

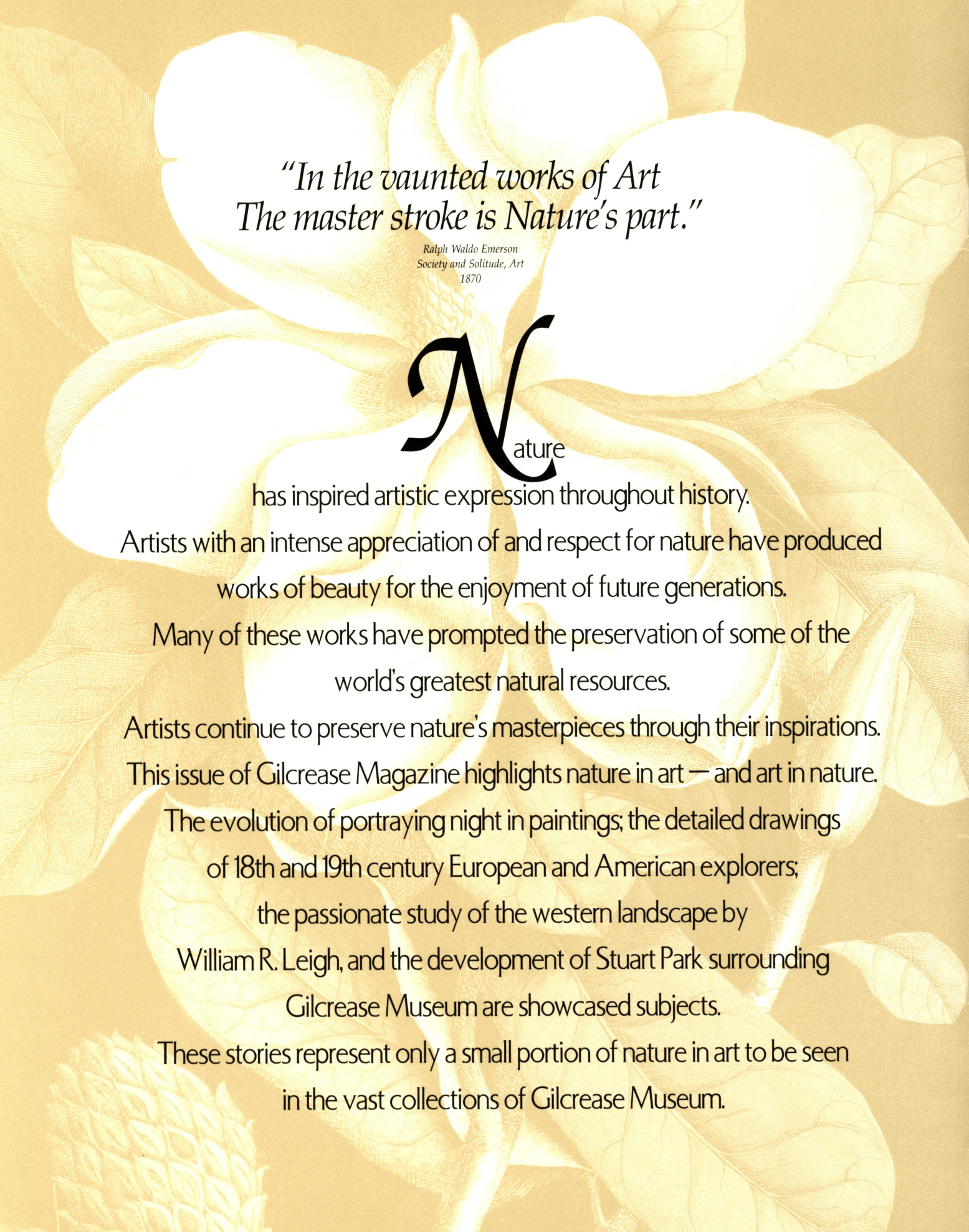
GILCREASE

MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART



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GILLIE
LIBRARY



*"In the vaunted works of Art
The master stroke is Nature's part."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Society and Solitude, Art
1870

Nature

has inspired artistic expression throughout history.

Artists with an intense appreciation of and respect for nature have produced works of beauty for the enjoyment of future generations.

Many of these works have prompted the preservation of some of the world's greatest natural resources.

Artists continue to preserve nature's masterpieces through their inspirations.

This issue of Gilcrease Magazine highlights nature in art — and art in nature.

The evolution of portraying night in paintings; the detailed drawings of 18th and 19th century European and American explorers;

the passionate study of the western landscape by

William R. Leigh, and the development of Stuart Park surrounding Gilcrease Museum are showcased subjects.

These stories represent only a small portion of nature in art to be seen in the vast collections of Gilcrease Museum.

NOCTURNES: PAINTINGS OF NIGHT

BY ANNE MORAND

During the 1860s, in an effort to release his work from the confines of subject matter, James Abbott

McNeill Whistler began painting the night. Considered as atmospheric studies, his dreamy, pensive representations of night were first called moonlights, though he later designated them with the musical term nocturne. He believed “as music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight, and the subject-matter has nothing to do with harmony of sound or of color.”

Characterized by a flat field of serene blue-green, *Nocturne, the Solent* was part of a series of seascapes Whistler completed after traveling to Chile in 1866. The title refers to his ship, *The Solent*, one of the three seen in the upper left quadrant of his composition. Although certain artistic conventions remain, with this type of painting Whistler began to challenge the boundaries of traditional

landscape painting. He established a high horizon line, the meeting of sea and sky, in the upper region of the composition. However, the break is barely discernible; sky is differentiated by a subtle lightening of color and minimal mixture. A dark, slightly thickened line at the far right suggests land.

The three square-rigged ships that populate the middle distance tie together the sea and sky and cast delicate reflections on the calm sea. Their running lights and pinpoints of light on the shore, painted in brilliant yellow are the only color highlights on an otherwise monochromatic surface. Whistler saved the painting from monotony by animated brushwork and fluid paint application that suggest the rippling of water.

Whistler, although born an American, spent his career abroad. A period of study in Paris spanning the 1850s and 1860s exposed him to varied influences. Among them were French modernism and Spanish tonalism as revealed through artists such as Gustave

Courbet, Edward Manet, Velasquez, and Oriental aesthetics learned from recently imported Japanese prints. Although he made his home in London, Whistler continued to travel and was seen by the European progressive art community as an articulate proponent of the avant-garde. However, the traditional art public, steeped in Victorian values, failed to understand or appreciate his attempts to synthesize a personal artistic statement out of his interests and abilities.

Paintings such as *Nocturne, the Solent* were among the most controversial works he had done. It is difficult to understand how paintings so placid as this could have confused and angered the art public during the 19th century. But Whistler's nocturnes negated the values taught by centuries of western (occidental) art, primarily prevailing ideas about light and color. First, consider the color that Whistler developed for his nocturnes. Whistler knew night as an equalizer. With the absence or lowering of intensity of light, color perception changes. Many colors wash out into a subdued blue-green, the color Whistler strove intently to mimic. Although the particular color was his own development, he borrowed the concept of restrained, nearly monochromatic expanses from Velasquez and from 18th century French painting, translated through Manet's work.

