutankhamon en dehors d'un contexte social très élargi. À cette date, le répertoire des manifestations ayant trait à l'Égypte était si étendu en Occident qu'on a quelque peine à faire la distinction entre ce qui a précédé cette découverte et ce qui l'a suivie.<sup>64</sup>

Karal Ann Marling, in her article on Demuth's masterpiece, cogently draws a connection to the painting and the burgeoning Egyptomania of the Jazz Age:

On one level, *My Egypt* is a joking commentary on topics as timely to the 1920s as the morning paper. By 1927, the smoldering kitsch of Theda Bara's *Cleopatra* and the rotogravure extravaganza of mummies' curses... had flowered in the precious boudoir accessories, mantel clocks, and cigarette cases of art deco. Egyptomania was as up to date as the lotus-strewn advertisement for the filter-tipped Murads.<sup>65</sup>

While most Demuth scholars—rightly—have located *My Egypt* within the larger social phenomenon of Egyptomania in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the relationship is a rich and complex one that merits concentrated attention.

Besides situating Demuth within the generalized Western cultural context, crazed for all things Egyptian in the early twentieth century, it is possible to posit more concrete, biographical associations to Demuth and Egyptian influences. His first extended exposure to this cultural trend may have been when the artist visited Berlin during the summer of 1913 on his second European sojourn.<sup>66</sup> While the German capital had established strong ties to the African nation by the middle of the nineteenth century, these

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<sup>64</sup>Michael Pantazzi, "Les années Toutankhamon," in *Egyptomania: L'Égypte dans l'art occidental, 1730–1930*. Jean-Marcel Humbert, et al. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1994), 508–509.

<sup>65</sup> Marling, 36.

<sup>66</sup> Patricia McDonnell, *Painting Berlin Stories: Marsden Hartley, Oscar Bluemner, and the First American Avant-Garde in Expressionist Berlin* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2003), 152.



connections reached an apex when “significant excavations were carried out [by Germans] in Amarna [in Egypt] from 1911 to 1914. Finds from this project are among [Berlin’s Egyptian M]useum’s finest treasures,” including the very well known *Bust of Queen Nefertiti*.<sup>67</sup> It is possible that during his trip to the German capital the artist visited the Egyptian Museum, as well as the Ostrich House at the Berlin Zoo (fig. 58), designed with Egyptian motifs by Heinrich Kayser and Karl von Grossheim and completed in 1899.

Although Demuth ended his studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of Art and Design in Philadelphia in 1910, the school remained within the artist’s geographical and intellectual orbit of Lancaster-Philadelphia New York City. It is likely, then, that he knew about Philadelphia’s first “Artists’ Masque, titled ‘The Masque of the Primitive Peoples,’ [which] was held at Horticultural Hall, in Fairmount Park, on April 16, 1915,” wherein “the [Pennsylvania] Academy..., represented by its most progressive faction...perform[ed] an ‘Egyptian Pantomime’” (fig. 59).<sup>68</sup> Regardless of whether Demuth attended the event or not, this performance is indicative of the type of cultural appropriation already enjoyed by the rich subject of ancient Egypt, presaging the trend that would burgeon in the next decade after the excavation of Tutankhamen’s grave.

Another much closer personal link between Charles Demuth and Egyptian style is his intimate, Robert Locher. According to Betsy Fahlman, “[t]he pair had met as early as 1909” and they remained lifelong associates.<sup>69</sup> Upon Demuth’s death, Locher received all of the artist’s unsold works on paper as a bequest. Locher, as an artist, illustrator,

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<sup>67</sup> <http://www.smb.spk-berlin.de/amp/e/g.html> (November 25, 2004)

<sup>68</sup> Sylvia Yount and Elizabeth Johns, *To Be Modern: American Encounters with Cézanne and Company* (Philadelphia: Museum of American Art of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1996), 13.

<sup>69</sup> Betsy Fahlman, “Modern as Metal and Mirror: The Work of Robert Evans Locher,” *Arts Magazine*, vol. 59, April 1985, 108.

interior designer, editor, and teacher of considerable reputation, was not only familiar with prevailing trends in a variety of spheres—fashion, publicity, and decorating—but also a proponent of and significant contributor to matters of taste. The undated ink drawing, *Café Cabaret* (fig. 60), with its Egyptian art deco female figure appropriately in profile, represents the kind of visual imagery with which Demuth came into contact in his personal and artistic dialogue with Locher.

Demuth also encountered Egyptian influences at the 1926 World's Fair. In his September 19, 1926 correspondence to Stieglitz, Demuth wrote, "The water colours in Phila. look very well. They gave me a good place, in the light, for a change! I saw them last week."<sup>70</sup> From this statement we can infer that Demuth visited the modern art exhibition (fig. 61), organized by Société Anonyme President Katherine Dreier and art critic Christian Brinton, which was held in conjunction with the Fair.<sup>71</sup> The Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition, as it was formally known, took place on League Island in southern Philadelphia from June 1 to November 30 of that year. While the artist does not expressly mention it in this letter, it is plausible that he took in other attractions and exhibits during his visit. According to the report on the Fair, published in 1929, "Fourteen foreign countries [including Egypt] officially appointed commissions or delegates to the Exposition...and ten participated unofficially, with exhibits."<sup>72</sup> To house their displays, seven of the participating foreign nations built impressive temporary structures, including Persia's reproduction of an ornate mosque (fig. 62) and India's edifice in the style of the Taj Mahal (fig. 63). While "Egypt had intended to erect an

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<sup>70</sup> Demuth to Alfred Stieglitz in Kellner, ed., 85.

<sup>71</sup> Demuth won a silver medal at the exhibition, for his watercolor *Plums*.

<sup>72</sup> Erastus Long Austin, ed., *The Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition*, reprint (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 81.

official pavilion at the Exposition,” unfortunately “fire destroyed a large number of the exhibits before shipment and the project of erecting a pavilion was abandoned in consequence thereof.”<sup>73</sup> Egyptian-style architecture was still present at the Exposition, however, in the form of a miniature temple (fig. 64) that housed the displays of the Fleischmann [Yeast] Company.

Demuth painted *My Egypt* in 1927, only several months after his outing to the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition. It seems reasonable to posit that, during the interim between his visit to the Exposition and beginning to paint the work under discussion, the artist conceived of *My Egypt* as a deliberate but understated nationalistic response to the grandiose Old World architectural replicas that he had seen at the Philadelphia fairgrounds. Within this context of international pageantry, Demuth’s visual and verbal conflation of the Great Pyramids with a modern Pennsylvania grain elevator rises to the challenge Brinton made in his exhibition catalogue essay:

...American modernism...suffers from a lack of that surging creative vitality which characterizes the work of the Continentals. We have not thus far put into our painting or sculpture that superb constructive imagination one finds in skyscraper, or in our inspiring expansion along materialistic and mechanistic lines.<sup>74</sup>

Given a cultural climate “sensibilisé et prêt à absorber toute nouveauté intéressante provenant d’Égypte” and Demuth’s own personal connections to Egyptomania, what kinds of meanings then was the artist deliberately evoking by naming his canvas *My Egypt*?<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>74</sup> Christian Brinton, *Modern Art at the Sesqui-Centennial Exhibition* (New York: Société Anonyme, Inc., 1926), 17.

<sup>75</sup> Pantazzi, “Les années Toutankhamon,” in *Egyptomania*, 509.

In his preface to the 1994 exhibition catalogue *Égyptomania: L'Égypte dans l'art occidental, 1730–1930*, Jean-Marcel Humbert delineates no fewer than seven ways in which Egypt has signified for Western civilization through history. At various times, for cultures from the Greco-Roman world to post-modern America, Egypt has symbolized the following: 1. art and architecture; 2. antiquity (in general); 3. law and order; 4. death and/or eternal life; 5. the “good life”; 6. the esoteric; and 7. the exotic other.<sup>76</sup> To understand better the profound complexity that Demuth evokes by titling his masterpiece *My Egypt*, I will examine each of Humbert’s seven points in relation to the painting.

Charles Demuth’s oeuvre contains many images of ordinary buildings, such as factories and storefronts, what Wanda Corn calls “America’s small-town equivalents of the great churches and palaces of Europe.”<sup>77</sup> For Demuth, referencing the Egypt of “art and architecture” in one of his largest works and his most complete artistic statement seems thoughtfully fitting. As the highly accomplished painting of a man-made structure,

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<sup>76</sup> Jean-Marcel Humbert, “L’égyptomanie: actualité d’un concept de la Renaissance au postmodernisme,” in *Egyptomania*, 25. The full quotation reads as follows: “Symbole de l’art et du modèle architectural, l’Égypte nous a légué des formes simples et rigoureuses qui, déjà appréciées dans les siècles passés, restent parfaitement adaptées à l’art contemporain qui en fait grand usage. L’Égypte devient de ce fait souvent un symbole de l’Antiquité en général, en même temps que celui d’un certain achèvement dans le domaine des arts, des sciences et du savoir, repris dans les décors d’écoles, de musées et d’expositions. L’Égypte symbolise aussi la justice, la sagesse, la loi et l’ordre, et il est intéressant de voir l’usage qui en est fait au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle dans l’architecture des palais de justice et des prisons. De par son architecture funéraire caractéristique, elle a été très tôt également le symbole de la mort, en même temps que de la vie éternelle. Quasiment sans interruption depuis l’époque romaine, les formes égyptiennes ont été assimilées par l’architecture funéraire, tandis que la mort même est très souvent présente au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle dans la peinture: la momie, notamment, constitue l’un des thèmes les plus directement et immédiatement associés à l’Égypte. Ce pays, qui représente aussi la puissance militaire, la cruauté et le despotisme, reste essentiellement le symbole de la douceur de vivre, de la beauté et de l’amour, où les femmes sont belles et sensuelles. Le mystère des hiéroglyphes et de sciences cachées au profane est également devenu l’un des symboles de l’Égypte, pris en compte par la franc-maçonnerie, les rose-croix, l’ésotérisme et les sciences occultes en général. L’Égypte, enfin, est aussi représentative d’un véritable exotisme qui ne constitue que l’une des composantes de l’égyptomanie. En fait, on se rend compte que si certains symboles issus de l’Égypte sont déjà présents à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, un grand nombre naissent au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, à une époque où le pays et son histoire commencent à être mieux connus. Tous ces symboles sont le plus souvent repris par l’égyptomanie, mais celle-ci véhicule aussi les siens propres, liés aux créations concernées.”

<sup>77</sup> Corn, 220.

*My Egypt* bears witness to Demuth's intellectual understanding of both the disciplines of fine art and architecture.

