

New York (City). Macbeth gallery

Box

# Loan Exhibition

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Paintings by

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Charles W. Hawthorne, N. A.

1917

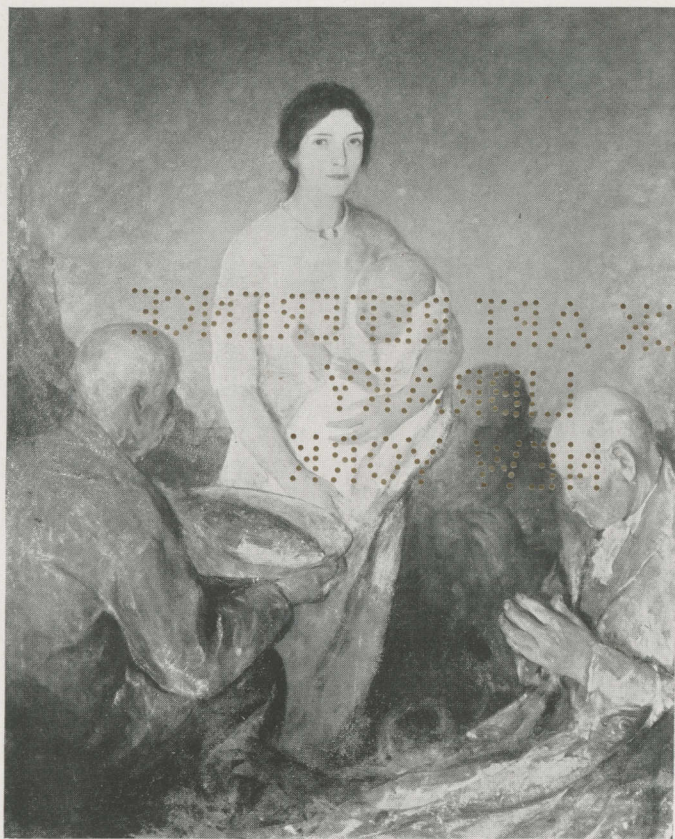
February

1917

THE MACBETH GALLERY  
LIBRARY  
NEW YORK

The Macbeth Gallery

450 Fifth Ave. New York  
at Fortieth Street



Adoration

Courtesy of  
City Art Museum, St. Louis

TITLES OF THE PICTURES

- 1 *Venetian Girl*  
Lent by Worcester Art Museum
- 2 *The Lovers*
- 3 *Boy with Shad*  
Lent by Ralph King, Esq.
- 4 *Adoration*  
Lent by City Art Museum, St. Louis
- 5 *School Girls*  
Lent by Ralph King, Esq.
- 6 *Mother and Child*  
Lent by Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts
- 7 *Youth*  
Lent by Mrs. C. K. Fox
- 8 *End of Day*  
Lent by W. S. Pardee, Esq.
- 9 *The Widow*  
Lent by Boston Museum of Fine Arts
- 10 *The Mother*  
Lent by W. S. Pardee, Esq.
- 11 *Blue Girl*  
Lent by W. S. Pardee, Esq.
- 12 *Fisherman and Daughter*  
Lent by W. S. Pardee, Esq.
- 13 *Daffodils*  
Lent by Duncan Phillips, Esq.
- 14 *Refining Oil*  
Lent by Detroit Museum of Art
- 15 *Sewing Girl*  
Lent by Joel W. Burdick, Esq.





7 Youth

Courtesy of  
Mrs. Charles K. Fox

## CHARLES W. HAWTHORNE

By DUNCAN PHILLIPS

BECAUSE young Charles W. Hawthorne had been a favorite pupil of William M. Chase, had studied Hals with him in Holland, and painted brass and fish with him at Shinnecock, with a zest for the same "bravura" of brushwork, it seemed safe to assume, as a well-known critic actually did in 1905, that this young Hawthorne would turn out to be another objective *virtuoso* of the flowing brush. This critic applauded the virility of his vigorous youth and the becoming brutality thereof. Hawthorne was already on Cape Cod and was painting fisher-folk and their catches, in their own brine-soaked atmosphere. The critic was sure that Hawthorne was an able painter, but also sure that he was "incapable of analytical reflection," "with scarcely a hint of sensitive compassion" for his subjects. He was simply a clever brushman with a "savage, angular style." He was only able to paint what he could see and he saw all too plainly. Well—perhaps it was for the best that he recognized his limitations. And how refreshing it was to find an American so free from foreign influence!

How strange it all sounds to-day, this estimate of Hawthorne as he seemed to a critic eleven years ago. Nowadays we grant him an original note of poetry, a sympathetic insight into character, a keen comprehension of and compassion for the humble fisher-folk he has painted





7 The Widow

so often. But we say that he shows too much Italian mannerism and that he is too much inclined to become sentimental over his subjects. We say that his flesh tones are too waxy, that his flat modeling often seems like an affectation of archaic simplicity, and that his heads often seem detached or at least detachable from his bodies. At Provincetown, however, where Hawthorne teaches the principles of pictorial art and the practice of painting out-of-doors to a colony of students, he is considered both a great teacher and a great painter. His pupils know that he can still paint for painting's sake with the skill of a Vollon, a Chase, or a Henri. The truth of the matter is that he has been to Italy and his work is haunted by its beauties. It was Italy which pacified his violent clash of jarring colors and gave his tones instead an emotional subtlety of relationship. It was Italy which modified his aggressive brush stroke and made his surfaces sensuous with a lustrous mellow paste. Most of all it was Italy which gave him the sentiment for his chosen subjects which he had lacked before.