Whistler recognized his own lack of skill in drawing. To compensate, he avoided the naturalistic subjects of Manet, opting instead to develop figurative paintings that were formal harmonies of color and design. This kind of painting





James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), Nocturne, the Solent(1866), oil on canvas, 19 1/2 by 36 inches

anticipated the Symbolists movement in France during the last half of the 19th century, in which night was seen not as a setting for action, but as mood. The Symbolist writers and painters strove to suggest mood with their words and visions rather than to tell a story, and night was perceived as a subject itself, without the need for supporting narrative.

Traditional 19th century audiences perceived paintings as perfect views from a window, neatly framed, carefully chosen sections of life. Compositions which included all necessary information to comprehend the subject were

Whistler's ideas were influential as they filtered down through the last decades of the 19th century . . .

handily contained within the frame. Certainly Whistler framed his paintings, but his were glances from a window at night, of mundane things viewed by chance rather than choice.

In paintings such as *Nocturne, the Solent*, Whistler used no crisp outlines, no hard focus. Here, he was not the innovator; his work was preceded by several generations of painters seeking to render in a painterly fashion. Whistler had studied Rembrandt and Velasquez and learned the dynamic of undefined or underdefined edges, of surfaces that overlap. His own transitions are either very soft or lost completely, as occurs in

nocturnal and peripheral observation. Nocturnal observation also revealed to Whistler that detail is suppressed or nonexistent at night. The lack of detail that defined the nocturnes was perhaps the hardest aspect of Whistler's work for his public to comprehend; in fact, few in his time ever did. Detail was a prime factor used to judge the ability of a painter.

An aspect of Whistler's work derived specifically from Oriental aesthetics was spatial ambiguity; audiences found it puzzling. Were objects near or far to the viewer, were they large or small in relation to the viewer and to each other? Whistler compounded his audience's consternation when he combined spatial ambiguity with enigmatic subject matter. Without knowledge of Whistler's intention, *Nocturne, the Solent* is identifiable only as a seascape. Without explanation, the title offers no enlightenment. Even explanations can be confusing; Whistler's audience in London would have recognized Solent as the name of a body of water that separates the Isle of Wight from the southern coast of England. Fewer would have known it to be the name of the ship he took from Southampton, England, to Chile (sailing through the Solent strait on departure). The coastline in the painting offers no help in discerning whether Whistler illustrates England or Chile. Only Whistler's private writings disclose his intention to paint his ship and others anchored off the coast of South America.

Whistler probably was not

fundamentally attempting to confuse his audience. Instead, he hoped the ambiguities would offer them a chance to accept his work as a pleasing arrangement of color and form on canvas, instead of expecting a story. Whistler rejected narrative as necessary and valid,





Frederic Remington, (1861-1909), *The Hungry Moon* (1906), oil on canvas, 20 by 26 inches

explaining in a discussion of another painting:

"My picture of a *Harmony in Grey and Gold* is an illustration of my meaning — a snow scene with a single black figure and a lighted tavern. I care nothing for the past, present, or future of the black

figure, placed there because the black was wanted at that spot. All that I know is that my combination of grey and gold is the basis of my picture. Now this is precisely what my friends cannot grasp. They say, 'Why not call it "Trotty Veck," and sell it for a round

harmony of golden guineas?'"

By the same logic, consider if Whistler had called *Nocturne, the Solent* "My Ship, the Solent, Anchored Near Valparaiso." The title would have described the scene completely and accurately and it would have made the subject

a little less ambiguous, but it would have imparted narrative, no matter how simplistic. Such a title would have relegated this painting to the ranks of a not very well-painted document of Whistler's transportation. By giving the painting a musical name, one that evokes mood, he tried to inform his audience that he desired only a response to mood.

Whistler's ideas were influential as they filtered down through the last decades of the 19th century and were spread to European and American painters. An unlikely and indirect disciple of Whistler was found during the early 20th century in Frederic Remington. Although Remington did not appreciate Whistler's work, calling his nocturnes "Black holes with no imagination," he did respond to Charles Rollo Peters, a California Tonalist painter who was a follower of Whistler. Remington, viewing Peters' paintings exhibited at the Union League Club in 1899, saw the possibilities for nocturnal studies in his own work, and made his first attempts in 1900.

Remington's *Hungry Moon* (1906) may be considered one of the finest examples of western nocturnal subjects. The painting is narrative, its story made more dramatic by the night setting. *Hungry Moon* reveals an aspect of Indian domestic life. A small group of Indian women work by moonlight in the snow to butcher a buffalo killed by now unseen hunters the previous day.

By cloaking it in night, Remington made *Hungry Moon* poignant, amplifying the desperation that forces the women

to work unprotected in the bitter cold. Remington saved the scene from sentimentality by limiting detail. Figures rendered in cold, midnight blue and black, are sharply defined against a silvery-green field of snow, but they are featureless. Only upon close examination does the viewer discern the specific forms of women and buffalo.

*As had Whistler,
Remington observed, but
then altered, his reality to
suit his painting.*

Remington's night scenes, first shown in December 1901 in New York, were immediately successful and won him the critical acclaim he sought as a painter. The timing was good for Remington to venture into this new territory. Critics perceived the experiments with night as progressive, aesthetic and innovative. Although Remington included day scenes in the exhibition, the critics preferred his nocturnes. Responding to the positive criticism, his nocturnal studies became so pervasive that by his 1908 exhibition in New York, three quarters of his canvases depicted the night. Even his day scenes were more tonal and subdued.

Lessons learned by Remington from Whistler, as translated through Peters, included reducing his palette. Another lesson well-applied, though not to the extremes of Whistler, is the dissolu-

tion of figures into the surrounding night. This is especially apparent in the group of horses in the background of *Hungry Moon*. Also, Remington attempted, but not to the extent Whistler did, to make his spaces ambiguous. The distance implied between the horses and the women is accepted only because of the intensity of the moonlight.

The success of paintings such as *Hungry Moon* is dependent on the high contrast between dark and light. From Peters, Remington learned the power of a large reflective surface; the expanse of snow on the ground serves as a secondary light source to further enhance the effects of the moon. It also serves as a dramatic backdrop for action.

As had Whistler, Remington observed, but then altered, his reality to suit his painting. He reduced the amount of pictorial detail and allowed mood to become an integral part of the work. But Whistler had no story — no sense of place — and that is what Remington ultimately had no desire to give up.

Artists who painted night scenes after Whistler's time realized as he did that these paintings by their nature require substantial observation of the night and its effects on familiar surroundings to be successful. Paint could be manipulated, in various colors, into shapes that were arranged in a pleasing format on the surface. This was not abstraction to its extreme as would occur later in the 20th century, but formed an idea that art could do more than mimic life and that representation could also be interpretation. ☺



George Catlin (1796-1872), *Ojibbeway Indians Spearing Salmon by Torchlight (1852)*, oil on canvas, 11 by 14 1/2 inches



George Catlin (1796-1872), *Sioux Indians Hunting Deer by Torchlight (1852)*, oil on canvas, 11 by 14 1/2 inches

In the 1840s and 1850s, George Catlin made a small number of nocturnal hunting scenes such as *Ojibbeway Indians Spearing Salmon by Torchlight* and *Sioux Indians Hunting Deer by Torchlight*. Catlin created almost monochromatic, intensely dark brown compositions of extremely shallow space defined by impenetrable dark. Limited ambient light provided by a torch in the lower register of each composition provides just enough illumination for the viewer to discern figures. The surrounding darkness is palpable, even cloying. Most interested in documentary images of Native American cultures, Catlin probably made his earliest experiments painting night as a result of recording observed events rather than a particular interest in nocturnal effects.

