



Seeing America

PAINTING AND SCULPTURE
FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE
MEMORIAL ART GALLERY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER



5: Milton W. Hopkins *Pierrepont Edward Lacey and His Dog, Gun* (1835-36)

Jacquelyn Oak

Folk artist and social activist Milton W. Hopkins worked in the Rochester area painting portraits in a plain, linear style from 1824 until about 1836. The portrait of Pierrepont Edward Lacey is one of his most successful and has become an American folk art icon. Owned by the family for over 140 years, the portrait was given to the Memorial Art Gallery by collateral descendents of the sitter in 1978.

Born in 1832 in Chili, New York, Pierrepont Edward Lacey was the son of Allen T. and Ann Gennett Pixley Lacey. The family moved to nearby Scottsville, south of Rochester, in 1835 and it was there that Hopkins painted this portrait and those of Pierrepont's mother and younger sister, Eliza. Allen T. Lacey, a prosperous farmer and businessman, was active in the anti-Masonic movement and Whig politics, as was Hopkins, and it is likely that they became acquainted through these associations.¹

After the death of Ann Gennett, Allen Lacey remarried and, in 1847, the family moved west to Marshall, Michigan. There they joined other members of the Lacey family who had established farms in the Calhoun County area. Pierrepont apparently finished school in Marshall and, like his father and cousins, engaged in farming. In 1858, he married Agnes Antoinette McClure and the couple had one son, Henry Alden, in 1860. Pierrepont died in 1888 and is buried with his wife in the Austin cemetery, northwest of Marshall.²

The portrait of Pierrepont, nearly full-size, is one of the most ambitious and engaging likenesses taken by Hopkins. Solid and sturdy, the young boy, dressed in his best suit and red shoes and bolstered by his huge, mastiff dog, looks out candidly at the viewer. The portrait exhibits characteristics typical of Hopkins's style: the facial features



Milton W. Hopkins,
1789-1844
*Portrait of Ann Gennett Pixley
Lacey (1809-1841), 1835-36*
Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert H.
Dunn in memory of Ruth
Hanford Munn and James Buell
Munn, 78.187

(Facing page)
Milton W. Hopkins,
1789-1844
*Pierrepont Edward Lacey
and His Dog, Gun, 1835-36*
Oil on canvas, 42 x 30 1/2 in.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert H.
Dunn in memory of Ruth
Hanford Munn and James
Buell Munn, 78.189

include a slightly oversized "C" shaped inner ear, salmon-colored lips, broad arching of the eyebrows, indented temples, soft modeling of the eye socket, highlights in the pupil and inner corner of the eye, and shading on the side of the nose. Like many other folk painters, Hopkins paid particular attention to costume details: Pierrepont wears a "tunic suit," complete with a round, ruffled collar and military-style gold buttons—a type of outfit very common for young boys in the 1830s. His dog "Gun," probably a restless subject, was depicted in realistic detail with brown and white markings typical of the breed. Unlike other animals included in folk paintings that may have been products of the artist's imagination or based on popular illustrations, "Gun" was a real pet. According to a family history, the Laceys raised m a s t i f f s when they lived in Scottsville.

Pierrepont's portrait is one of a group of six showing children, full-length, dressed in their finest clothes, often accompanied by their dogs. Of the six



21: Thomas Ridgeway Gould *The West Wind* (1876)

Cynthia L. Culbert

Careless and American in aspect, her pulse-beats throbbing through a belt of Western stars, the glad incarnation seems to have just cooled in the Pacific the light foot she sets on the shore of an untamed continent.¹

So described in an 1876 review, Thomas Ridgeway Gould's *The West Wind* was the embodiment of westward expansion. The original sculpture, made in 1870, was so popular that Gould made at least seven more marble copies in two sizes, the last in 1876. The sculpture in the Memorial Art Gallery's collection, as well as personifying the American ideal of eminent domain and westward drive, also made quite a westerly journey herself. Tied to Rochester and the Memorial Art Gallery even through her creator, she took several trips and many decades to arrive at her final destination.

All the versions of *The West Wind* were carved in Florence, Italy, where Gould had resided since 1868. He had spent most of his life in Boston, working as a dry goods merchant and studying art in his spare time. After the Civil War, his business failing, he decided to try his hand at sculpture. As many sculptors before him had done, he made his way to Italy, where the old masters, the marble, and the carvers were abundant.

