



# TONALISM

PATHWAY FROM THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL TO MODERN ART

FEBRUARY 15 — JUNE 14

2020

# TONALISM

PATHWAY FROM THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL TO MODERN ART

## INTRODUCTION

This exhibition explores Tonalism in the United States as a connection between the Hudson River School in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and Modernism in the twentieth through artists with ties to New York State. The historic role of Tonalism has not always been agreed upon by scholars and critics. On one hand, it has been long considered a conservative style, often discussed as the antithesis to Impressionism, its contemporary. More recent publications, however, have begun to reassess Tonalism as innovative in its approach to representation both intellectually in concept and as realized in the finished work of art. Thus, it can be argued that while Tonalism grew out of and reacted to the Hudson River School and other influences, it also helped lay the groundwork for Modernism.

Tonalism in the broadest sense can be seen as an approach to representation that relied less on faithfulness to visual reality and more on creating an evocative mood, often through memory. Landscapes dominated the movement, but not exclusively, as figurative works were also produced. A prevailing sense of quiet was achieved in Tonalist works by typically depicting subjects at either end of the day in muted light and with a range of delicate colors, thus “tonal.” Emerging in the years after the Civil War, Tonalism appealed to an audience in need of respite not only from the devastation of the war but from Reconstruction and the rise of industrialization and urbanization in the war’s aftermath. For many in the era, a retreat from the external world could be tinged with a quest for spirituality. Overall, though, Tonalism encouraged contemplation.

The group of artists included in the exhibition is not meant to be an exhaustive representation of those who practiced Tonalism or even Tonalism in New York. Some of these artists are widely known, others not, and still others, until now, have not been studied in the context of the movement. Drawn from the collections of smaller institutions across the state, as well as private collections, the artists range from Frederick Kost (1861–1923) on Long Island; to those associated with Woodstock in the Hudson Valley, including Birge Harrison (1854–1929), Eva Watson-Schütze (1867–1935), and Bolton Brown (1864–1936); to Alexander Helwig Wyant (1836–1892) in Arkville in Delaware County and Keene Valley in the Adirondacks; to Walter Launt Palmer (1854–1932) and others who had ties to Albany. The goal is to cast a wide net and consider Tonalism as a broader concept than heretofore presented.

*On the cover:* Carl Olaf Eric Lindin, *Moonlight*, 1904, Oil on canvas, 18 x 24 in.,  
New York State Museum, Historic Woodstock Art Colony; Arthur A. Anderson Collection.

## THE TRAILBLAZERS:

### George Inness and James Abbott McNeill Whistler

Although they had vastly different approaches, George Inness (1825–1894) and James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) are seen as the forefathers of Tonalism. Subsequent artists practicing the style found inspiration in one or the other, or both.

George Inness became one of the most important landscape painters in the United States after the Civil War. His early work bore similarities to that of the artists of the Hudson River School in its tight paint handling and detail, but his subject matter differed in that he favored domesticated views rather than the awe-inspiring wilderness depicted by America's first group of landscape artists. In his travels abroad, Inness was exposed to the work of the French Barbizon painters, realist artists who depicted rural subjects with loose brushstrokes and a deep, rich palette. Drawing on this, Inness developed a personal style that eschewed the narrative elements often found in Barbizon work. He gradually relied more upon memory, woven with his belief in the relationship between natural and spiritual worlds.

If George Inness was the most important late nineteenth-century American landscape painter, James Abbott McNeill Whistler was overall one of the most influential artists of the century. Unlike Inness's efforts to realize spirituality in his landscapes, Whistler espoused Aestheticism, or "Art for Art's Sake." He stated,

*"Art should be independent of all clap-trap—should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism, and the like. All these have no kind of concern with it, and that is why I insist on calling my works 'arrangements' and 'harmonies.'"*<sup>1</sup>



George Inness, *From the Shawangunk Mountains*, 1885, Oil on canvas, 20 x 30 in., Collection of David Adams Cleveland and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Aestheticism encouraged artists to move away from traditional representation and subject matter. This departure from the depiction of visual reality set the stage for the rise of modernist approaches, including abstraction, in the twentieth century.

Whistler also immersed himself in the avant-garde artistic and literary circles in Paris and London whose members believed that contemporary life should be the source of creative work. In the visual arts, this radical concept rejected the Renaissance tradition of historical painting—subjects taken from ancient Greek and Roman history or the Bible—long held to be the highest form of expression. In all media—painting, pastel, etching, and other works on paper—Whistler also embraced the principles of Japanese composition, then newly discovered by European artists via prints, with flattened forms and space, and often monochromatic colors.