Compare Leigh's two versions of *Rainbow Bridge*. The sun suffuses the scene with a broad spectrum of soft color; the night robs it of that variety. However, moonlight imparts mood and vitality, an air of mystery and wonder. In the daylight version one can consider this formation and its oddity in

nature. The night version causes one to speculate on the beauty of the night. Leigh wrote:

"The light of the moon is the most appropriate light in which to view this fantastic freak [*Rainbow Bridge*]. With a background of enigmatic stars, it speaks a language all its own."



William R. Leigh (1866-1955), *Rainbow Bridge (1921)*, oil on canvas, 13 by 16 1/2 inches



William R. Leigh (1866-1955), *Rainbow Bridge (1921)*, oil on canvas, 13 by 16 1/2 inches



Joseph Henry Sharp (1859-1953), *Singers of the Night, Taos Pueblo*, oil on canvas, 30 by 40 inches

Sharp painted a range of nocturnal subjects, from those featuring groups of Taos Indians gathering for an evening ceremony, to those examining the uniquely western character of a Crow village at night. Moonlight sharply defines the robed figures in *Singers of the Night, Taos Pueblo*. In *Crow Teepees at Night*, moonlight is diffused by cloud cover. The secondary light source, warm glow of fire inside the tipi, is ameliorated by the hide walls and is not strong enough to detail figures.

As Sharp lived first in Montana on the Crow reservation during the first decade of the 20th century and then later in Taos, New Mexico, near the Pueblo, both scenes resulted from observed phenomenon.



Joseph Henry Sharp (1859-1953), *Crow Teepees at Night*, oil on canvas, 20 by 30 inches



Thomas Moran (1837-1926), *Moonlight on Napeague Beach* (1901), oil on canvas, 20 by 30 inches

Thomas Moran rarely painted night landscapes and may have created *Moonlight on Napeague Beach* as part of his life-long interest in atmospheric effects. Probably based on observation — the community of Napeague was a near neighbor to his home of East Hampton, New York — the painting captured the suffused moonlight reflected off clouds and sand dunes.

Several periods of European travel and study during the 19th century resulted in latent influences that periodically emerged in Moran's work. In England during the 1860s and 1880s, he probably

saw Whistler's nocturnes. Although Moran's composition was created many years after Whistler's, and betrays attention to detail that Whistler rejected and Moran retained until the last years of his career (note the crane in the foreground and buildings on the horizon), *Moonlight on Napeague Beach* can be seen as an evocative painting of mood. Due to his interest and participation in the New York art scene throughout his career, he would also have been aware of the Tonalists. *Moonlight on Napeague Beach* was painted two years after Charles Rollo Peters' exhibit of nocturnes in New York.

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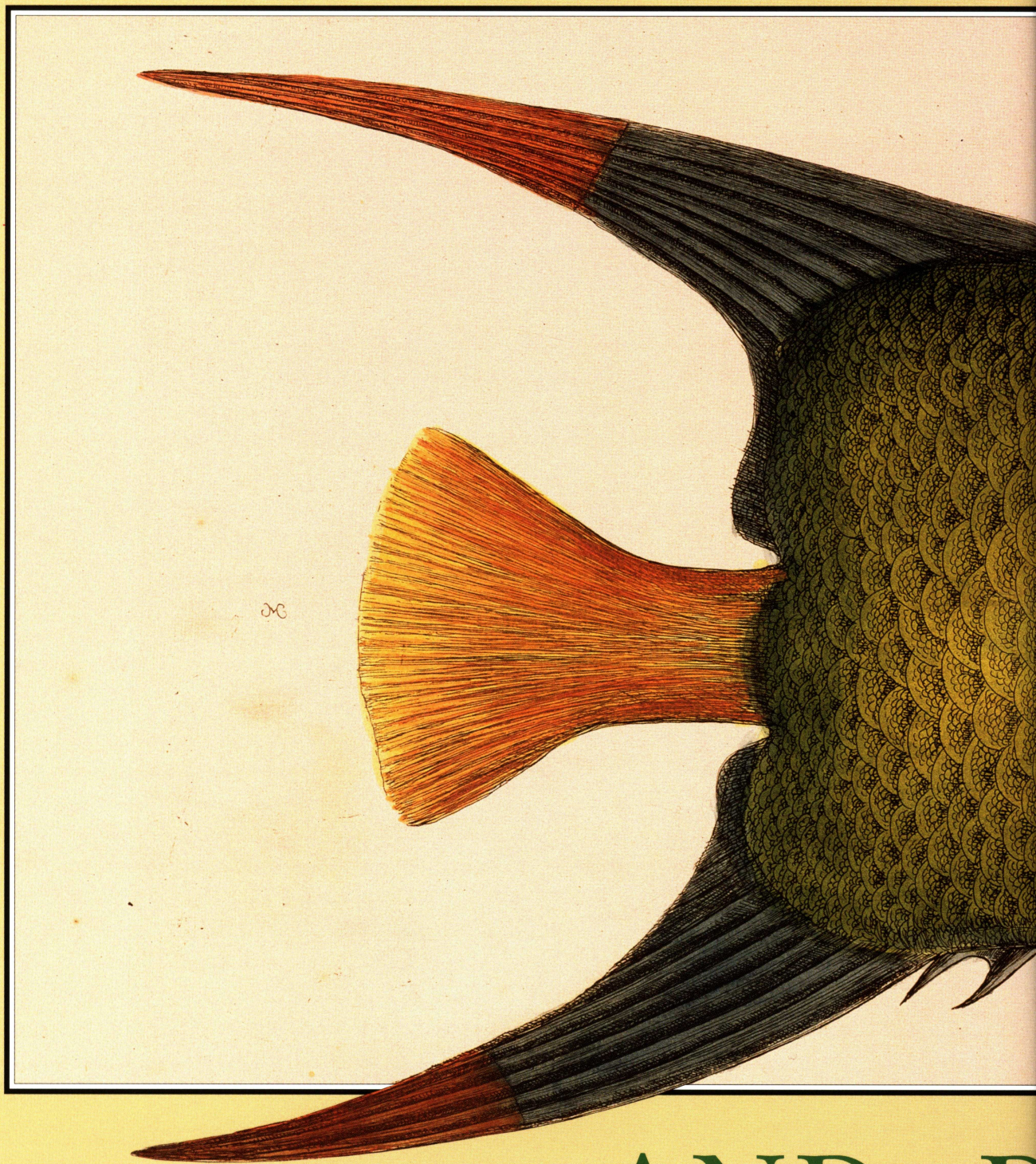
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NATURAL HISTORIANS:

SCIENTISTS AS



AND D

ARTISTS

BY PAUL KELTON



The discovery of America by Europeans is often attributed to the great explorers such as

Christopher Columbus, John Cabot, and Henry Hudson, but America is too large, complex, and dynamic to have been discovered by only a few people. It may be more appropriate to attribute the discovery of America to the many natural historians, both European and American, who sought a scientific understanding of a world that was new to them.