The West Wind's first connection to the Memorial Art Gallery was through Gould's family. He was the uncle of Marion Stratton Gould, who had died at the age of twelve and whose mother, Mrs. Samuel Gould of Rochester, created an endowment in her memory. The Marion Stratton Gould fund is still used to this day to acquire some of the Gallery's most important works. Mrs. Gould also bequeathed her brother-in-law's marble relief *The Ghost in Hamlet* to the Gallery.

But parts of *The West Wind*'s itinerary between Florence and Rochester are clouded. In 1871, the first documented *West Wind*, the original work, came to the U. S. It was owned by Demas Barnes,² and according to the catalogue of the exhibition was the one that appeared in the prestigious Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, a six-month celebration of the country's founding.³ (For this exhibition Gould had submitted, from Italy, applications for space for four sculptures: *The West Wind*, *The Water Babies*, *The Rose*, and *The Lily*.⁴) But the situation becomes confusing because another source lists the version of *The West Wind* on view at the exhibition as having been lent by "its owner, Mr. Powers, of Rochester, N.Y."⁵ Unfortunately, the Centennial catalogue was known for its mistakes and inconsistencies,⁶ so the question remains: which of the two versions of *The West Wind* appeared at the 1876 Exposition? Clearly, parts of the story of her journey from Florence to MAG have yet to emerge, but a good, if circumstantial, case can be made that, the catalogue aside, it was the Powers version that appeared in the Philadelphia exhibition.⁷

(Facing page)
Thomas Ridgeway Gould,
1818–1881
The West Wind, 1876
Marble, 70½ x 23 x 33¼ in.
Gift of the Isaac Gordon Estate
through the Lincoln
Rochester Trust Company,
66.18

What we do know is that "Mr. Powers"—Daniel W. Powers, a prosperous Rochester banker—bought several sculptures from the Exposition,⁸ and that he had also gone art-buying in Italy in 1875. It is possible that he met Gould in Florence and placed his order for *The West Wind* there rather than risk losing it to another buyer in Philadelphia, and taking advantage of the free shipping offered by the Exposition for works by American artists living abroad.⁹

Unknown photographer
Marion Stratton Gould
(1877–1890)
Hand-colored photograph
on opaque glass, ca. 1885–90
23¼ x 19¼ in.
Bequest of Mrs. Samuel Gould,
35.47





23: John Haberle *Torn in Transit* (1888-89) John Frederick Peto *Articles Hung on a Door* (after 1890)

Marjorie B. Searl

When humans have long enjoyed being astonished by the experience of illusion, by being “taken in” by the appearance of a reality that isn’t real. The most sophisticated connoisseur intent on brushing the lifelike fly or ant off the surface of a painting has gasped, at first with disbelief and then with delight, upon realizing that the creature is composed of strokes of paint. Legends about the virtuosity of artists like the ancient Greek painters Parrhasios and Zeuxis, who rivaled each other’s ability to deceive, have been handed down through the generations.¹

The “true modern Parrhasios,” late nineteenth-century painter William Harnett, set the standard for his nineteenth-century American peers for hyperillusionistic painting, a style often referred to after 1800 as “trompe l’oeil,” French for “fool the eye.”² Harnett studied in Philadelphia and then traveled to Europe in the early 1880s, where he could see a variety of painting styles and subjects. Later in the decade, his celebrated work *After the Hunt*, most likely painted in Germany, hung in Theodore Stewart’s Warren Street Saloon in Lower Manhattan, attracting visitors who came as much to see the painting as to drink. Much of the entertainment was generated by out-of-towners duped into placing a wager on whether or not the objects in the painting were real.³ While interest in this type of mimetic work declined as the influence of abstraction increased, in 1940, an exhibition called Nature-Vivre at Edith Halpert’s Downtown Gallery, encouraged its reexamination by *San Francisco Chronicle* art critic Alfred Frankenstein with unexpected results.⁴ Frankenstein became interested in Harnett’s work and decided to track it down; in the process, he revived the reputations of several of Harnett’s contemporaries. While works by Harnett are not represented in the Memorial Art Gallery’s collection, at least four MAG painters were indebted to him for their inspiration, and it’s nearly impossible to consider them without understanding his impact on American art history.

