

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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PAINTINGS BY 19th CENTURY LANDSCAPE ARTIST GEORGE INNESS
TO GO ON VIEW AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Exhibition Title: George Inness

WASHINGTON -- The first national exhibition of paintings by 19th century American landscape artist George Inness (1824-1894) will go on view in the National Gallery of Art's West Building, June 22 through Sept. 7, 1986. This selection of 43 paintings is a modified version of a retrospective exhibition seen in four other U.S. cities during the past year.

J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery, said: "We welcome the opportunity to reacquaint the American public with George Inness, the most influential landscape painter of the 19th century in America. The size of the exhibition has been reduced, but this new version remains a true retrospective, highlighted by some of the artist's greatest pictures."

Inness is frequently associated with contemporary American landscape painters of the Hudson River School. His intimate and suggestive landscapes, however, were largely responsible for shifting taste away from the grandiose and precisely detailed paintings of the Hudson River School.

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Although his paintings were often inspired by the countryside of the Northeastern United States, Inness used this inspiration to create his own landscape images. He believed that landscapes should express feelings, not describe places or tell stories. In evoking a mood, Inness freely adapted natural elements to suit his purpose, and did not necessarily adhere to the image before him. The aim of art, he wrote, is "not to instruct, not to edify, but to awaken an emotion." For the last quarter of the 19th century Inness' paintings were the primary influence on American landscape art, and at his death in 1894 he was one of America's most celebrated artists.

Inness, like many 19th-century American artists, was largely self-taught. He had no formal training or academic education. His early landscapes, like A Bit of the Roman Aqueduct (c. 1852), were based on pictorial formulas that he learned from his study of prints or copies after classical 17th century landscapes, such as those of Claude Lorrain.

In 1853, on his second trip to Europe, Inness was introduced to the art of the French Barbizon school, named for the village in the forest of Fontainebleau, near Paris, where its members lived and worked. The suggestive forms, evocative colors and informal compositions characteristic of Barbizon landscapes were the most decisive influence of Inness' career.

The Lackawanna Valley (c. 1855), one of Inness' greatest paintings, depicts a tranquil Pennsylvania countryside transformed by man into an energetic, modern landscape. Although the panoramic sweep of this early painting recalls the Hudson River School style, the soft, resonant colors and atmospheric handling of light reveal the impact of Barbizon painting. Inness celebrates here what he termed "the civilized landscape", man's technological progress and his ability to manipulate and control his environment.

Clearing Up (1860) is a masterpiece of Inness' Barbizon-inspired style, in which the Barbizon example has been fully assimilated and adapted to Inness' own artistic purposes. It marks the beginning of Inness' development of an emotionally expressive landscape, based on dramatic natural moments and moving effects of color. The cloud-filled sky fades to a luminous violet horizon, giving the painting a vivid naturalism that is the hallmark of Inness' technique. The touch of red in the figure in the foreground serves as a focal point for this expressive rural scene.

Approaching Storm (1869) displays Inness' continuing development as a superb colorist. The ominous storm rolling into the tranquil valley is captured with bursts of color applied to the canvas in broad brush strokes. The rapidly moving clouds and wind-tossed trees create a stimulating and suspenseful image, while the complex and stark effects of light animate the pastoral landscape.

In his late work Inness' paintings became increasingly abstract, as is evident in such works as Early Autumn, Montclair (1888), Early Autumn, Tarpon Springs (1892) and Sundown (1894). Images are blurred as the landscapes become even more suggestive, and color depends more on the taste and feeling of the artist than any necessary correspondence to nature.

Painted in the last year of the artist's life, Sundown reveals that Inness never gave up the notion of the "civilized landscape." With its vague figure of a woman, hazy landscape marked by bold use of color in the sky and sophisticated manipulation of space, this painting shows the artist's ability to create a logical image using a wholly innovative technique. The rural scene recalls the influence of the Barbizon masters as well as a central theme of Inness' work, the existence of man in nature.

Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., curator of American art and coordinator of the exhibition at the National Gallery of Art and the author of several books on Inness, said: "The message of George Inness to his own time was that landscape painting was an expression of feeling through color and form, not a mere record of experience. But today, ironically, we have lost touch with that modern message, and with the American artist whose instincts and accomplishments were more progressive than those of any other American not directly influenced by modernism."

The exhibition, organized by Michael Quick, curator of American art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, has been seen at The Metropolitan Museum of Art; The Cleveland Museum of Art; The Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. A fully illustrated catalogue, including essays by Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr. and Michael Quick, accompanies the exhibition.