For these individuals, America was a laboratory for the Linnaean science of classification. Promises of previously unclassified specimens drove many to explore areas that had yet to be reached by Euroamericans. They saw foreign plants, animals, landscapes, and people that were intriguing. Moreover, they recorded these with such artistic beauty and scientific detail that others ventured into the American wilderness seeking a pristine natural environment.

The Gilcrease Museum archives contain several rare books which describe the natural history of the western hemisphere as seen through the eyes of 18th and 19th century European and American explorers. These books remain magnificent examples of

SCOVERERS

Picus varius, ventre ruber.
The red belly'd Woodpecker.

Picus varius medius, quasi villosus.
The hairy Woodpecker.



Quercus (frax) Marilandica, folio crispato ad Japonicas Accedente. Ray. Hb.
Black Oak

Mark Catesby, Red-bellied and Hairy Woodpeckers, Black Oak, hand-colored engraving, 9 7/8 by 13 3/4 inches

the beauty of the American environment.

Mark Catesby's two-volume work, entitled *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands* (published 1731-1743), contributed to European and American science in the 18th century. Catesby (1682/83-1749) was an Englishman, who in 1722 began his travels in the Southeast, travels that provided him with the material to produce his master-

piece. Intrigued by all that he found, Catesby gathered and painted so many samples that it took him over 20 years to complete his two volumes. Catesby's documentation included everything from the Black Squirrel to the Great Moth in his *Natural History*. Each picture is distinguished by impressive detail that not only gives the work scientific importance, but also artistic value. Catesby was among the first to

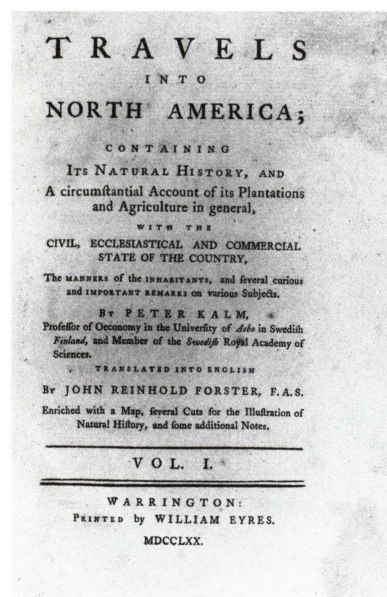
illustrate animals in their natural habitat. With his paintings, he included a written description of each subject, which together created an unprecedented work of natural history. Although *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands* was an expensive book for the time, it was quite popular and utilized greatly by future natural historians.

Shortly after Catesby ended his travels in the southeastern colonies, a Scandinavian named Peter Kalm (1716-1779) toured the northern colonies. Kalm wrote a book, appropriately titled *Travels into North America*, which appeared in three volumes between 1753 and 1761. It was translated and published in English in 1770. Kalm was interested in the social, as well as the natural, aspects of North America. Since he commented on a variety of things including pre-revolutionary Philadelphia, colonial slavery and white and Indian relations, Kalm's work is an important source for colonial historians and an important source in understanding how Europeans viewed America in the 18th century. During his stay in the American colonies, Kalm was often a welcomed guest at the home of Benjamin Franklin. Kalm, a student of Carl Linnaeus, also contributed to the natural science of the period with his description of the northern colonies. His sketches included animals such as the Raccoon and the American Pole-Cat.

One of the most noted natural historians represented in the Gilcrease Collection of rare books is William Bartram (1739-1823), the son of John Bartram the first



Mark Catesby, The Black Squirrel, hand-colored engraving, 13 5/8 by 10 inches



Title page and illustrations from "Travels into North America" by Peter Kalm



American-born botanist. William Bartram completed a volume of natural history in 1793 entitled *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida*. The English poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were inspired by the beauty of the American environment as represented by Bartram.

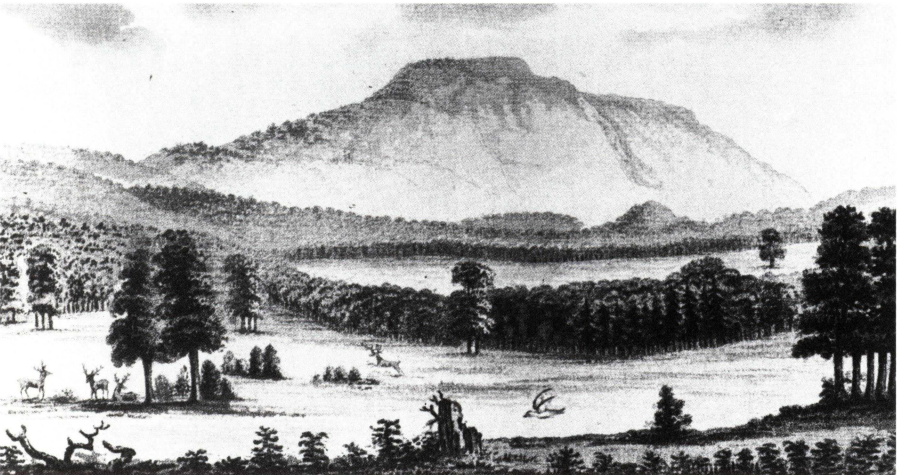
Bartram was curious about all aspects of the American environment. When he discovered several large snakes, Bartram stated, “I endeavored to irritate them, in order to discover their disposition.” Fortunately, their disposition was mild and Bartram was not harmed.

Bartram included Native Americans in his natural history, but he described them as if they were Jean-Jaques Rousseau’s noble savage. In the inside front cover of *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida*, there is a drawing of an ornate Seminole, titled “Micco Chluccho the long Warrior, or King of the Siminoles [sic].” Bartram describes the Creeks, Seminoles, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Cherokees as “tall, erect, and moderately robust; their limbs well shaped, so as generally to form a perfect human figure . . . yet the forehead and brow so formed, as to strike you instantly with heroism and bravery.” Despite the stereotypical image of the noble savage that is present in Bartram’s work, his description of these tribes provides an important source of information of southeastern Indian culture during the 18th-century.

A friend of William Bartram, Thomas Nuttall (1786-1859),



William Bartram (1739 - 1823), *Mico Chluccho the Long warrior, or King of the Seminoles*, engraving, 6 3/4 by 4 1/2 inches



Thomas Nuttall (1786 - 1859), *Cavanol Mountain*, lithograph, 8 3/8 by 5 inches



John Gould (1804 - 1881), *Pterophanes temminckii*, hand-colored lithograph, 22 by 15 inches

provided the earliest documentation of the natural history of what is now Oklahoma. In 1819, the American Philosophical Society sponsored Nuttall on a trip into an area of western territory that many thought to be inhospitable. It was in fact a difficult trip for Nuttall. He suffered many hardships, including a fever from which he nearly died. He survived and in 1821 published his *Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory During the Year 1819*. Nuttall gave details of the Oklahoma landscape, flora and fauna as it existed before the southern Indian tribes brought elements of white civilization to the area. Included in his work are descriptions of the Arkansas, Grand, and Verdigris Rivers and the Kiamichi and Quachita Mountains. He also made reference to Osage encampments and several Cherokee settlers, who had moved to the West before the federal government forced the main body to evacuate their eastern homelands in the 1830s. In 1823, Nuttall was appointed a professor of natural history and botany at Harvard University. Nuttall returned to the West in 1834 with an expedition led by Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth. On this journey, which eventually took him to the west coast and then to Hawaii, he discovered the western dogwood tree, which in Linnaeus terminology bears his name — *Cornus nuttalli*.