While American artists worked in the still-life tradition and included still-life details as early as John Singleton Copley’s pre-Revolutionary portraits, trompe l’oeil painting, a subset of still life, did not appear to flourish until the 1850s. Often, the work is composed in such a way that the canvas or panel itself appears to be the backdrop for one or more objects, and the eye, rather than being drawn toward the back of the painting, is only permitted to scan the details on the surface. Richard LaBarre Goodwin, for example, followed the tradition of Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait’s 1850s game paintings with *A Brace of Ducks* (1885).⁵ Goodwin’s ducks hang heavily on a nail against a plain background where the cast shadows cause the objects to appear to project into the viewer’s space. After 1885, presumably influenced by Harnett and paintings like *After the Hunt*, Goodwin’s work became more complex.



Richard LaBarre Goodwin,
1840–1910
A Brace of Ducks, 1885
Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in.
Marion Stratton Gould Fund,
64.39

(Facing page)
John Haberle,
1856–1933
Torn in Transit, 1888–89
Oil on canvas, 14 x 12¹/₈ in.
Marion Stratton Gould Fund,
65.6

Goodwin was but one of Frankenstein’s “finds” on the trail of Harnett.⁶ Another was John Haberle, an inventive trickster who understood that part of the success of a trompe l’oeil painting depended on its ability to activate the impulse to touch it. MAG’s *Torn in Transit*, one of three similar works by Haberle, is so tempting that curators keep a Plexiglas lid between the painting and the public.⁷ At first glance, we are not seeing a painting at all, but a package whose wrapper has been torn open to expose the contents, a

Frederick MacMonnies,
1863–1937
Nathan Hale (back), 1890
Bronze, 28³/₈ x 9¹/₂ x 5¹/₁₆ in.
Marion Stratton Gould Fund,
86.4



Frederick MacMonnies,
1863–1937
Nathan Hale at City Hall Park,
Manhattan, (life-size)
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to mind the words of a more contemporary and more infamous New Yorker, the heiress and hotel maven Leona Helmsley, who observed that she thought the responsibility for paying taxes pertained only to “the little people” in America. (No doubt she would have benefited from a better acquaintance with the idealism and willingness to make a personal sacrifice that shines forth from MacMonnies’s *Hale*.)

As we confront MacMonnies’s own reported words, we discover that much like Hale’s reputed oration, they conceal as much as they reveal, and warrant a more critical reflection than they sometimes receive. Ultimately, however, we are left with MacMonnies’s ability to imbue bronze with the power of testament and to embody the unabashed idealism of a national hero. Most heroes reveal flaws if examined closely, but not so the Hale of this remarkable work, in which the pathos is genuine, the sacrifice noble, its meaning clear. Thus the artist captures the essence of the heroic narrative and returns it to us in a visual *tour de force*. For all of the contradictions in the events it embodies, MacMonnies’s *Nathan Hale* shows us why heroes are necessary—and how much we miss them when they are gone.

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25: Winslow Homer *Paddling at Dusk* (1892)

David Tatham

Winslow Homer's long association with the Adirondacks began in 1870 and ended only with his death in 1910. He visited this heavily forested region of northern New York primarily to fish and to enjoy the company of other sportsmen and their families, but for many years he also took along his painting gear. From these visits came several oils and more than a hundred watercolors, including *Paddling at Dusk*.¹

Homer's preferred Adirondack locale was a forest clearing with rustic buildings in the Essex County township of Minerva. He found subjects in the local folk, fellow sportsmen, and the surround of woods, water, and low mountains. He depicted trappers, hunters, woodsmen, and guides, all of whom he knew and respected, showing them at work or resting from their labors. He also painted fly fishermen who, like himself, had come to the Adirondacks in search of an angler's paradise.

Paddling at Dusk differs from these Adirondack works in its singular subject. The figure who paddles toward the heavy foliage of the nearby shore is neither a local woodsman nor an active angler, but rather a well-dressed young man demonstrating the worthiness of a small lightweight canoe. He was



J. Ernest G. Yalden, a twenty-two year old engineering student at New York University who had himself built the canoe. Homer knew Yalden and his parents—they all belonged to the Adirondack Preserve Association. This organization (which in 1895 renamed itself the North Woods Club) had acquired the Minerva clearing, its buildings, and five thousand acres of woodland spotted with lakes and ponds.²

In 1936, forty-four years after Homer had rendered the scene, Yalden prepared an account of how and why the artist had painted him and his boat. He wrote:

Paddling at Dusk...was painted some time during the summer of 1892. Mr. Homer and myself were members of the Adirondack Preserve Association at the time; and this picture was made at Mink Pond on the preserve. It is a canoe built by myself which interested Mr. Homer on account of its portability for it weighed only 32 lbs. He was particularly interested in the broad flashes of light from the paddle when underway after dark; and this picture was painted when it was almost dark. The canoe built of mahogany was based on the model of a Canadian bateau, was 12 [feet] long, and 18 inches beam. It has always been a puzzle to me how he was able to get the effect he did when it was almost too dark to distinguish one color from another. I have a number of interesting photographs of Homer that I made when with him [at the club] for several summers....³



ALSO IN THE MAG COLLECTION:

After Winslow Homer,
1836–1910

*Camping Out in the Adirondack
Mountains*, 1874

(published in *Harper's Weekly*,
November 7, 1874)

Wood engraving, 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 13 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.
Gift of Howard and Florence
Merritt, 86.69

Winslow Homer,
1836–1910

Paddling at Dusk, 1892 (detail)

Watercolor with graphite
on wove paper, 15 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 21 $\frac{7}{16}$ in.

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. James
H. Lockhart, Jr., 84.51



54: Georgia O'Keeffe *Jawbone and Fungus* (1931)

Sarah Whitaker Peters

Georgia O'Keeffe's search for containers from nature that could hold and express her feelings and desires with paint has rarely turned up an odder pairing than the two in *Jawbone and Fungus* (1931). We can only speculate about the intentions behind its form and content. O'Keeffe never helped her paintings with words, but she did say (in her late eighties) that, "I find...I have painted my life—things happening in my life—without knowing."¹ Perhaps this is the most useful key we have.

What did she actually put here? The upper part of an animal's jawbone fills the foreground, and nearly all of the canvas's lower half. O'Keeffe did not identify the jawbone in her title, but it is generally considered to be that of a mule. (In the later 1930s she would paint several complete mule skulls.)

Directly behind the bleached bone is an unnervingly large black fungus. Cropped at its base by the bone, it appears to be levitating rather than growing properly out of the ground. There is a carefully calibrated balance between these two forms, with tactile interplays between the colors, between hard and soft, sharp and round, alive and dead—to name the most obvious ones.

What were bones to O'Keeffe? She found them "beautiful," she said in 1939, and "keenly alive."² By the time *Jawbone and Fungus* was painted, she had come to regard New Mexico as her psychic homeland, a place where "I felt as grateful for my largest hurts as I did for my largest happiness."³ In Taos, she had often gone to Indian dances, "sings," and other sacred ceremonies with Tony Luhan, the Navajo husband of her hostess Mabel Dodge Luhan. And she began to have an intense interest in the still-functioning Anasazi-Pueblo culture of New Mexico. It therefore seems unlikely she wouldn't have known that shamans in primitive societies the world over believed bones to be sacred. (They were not only placed in graves as regenerative symbols, they were used in divination and healing practices as well.)

The choice of a jawbone from the ass family may be significant for the artist's personal meaning. A beautiful shape to be sure. But with O'Keeffe abstract design is always a means, not an end in itself. As a symbolist painter, she never intends what you see to be all of what you get. Therefore we should probably be alert to the fact that the mule, the hinny, and the donkey are famous within the animal kingdom for being durable, sure-footed, obstinate, and hardy—traits that belong memorably to the artist (who lived to ninety-eight).

As to the fungus, O'Keeffe has juxtaposed it with the jawbone in a peculiarly threatening way. It towers over the bone like an ominous black cloud. The fungus is a plant of abnormal, spongy growth which has time-honored connections with morbidity.

Any meaning we glean from this picture must, of course, include the colors: variations on black, brown, and white. It should perhaps be stressed that white always held a specific meaning for O'Keeffe. Her husband, the great photographer Alfred Stieglitz, often referred to her as white. ("Georgia is a wonder....if ever there was a whiteness she is that."⁴)

Could the white jawbone be one of O'Keeffe's abstract self-portraits, and the black fungus one of Stieglitz? There is some context to suggest that this is so. The abstract portrait was a Stieglitz circle specialty. Inspired by New York Dada during World War I, Stieglitz encouraged the artists around him to analyze one another's personalities (including his own) by abstract means in order to create new forms and abstract symbols. O'Keeffe wrote a friend in 1915 that she was crazy about this stuff—that it just took her breath away.⁵ But she never admitted to doing it herself.