James A. McNeill Whistler, *The Sea at Pourville (no.2), near Dieppe, France, 1899*, Oil on panel, 5 1/2 x 9 1/4 in., Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Museum of Art, Utica, NY, Museum Purchase with Funds from the Charles E. Merrill Trust, 73.114. Photo: Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute / Art Resource, NY



## HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL TO TONALISM, TONALISM TO MODERNISM

Like those of George Inness, the early landscape paintings of other artists who became Tonalists also revealed affinities with the Hudson River School. Homer Dodge Martin (1836–1897), Jervis McEntee (1828–1891), and Alexander Helwig Wyant, for example, all matured as painters when the Hudson River School was in its prime. Martin and McEntee studied with artists associated with the school, and Wyant was inspired to become a landscapist after seeing some of Inness’s work in an exhibition. While their early paintings employed detailed brushstrokes and frequently featured open vistas in full daylight, their later compositions became looser in paint handling, with evocative, more intimate glimpses of nature in subdued light. McEntee, not traditionally associated with Tonalism, made his intentions clear:

*“All art is based upon a knowledge of Nature and a sympathy for her; but in order to represent her it is not necessary to make a thing exactly like a thing. Imitation is not what we want, but suggestion...”<sup>2</sup>*

Jervis McEntee, *Clouds, 1870*, Oil on canvas, 8 1/16 x 13 1/16 in., Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, Gift of Ellen G. Milberg, class of 1960, on the occasion of her 50th reunion, 2010.3.1

A later generation of artists, and the largest group in this exhibition, worked solely in a Tonalist style. Some studied with Inness or sought out Whistler, others saw their work in exhibitions or were influenced by those already immersed in the style, as it was one that prevailed at the end of the nineteenth century. Just a sample in this exhibition includes the softly glowing evening scenes of Carl Eric Lindin (1869–1942), the muted colors of the rocky hillsides favored by Ben Foster (1852–1926), and the sun filtered through milky skies in landscapes by Leonard Ochtman (1854–1934).

Other painters explored more than Tonalism. Walter Launt Palmer, for example, moved back and forth between Impressionism, characterized by short brushstrokes, pure colors, and scenes depicted in direct sunlight, and the subtler range of color and moodiness of Tonalism, demonstrating that the two approaches were not mutually exclusive. Agnes Richmond (1870–1964) began her career working in a rich Tonalist mode but became better known for her more brightly lit portraits painted with saturated colors.



Leonard Ochtman, *Early Snow*, n.d., Oil on canvas, 11 3/4 x 16 in., Collection of Jack and Mary Ann Hollihan



Walter Launt Palmer, *Catskill Clove*, 1886, Pastel on paper, 25 1/4 x 19 1/2 in., Albany Institute of History & Art, gift of Miss Evelyn Newman, 1964.31.41



Tonalism has often been discussed as old-fashioned rather than avant-garde, and its reputation plummeted in the twentieth century. In fact, in a mid-century survey of American painting the author wrote that “this movement is today completely forgotten.”<sup>3</sup> Some of this may have to do with the dark, sometimes murky palette, the focus on mundane (though often beautiful) subject matter, and the retreat from depicting the contemporary world. Much about Tonalism, however, looks forward to Modernism and the subtle exploration of color relationships not bound by representation with which artists experimented in the twentieth century, sometimes leading to total abstraction. This is seen, for example, in the increasingly ethereal work of John Francis Murphy (1853–1921), in the thickly painted surfaces of the canvases of Charles Melville Dewey (1849–1937) that vie with the subject, or the opposite, in the thinly applied pigments that cast a veil over the landscapes of Leon Dabo (c. 1864–1960).

Agnes Richmond, *Woman by a River*, 1904, Oil on canvas, 19 1/2 x 15 1/2 in., Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild, gift of the Douglas C. James Charitable Trust



Leon Dabo, *Seascape*, n.d., Oil on canvas, 27 x 36 in., Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester; Bequest of Lois Badger

## TONALISM IN DIFFERENT MEDIA

Tonalism was not confined to oil painting. As seen in this exhibition, artists also worked in pastels, watercolors, printmaking, and photography, and the style reached across all media. The soft quality of pastels was conducive to subtle Tonalist effects in the work of Dwight William Tryon (1849–1925) or Walter Launt Palmer, for example. Charles Warren Eaton (1857–1937) explored the delicate washes of watercolor. The etchings of Margery Ryerson (1886–1989) relate to those of Whistler in the suggestive play between dark ink and light paper. Bolton Brown, who became known as the father of American lithography for his experiments in that medium, produced a body of work that includes evocative landscapes of subdued tonal ranges. Likewise, the soft-focus approach in photography, called Pictorialism, explored similar principles, as seen in moody images by Horatio Hendrickson (c. 1866–1941) or George Seeley (1880–1955), among others.