John Gould's *A Monograph of the Trochilidae or Humming Birds* contains strikingly beautiful images of numerous species of hummingbirds. Gould (1804-



John Gould (1804 - 1881), *Clytolaema Rubinea*, hand-colored lithograph, 22 by 15 inches

1881) classified and painted specimens collected from residents or travelers of the Americas. He depicted the birds in their natural habitat and included a description of their features, manners, and locality. Gould's work encompasses twenty-five volumes, which he began publishing in 1849 and completed by 1861. Most of the birds pictured were from South and Central America, but some inhabited North America as well. Gould's work was a significant contribution to students of ornithology, but was also a great artistic achievement. One does not have to be an ornithologist to benefit and enjoy Gould's hummingbirds.

The works of the renowned artist Karl Bodmer (1809-1893) also contributes to the importance of Gilcrease's rare books concerning the natural history of the Americas. Contained in a volume, published in 1844 and entitled *Illustrations to Maximilian Prince of Wied's Travels in the Interior of North America*, are a series of hand-colored aquatint engravings. These works were inspired during Prince Maximilian's Missouri River expedition of 1833-34 and illustrate the Great Plains as seen in its pristine glory. Maximilian may have been the best trained natural historian to travel through the American West before the 1850s. His book on his travels and experiences with Native Americans became a reference for many ethnographers. Unlike Maximilian, Bodmer was not a scientist, but a European-trained artist, who complemented

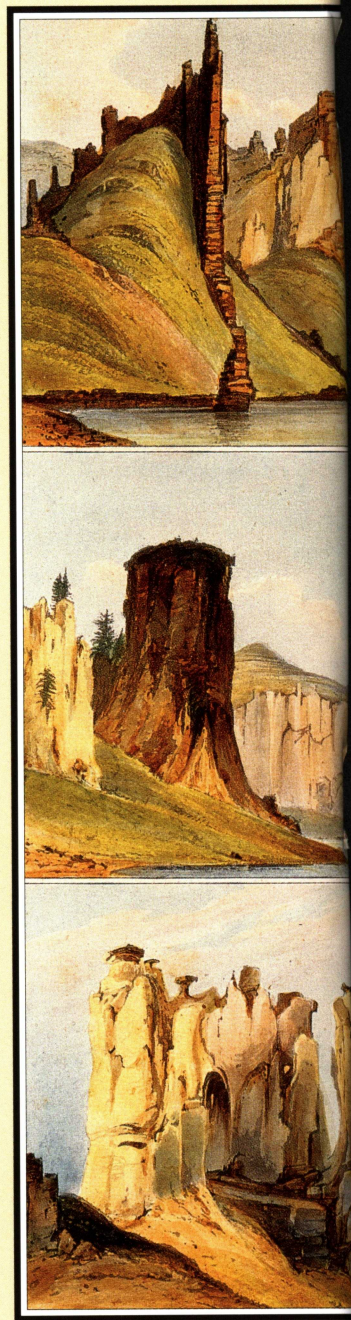
Maximilian's scientific ability. Many of Bodmer's works, and perhaps his most famous, are dedicated to Native American subjects. In addition, he painted landscapes, plants, and animals of the Great Plains, giving non-Natives a magnificent visual image of the West. Bodmer and Maximilian were impressed with the geological formations along the Missouri River, which they thought resembled medieval ruins. In fact, Maximilian was almost fooled by one such formation, as he stated, "These singular natural formations, when seen from a distance, so perfectly resembled buildings raised by art, that we were deceived by them, till we were assumed of our error."

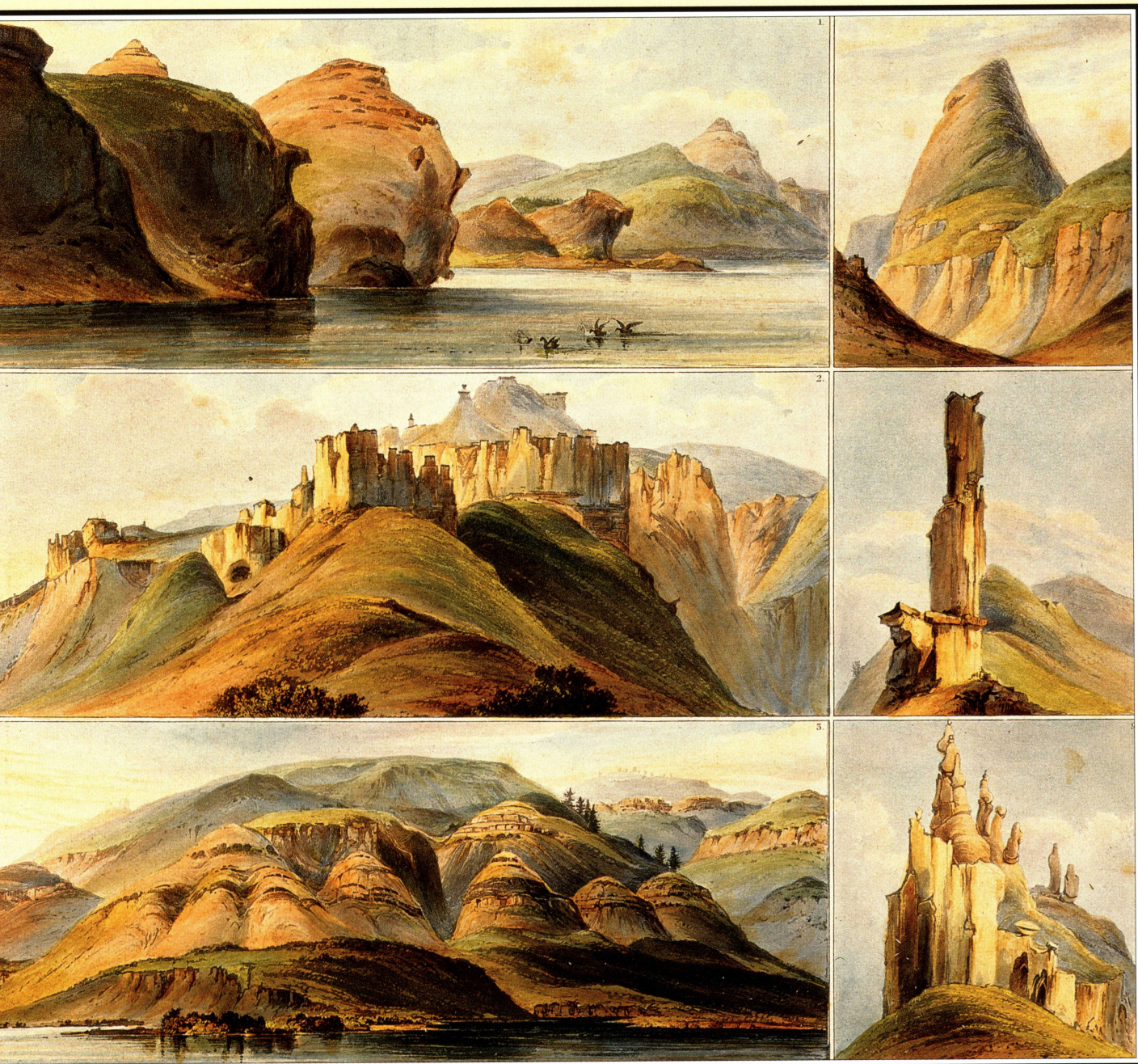
Catesby, Kalm, Bartram, Nuttall, Gould, and Bodmer were all discoverers of America. They discovered something that many explorers failed to see — a beautiful natural environment. They did not travel into a relatively unknown land to exploit its resources or remove its native inhabitants. They ventured into the American wilderness to discover plants, animals, and peoples. Their works made significant contributions to science and art. Furthermore, they serve as important sources of information for devotees of Colonial America and the American West. ☺