In the early twentieth century America was struggling with a cultural inferiority complex in relationship to Europe. Artists throughout the United States were attempting to discover and create a "national" art. By aligning American architecture with the Great Pyramids (structures older than the cathedrals and royal residences of France, Germany, and Italy), Demuth effectively punctured any sense of European cultural superiority through the visual rhetoric of *My Egypt*.

Thus, the Egypt suggested by Demuth's title becomes a symbol for Humbert's second signifier: "antiquity (in general)." Alvord Eiseman, in his 1976 dissertation on Demuth, quotes the artist's biographer Emily Farnham regarding the meaning of the appellation of Demuth's 1927 masterpiece: "The scale of the columnar elevators and horizontal patterns in these scenes seemed to the artist's imagination to be Egyptian."<sup>78</sup>

Other twentieth-century artists employed this kind of modern allusion to past civilizations as well; for example, Demuth's contemporary and fellow Precisionist artist Charles Sheeler made reference to ancient Greece in his painting entitled *Classic Landscape* of 1931 (fig. 65).<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Alvord L. Eiseman, *A Study of the Development of an Artist: Charles Demuth (Volumes I and II)*, Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1976, 528.

<sup>79</sup> Franklin Kelly, "Classic Landscape by Charles Sheeler," in *Twentieth-Century American Art: The Ebsworth Collection*. Bruce Robertson, et al. (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2000), 223. Art historians frequently and appropriately connect Demuth's grain elevators to Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*, which opens with eight photographic images of silos and which compares these structures to ancient Egyptian forms. The book came out in French in 1923; an English edition, translated by Frederick Etchells and published in New York, followed in 1927. See Marling, 36, and Haskell, *Charles Demuth*, 194. Le Corbusier had previously linked modern buildings to ancient architectural structures in the inaugural copy (October, 1920) of the small magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau*, wherein the picture of an American grain silo appeared. See Gladys C. Fabre, "L'Esprit Moderne dans la peinture figurative: de l'Iconographie moderniste au Modernisme de conception," in *Léger et l'Esprit Moderne: une alternative d'avant-garde à l'art non-objectif (1918–1931)*. Gladys C. Fabre, et al. (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1982), 99–100.

There are many compelling reasons for interpreting *My Egypt* as a painting that references the Egypt of “law and order,” Humbert’s third signifier. Overall the image is neatly arranged and painted cleanly, the product of much forethought and discipline. In addition, the composition is bilaterally symmetrical. This feature calls to mind the two Tablets of the Law, as well as a pair of scales, the symbolic object that the allegorical figure of blind Justice carries as she weighs the truth.

Lancaster City, as seat of Lancaster County, is the site of administrative services for the region, including the local courts. The courthouse (fig. 66), depicted by Demuth in *Welcome to Our City* (fig. 67), is located at 50 North Duke Street (see map, fig. 68).<sup>80</sup> The church that the artist and his parents attended, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, can be found at 31 South Duke Street (see map, fig. 68). Both of these institutions, centers of law and governance, were within short walking distances of the artist’s home at 118 South King Street (see map, fig. 68), making Demuth’s neighborhood an amplified locus of legal and canonical discourse and action.

When Demuth visited the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition in 1926, he had the opportunity to see Violet Oakley’s completed mural panels, commissioned for the State Supreme Court building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The artist had “consented to make these available to the visitors to the Pennsylvania Building during the Exposition. For this purpose a paneled room was created of about the same size as the Supreme Court.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> As of this writing, my several attempts to determine whether the original courthouse structure contains a painted or sculpted image of the Ten Commandments have been unsuccessful. However, the photograph in fig. 66 clearly shows the allegorical figure of Justice atop the building’s dome.

<sup>81</sup> Austin, ed., *The Sesqui-Centennial*, 145.

Befitting the interior of a high court, the theme chosen for the painting cycle was “The Law.” Individual panels, combining images and texts, illustrated different manifestations of lawgiving, including “Revealed Law,” “Law of Reason,” “Common Law,” and “Law of Nations.” Of particular note is Oakley’s panel for *The Decalogue—Hebrew Idea of Revealed Law* (fig. 69). The image depicts Moses carving the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets with rounded tops, shapes that have already been compared to the grain elevators in Demuth’s *My Egypt*.<sup>82</sup>

In Jean-Marcel Humbert’s analysis of Egyptomania, his fourth aspect associates Egypt with the concept of “death and/or eternal life.” He states: “Quasiment sans interruption depuis l’époque romaine, les formes égyptiennes ont été assimilées par l’architecture funéraire....”<sup>83</sup> Notable American architectural examples that employ this trope include the gates from Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the obelisk of the Washington Monument on the National Mall in Washington, DC. *My Egypt* has often been interpreted in this light. The dominant forms of the grain elevator bear a striking resemblance to Egyptian block statues of the Late Period (fig. 71), sculptures that performed a funerary function.<sup>84</sup> For Marling, “Demuth’s Lancaster grain elevator, *My Egypt*, was a culminating reprise of themes, methods, and relationships

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<sup>82</sup> Oakley’s murals, particularly *The Decalogue*, deeply impressed another visitor to the Sesqui-Centennial, wealthy Philadelphia patron Samuel S. Fleisher. In 1922 Fleisher had purchased the building of the previous Episcopal Church of the Evangelists at 711 Catherine Street in Philadelphia to house his flourishing Graphic Sketch Club. See <http://www.philamuseum.org/information/history/pg11.shtml> (November 25, 2004). According to Patricia Likos, “[Fleisher] wanted to preserve certain features of the Romanesque-style architecture [of the former church], and he commissioned Oakley to design an altarpiece with the theme of Moses for the Sanctuary” (fig. 70). See Likos, *Bulletin* (Philadelphia Museum of Art), vol. 75, June 1979, 25. The artist contracted to undertake this project in 1927, the same year that Demuth was working on *My Egypt*. While Oakley’s reredos could not have served as a direct, visual inspiration for Demuth’s masterpiece, it is possible that, given the geographical proximity of Lancaster to Philadelphia and Demuth’s strong personal connections to the arts community there, the artist would have known of such a prominent and unusual commission and the choice of its subject matter.

<sup>83</sup> Humbert, “L’égyptomanie,” in *Egyptomania*, 25.

<sup>84</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Marjorie S. Venit for sharing this observation with me.

pieced together in a biographical context haunted by the shadow of death.... The pyramid/elevator was Demuth's memorial to himself."<sup>85</sup>

In the very next paragraph of her essay, Marling goes on to discuss briefly "the tradition [that] holds that the pyramids were grain elevators, not tombs," especially the correlation with the biblical hero Joseph who was sold into slavery in Egypt and became known for his interpretations of dreams, especially one involving seven thin ears of grain devouring seven fat ears (Genesis 41).<sup>86</sup> Given Demuth's multivalent subject and his Lutheran upbringing, Marling's alignment seems persuasive and correct. However, we only need to consider the literal focus of the image—a building constructed for the storage of harvested grain—to approach the image's consonance with symbols for death. Western culture has long associated harvest with mortality. A painting like Winslow Homer's *Veteran in a New Field* (fig. 72) makes this association more explicitly, though no less powerfully, than Demuth's *My Egypt*.

Egypt, "également le symbole de la mort, en même temps que de la vie éternelle," resonates with the Christian paradox that "Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:33). This concept is often expressed metaphorically in terms of a piece of grain that must perish in order to yield fruit, as in John 12:24, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

This biblical allusion is the basis for the title of French author André Gide's autobiographical sketches, *Si le grain ne meurt...*, published commercially in 1926.<sup>87</sup> These memoirs about the author's family, childhood experiences, and unconventional

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<sup>85</sup> Marling, 33.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>87</sup> [http://www.britannica.com/nobel/micro/733\\_60.html](http://www.britannica.com/nobel/micro/733_60.html) (November 25, 2004)



sexuality followed the homosexual apologia *Corydon*, which had appeared in 1924. For Demuth the homosexual, whose interest in French culture was well established and whose library contained several books by gay or lesbian authors, including Walt Whitman, Gertrude Stein, Walter Horatio Pater, Virginia Woolf and Marcel Proust, his knowledge of, if not familiarity with, *Si le grain ne meurt...* seems highly probable.<sup>88</sup> In the context of this book, the confessional narrative of a young man's psychological, artistic, and moral struggles, *My Egypt's* themes of grain, sexuality, harvest, and death take on additional significance.

Here, too, Demuth's trip to the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition deserves mention once again. Based on the artist's letter to Stieglitz, already cited, we know that Demuth visited the modern art show that was held in conjunction with the 1926 World's Fair. What is interesting to consider, in light of our examination of the possible meanings for grain and death embedded in *My Egypt*, is the catalogue published for this exhibition.

The twenty-four-page pamphlet contains a foreword by Katherine Dreier and illustrations of the work of twenty-two exhibiting artists from around the world, including Demuth himself.<sup>89</sup> Christian Brinton, named Special Deputy for Foreign Art for the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition, wrote the catalogue's main text. Tracing a by now familiar genealogy of modern art, Brinton's essay divides itself into four sections. The first, "Its Reason for Being," is a statement about modernism's necessary rise from

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<sup>88</sup> The Demuth Foundation in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, owns about two dozen titles from Charles Demuth's former personal library. The complete list of books appears in Appendix A. I would like to thank Corinne Woodcock, Director of the Demuth Foundation, for her generosity in providing me with the inventory and its provenance and for granting me permission to publish it here.

<sup>89</sup> Demuth is represented in the publication by a watercolor of buildings and trees, entitled *Landscape*; based on style the work probably dates from his trip to Bermuda in 1917. See Brinton, 21.

the tension between society's radical and reactionary factions. The second section, "Sowing the Seed," points to the triumvirate of Cézanne, Gauguin, and Van Gogh as the forebears for the artistic experiments of Matisse, Picasso, and Braque and the development of French cubism. "The Harvest," the third section, widens the circle of modern art to include various Russian developments, Italian futurism, German expressionism, and even American art after the 1913 Armory Show in New York City. In the final section, "The Garnered Grain," Brinton reviews contemporary developments in art (i.e., from the 1920s), singling out the exhibition's Russian, Yugoslav, and German participants for particular mention. Within the framework of Brinton's metaphorical interpretation of the history of early twentieth-century painting and sculpture—that seeds were sown, the plants grew, and a crop was reaped—*My Egypt*, whose subject is a grain elevator, becomes a weighty statement about the maturity of the American avant-garde.