Georgia O'Keeffe,
1887–1986
Jawbone and Fungus, 1931
Oil on canvas, 17 x 20 in.
Marion Stratton Gould Fund,
51.1.1a
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Foundation/Artists Rights
Society (ARS), New York



60: Ralston Crawford *Whitestone Bridge* (1939–40)

Marjorie B. Searl

*Shocking to me: the solitary man
perched high on a girder of the Whitestone Bridge,
until his yellow hard hat bolts
into sight, his wind-burned face,
legs that ride a wedge between sky and sea. Closer,
and more startling still:
grasping a tiny whisk broom, he dusts the ledge
with a motion delicate and precise—
a jeweler brushing a watch's gears.
—From "Gulls and the Man" by Maria Terrone¹*

 On April 29, 1939, a brand-new New York City icon was dedicated—the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge. The bridge, itself heralded by many as a work of art, has inspired or figured in artistic creations in many genres, from the poem above to an exhibition of artworks related to Alfred Hitchcock's films, an exhibition that included Ralston Crawford's painting, *Whitestone Bridge*.²

Fittingly, the spare and elegant bridge is also a metaphor for a transitional period in Crawford's career, coming just as he moved from the painterly and peaceful landscapes and still lifes of the early 1930s to more austere works whose bridges, industrial elevators, roofs, and barns were created with a limited palette and linear style, linking him with precisionists like Charles Sheeler (1883–1965) and Charles Demuth (1883–1935).

Ralston Crawford's life and career were characterized by change.³ From California, where he worked as an illustrator for Walt Disney Studios, he moved to Philadelphia in 1927, where he became acquainted with modern art at the Barnes Foundation, and from there to New York City, which became his home base. Study in Europe, married life in Bucks County, and trips to Florida and New Orleans happened in quick succession. By 1938, he had completed some of his most muscular paintings, and the next year saw the creation of the surrealistic and much-acclaimed *Overseas Highway* (Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, 1939), a sibling to *Whitestone Bridge* in its illusionistic pull of the viewer into deep space, with no certainty of a safe landing at the other end, and only a cloud to reach for.

Whitestone Bridge was finished in 1940, the year following the bridge's completion. Given Crawford's interest in the industrial landscape the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge was a natural subject for him: a manmade structure of significant proportions, with startling visual impact and, viewed from the right angle, the potential for psychic unease. The bridge unfolds before the viewer like a fan, with carefully creased pleats made up of narrow slivers of guard rail, roadway, and median.

Using a severely restricted palette of blues, grays, black, and white, Crawford eliminates all but the most essential components of the composition. There is no meandering from foreground to middleground to background—the exaggerated diagonal lines leave the viewer no choice but to zoom ahead, as if one were in reality traversing the bridge by car. The surreal absence of land on the other side of the bridge—in effect, a suspension bridge suspended in space—suggests the memory of an anxiety dream, made dreamier by the cottony cloud drifting by, a counterpoint to the hard-edged surfaces of the painting.

Ralston Crawford,
1906–1978
Whitestone Bridge, 1939–40
Oil on canvas, 40¼ x 32 in.
Marion Stratton Gould Fund,
51.2
Ralston Crawford Estate

By 1936, traffic on the East River bridges, including the new Triborough Bridge, had become insupportable, and one powerful man, Robert Moses, was convinced that a new bridge would solve the problem. A crossing from Whitestone, Queens, to Ferry Point, the Bronx, had been proposed since early in the century, but not until Moses advanced his plan in 1930 was the vision for the complex roadway system that included the Whitestone Bridge fully articulated:



If the Marginal Boulevard, the Ferry Point-Whitestone Bridge and the Hutchinson River Parkway Extension were built...motorists would be able to leave Manhattan Island on the Brooklyn Bridge and then proceed over broad modern roads, unhindered by a single traffic light, all the way around Brooklyn to the Long Island parkways and parks. In addition, Manhattan and Brooklyn motorists would be presented with a through route to the Bronx, Westchester and New England—and so would motorists from Nassau and Suffolk counties.⁴

Resistance was strong: New York City's Regional Plan Association insisted that no traffic solution would be acceptable unless mass transit or the potential for mass transit were included as part of the structure. Moses was equally adamant that this not happen, possibly due to his concern that "undesirables" might overrun Long Island. Or, he may have been concerned that the budget would prove inadequate to the project.