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Paul Kelton has an undergraduate degree in history from the University of Tulsa and is working toward a doctoral degree in Western American history at the University of Oklahoma. For two semesters he has been an intern at Gilcrease Museum, working in the Library and conducting research on the Cherokee Indians during the Civil War.





Karl Bodmer (1809 - 1893), Remarkable Hills of the Upper Missouri, hand-colored aquatint engraving, 15 3/4 by 21 3/4 inches

W. R. LEIGH:

LETTING NATURE BE HIS GUIDE

BY PAULA HALL

The sky and land
always held a certain
fascination for William
Robinson Leigh.

This intimacy with the
many moods of nature grew intently during his
80-year career as a painter. The artistic legacy
he left tells the story of his passion
to capture on canvas the fleeting moments
when nature redesigns itself through
light and color.

An Arizona sunset, a threatening sky or
sunrise on a tranquil, summer day in the desert
were some of Leigh's most cherished
subjects for his canvases.

Leigh's keen interest in learning about the
land and his surroundings began with
early boyhood experiences.

Born in 1866 in Berkley County, West
Virginia, he received his early education at
home under private tutors. Leigh roamed and
explored nature freely on the family plantation
located on the banks of the Potomac River.

In his unpublished memoirs written
in 1952, Leigh recalled some of his
earliest observations:

"I was close to the long rear porch, and
both my mother and father were on the
porch reading. I heard distant thunder off to
the west, and looking out I beheld not far



*William R. Leigh (1866 - 1955),
Cumulus Clouds Opposite Sunset, South Dakota (1913),
oil, 13 by 17 inches*



above the horizon, billowing clouds, edged with afternoon sunlight. They were piled up, roughly resembling a great stairway leading to dizzy heights.”

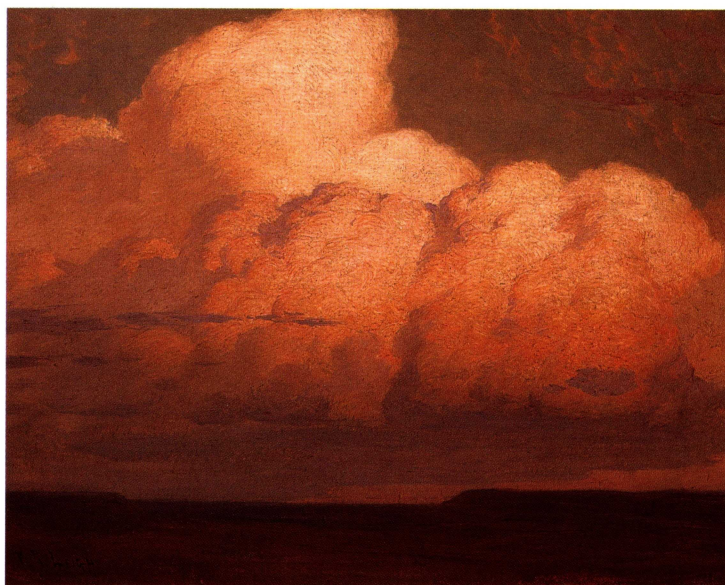
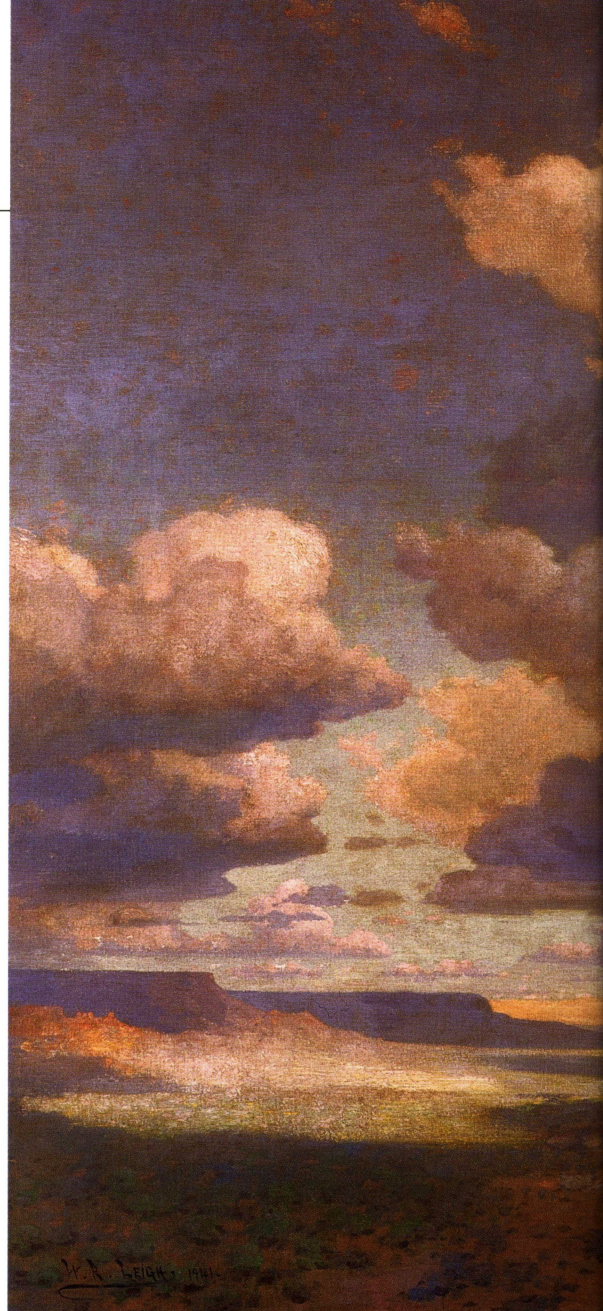
Although in later years Leigh devoted much of his time to capturing the image of the American cowboy and the life of the Navajo, Hopi and Zuni, the allure of the sky and land remained.

Leigh began his formal study of art at the Maryland Institute in Baltimore in 1880. At the age of 17 he entered the Royal Academy of Art in Munich, Germany. While studying and painting in Europe for the next 12 years, Leigh never lost sight of one goal — to explore and paint the American West.