That *My Egypt* represents Humbert's fifth signifier for Egypt—the "good life"—is contradictorily both obvious and obscure. The abundant illumination in the work generously bathes the architectural forms, creating a sense of languor. Grain, and its storage in large quantity for later use, implies great wealth and bounty, evoking a luxurious and sensual world "de la beauté et de l'amour."<sup>90</sup> Although nowadays it conjures up images of dry, sandy deserts in the popular imagination, in antiquity Egypt served as the principal source of grain for the Roman Empire.<sup>91</sup> The buildings in Demuth's painting unequivocally evoke Lancaster's status as breadbasket for the northeastern United States, based on the "thriving farms of the Plain religious sects whose land excels in the production of milk, wheat, and corn, and the raising of chickens

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<sup>90</sup> Humbert, "L'égyptomanie," in *Egyptomania*, 25.

<sup>91</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Marjorie S. Venit for reminding me of this fact.

and cattle.”<sup>92</sup> Lancaster County’s bountiful homegrown produce formed the subject matter of many of Demuth’s still lifes, including *Daisies and Tomatoes*, c. 1924, and *Eggplant and Green Pepper*, 1925.

Demuth’s masterpiece clearly resonates with the sixth signifier for Egypt: “the esoteric,” what Humbert calls “[l]e mystère des hiéroglyphes et de sciences cachées au profane,” including Free Masonry, Rosacrucianism, and the occult in general.<sup>93</sup> *My Egypt* resists easy interpretation, due to the image’s abstract qualities and the ironic disjunction between subject and title. The painting exudes silence and inscrutability, aligning the work with the seemingly unknowable mysteries of the occult world. The combination of puzzle and threat evokes the Sphinx in true Dada spirit. Demuth may have been influenced by his friend Marcel Duchamp’s own arcane investigations, including images of pyramids, such as *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close To, for Almost an Hour* (fig. 73), 1918, and culminating in his masterpiece *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*, 1915–1923, a work that critics have often interpreted in terms of alchemy and the occult. “It is suggestive,” notes Marling, “that the *Glass* was first exhibited publicly in 1926–27, and within months Demuth began work on his largest and most carefully conceived industrial [painting].”<sup>94</sup>

Lastly, in the title of his masterpiece Demuth playfully referenced “the exotic,” Humbert’s seventh meaning for Egypt. Much of Dada’s wit depends upon the juxtaposition of disparate elements for comic effect. The artist employs this method here

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<sup>92</sup> Farnham, *Behind a Laughing Mask*, 37.

<sup>93</sup> Humbert, “L’égyptomanie,” in *Egyptomania*, 25.

<sup>94</sup> Marling, 36. For a discussion of Duchamp’s occult interests, see John F. Moffitt, “Marcel Duchamp: Alchemist of the Avant-Garde,” in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985*. Maurice Tuchman, et al. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), 256–271.

by layering a richly perfumed orientalism over the “unsophisticated” culture of America. And yet the humor depends upon context; with Demuth nothing is ever straightforward. Demuth’s oft-repeated epithet for his hometown—“the province”—betrays the artist’s awareness of Lancaster’s own regional marginalization and otherness when compared to the art world center of New York City. In a clever and convoluted humorous reversal, Demuth is able to have the joke both ways, laughing at himself as a culturally inferior American (when compared to urbane Europeans) while, as a suave and well-traveled sophisticate, simultaneously mocking his “plain and simple” local culture.

The many significations for Egypt—art and architecture, antiquity, law and order, death and/or eternal life, the “good life,” the esoteric and the exotic other—reveal the power that this archetype has had throughout the centuries in Western culture. Demuth added exponentially to the meaning of his own picture by layering the freighted historical term “Egypt” onto a local subject with intensely personal connotations. Humbert’s astute analysis of the phenomenon of Egyptomania can just as easily be applied to Demuth’s picture: “La part de l’Égypte dans l’égyptomanie est donc plus complexe qu’il n’y paraît de prime d’abord...”<sup>95</sup>

This ostensible simplicity veiling great complexity is the hallmark of Demuth’s best work. The artist’s oil painting *My Egypt* shares this characteristic with one of his late watercolors, *Artist on the Beach at Provincetown* (fig. 74), 1934. Not unlike the imposing and austere exterior of the Eshelman grain elevators, here in his last self-portrait Demuth depicts himself with back towards us, partially shutting us out. This pose frustrates any attempt to engage the artist’s visage (the seat of intellect and emotion) as well as prevents the viewer from seeing completely the work in progress, propped up

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<sup>95</sup> Humbert, “L’égyptomanie,” in *Egyptomania*, 25.

against the end of a wharf. With its themes of bathing, creativity, and hiddenness, the watercolor is a kind of inside-out version of Raphaëlle Peale's *After the Bath* (fig. 75), a work Demuth might have known because of his association with the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.<sup>96</sup> In the watercolor, a blotted line connects the artist's eye to a structure across the water, recapitulating the leitmotifs of near/far and seeing/not seeing that are latent in *My Egypt*. The cylindrical piles of the dock in the watercolor rhyme visually with the smokestack and grain elevators of the oil painting. Both works rely on a balanced asymmetry originating in the human body, made explicit by the axis of the painter's spine in the drawing (what Henry Adams calls "the slight deformity and peculiar twist of [Demuth's] body") and the line created by the abutment of the two rounded shafts in the oil painting.<sup>97</sup> In addition, the three focal points of creativity in the watercolor—the brushes held in the artist's left hand, the pencil in his right, and the palette to his lower right—form a triangular composition whose stability evokes the Pyramids and *My Egypt* by extension. Here, in this final self-portrait before his death in 1935, Demuth actively performs the recapitulation of various themes that he had distilled so eloquently in *My Egypt*: the body, vision, appearance and reality, and the power of art over death.

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<sup>96</sup>Demuth studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts between 1905 and 1911. Charles Willson Peale, among others, founded the country's oldest fine arts school and museum in 1805 and he and members of his family of artists frequently exhibited there. Charles Willson Peale's important self-portrait, *The Artist in His Museum*, 1822, entered the Academy in 1878 as a gift of Mrs. Sarah Harrison. The collection also contains two works by Raphaëlle Peale, *Fox Grapes and Peaches*, 1815, and *Apples and Fox Grapes*, 1815, both probably purchased in 1817. See <http://www.pafa.org/historyTimeline.jsp>, <http://www.pafa.org/paintingsPreview.jsp?id=975&currentCount=12>, <http://www.pafa.org/paintingsPreview.jsp?id=8891&currentCount=1>, and <http://www.pafa.org/paintingsPreview.jsp?id=8893&currentCount=2> (all November 25, 2004).

<sup>97</sup> Henry Adams, "The Beal Collection of Watercolors by Charles Demuth," *Carnegie Magazine*, vol. 56, November/December 1983, 28.

This oxymoronic simple complexity and complex simplicity of *My Egypt* is acknowledged by the anonymous author of the statement “It Must be Said,” who associates *My Egypt* with a long and difficult process of understanding: “hard to know.... hard to see, hard to receive.” This text is compelling precisely because it evokes, succinctly but profoundly, several themes layered within the composition of the painting. By comparing the oil painting to a Native American dance, the statement’s author intuitively recognizes the religious and bodily aspects common to both performative images. In *My Egypt*—as in the Indian dance and in this thesis—we are caught up in “giving and receiving—giving and seeing”—the dialogical process between object and viewer that allows us each, in our own way, to “know,” to “see,” and to “receive” Charles Demuth’s masterpiece.



Fig. 1      *My Egypt*, 1927  
Oil on composition board, 35 3/4 x 30 in.  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
Purchased with funds from Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, 31.172



Fig. 2

*Poster Portrait: O'Keeffe, 1923–1924*  
 Poster paint on panel, 20 x 16 in.  
 Collection of American Literature  
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
 Yale University, New Haven



Fig. 3

*Poster Portrait: Marin, 1926*  
 Poster paint on panel, 27 x 33 in.  
 Collection of American Literature  
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
 Yale University, New Haven



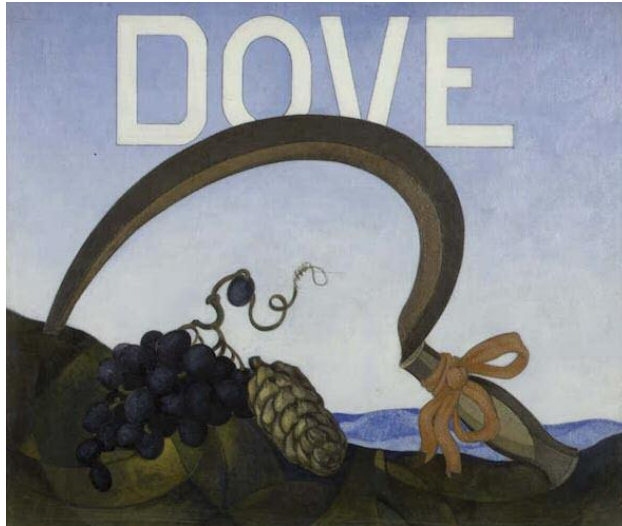


Fig. 4 *Poster Portrait: Dove*, 1924  
 Poster paint on panel, 20 x 23 in.  
 Collection of American Literature  
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
 Yale University, New Haven



Fig. 5 *The Figure 5 in Gold*, 1928  
 Oil on board, 35 1/2 x 30 in.  
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
 Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49.59.1



Fig. 6      *Sketch for "My Egypt," c. 1927*  
Pencil on paper, 8 1/4 x 6 1/2 in.  
Ex-collection Robert E. Locher, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

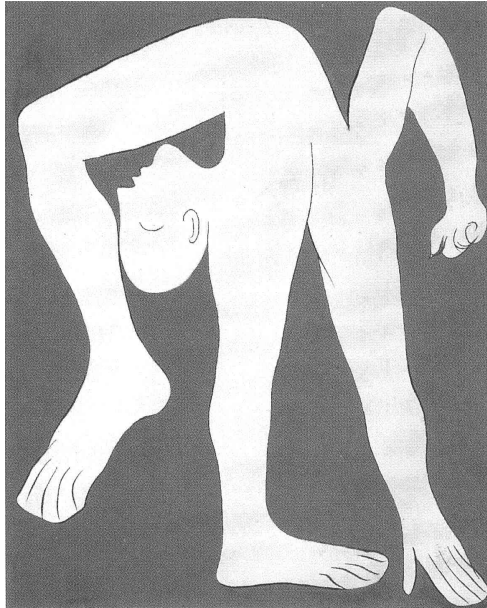


Fig. 7 Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)  
*L'Acrobate*, 1930  
 Oil on canvas, 63 3/4 x 51 1/8 in.  
 Musée Picasso, Paris  
 MP 120