As was nearly always the case, Moses had his way, but the city's much-anticipated traffic relief never materialized. Notwithstanding traffic woes, the bridge's design was widely praised. One reporter commented: "The bridge's

freedom from heavy structural lines and ornamentation gives a breath-taking grace to the 2,300-foot center span and 3,770-foot overall length."⁵ At the ribbon-cutting, Robert Moses described it as "architecturally the finest suspension bridge of them all, without comparison in cleanliness and simplicity of design, in lightness and absence of pretentious ornamentation. Here, if anywhere, we have pure, functional architecture."⁶ Forty years later, Moses was still smitten with the bridge's beauty, as he described the "'airy, gossamer lightness' of the original structure."⁷

New York City viewers in 1940, for whom the bridge was a symbol of innovation and progress, brought an entirely different set of associations to Crawford's painting than their 2005 counterparts. The streamlined Art Deco style of the Whitestone Bridge was a perfect entrée for visitors crossing the East River to the futuristic fairgrounds, whose theme—"Building the World of Tomorrow"—was expressed in its architecture and, especially, in its "Trylon and Perisphere" logo. On April 30, 1939 (in a feat of good planning, the day after the dedication of the Whitestone Bridge), Franklin Roosevelt made the first live television broadcast from Flushing Meadow Park, Queens, in which he declared the 1939 World's Fair officially open.⁸

Crawford's *Whitestone Bridge*, too, excited great interest and functioned as a benchmark against which his future work was often com-



Ralston Crawford,
1906–1978
Study for Fortune Magazine,
ca. 1945
Pen and ink with watercolor
on paper, 7¹⁵/₁₆ x 5 in.
Gift of Edith Holden Babcock,
Peter Iselin, Dr. Ben Shenson,
Dr. A. Jess Shenson, Emilie
Wiggin, and Marion Stratton
Gould Fund, by exchange, 95.50
Ralston Crawford Estate

Ralston Crawford,
1906–1978
Study for "Whitestone Bridge,"
ca. 1940
Pen and ink with graphite
on paper, 7¹⁵/₁₆ x 5 in.
Gift of Edith Holden Babcock,
Peter Iselin, Dr. Ben Shenson,
Dr. A. Jess Shenson, Emilie
Wiggin, and Marion Stratton
Gould Fund, by exchange, 95.48
Ralston Crawford Estate

pared. The celebratory atmosphere of the openings of the bridge and the World's Fair may have also given Crawford reason to believe that the bridge would be a well-received subject. He recalled that "The production of the painting 'Whitestone Bridge' was preceded by a series of direct visual stimuli related to this bridge and similar forms.⁹ In this painting I have tried to express the sensations and thoughts about the sensations that I have had while driving over such bridges. The simplifications and distortions aim at a distillation of these experiences. Some of the people who have gotten satisfaction from the painting tell me that it clarifies and enlarges their reaction to similar experiences."¹⁰



Ralston Crawford,
1906–1978
Study for "Whitestone Bridge,"
ca. 1940
Pen and ink with watercolor
on paper, 7¹⁵/₁₆ x 5 in.
Gift of Edith Holden Babcock,
Peter Iselin, Dr. Ben Shenson,
Dr. A. Jess Shenson, Emilie
Wiggin, and Marion Stratton
Gould Fund, by exchange, 95.49
Ralston Crawford Estate

The first published reference to the painting appears to have been in Edward Alden Jewell's review of the 1940 Whitney annual exhibition of contemporary American painting, which includes in an informal list of work "Ralston Crawford's severely simplified perspective device, 'Whitestone Bridge.'"¹¹ In January 1944, Dorothy Grafly, reviewing the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts salon, described the "cool, precise, engineering emphasis in Ralston Crawford's 'White Stone Bridge.'"¹² In 1943, the dynamic art dealer Edith Halpert of the Downtown Gallery began to represent Crawford¹³ and a year later she sold *Whitestone Bridge* to the Encyclopedia Britannica Collection:



Incidentally, did you know that we sold your "Whitestone Bridge" to Encyclopedia Britannica just before we closed for the summer. Because of the split commission (on which we charge 40%), I raised the price (and this is confidential) to \$850.00, so that you won't have to take a cut. They are assembling a pretty good collection, slightly on the conservative side, but have been breaking loose lately. I tried to put over a later example, but the committee couldn't quite take it. However, they got a swell picture, and everyone was happy.¹⁴

