

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 511

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GALLERY ANNOUNCES ACQUISITION OF LANE PAINTING
AND FORTHCOMING FILM USING AMERICAN LIGHT EXHIBITION

WASHINGTON, D. C. June 12, 1980. A major painting in the late work of the 19th-century American luminist, Fitz Hugh Lane (1804-1865), entitled Lumber Schooners at Evening on Penobscot Bay, has been acquired by the National Gallery of Art.

A poetic twilight picture dating from 1860, it was acquired through the Andrew W. Mellon Fund and a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Francis W. Hatch. This is the first painting to enter the Gallery's collection by Lane, one of the earliest exponents of luminism and a significant figure in 19th-century American art.

The painting is currently on view in the Gallery's critically acclaimed and popular exhibition American Light: The Luminist Movement, 1850-1875, which closes June 15. A half-hour film is being made of this crucial moment in American cultural history, with its primary focus on the exhibition. The film is being produced by Camera Three Productions, New York, through the generosity of The Barra Foundation, Inc. John Wilmerding, the Gallery's curator of American art and senior curator who organized the exhibition, with Rosamond Bernier, well-known lecturer on the arts, will discuss many of the paintings in the exhibition. In addition, they will take the viewer to several locations along the East Coast where many of the luminist painters traveled for subject matter. The film will be available at no charge through the Gallery's extension service to colleges, universities and other groups through The Barra Foundation's grant to the Gallery of rights to the film.

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Lumber Schooners at Evening on Penobscot Bay depicts a typical scene in this Maine area--large lumber schooners laden with wood or granite often dotted the bay in passage from eastern Maine or Portland for Boston. Only small figures on the large schooner in the foreground are shown--the great expanse of sky and water demonstrate Lane's foremost concern for light and time of day. The offshore view, which became increasingly characteristic in Lane's work, allowed for a quiet and reflective vantage point. In his last years, Lane developed a preference for scenes of dusk. The late afternoon pink sunset glows in the Gallery's painting, catching the distant hills and masts of the schooners, creating a tranquil yet poignant sense of time's passage. Thinly painted and delicately colored, the picture is suffused with pale tonalties, particularly in the translucent pink, using light as the foremost element to convey nature's more intangible spirit.

Lane first traveled in Maine from his native Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1848. He was to return there almost every summer until his death. As a luminist, Lane was primarily concerned with representing nature's spiritual content. His Maine views almost entirely eliminate the human presence, making light, with all its symbolism, the dominant element in landscape. His attitudes merged with those in literature and philosophy of his contemporaries Thoreau and Emerson, among others, whose beliefs celebrated man's harmony with nature and at the same time consecrated nature with a mantle of divinity.

Lane is considered one of the five principal artists of luminism; the others are John F. Kensett, Martin Johnson Heade, Sanford Gifford and Frederic E. Church, all of whose work is surveyed in the Gallery's exhibition. Since the opening of American Light in February, attendance has been over 300,000.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director (Information Officer) or Pamela J. Driscoll, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 511.