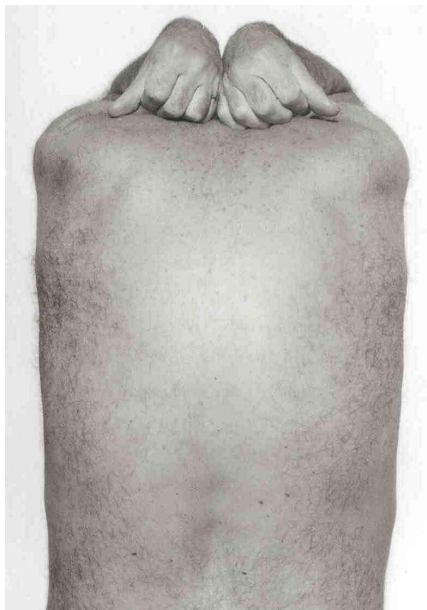


Fig. 8 John Coplans (1920–2003)  
*Back and Hands*, 1984  
 Photograph using Polaroid Positive/Negative film, 42 x 32 in.  
 Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery



Fig. 9 Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957)  
*Torso of a Young Man [I]*, 1917?–1922  
 Maple, 19 x 12 3/8 x 7 1/4 in.  
 Philadelphia Museum of Art  
 The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950

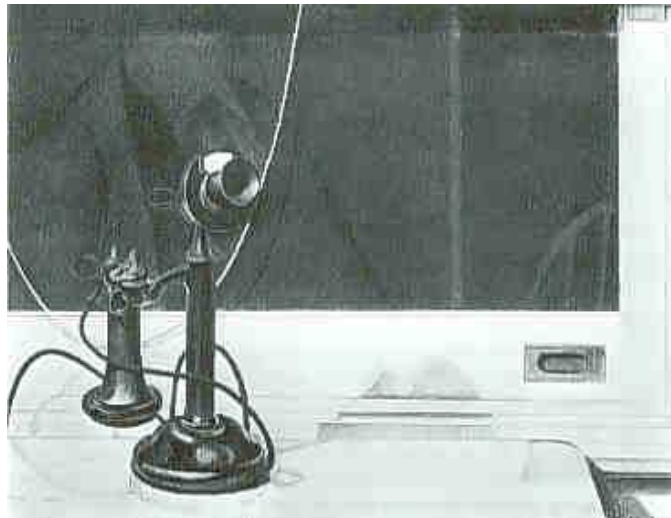


Fig. 10 Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)  
*Self Portrait*, 1923  
 Conté crayon, gouache, and pencil on paper, 19 3/4 x 25 3/4 in.  
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
 Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller



Fig. 11a      Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946)  
*Charles Demuth* (recto)  
 Photograph  
 Collection of American Literature  
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
 Yale University, New Haven

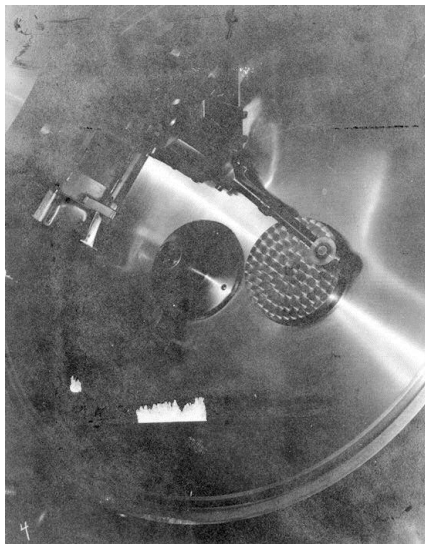


Fig. 11b      Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946)  
*Machine Parts* (verso)  
 Photograph  
 Collection of American Literature  
 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
 Yale University, New Haven



Fig. 12      Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946)  
*Charles Demuth, 1915*  
Platinum print, 9 5/8 x 7 5/8 in.  
National Gallery of Art, Washington  
Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949.3.354





Fig. 13      Unknown artist  
*Charles Demuth*, c. 1920  
 Photograph  
 Published in *Look Magazine*, March 28, 1950, page 52



Fig. 14      Florine Stettheimer (1871–1944)  
*Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz*, 1928  
 Oil on canvas, 38 x 25 1/2 in.  
 Fisk University Galleries, Nashville, Tennessee  
 Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Gift of Georgia O'Keeffe



Fig. 15      *Study for "Poster Portrait: Marsden Hartley," 1923–1924*  
 Watercolor and pencil on paper, 10 x 8 in.  
 Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven  
 Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903, Fund and Everett V. Meeks, B.A. 1901,  
 Fund





Fig. 16 Dorothy Norman (b. 1905)  
*Study of Charles Demuth, c. 1933*  
 Photograph  
 Unknown collection



Fig. 17 *A Prince of Court Painters (after Watteau)*, 1918  
 Watercolor on paper, 8 x 11 in.  
 Private collection



Fig. 18 *The Triumph of the Red Death*, 1918  
Watercolor on paper, 8 1/2 x 10 3/4 in.  
The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania



Fig. 19 *Te Nana (Nana before the Mirror)*, 1916  
Watercolor and pencil on paper, 8 x 10 in.  
Lafayette Parke Gallery, New York



Fig. 20 *Longhi on Broadway*, 1928  
Oil on board, 34 x 27 in.  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
Gift of the William H. Lane Foundation 1990.397



Fig. 21 *Love, Love, Love (Homage to Gertrude Stein)*, 1929  
Oil on panel, 20 x 20 3/4 in.  
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid



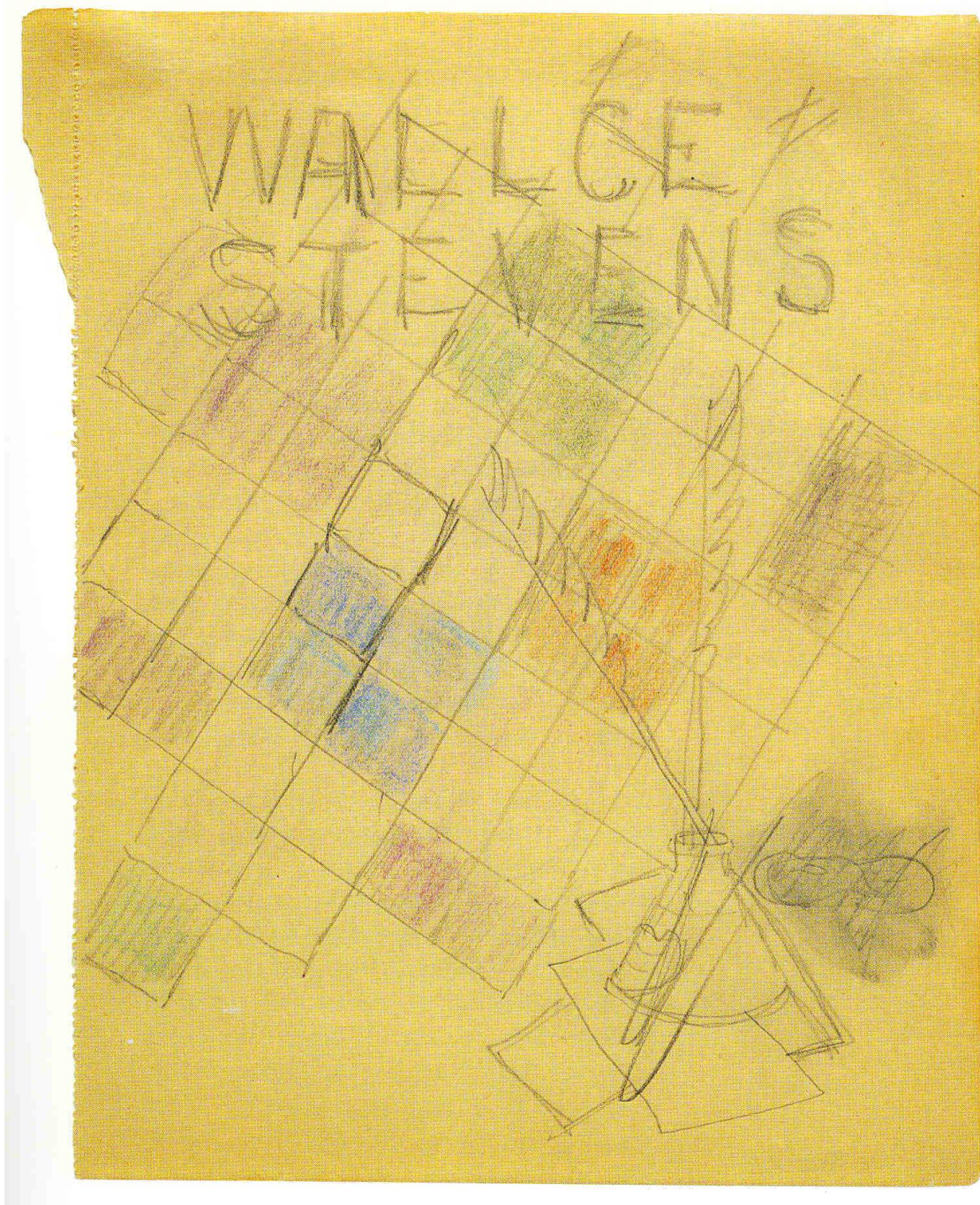


Fig. 22

*Sketch for "Poster Portrait: Wallace Stevens," 1925–1926*

Pencil and crayon on paper, 8 1/4 x 6 13/16 in.