Margery Ryerson, *Crowd - 42nd Street*, c. 1920, Drypoint etching,  
6 x 8 in., Estate of Margery Ryerson, The James Cox Gallery at Woodstock



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> James McNeill Whistler to *The World*, May 22, 1878, in University of Glasgow, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, <https://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/exhibit/display/?rs=13&exhibid=LoRA-1872&sort=>, accessed 7/24/19.

<sup>2</sup> Jervis McEntee in George William Sheldon, *American Painters: With Eighty-three Examples of Their Work Engraved on Wood*, London: Cassel Petter & Galpin; New York: D. Applewood and Company, 1879, pp. 51–52 as quoted in Lee A. Vedder, “Jervis McEntee: Painter-Poet of the Hudson River School,” in *Jervis McEntee: Painter-Poet of the Hudson River School*, Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, State University of New York at New Paltz, 2015, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> E. P. Richardson, *Painting in America: The Story of 450 Years*, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1956, p. 368, n. 5.

George Seeley, *Landscape with Pines*, 1916, Gum bichromate print, 18 7/8 x 14 1/2 in., Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery

## EXHIBITION

Bolton Brown  
(b. United States, 1864–1936)  
*Cloudy Dawn*, 1916  
Lithograph  
New York State Museum, Historic Woodstock  
Art Colony: Arthur A. Anderson Collection

Bolton Brown  
(b. United States, 1864–1936)  
*Evening Travelers*, n.d.  
Oil on panel  
Collection of William A. Lanford

Bolton Brown  
(b. United States, 1864–1936)  
*Moonlight Bathers*, 1916  
Lithograph  
Collection of David B. Gubits and Mariella Bisson

Bolton Brown  
(b. United States, 1864–1936)  
*Moonlight (Moonlight: Wood Interior)*, 1923  
Lithograph  
Collection of David B. Gubits and Mariella Bisson

Bolton Brown  
(b. United States, 1864–1936)  
*Naiads*, 1920  
Lithograph  
Collection of David B. Gubits and Mariella Bisson

Bolton Brown  
(b. United States, 1864–1936)  
*Seneca Lake (New York)*, c. 1905–1910  
Oil on canvas  
New York State Museum, Historic Woodstock  
Art Colony: Arthur A. Anderson Collection

Bolton Brown  
(b. United States, 1864–1936)  
*Summer Shower*, 1921  
Lithograph  
Collection of David B. Gubits and Mariella Bisson

Bolton Brown  
(b. United States, 1864–1936)  
*Valley and Sky (Tonalist Mountains)*, 1904  
Oil on canvas  
New York State Museum, Historic Woodstock  
Art Colony: Arthur A. Anderson Collection

William Anderson Coffin  
(b. United States, 1855–1925)  
*Sunset in October*, 1900  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Leon Dabo  
(b. France, c. 1864–1960)  
*Seascape*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas  
Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester;  
Bequest of Lois Badger

Charles Melville Dewey  
(b. United States, 1849–1937)  
*Sunset*, 1910  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Charles Warren Eaton  
(b. United States, 1857–1937)  
*Melting Snow*, c. 1900  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Charles Warren Eaton  
(b. United States, 1857–1937)  
*Pines*, 1905  
Watercolor on paper  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Charles Warren Eaton  
(b. United States, 1857–1937)  
*Winter Solitude*, 1887  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of Jack and Mary Ann Hollihan



## EXHIBITION

Charles Warren Eaton  
(b. United States, 1857–1937)  
*Winter Twilight*, 1886  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of Jack and Mary Ann Hollihan

Ben Foster  
(b. United States, 1852–1926)  
*Rocky Hill*, c. 1915  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Ben Foster  
(b. United States, 1852–1926)  
*Summer Laurels*, 1910  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Birge Harrison  
(b. United States, 1854–1929)  
*Serenity on the Pacific*, 1896  
Oil on canvas  
Woodstock Artists Association & Museum,  
gift of Peter Whitehead

Birge Harrison  
(b. United States, 1854–1929)  
*St. Lawrence River Sunset*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas  
New York State Museum, Historic Woodstock  
Art Colony: Arthur A. Anderson Collection