“I have always felt that the West was the place for me. Even while I studied in Europe I had this in my mind as my objective, and consistently worked and planned to the end that I might go there and paint,” Leigh wrote.

When Leigh returned to America in 1896, he was confident his future still depended on traveling West. But his long years of studying abroad had left Leigh financially strapped and to fund his pursuit of the West he began producing illustrations for such publications as *Scribner's Magazine*.

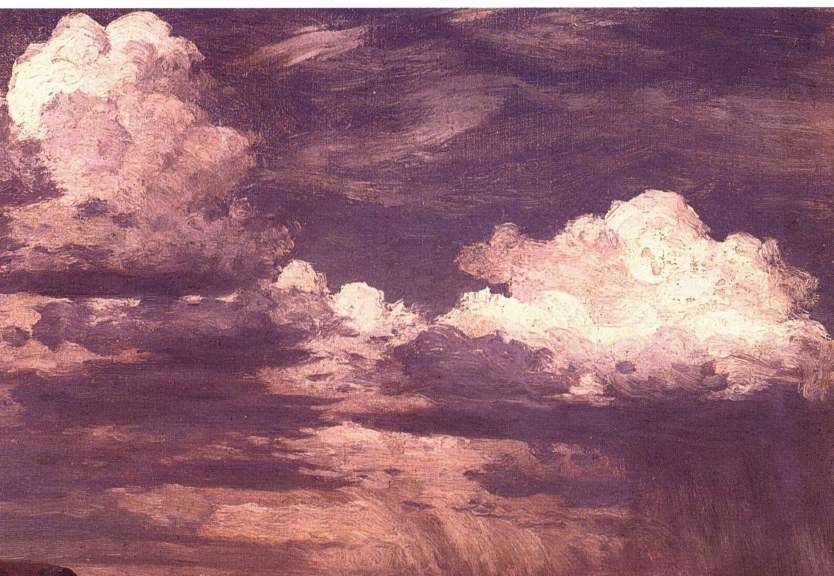
In 1906, Leigh made his first trip to the American West. He was 40 years old. During those first summer trips, Leigh concentrated primarily on sketching and painting the Grand Canyon and the surrounding area. Eventually he ventured to the lands of the Southwest. Nearly every summer



William R. Leigh (1866 - 1955), *Massive Cumulus Clouds Opposite Sunset , Arizona*, oil, 13 by 17 inches



William R. Leigh (1866 - 1955), Arizona Wonderland (1941), oil, 13 by 17 inches



William R. Leigh (1866 - 1955), Threatening Weather Ganado, Arizona, 1912, oil, 13 by 17

between 1912 and 1926, Leigh left his Manhattan studio and traveled in the lands of the Hopi and Navajo in the Keams Canyon and Ganado, Arizona, area to study, sketch and photograph Indian life and the Southwest landscape.

Leigh, known for his quest for accuracy based on first-hand observation, found the drama, simplicity and beauty of the Southwest a natural haven for his life's work.

He commented on one of his first trips west:

"I was eager to waste no time whatever. I saw that I needed studies of everything, the vegetation, the rocks, and plains, the mesas, the sky, the Indians and their dwellings, scores of studies — dependable studies. I saw that I must, as far as possible, soak up everything . . . I started to paint, paint, paint."

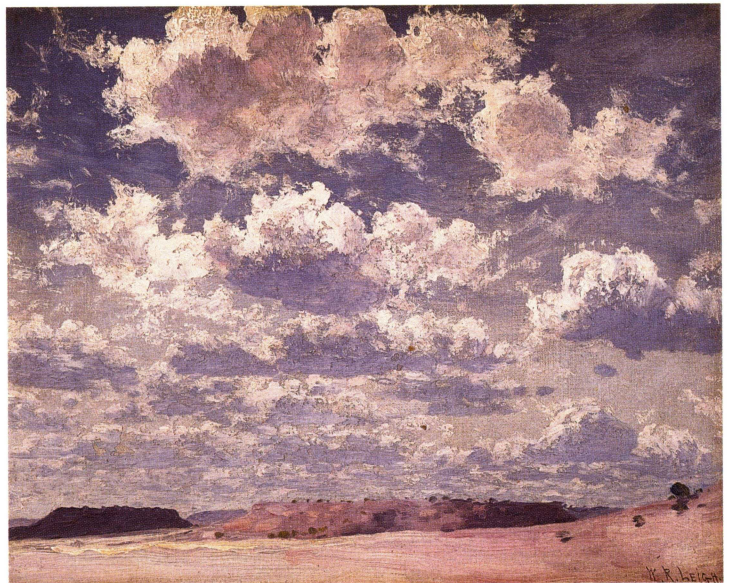
Many of Leigh's biographers have written of his masterful sketching abilities. With meticulous detail, he documented the vast landscapes, billowing clouds, mesas and the land's inhabitants — both human and animal. These experiences and his documentation provided the means to recall from memory stirring scenes long after the happening.

Forty years after a camp-out near the south rim of the Grand Canyon, Leigh recalled one painting expedition:

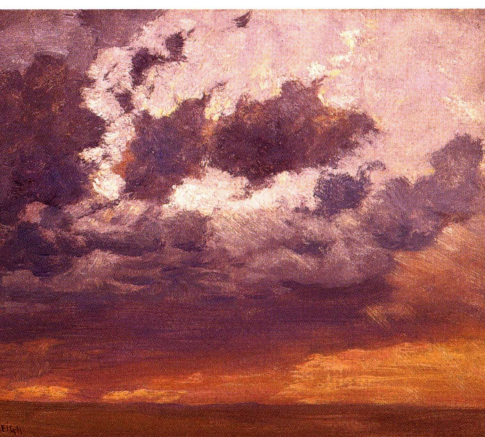
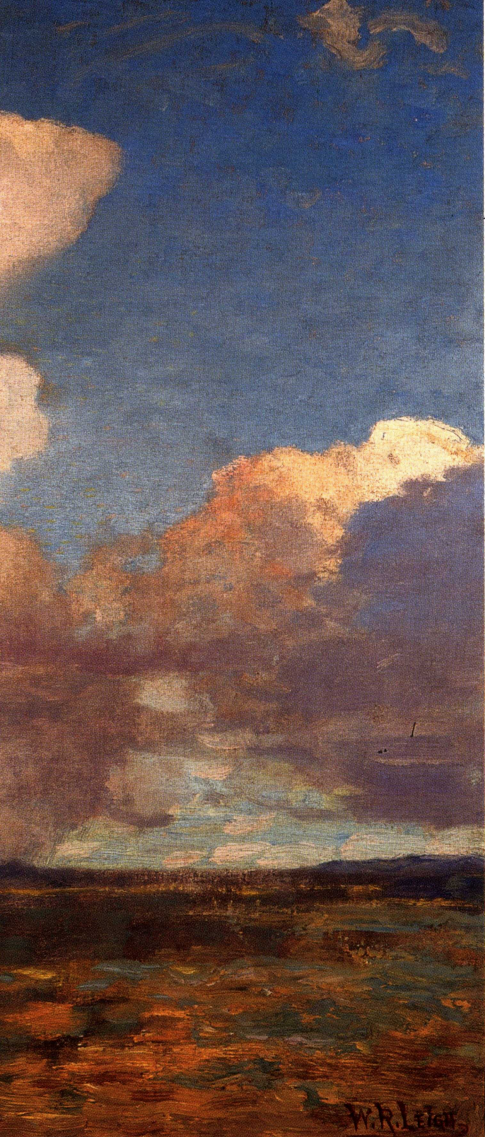
"When the light on the cliffs had changed sufficiently to stop work on the larger studies, I grabbed a paint-box panel and started another. Presently the great shadows began to swallow up