The Ackland Art Museum

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Ackland Fund 76.50.1



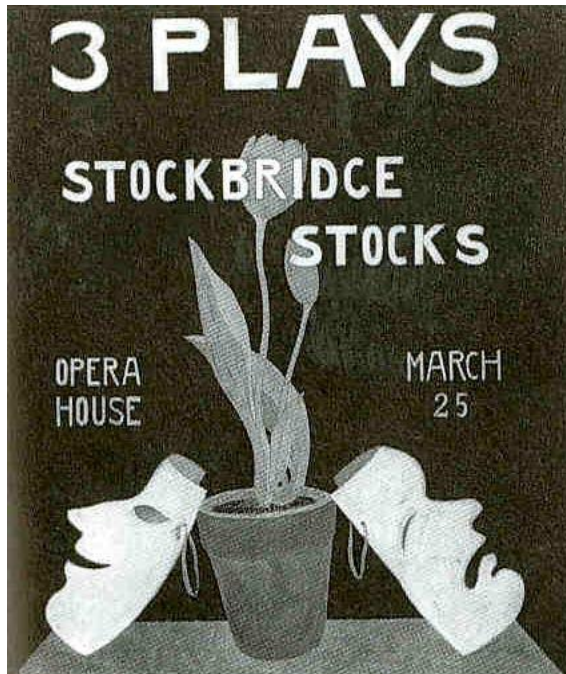


Fig. 23 *Stockbridge Stocks*, 1926  
Tempera on board, 25 1/2 x 21 in.  
Private collection



Fig. 24 *Dancers Number Two (Black and White Ball)*, 1928  
Pencil on paper, 10 1/2 x 8 in.  
Private collection, courtesy Zabriskie Gallery, New York



Fig. 25 *Negro Jazz Band*, 1916  
Watercolor on paper, 12 7/8 x 7 7/8 in.  
Private collection



Fig. 26 *In Vaudeville, the Bicycle Rider*, 1919  
Watercolor and pencil on paper, 11 x 8 5/8 in.  
Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington  
Bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Biddle

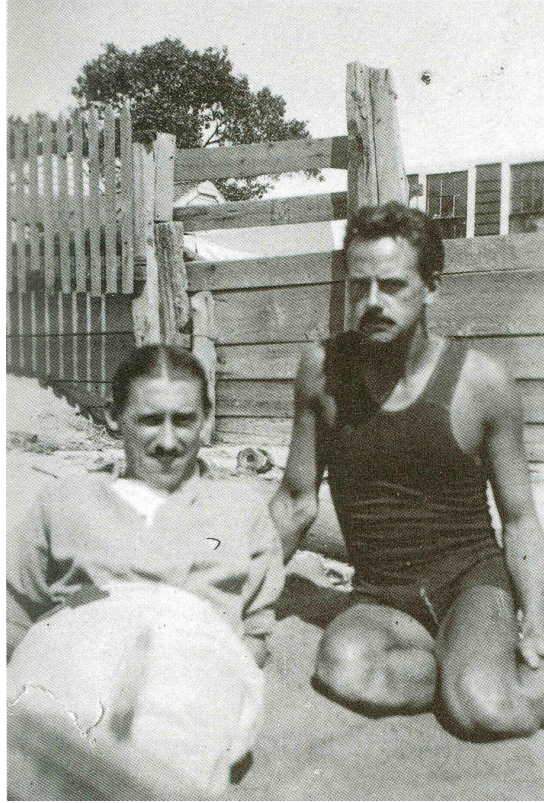


Fig. 27      Unknown artist  
*Charles Demuth and Eugene O'Neill in Provincetown, 1916*  
 Photograph, 3 3/4 x 6 1/2 in.  
 Connecticut College Library, New London, Connecticut  
 Schaeffer-O'Neill Collection



Fig. 28      *Edward Fisk Reclining, 1912*  
 Watercolor and pencil on paper  
 Fisk Family Collection



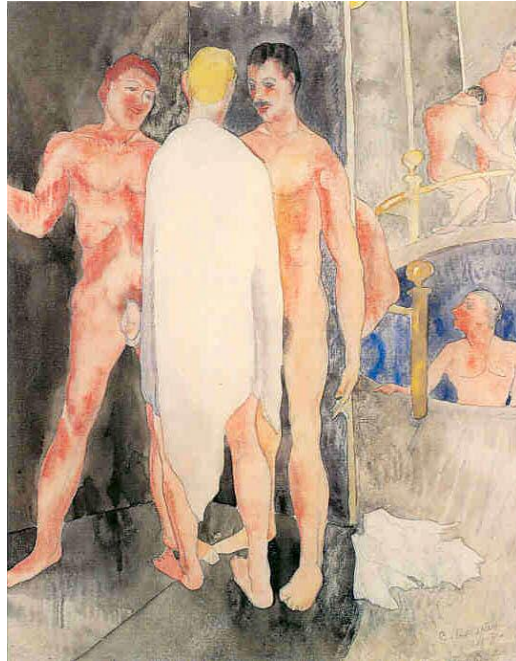


Fig. 29 *Turkish Bath*, 1918  
Watercolor on paper, 11 x 8 1/2 in.  
Private collection



Fig. 30 *Two Sailors Urinating*, 1930  
Watercolor and pencil on paper, 9 1/2 x 13 1/4 in.  
Private collection





Fig. 31 John Singer Sargent (1856–1925)  
*Sir Frank Swettenham*, 1904  
 Oil on canvas, 101 5/8 x 56 1/8 in.  
 Singapore History Museum, National Heritage Board



Fig. 32 John Singer Sargent (1856–1925)  
*Crescenzo Fusciardi (Portrait of Vincenzo Fusciardi)*, c. 1890–1915  
 from a volume of thirty-one nude studies  
 Charcoal on faded blue laid paper, 24 x 18 5/16 in.  
 Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums  
 Gift of Mrs. Francis Ormond, 1937.9.13

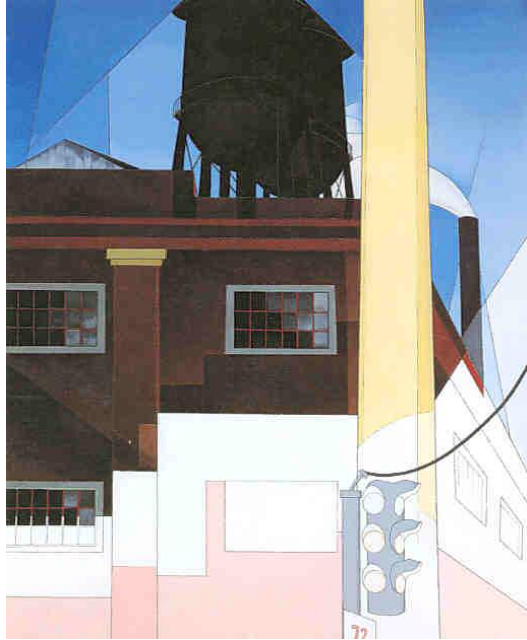


Fig. 33      *...And the Home of the Brave*, 1931  
Oil on board, 30 x 24 in.  
The Art Institute of Chicago  
Gift of Georgia O'Keeffe, 1948.650



Fig. 34      *After All*, 1933  
Oil on board, 36 x 30 in.  
Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida

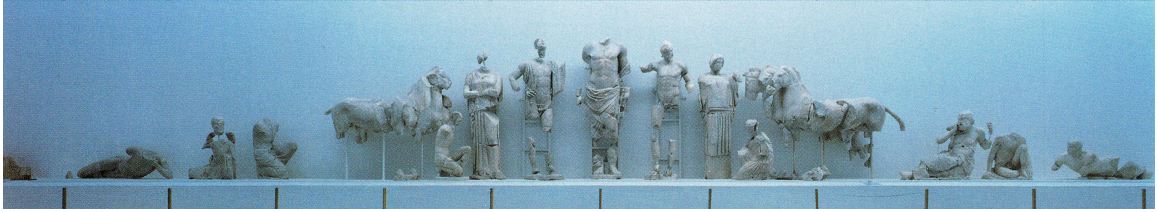


Fig. 35      Attributed to Paionios of Mende in Thrace (active fifth century BCE)  
*East Pediment from the Temple of Zeus*, c. 470–456 BCE  
 Marble, approximately 87 feet wide  
 Archaeological Museum, Olympia, Greece



Fig. 36      Hans Memling (c. 1433–1494)  
*The Virgin and Child with Saints and Donors (The Donne Triptych)*,  
 c. 1478  
 Oil on oak, central panel: 27 13/16 x 27 3/4 in.; wings, each: 27 15/16 x  
 11 13/16 in.  
 National Gallery, London, 6275.1





Fig. 37 Edgar Degas (1834–1917)  
*At the Milliner's*, c. 1882  
 Pastel on paper, 27 5/8 x 27 3/4 in.  
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
 Gift of Mrs. David M. Levy



Fig. 38 Juan Gris (1887–1927)  
*Landscape with Houses at Ceret* 1913  
 Oil on canvas, 39 3/8 x 25 5/8 in.  
 Galeria Theo, Madrid



Fig. 39      Everett Shinn (1876–1953)  
*Orchestra Pit, Old Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre*, c. 1906–1907  
 Oil on canvas  
 Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven  
 Bequest of Arthur G. Altschul, B.A. 1943



Fig. 40      Edward Hopper (1882–1967)  
*The New York Restaurant*, c. 1922  
 Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 in.  
 Muskegon Museum of Art, Michigan  
 Hackley Picture Fund purchase, 1936



Fig. 41 Giotto di Bondone and assistants (about 1266/76–1337)  
*The “Peruzzi Altarpiece,”* about 1310–15  
 Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 41 5/8 x 98 1/2 in.  
 North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh  
 Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 60.17.7

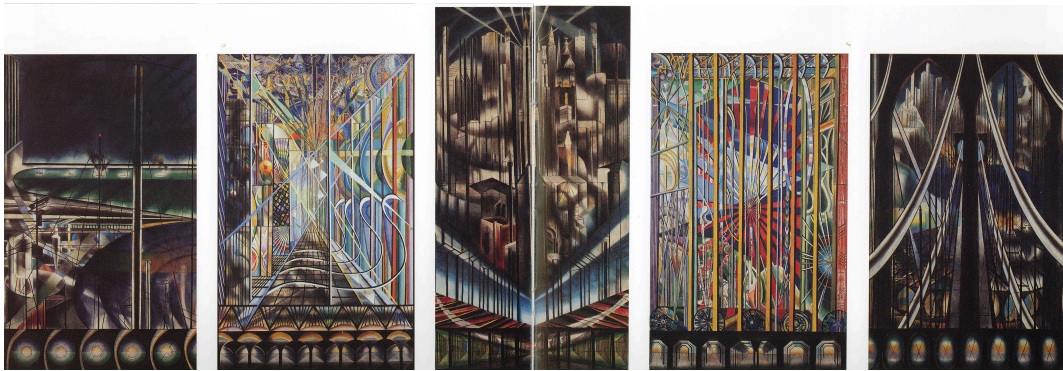


Fig. 42 Joseph Stella (1877–1946)  
*New York Interpreted (The Voice of the City)*, 1920–1922  
 Oil and tempera on canvas, five panels (from right to left):  
*The Port (The Harbor, The Battery)*, 88 1/2 x 54 in.  
*The White Way I*, 88 1/2 x 54 in.  
*The Skyscrapers (The Prow)*, 99 3/4 x 54 in.  
*The White Way II (Broadway)*, 88 1/2 x 54 in.  
*The Bridge (Brooklyn Bridge)*, 88 1/2 x 54 in.  
 The Newark Museum  
 Purchase 1936: Thomas L. Raymond Bequest Fund, 37.288





Fig. 43 John Marin (1870–1953)  
*Brooklyn Bridge*, c. 1912  
 Watercolor and charcoal on paper, 18 5/8 x 15 5/8 in.  
 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
 Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 49.70.105

