

BACKGROUND WITH FIGURES

Summer Reading 2014

AMERICAN PAINTINGS & AMERICAN PROSE



HAWTHORNE FINE ART

Dear Reader

I DECIDED to name this Summer Reading catalogue after Cecilia Beaux's autobiography of the same title: *Background with Figures*. It remains one of my very favorite books and was a source of great inspiration to me back in my years as a student when writing my undergraduate thesis on the artist and her gilded age portraits. In it, Beaux documents her family background, her artistic education and experiences as a leading artist of her day with a voice of brilliant clarity and nuance. One of the passages that stands out most describes her excitement at the prospect of embarking on a career as a portraitist:

But the unbroken morning hours, the companionship, and, of course above all, the model, static, silent, separated, so that the lighting and the values could be seen and compared in their beautiful sequence and order, all this was the farther side of a very sharp corner I had turned, into a new world which was to be continuously mine.¹

This passage carries a personal resonance for me as it reflects the enthusiasm I perpetually feel for my work in finding paintings of great beauty and assembling a harmonious inventory to offer our clients, continually turning the corner to discover a previously unseen treasure and share it. More broadly, Beaux's insight has affected the way I see not only art, but the world. Life's experiences are animated not only by the figures acting within them but also the foil or scenery onto which they project their ideas and emotions. With this theme of "Background" and "Figures" in mind, I have selected paintings that exemplify this format quite literally as figural works, but also those that by their mood and subtlety evoke an implied human presence or invite the viewer to be a stand-in. The accompanying literary passages are meant to reinforce the expression of drama within the paintings. I very much hope you enjoy exploring this year's edition of Summer Reading and a contemplation of the theatrical aspects of the works offered here.

Please accept our invitation to visit our gallery to see these and other exceptional pieces firsthand.

Sincerely,

JENNIFER C. KRIEGER

Managing Partner, Hawthorne Fine Art, LLC

1. Cecilia Beaux, *Background with Figures* (New York and Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), 88.

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JOHN FRANCIS MURPHY (1853–1921)

The Brook

Oil on canvas, 7½ x 14 inches

Signed lower right





We chanced in passing by that afternoon
To catch it in a sort of special picture
Among tar-banded ancient cherry trees,
Set well back from the road in rank lodged grass,
The little cottage we were speaking of,
A front with just a door between two windows,
Fresh painted by the shower a velvet black.

ROBERT FROST, *The Black Cottage*



Your thighs are appletrees
whose blossoms touch the sky.
Which sky? The sky
where Watteau hung a lady's
slipper. Your knees
are a southern breeze—or
a gust of snow. Agh! what
sort of man was Fragonard?
—As if that answered
anything.—Ah, yes.

—WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, *Portrait of a Lady*



JAMES CARROLL BECKWITH (1852–1917)

Nita, 1897

Oil on panel, 10¹/₁₆ x 7⁵/₈ inches

Signed lower left

Inscribed, Background of / Nita Sewell / 1897, verso

As she moved beside him, with her long light step, Selden was conscious of taking a luxurious pleasure in her nearness: in the modeling of her little ear, the crisp upward wave of her hair—was it ever so slightly brightened by art?—and the thick planting of her straight black lashes. Everything about her was at once vigorous and exquisite, at once strong and fine.

—EDITH WHARTON, *House of Mirth*



EDMUND CHARLES TARBELL (1862–1938)