William R. Leigh (1866 - 1955), Arizona Cloud Bank, oil, 37 by 49 inches



William R. Leigh (1866 - 1955), Tranquil Day, Ganado, Arizona 1912, oil, 13 by 17 inches



William R. Leigh (1866 - 1955), *Late Afternoon Storm, Effect, Arizona*, oil, 13 by 17 inches

the depths, while the light on the upper pinnacles gathered color; delicate orange and pearl-lilac; a crazy quilt of magical form and bewitching color — a fabulous mosaic — a grand kaleidoscopic array of tints of infinite charm. Now the orange light was changed to rose; to vermillion; the shadows to lavender, to purple. The shadows of peaks were growing to enormous lengths in the east; in the west a giant conflagration was developing; tremendous shafts of lurid luminosity shot sheer to the zenith. Meanwhile pearl-cerulean mists gathered in the depths and climbed — creeping, gliding up. No language, no pigment could describe the sublime drama of light and shade, of color and form.”

Much as Leigh wrote of his experiences while living in the company of Indians, his descriptions and comments suggest he preferred to sketch the countryside alone, concentrating on the vast landscapes and surroundings of the desert. No mood escaped his observation or brush.

Leigh’s interest in capturing the images of his observations on canvas continued until his death on March 11, 1955. During the last five years of his life, with eyes weakening, he is reported to have completed more than 30 paintings.

Nearly seven years after Leigh’s death, his widow, Ethel Traphagen Leigh, reportedly wrote to civic leaders in his home state of West Virginia concerning establishing an exhibit or installation in her husband’s honor:

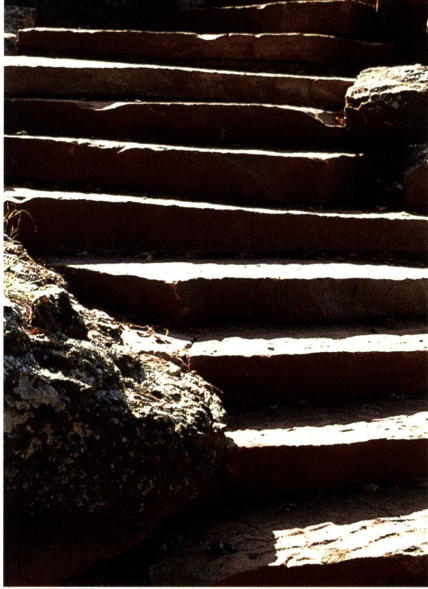
“My husband W.R. Leigh’s studio is still intact, just the way he left it, containing some drawings he made when six or seven years old, and among other things his last painting — a painting of a sunset — that he finished just a half hour before he passed on.”

In September 1963, the contents of Leigh’s studio in New York was presented to the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art by his heirs. The studio contained sketchbooks, brushes, easels, baskets, saddles, pottery, books and hundreds of paintings, as well as drawings executed in pencil, charcoal, and pen and ink. A re-creation of the studio and many of Leigh’s works are on display at Gilcrease Museum. ☺

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 William R. Leigh quotations are from a 300-page typewritten draft of *My Life* written by Leigh in 1952. This unpublished manuscript is part of the Gilcrease Museum archives.

Paula Hall is a free-lance writer and has served as editor of Gilcrease Magazine since 1988.



STUART PARK

Preserving the Beauty of

BY PAULA HALL

As an Oklahoma native, Harold Stuart grew up enjoying the rolling landscape of the Osage Hills.

He, along with many other Tulsans, are working to preserve this natural beauty which surrounds Gilcrease Museum, for future generations.

"The new park will provide an opportunity for people to see the Osage Hills in as natural a state as possible," Stuart explains. "I don't know of any other museum in the country that will offer visitors a chance to see and be a part of this type of natural setting. It is a wonderful opportunity for us and we are proud to be a part of it."

The development of Stuart Park began several years ago when museum and City of Tulsa leaders became concerned about the development of land west of Gilcrease Museum. Since the earliest days of the museum, the area has provided a magnificent natural backdrop for the museum.

The rustic and natural beauty of the Osage Hills will be preserved in Stuart Park, blending with the completed theme gardens of Gilcrease Museum.



e Osage Hills





held with various city and museum groups in an effort to “use the land as an outward extension of the museum.”

“Those discussions have continued for years. The development of Gilcrease’s formal gardens was an outgrowth of these early discussions,” McKnight explained.

The Gardens at Gilcrease include theme-period gardens which surround the museum. The gardens feature landscaping that relate and even extend, the museum into the surrounding acreage, a concept influenced by André Malraux’s “museum without walls.”

“Stuart Park development will be an extension of this concept,” explains Jim Crosby, principal of Planning Design Group. “The view from the museum’s Vista Room provides the best example of what we are trying to accomplish with the entire project.”

Standing in front of the floor-to-ceiling windows of the Vista Room, a museum visitor can enjoy the splendor of the Osage Hills.

Development in the first phase of Stuart Park includes a half-mile nature trail, several observation

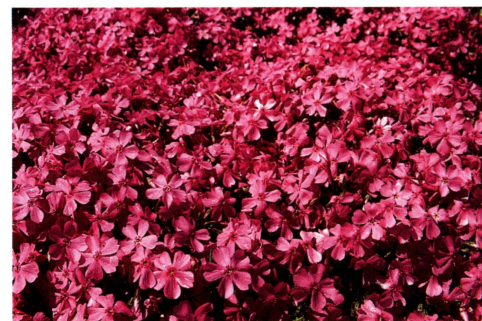
overlooks and the preservation of two ponds in the area. A natural cedar gazebo and boardwalks will link the trails and ponds.

“We will also preserve a wonderful beaver lodge and two beaver dams. We plan to reforest with approximately 100 new trees native to the area,” says Crosby.

Trails and other components will be constructed from native materials. More than 250 tons of boulders from the Osage County area are being used to complete steps and retaining walls located near the museum. A large portion of the area will be handicapped accessible and other areas will be accessible through appointment.

All development of the park will capitalize on and enhance the area’s natural state, according to Crosby.

“It is an important project,” Stuart says. “Of course, it will take several years, possibly decades, before we see the project fully completed. But the opportunity to keep this wonderful part of nature for future generations will be a tremendous asset for Gilcrease Museum and the City of Tulsa.”



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NOCTURNES: Paintings of Night	1
NATURAL HISTORIANS: Scientists as Artists and Discoverers	10
WILLIAM R. LEIGH: Letting Nature Be His Guide	20
STUART PARK: Preserving the Beauty of the Osage Hills	26

FRONT COVER:
Mark Catesby, *Magnolia*, hand-colored
engraving, 13 3/4 by 10 1/2 inches

BACK COVER:
Frank Tenny Johnson, *The Pony Express*,
oil on canvas, 42 by 56 inches

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