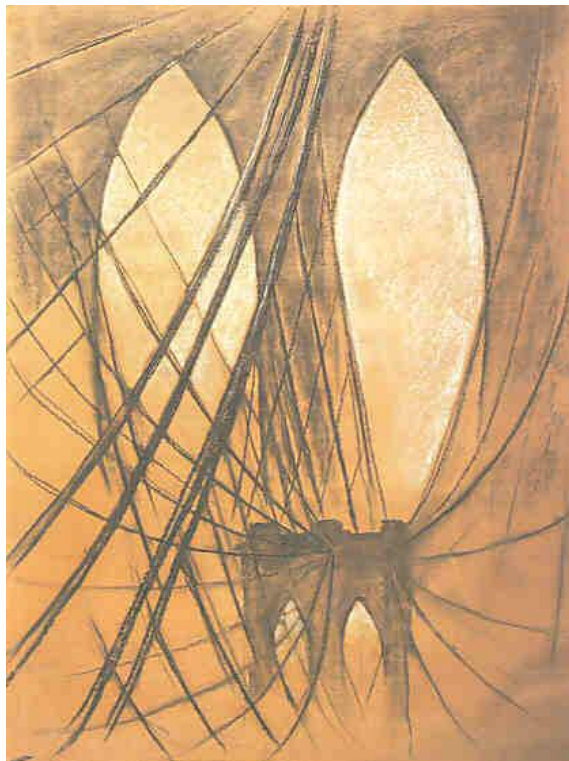


Fig. 44 Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986)  
*Brooklyn Bridge*, 1949  
 Charcoal on paper, 39 7/8 x 29 1/2 in.  
 Private collection

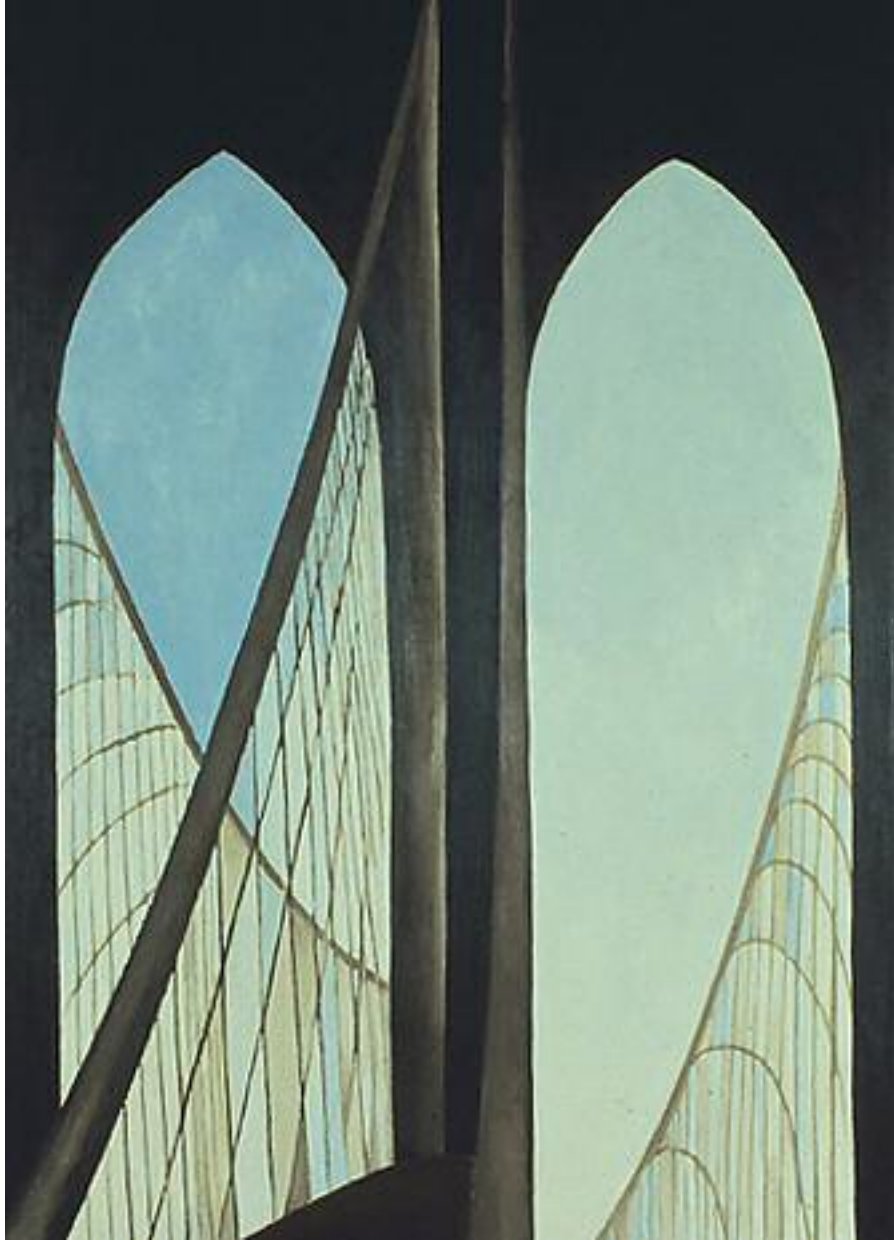


Fig. 45

Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986)  
*Brooklyn Bridge*, 1948  
Oil on Masonite, 47 15/16 x 35 7/8 in.  
Brooklyn Museum of Art  
Bequest of Mary Childs Draper, 77.11



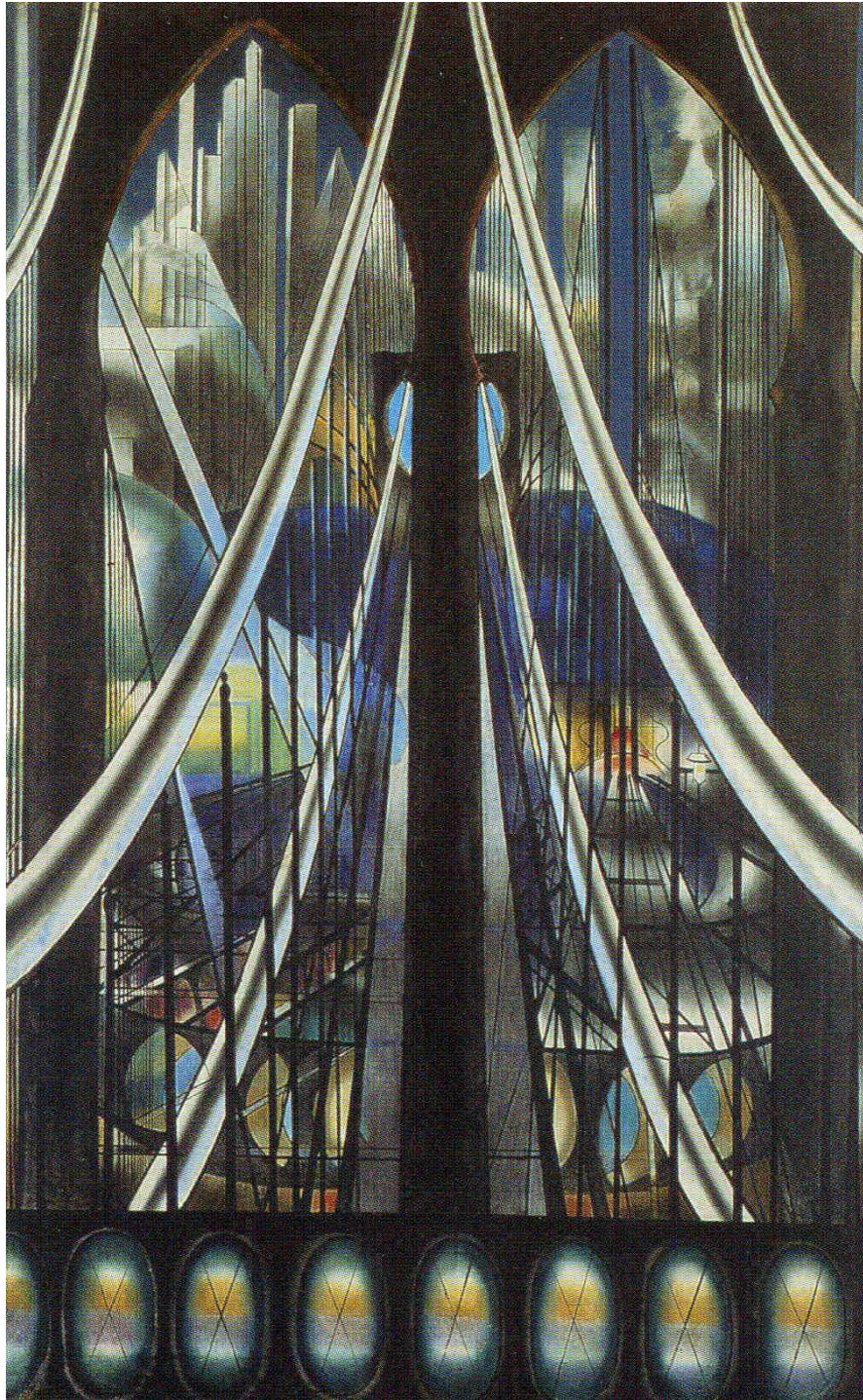


Fig. 46

Joseph Stella (1877–1946)

*New York Interpreted (The Voice of the City): The Bridge (Brooklyn Bridge)*, 1920–1922

Oil and tempera on canvas, 88 1/2 x 54 in.