Horatio Hendrickson  
(b. United States, c. 1866–1941)  
*Deep in the Forest*, 1904  
Gum bichromate print  
Albany Institute of History & Art,  
Horatio Hendrickson Collection, PC 6

Arthur Hoerber  
(b. United States, 1854–1915)  
*Dusk on the Dunes*, 1890  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of Jack and Mary Ann Hollihan

George Inness  
(b. United States, 1825–1894)  
*Keene Valley, Adirondacks*, 1885  
Oil on board  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art,  
gift of Elizabeth Koppitz, 1961.001.001

George Inness  
(b. United States, 1825–1894)  
*Montclair, New Jersey*, 1885  
Oil on board  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art,  
gift of Elizabeth Koppitz, 1961.001.002

George Inness  
(b. United States, 1825–1894)  
*From the Shawangunk Mountains*, 1885  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Frederick Kost  
(b. United States, 1861–1923)  
*Staten Island Sunset*, 1891  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Frederick Kost  
(b. United States, 1861–1923)  
*Winter Landscape*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas  
Century Association, New York

Carl Olaf Eric Lindin  
(b. Sweden, 1869–1942)  
*March Evening*, early 20th c.  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of William A. Lanford

Carl Olaf Eric Lindin  
(b. Sweden, 1869–1942)  
*Moonlight*, 1904  
Oil on canvas  
New York State Museum, Historic Woodstock  
Art Colony: Arthur A. Anderson Collection

Carl Olaf Eric Lindin  
(b. Sweden, 1869–1942)  
*Rainbow*, 1906  
Oil on board  
Woodstock Artists Association & Museum,  
gift of David and Heidi Freilich

Carl Olaf Eric Lindin  
(b. Sweden, 1869–1942)  
*Untitled [Trees]*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of William A. Lanford

George Macrum  
(b. United States, 1878–1970)  
*On the Road to Woodstock*, 1914  
Oil on canvas  
New York State Museum, Historic Woodstock  
Art Colony: Arthur A. Anderson Collection

Homer Dodge Martin  
(b. United States, 1836–1897)  
*Ausable Valley and Mount Marcy*, c. 1866  
Oil on canvas  
Century Association, New York

Homer Dodge Martin  
(b. United States, 1836–1897)  
*Silence of the Brook*, n.d.  
Oil on panel  
Collection of Jack and Mary Ann Hollihan

Homer Dodge Martin  
(b. United States, 1836–1897)  
*Woodland Pool*, 1880  
Oil on canvas  
Century Association, New York

Jervis McEntee  
(b. United States, 1828–1891)  
*Clouds*, 1870  
Oil on canvas  
Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center,  
Vassar College, gift of Ellen G. Milberg,  
class of 1960, on the occasion of her  
50th reunion, 2010.3.1

Jervis McEntee  
(b. United States, 1828–1891)  
*Winter Sunset after a Storm*, c. 1870  
Oil on canvas  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art,  
gift of Helen S. McEntee, 2010.013.001

Hermann Dudley Murphy  
(b. United States, 1867–1945)  
*The Shower of Sunset (Woodstock)*, 1904  
Oil on canvas  
New York State Museum, Historic Woodstock  
Art Colony: Arthur A. Anderson Collection

John Francis Murphy  
(b. United States, 1853–1921)  
*Evening*, 1902  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of Jack and Mary Ann Hollihan

John Francis Murphy  
(b. United States, 1853–1921)  
*October Mist*, 1906  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

John Francis Murphy  
(b. United States, 1853–1921)  
*Springtime: Foggy Morning*, 1899  
Oil on canvas  
Memorial Art Gallery of the University  
of Rochester; Bequest of Edith Holden Babcock

Leonard Ochtman  
(b. Netherlands, 1854–1934)  
*A Silent Morning*, 1909  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Leonard Ochtman  
(b. Netherlands, 1854–1934)  
*Early Snow*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of Jack and Mary Ann Hollihan

## EXHIBITION

Walter Launt Palmer  
(b. United States, 1854–1932)  
*Blue and Gold*, c. 1932  
Oil on canvas  
Albany Institute of History & Art,  
gift of Beatrice Palmer, 1943.60.6

Walter Launt Palmer  
(b. United States, 1854–1932)  
*Catskill Clove*, 1886  
Pastel on paper  
Albany Institute of History & Art,  
gift of Miss Evelyn Newman, 1964.31.41

Walter Launt Palmer  
(b. United States, 1854–1932)  
*The Day's End*, c. 1931  
Oil on canvas  
Albany Institute of History & Art,  
gift of Beatrice Palmer, 1943.60.4