Ralston Crawford,
1906–1978
Whitestone Bridge, ca. 1940
Gelatin silver print,
2¹¹/₁₆ x 3¹⁵/₁₆ in.
Gift of Edith Holden Babcock,
Peter Iselin, Dr. Ben Shenson,
Dr. A. Jess Shenson, Emilie
Wiggin, and Marion Stratton
Gould Fund, by exchange, 95.52
Ralston Crawford Estate

Crawford answered her from Washington, D.C., on July 23, 1944:

I am terribly glad about WHITESTONE BRIDGE and I am more than pleased that you were able to arrange the price so effectively. I very well understand their choice of this picture rather than a later example. I also appreciate your effort to provide them with a later example. This procedure of selecting the earlier ones is, I am sure, an old story in your experience and it is becoming



ly honored by the National Academy," he endorsed Grumbacher oils in a national ad campaign: "After seeking the most permanent colors for years, I have come to the conclusion that Grumbacher Finest Oil Colors are my answer, and I always use them."⁹

The setting of the painting has always been a mystery. Clearly, it was a bar set slightly below street level (as indicated by the legs of figures seen through the window) and there was also a dining room (the sign appears on the back wall). But was it an actual place or a generic spot concocted in Gorsline's imagination? The discovery of a creased and faded photograph of a lost Gorsline painting titled *Costello's Bar* suggests that this was also the location depicted in *Bar Scene*, painted in the same year. This supposition is confirmed by a surviving copy of the menu that Gorsline designed for Costello's, illustrated with lively vignettes of the establishment's staff and patrons, one of the original sketches for which is also dated 1942.¹⁰



Costello's was the legendary home away from home for writers at *The New Yorker*, *The Daily News*, *United Press International*, and *Associated Press* and served as "forward editorial headquarters"¹¹ for *Yank Magazine* during World War II. Located at Third Avenue and East Forty-fourth Street in New York City, the Irish bar and grill was decorated with murals by James Thurber, one of its regulars, and made famous in John McNulty's *This Place on Third Avenue*. Its habitués were "truck drivers, horseplayers, glamour girls, draftees, has-beens, never-weres, dreamers and despairers,"¹² exactly the sort of characters that captured Gorsline's fancy. In *Costello's Bar*, which hung in the establishment until about 1947, proprietor Tim Costello leans against the mahogany bar while, in the background, an archetypal "Gorsline Girl" chats with a man in a fedora. The artist eventually reacquired the canvas; around 1957, while developing a new, "splintered" visual style, he painted a different portrait of Costello on top of it.¹³

Douglas Warner Gorsline,
1913–1985
Tim Costello, before 1947
Courtesy Musée Gorsline,
Bussy-le-Grand, France

Fortunately, *Bar Scene* has remained undisturbed in the Memorial Art Gallery's collection, still an outstanding example of urban genre painting. In recent years, it has been included in a number of exhibitions: A Rochester Retrospective (1980), The Art of Douglas Gorsline (1990), Out of the Drawing Room (1995), and Eye Contact: Paintings by Ken Aptekar (2002). It also appeared in *Amerika: Traum und Depression, 1920–1940*, which was on view in Berlin and Hamburg in 1980–81.

Even as Gorsline was receiving accolades from the critics, he was urged by them to emancipate himself from discipleship to Kenneth Hayes Miller, his former teacher and also a master of the urban scene. "His vocabulary of night clubs, restaurants and subways could be broadened," counseled one.¹⁴ "It will be interesting to see whether this young painter...will be able to dominate a

felicitous technique or whether his skill will stand in the way of more mature emotional growth," mused another.¹⁵

(Facing page)

Douglas Warner Gorsline,
1913–1985
Bar Scene, 1942
Oil on canvas, 29½ x 25¼ in.
Art Patrons' Purchase Award,
1942 Rochester-Finger Lakes
Exhibition, 42.19
Courtesy Musée Gorsline,
Bussy-le-Grand, France

Although he never fully rejected realism, by the late 1950s Gorsline had begun wedding it to a cubist sensibility. Inspired by the photographs of Étienne-Jules Marey, his new work was visually fragmented—an exploration of movement and the passage of time. In 1965, he moved to a remote farm in the Burgundy region of France with his third wife, Marie, who had been his artist's representative. Mrs. Gorsline now directs the museum she created to house his work in Bussy-le-Grand, where examples of both his early and late paintings are on view to the public.

Marie Via is Director of Exhibitions, Memorial Art Gallery.



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