The Newark Museum

Purchase 1936: Thomas L. Raymond Bequest Fund, 37.288





Fig. 47

Joseph Stella (1877–1946)

*Old Brooklyn Bridge*, c. 1940

Oil on canvas, 76 1/4 x 68 1/4 in.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Gift of Susan Morse Hilles in memory of Paul Hellmuth, 1980.197

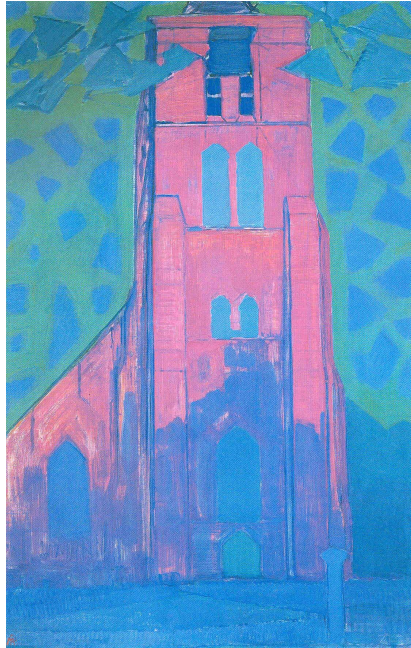


Fig. 48 Piet Mondrian (1872–1944)  
*Church at Domburg*, 1910–1911  
 Oil on canvas, 44 7/8 x 29 1/2 in.  
 Haags Gemeentemuseum



Fig. 49 Ferdinand A. Demuth (1857–1911)  
*Steeple of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity*,  
 1900/1910  
 Photograph  
 Private collection





Fig. 50 *The Red State and the Gray Church (Red and Gray Buildings)*, 1919  
Gouache on board, 14 x 20 in.  
Ex-collection Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan  
Sold at auction by Sotheby's, New York, May 3, 1972, lot no. 165



Fig. 51 *After Sir Christopher Wren*, 1920  
Watercolor, gouache, and pencil on board, 24 x 20 in.  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
Bequest of Scofield Thayer



Fig. 52      Luc Olivier Merson (1846–1920)  
*Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, 1879  
Oil on canvas, 28 1/4 x 50 1/2 in.  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
Bequest of George Golding Kennedy, 18.652



Fig. 53 Cecil B. DeMille (1881–1959)  
Film still from *The Ten Commandments*, 1923  
Black and white and color film, 146 minutes  
Produced by Famous Players / Lasky Corporation / Paramount



Fig. 54 Unknown artist  
*Altarpieces*, [Ten Commandments] c. 1702 and [Apostles' Creed] c. 1718;  
restored and probably repainted in 1882  
Oil (?) on wood  
St. Mary's White Chapel Church, Lancaster County, Virginia



Fig. 55      Unknown architect  
*Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Lancaster, Pennsylvania*, constructed 1761–1766  
 Interior view of sanctuary from the balcony



Fig. 56      Henry Kepple Beck (1862–1937)  
*The Resurrection*, 1893  
 Oil (?) on plaster, 16 x 9 feet  
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Lancaster, Pennsylvania  
 Installation view with Easter lilies





Fig. 57 Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946)  
*Charles Demuth, 1923*  
 Palladium print, 9 7/16 x 7 9/16 in.  
 National Gallery of Art, Washington  
 Alfred Stieglitz Collection 1949.3.541

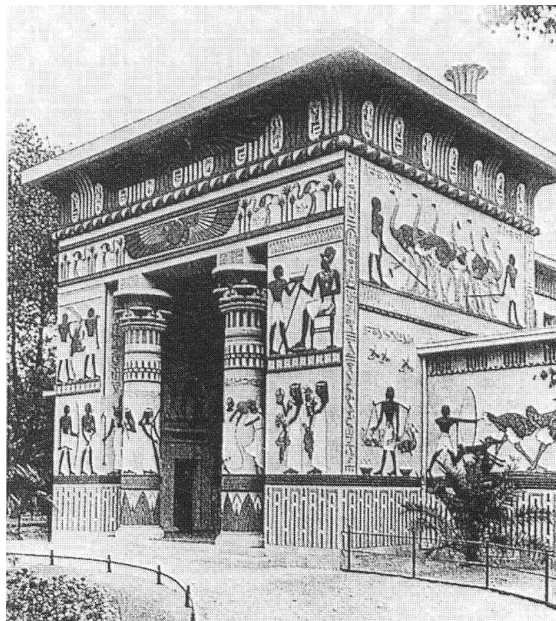


Fig. 58 Heinrich Kayser (1842–1917) and Karl von Grossheim (1841–1911)  
*Ostrich House, 1899*  
 Berlin Zoological Garden  
 Exterior view





Fig. 59 Unknown artist  
*Egyptian Pantomime* from "*The Masque of the Primitive Peoples*," 1915  
 Photograph  
 Archives of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

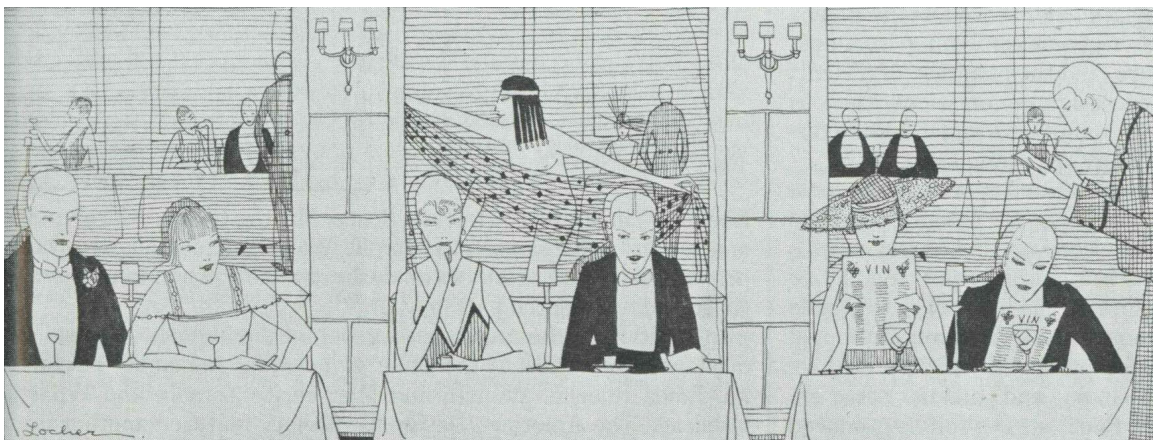


Fig. 60 Robert E. Locher (1888–1956)  
*Café Cabaret*, probably 1910/1920  
 Ink on paper, 10 3/8 x 12 5/8 in.  
 Rhode Island School of Design, Providence



Fig. 61      Unknown artist  
*Interior view of modern art exhibition at the World's Fair, 1926*  
 Photograph  
 Published in *The Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition*, 1929

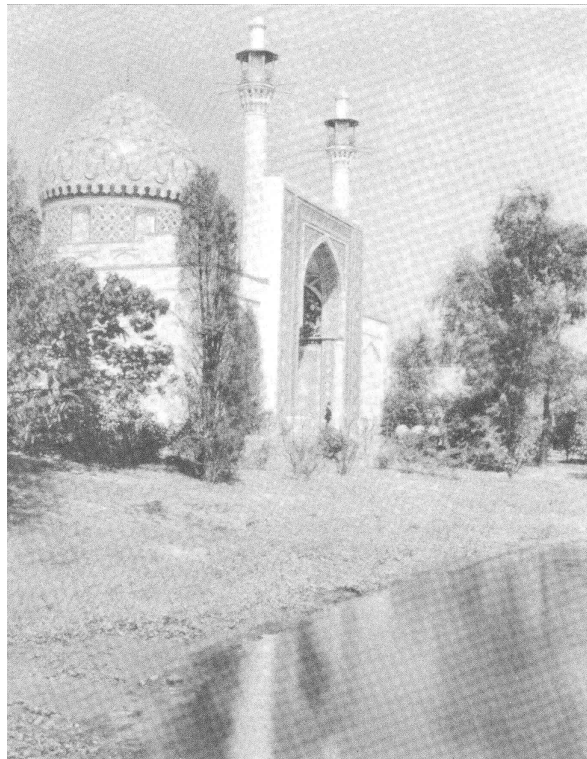


Fig. 62      Unknown architect  
*Persian pavilion at the World's Fair, 1926*  
 Published in *The Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition*, 1929  
 page 10  
 Exterior view

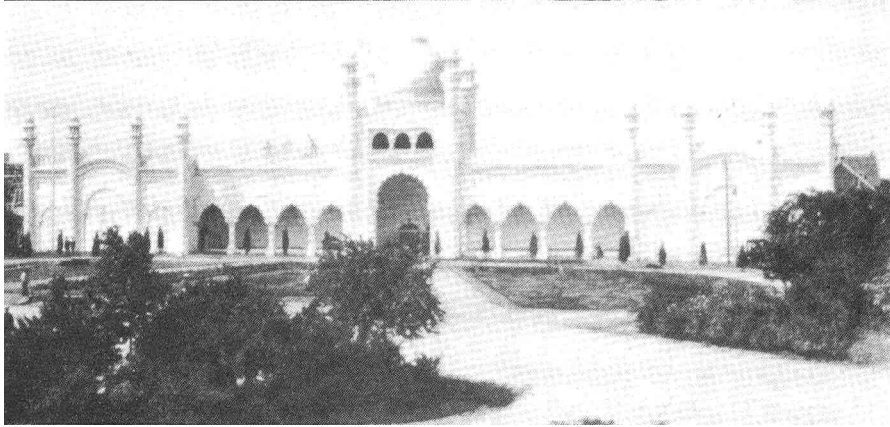


Fig. 63      Unknown architect  
*Indian pavilion at the World's Fair, 1926*  
 Published in *The Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition, 1929*  
 page 45  
 Exterior view

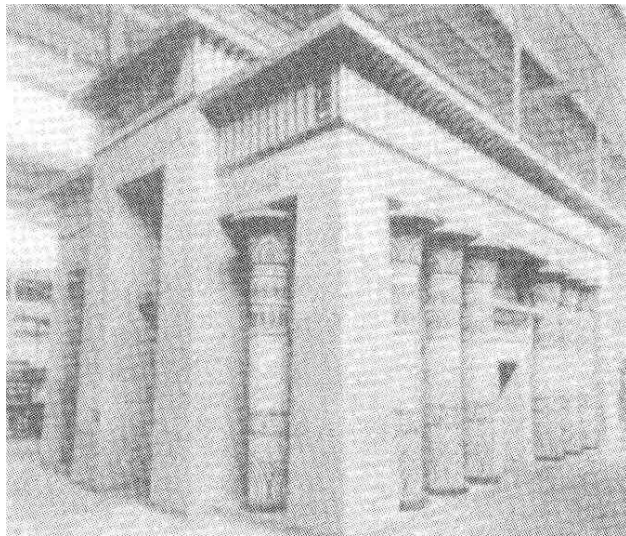


Fig. 64      Unknown architect  
*Fleischmann [Yeast] Company pavilion at the World's Fair, 1926*  
 Published in *The Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition, 1929*  
 page 348  
 Exterior view





Fig. 65 Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)  
*Classic Landscape*, 1931  
Oil on canvas, 25 x 32 1/4 in.  
National Gallery of Art, Washington  
Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth, 2000.39.2



Fig. 66 Ferdinand A. Demuth (1857–1911)  
*View of Lancaster, Looking North from Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity*, before 1892  
 Photograph  
 Courtesy the Demuth Foundation, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