Hawthorne came to a period in his development when brutality was no longer congenial to him. He went to Italy in 1907 at the age of 36 to get out of the habit of being a brutal and brilliant painter. A wistfulness had crept into his work so noticeably that Charles H. Caffin in his "Story of American Painting," although still bracketing him with Henri, Glackens and Luks, had the intuition to observe, "this painter has not yet found himself. That he will do so is probable for he is now in Italy where men discover that brushwork does not constitute the whole of painting." In the presence of the great paintings





7 Mother and Child

Courtesy of  
Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts

of Giorgione and Titian, Hawthorne discovered within himself hitherto unrecognized capacities for æsthetic enjoyment. He delighted in subtly constructed relations of technical elements and came to think of painting in terms of music. He realized that never again would he force his lights and shadows and crisply model his forms to make them "stand out." How much more beautiful was the decorative convention of comparative flatness of modelling and of varied combinations of colors arranged within the same scale of tone. The surfaces of old Italian pictures enthralled him. If the Venetians under-painted in *tempera*, was it not worth his while to experiment with that method? It is to Hawthorne's credit that in spite of the spell which Italy cast over him and the metamorphosis it made in his work, yet he maintained his individuality. His own work, although inspired by Italy, is not reminiscent of any Italian painter. His surfaces have a look of mellow glaze under granulation which curiously resembles the patina of Oriental pottery. Emphatically he denies Oriental influence. Discussing the genesis of his texture with him recently, he suddenly exclaimed: "I never thought of it before, but now that you mention it, I believe that it was not Italian pictures which inspired that particular surface but Italy itself—the familiar look of it as I lived there day after day, the texture of the trees, of the soil, of the walls, and—oh, I don't know—just Italy!"

But Italy did not merely alter the surfaces of Hawthorne's pictures and the direction of his technical approach. What it really did to him was to stir into conscious life, under that swashbuckling strength of his,





71 School Girls

Courtesy of  
Ralph King, Esq.

depths of tenderness and poetic insight, hitherto unsuspected. Thereafter his approach to his subjects was not undertaken so much as a technical exploit nor even as an intellectual adventure, but as an emotional experience. Giorgione was the first great painter to make a record of that look in the eye which manifests a soul which, for the moment, at least, is self-withdrawn. Yet it was Titian's Young Englishman of the Pitti Palace who particularly fascinated the American painter; that stalwart man of action observed in a mood of such absorbing reverie that his large eyes stare at us without seeing us, while his whole body seems rigid with the concentration of his thoughts. In consequence of this portrait's strong influence on Hawthorne, it must be acknowledged that his Cape Cod fishermen and their families have formed the habit of stolidly, stupidly staring at us without seeing us, ever since. It was original with him, although inspired by Giorgionesque portrait heads, to make us realize that even the fishermen of Provincetown have their happy day-dreams and their sharp, relentless tragedies. The *unspoken thought* interested the poet in him. He sought for various ways to express the silences which suddenly separate us from one another, at those moments when, in the midst of company, we are alone. Hawthorne's Cape Cod models have thus been given universal significance as symbols for us all. Big moments are suggested by the faces of these people, old and young. Imagination is stimulated through the painter's suggestions of some of the great forces eternally at work in human hearts.





➤ Fisherman and Daughter

Courtesy of  
W. S. Pardee, Esq.

All ages have been given sympathetic interpretation in the paintings of Hawthorne, but one type prevails and reappears. Being himself a big, simple man, his models are usually simple people, more or less symbolical in suggestion, roughly generalized rather than individually characterized. In Hawthorne's picture entitled "Youth" a boy and a girl, playmates yesterday, walk hand in hand, their faces pale and serious, out of the world of play, into the world of labor and danger and wonder. It is youth which appeals most keenly to this artist; the freshness and wistfulness of maidenhood have won from Hawthorne many a graceful tribute. None is more charming than the lovely composition in tones of pearl and turquoise and pale gold entitled "Daffodils." But the masterpiece of the artist is the tragedy called "The Widow," in which solemn twilight tones of color sound like muffled funeral bells. A great lone star is shining, steadfast, eternal. A flag flies at half-mast over the square sails of the huddled boats in the harbor. Dry-eyed, desolate, yet passionless in her grief, a young dark mother clasps her baby close. Soon she will understand what has happened to her. Night is falling—but never again can her man come home.

I could dwell critically upon the mannered technique of Hawthorne and find faults with the excessively flat modelling, the heavily opaque and oft-times discordant color of the less successful pictures of later years. I could say that as a rule there is too much of a sameness of texture all over these panels; that he cannot or will not vary his style to suit his subject. And yet so powerful is the drawing and the painting of the best pictures





7 Venetian Girl

Courtesy of  
Worcester Art Museum

of this last and best period, so sensitively prepared and contrasted are the resonant and reverberant tones, and, in "The Widow" and "The Trousseau" of the Metropolitan Museum, so inspired is the conception and so perfect the execution, that fault-finders are silenced. Hawthorne's story is yet, we hope, half told. He is a young man, and of the adventurous breed. New developments may be confidently expected. Whatever his ultimate rank, it is certain that in at least two of his paintings he has achieved that *greatness* which is attributable only to those works of art in which form and spirit are one, and in which good painting does not exist merely for its own sake, but seems to be inspired for the special expression of those sentiments which make life worth living.

This article is part of an essay which is to be published  
in *The International Studio* for March



Our cordial thanks are extended  
to the museums and to the private owners whose cooperation in  
generously lending their pictures  
has made this exhibition possible

WILLIAM MACBETH