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1986

GEORGE INNESS
Exhibition Checklist

1. A Bit of the Roman Aqueduct, c. 1852
High Museum of Art, Atlanta
Purchase with funds from the Members Guild and through exchange
(Catalogue #1)
2. Lackawanna Valley, c. 1855
National Gallery of Art, Gift of Mrs. Huttleston Rogers, 1945
(Catalogue #2)
3. Delaware Water Gap, 1857
James Maroney, New York
(Not in catalogue)
4. St. Peter's Rome, 1857
The New Britain Museum of American Art, Connecticut
Charles F. Smith Fund
(Catalogue #5)
5. Clearing Up, 1860
George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum, Springfield, Massachusetts
(Catalogue #6)
6. Twilight, c. 1860
Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts
Gift of Cyrus P. Smith '18, in memory of his father, B. Herbert
Smith (Class of 1885)
(Catalogue #8)
7. Landscape, c. 1865
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. George D. Hart
(Catalogue #12)
8. Winter, Close of Day, 1866
The Cleveland Museum of Art
The Charles W. Harkness Gift
(Catalogue #13)
9. Landscape with Farmhouse, 1869
Mead Art Gallery, Amherst College
(Not in Catalogue)
10. Approaching Storm, 1869
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick R. Mayer
(Catalogue #14)
11. Pine Brook, N.J., 1870
Collection of Mr. Thomas Colville
(Catalogue #15)

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12. Catskill Mountains, 1870
 Courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago, Edward B. Butler
 Collection
 (Catalogue #17)
13. The Tiber below Perugia, 1871
 The Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Arthur J. Secor
 (Catalogue #18)
14. Lake Nemi, 1872
 Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Misses Hersey
 (Catalogue #19)
15. In the Roman Campagna, 1873
 The St. Louis Art Museum
 (Catalogue #20)
16. The Olives, 1873
 The Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of J.D. Robinson in memory of
 his wife, Mary Elizabeth Robinson
 (Catalogue #22)
17. The Alban Hills, 1873
 Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts, Gift from the Lucius J.
 Knowles Art Fund and Museum Purchase
 (Catalogue #23)
18. The Monk, 1873
 Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover,
 Massachusetts, Gift of Stephen C. Clark
 (Catalogue #24)
19. View of the Tiber River near Perugia, 1874
 National Gallery of Art
 (Not in catalogue)
20. Etretat, 1875
 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, The Ella Gallup Sumner
 and Mary Carlin Sumner Collection
 (Catalogue #25)
21. Kearsarge Village, 1875
 Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Miss Mary Thacher in
 memory of Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Thacher and Miss Martha Thacher
 (Catalogue #26)
22. Saco Ford: Conway Meadows, 1876
 Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, Massachusetts, Gift
 of Miss Ellen W. Ayer
 (Catalogue #28)
23. Castel Gandolfo, 1876
 Portland Art Museum, Oregon
 Helen Thurston Ayer Fund
 (Catalogue #29)

24. The Homestead, c. 1877
Haggin Collection, The Haggin Museum, Stockton, California
(Catalogue #32)
25. Gray, Lowery Day, c. 1877
Collection of The Wellesley College Museum, Massachusetts
(Catalogue #33)
26. The Coming Storm, 1878
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, Albert H. Tracy Fune, 1900
(Catalogue #34)
27. The Rainbow, c. 1878-79
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Gift of George E. Hume
(Catalogue #36)
28. Winter Morning, Montclair, 1882
From the collection of the Montclair Museum, New Jersey, Gift of
Mrs. Arthur D. Whiteside
(Catalogue #40)
29. Winter at Montclair, New Jersey, 1884
Private Collection
(Catalogue #43)
30. Gossip, 1884
Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas
(Not in catalogue)
31. The Storm, 1885
Reynolda House Museum of American Art, Winston-Salem, North
Carolina
(Catalogue #45)
32. October, 1886
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Paul Rodman Mabury Collection
(Catalogue #46)
33. A Breezy Autumn, 1887
Private Collection
(Catalogue #48)
34. The Bathers, 1888
Meredith Long & Co., Houston
(Catalogue #50)
35. Early Autumn, Montclair, 1888
Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey
(Catalogue #51)
36. The Clouded Sun, 1891
Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Purchase from T.B.
Clarke Sale through M. Knoedler & Co., New York City, 1899
(Catalogue #52)

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37. Early Autumn, Montclair, 1891
Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, Special Purchase Fund and the
Friends of Art
(Catalogue #53)
38. Sunset in the Woods, 1891
In the collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.,
Museum Purchase
(Catalogue #54)
39. Spirit of Autumn, 1891
Private Collection
(Catalogue #55)
40. Near the Village, October, 1892
Cincinnati Art Museum, Gift of Emilie L. Heine in memory of Mr. and
Mrs. John Hank
(Catalogue #57)
41. Early Morning, Tarpon Spring, 1892
Courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago, Edward B. Butler
Collection
(Catalogue #58)
42. Morning, Catskill Valley (The Red Oaks), 1894
Collection of The Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California, Gift of
Mrs. Sterling Morton to the Preston Morton Collection
(Catalogue #62)
43. Sundown, 1894
National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C.
(Catalogue #63)

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