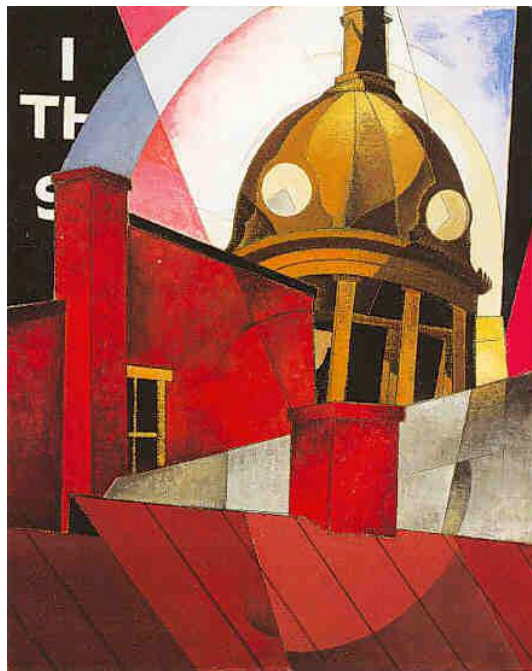


Fig. 67 *Welcome to Our City*, 1921  
 Oil on canvas, 24 1/2 x 19 3/8 in.  
 Terra Foundation for the Arts, Chicago

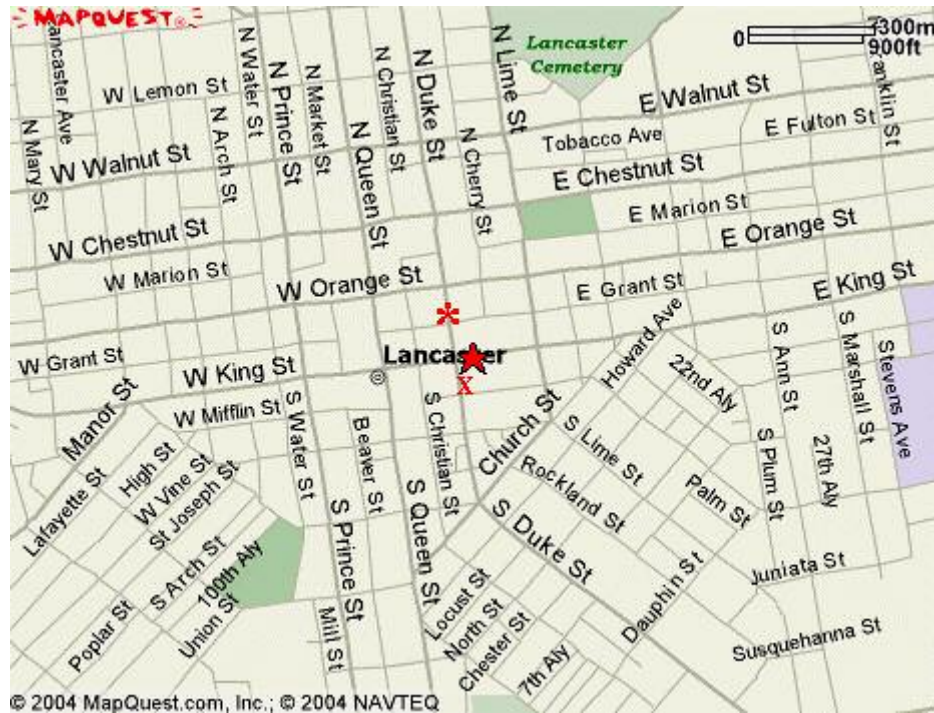


Fig. 68 Map of Lancaster, Pennsylvania  
 star = Demuth home (118 East King St.)  
 asterisk = Lancaster County Courthouse (50 North Duke St.)  
 X = Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity (31 South Duke St.)



Fig. 69 Violet Oakley (1874–1961)  
*The Decalogue (Hebrew Idea of Revealed Law)*, before 1925  
 Mural, approximately 8 x 8 feet  
 Supreme Court  
 State Capitol Building, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania





Fig. 70 Violet Oakley (1874–1961)  
*The Life of Moses*, 1929  
 Oil on canvas, mounted in wood frame, 18 x 7 feet  
 Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial, Philadelphia





Fig. 71      Unknown artist  
*Thanefer, Son of Nespa-medu*, c. 380–340 BCE (Dynasty XXX)  
 Granite, height: 18 in.  
 The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York



Fig. 72      Winslow Homer (1836–1910)  
*The Veteran in a New Field*, 1865  
 Oil on canvas, 24 1/8 x 38 1/8 in.  
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
 Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot, 67.187.11





Fig. 73

Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968)

*To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close To, for Almost an Hour*, 1918

Oil paint, silver leaf, lead wire, and magnifying lens on glass (cracked), 19 1/2 x 15 5/8 in., mounted between two panes of glass in a standing metal frame, 20 1/8 x 16 1/4 x 1 1/2 in., on painted wood base, 1 7/8 x 17 7/8 x 4 1/2 in.; overall height, 22 in.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 150.53



Fig. 74      *Artist on the Beach at Provincetown, 1934*  
Graphite and watercolor on paper, 8 7/16 x 11 in.  
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh  
Bequest of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Beal, 93.189.23



Fig. 75      Raphaelle Peale (1774–1825)  
*Venus Rising from the Sea—A Deception (After the Bath)*, c. 1822  
Oil on canvas, 29 1/4 x 24 1/8 in.  
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri  
Purchase: Nelson Trust, 34.147

## APPENDIX A

### A List of Books from Charles Demuth's Personal Library in the Collection of the Demuth Foundation, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Provenance: Upon Demuth's death Robert Locher inherited the artist's book collection; the library then passed to Locher's partner Richard Weyand. After Weyand's untimely demise, a bookseller from Jonestown, Pennsylvania, purchased the collection at Weyand's estate sale in 1958. From this dealer, benefactor Jean Gromoll purchased eighteen titles, which she gave to the Demuth Foundation in 1991.\*

I have categorized the books in four ways:

1. Volumes definitely owned by Demuth (artist's name inscribed in his own hand or other documented dedication)
2. Volumes probably owned by Demuth (no inscription, publication date before 1935)
3. Volumes possibly owned by Demuth (no inscription, unknown publication date)
4. Volumes added to the collection by Robert Locher and/or Richard Weyand (publication date after Demuth's death in 1935)

Within these categories, the books are listed in accession number order

#### 1. Volumes definitely owned by Demuth

Anatole France and A. W. Evans, translator

*Penguin Island*, 1909

Hardcover book, inscribed with the artist's autograph

#G85.2.2

Virginia Woolf

*To the Lighthouse*, 1927

Hardcover book, inscribed with the artist's autograph and "23 Nov., 1927"

#G85.2.3

Henry James

*The American Scene*, 1907

Hardcover book, inscribed with the artist's autograph

#G85.2.4, gift of Jack Locher

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\* Information provided by Corinne Woodcock, Director of the Demuth Foundation.

E. E. Cummings

*The Enormous Room*, 1922

Hardcover book, inscribed with the artist's autograph and "Nov. 4, 1926"

#G85.2.5, gift of Jack Locher

Marcel Proust

*Swann's Way, Volumes I & II*

Hardcover books, inscribed with the artist's autograph and "Lancaster 1925"

#G85.2.6A-B

Walt Whitman

*Leaves of Grass with Autobiography*, 1900

Hardcover book, inscribed by the artist: "Charles Demuth—Lancaster, Pa., 1909"

#G85.2.7

Carl Van Vechten

*Peter Whiffle His Life and Works*, 1922

Hardcover book, inscribed by the artist: "C. Demuth, Lancaster, Pa., 12 May, 1922"

#G85.2.8

David Garnett

*Lady Into Fox*, 1923

Hardcover book, inscribed by the artist: "C. Demuth, Lancaster, Pa. 2-May-1923"

#G85.2.9

Gertrude Stein

*Three Lines: Stories on the Good Anva, Melanctha and the Gentle Leva*, 1909

Hardcover book, inscribed by the artist: "C. Demuth—Lancaster, Pa."

#G85.2.11

Walter Horatio Pater

*The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, 1912

Hardcover book, inscribed by the artist: "C. Demuth, Lancaster, Pa. 10-Mar-1914"

Also contained a paper doily, a subscribed form to the *American Mercury*, and a sales list of cookies and flavoring for the artist

#G85.2.12

A. E. Gallatin

*Charles Demuth*, 1927

Hardcover book, inscribed by the artist: "C. Demuth 3, Nov. '27"

#G85.2.13

A. E. Gallatin

*American Water-Colourists*, 1922

Hardcover book, inscribed: "For Charles Demuth with the author's compliments"

#G91.6.3, gift of Jean Gromoll

2. Volumes probably owned by Demuth

Samuel Kootz

*Modern American Painters*, 1930

Hardcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.1, gift of Jean Gromoll

William Murrell

*Charles Demuth*, 1931

Hardcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.4, gift of Jean Gromoll

A. E. Gallatin Collection, New York University

*Gallery of Living Art*, 1933

Hardcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.8, gift of Jean Gromoll

Anderson Galleries

*The John Lane Collection of Original Drawings by Audrey Beardsley*, 1926

Softcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.14, gift of Jean Gromoll

William Blake

*Blake's Songs of Innocence*, reproduced from the copy in the British Museum by Minto

Balch and Co., New York, 1926

Hardcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.16, gift of Jean Gromoll

Rachilde and Madeleine Boyd, translator

*Monsieur Venus*, 1929

Hardcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.17, gift of Jean Gromoll

3. Volumes possibly owned by Demuth

Adrien Chappuis

*Dessins de Paul Cézanne*

Softcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.2, gift of Jean Gromoll

A. E. Gallatin Collection, New York University

*Museum of Living Art*

Hardcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.7, gift of Jean Gromoll



*A History of American Watercolor Painting*

Softcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.12, gift of Jean Gromoll

Argosy Gallery

*American Art—Historical, Pioneer, Amateur, and Primitive*

Softcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.13, gift of Jean Gromoll

R. A. Walker, ed.

*The Best of Beardsley*

Hardcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.15, gift of Jean Gromoll

4. Volumes added to the collection by Robert Locher and/or Richard Weyand

James Thrall Soby

*Contemporary Painters*, 1948

Hardcover book, inscribed: "Ouch, darling, can I take a hint! Aunt Becky"

#G91.6.5, gift of Jean Gromoll

Philadelphia Museum of Art

*Arensberg Collection*, 1954

Hardcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.6, gift of Jean Gromoll

Knoedler Galleries

*To Honor Henry McBride*, 1949

Softcover book, inscribed with Henry McBride's autograph

#G91.6.9, gift of Jean Gromoll

Wildenstein Gallery, New York

*French Painting of the Time of Louis XIIIth and Louis XIVth*, May–June 1946

Softcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.10, gift of Jean Gromoll

Whitney Museum of American Art

*Juliana Force and American Art—A Memorial Exhibition*, 1949

Softcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.11, gift of Jean Gromoll

Gertrude Stein

*Paris France*, 1940

Hardcover book, not inscribed

#G91.6.18, gift of Jean Gromoll



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