Agnes Richmond  
(b. United States, 1870–1964)  
*Woman by a River*, 1904  
Oil on canvas  
Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild, gift of  
the Douglas C. James Charitable Trust

Margery Ryerson  
(b. United States, 1886–1989)  
*Crowd – 42nd Street*, c. 1920  
Drypoint etching  
Estate of Margery Ryerson,  
The James Cox Gallery at Woodstock

Margery Ryerson  
(b. United States, 1886–1989)  
*Waiting Taxi*, c. 1920  
Etching  
Estate of Margery Ryerson,  
The James Cox Gallery at Woodstock

George Seeley  
(b. United States, 1880–1955)  
*Landscape with Pines*, 1916  
Gum bichromate print  
Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery

Edward Steichen  
(b. Luxembourg, 1879–1973)  
*Judgement of Paris (from Camera Work)*, 1903  
Halftone print  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art,  
gift of Howard Greenberg, 1985.003

Edward Steichen  
(b. Luxembourg, 1879–1973)  
*The Photographer's Best Model –  
George Bernard Shaw, London*, 1907  
Gelatin silver print  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art,  
gift of Howard Greenberg, 2005.070.101

Dwight Tryon  
(b. United States, 1849–1925)  
*Late Twilight – Autumn*, 1906  
Oil on panel  
Memorial Art Gallery of the University  
of Rochester; Gift of the Estate of Emily  
and James Sibley Watson

Dwight Tryon  
(b. United States, 1849–1925)  
*Moonlight*, n.d.  
Pastel on paper  
Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College,  
gift of Mrs. Deborah Elton Allen, class of 1930,  
1989.10.2

Frame: Stanford White (b. United States,  
1853–1906)

Dwight Tryon  
(b. United States, 1849–1925)  
*November*, 1889  
Oil on board  
Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College,  
gift of Mrs. Burton P. Twichell (Katherine Pratt,  
class of 1914), 1979.1.3

Eva Watson-Schütze  
(b. United States, 1867–1935)  
*Portrait of Bolton Brown*, c. 1905  
Platinum print  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art,  
gift of Howard Greenberg, 2007.040.032

Eva Watson-Schütze  
(b. United States, 1867–1935)  
*Portrait of Carl Eric Lindin*, 1905  
Platinum print  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art,  
gift of Howard Greenberg, 2007.040.031

Eva Watson-Schütze  
(b. United States, 1867–1935)  
*Portrait of Martin Schütze Playing Violin*, 1900  
Platinum print  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art,  
gift of Arthur A. Anderson, 2008.039.002

Eva Watson-Schütze  
(b. United States, 1867–1935)  
*Portrait of Two Children by Waterfall*, 1905  
Platinum print  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art,  
gift of Howard Greenberg, 2007.040.047

Eva Watson-Schütze  
(b. United States, 1867–1935)  
*Portrait of a Woman with Hand on Chin Seated  
Under Tree*, c. 1915  
Photograph  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art,  
gift of Howard Greenberg, 2007.040.012

James A. McNeill Whistler  
(b. United States, 1834–1903)  
*Little Venice*, 1880  
Etching  
Albany Institute of History & Art, gift of  
Gov. and Mrs. W. Averill Harriman, 1979.50.8

James A. McNeill Whistler  
(b. United States, 1834–1903)  
*The Sea at Pourville (no. 2), near Dieppe,  
France*, 1899  
Oil on panel  
Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute,  
Museum of Art, Utica, NY, Museum Purchase  
with Funds from the Charles E. Merrill Trust  
73.114

Clarence White  
(b. United States, 1871–1925)  
*Woman with Parasol*, early 1900s  
Platinum print  
Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery

Alexander Wyant  
(b. United States, 1836–1892)  
*Adirondack Ledge*, 1884  
Oil on canvas  
Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute,  
Museum of Art, Utica, NY, Museum Purchase  
64.146

Alexander Wyant  
(b. United States, 1836–1892)  
*Gray Hills*, 1879  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of David Adams Cleveland  
and Patricia Haas-Cleveland

Alexander Wyant  
(b. United States, 1836–1892)  
*Irish Landscape*, 1865  
Oil on canvas  
Collection of Jack and Mary Ann Hollihan



Eva Watson-Schütze, *Portrait of Bolton Brown*, c. 1905, Platinum print, 8 1/8 x 6 1/4 in.,  
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, gift of Howard Greenberg, 2007.040.032



The New York State Museum is a program of The University of the State of New York  
The State Education Department | Office of Cultural Education

[www.nysm.nysed.gov](http://www.nysm.nysed.gov)