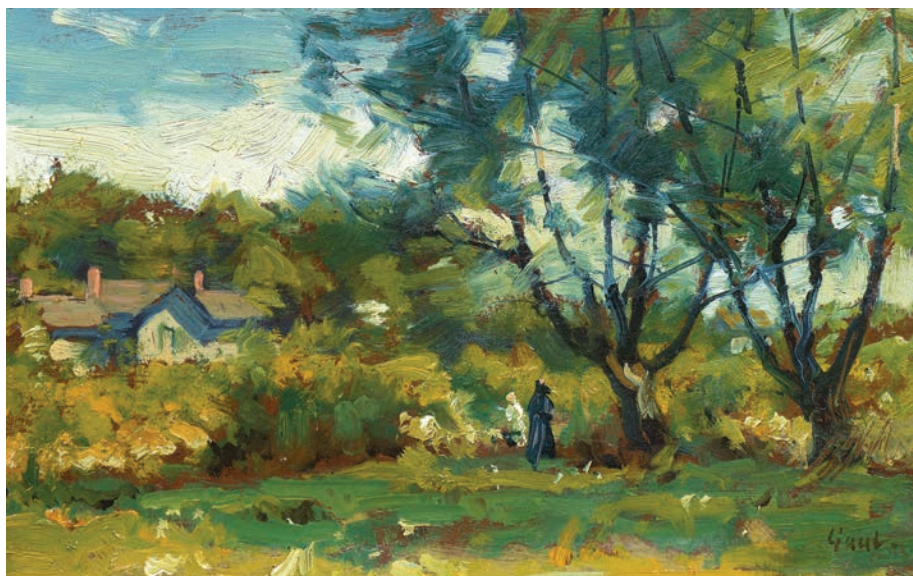
A Summer Idyl, c. 1890–93

Oil on canvas, 32¹/₄ x 27¹/₂ inches

Signed lower right and inscribed: To May & Arthur/Tarbell







The spot, though undistinguished by surprising scenery, is a very lovely one, and not unfrequent in the middle country of the Atlantic Southern States. It presents a pleasing prospect under a single glance of the eye, of smooth lawn, and gentle acclivity, and lofty forest growth. Looking up from this spot while your steed drinks, you behold, perched on another gentle swell of ground, as snug and handsome an edifice as our forest country usually affords; none of your overgrown ambitious establishments, but a trim tidy dwelling, consisting of a single story of wood upon a brick basement. . . . The lawn slopes away, for several hundred yards, an even and very gradual descent even to the road; a broad tract, well sprinkled with noble trees, oaks, oranges, and cedars, with here and there a clump of towering pines, under which steeds are grazing.

—WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS,

As Good as a Comedy, or, The Tennessean's Story



GILBERT GAUL (1855–1919)

Cottage in the Woods

Oil on board, 5½ x 9½ inches

Signed lower right



At this precise moment, then, the Montauk was lying at a single anchor, not less than a league from the land, in a flat calm, with her three topsails loose, the courses in the brails, and with all those signs of preparation about her that are so bewildering to landsmen, but which seamen comprehend as clearly as words.

—JAMES FENIMORE COOPER, *Homeward Bound*




CLARK GREENWOOD VOORHEES (1871–1933)

Schooner, Noank, CT

Oil on panel, 12 x 16 inches

Estate stamp verso





It was late in the afternoon, and the light was waning. There was a difference in the look of the tree shadows out in the yard. Somewhere in the distance cows were lowing and a little bell was tinkling; now and then a farm-wagon tilted by, and the dust flew; some blue-shirted laborers with shovels over their shoulders plodded past; little swarms of flies were dancing up and down before the peoples' faces in the soft air. There seemed to be a gentle stir arising over everything for the mere sake of subsidence—a very premonition of rest and hush and night.

—MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN, *A New England Nun*



EDWARD GAY (1837–1928)

Under the Birches, 1872

Oil on canvas, 30 x 20 inches

Signed and dated 1872, lower left





Nobody knows this little Rose—
It might a pilgrim be
Did I not take it from the ways
And lift it up to thee.
Only a Bee will miss it—
Only a Butterfly,
Hastening from far journey—
On its breast to lie—
Only a Bird will wonder—
Only a Breeze will sigh—
Ah Little Rose—how easy
For such as thee to die!

—EMILY DICKINSON, *Nobody knows this little Rose*



MARTIN JOHNSON HEADE (1819–1904)

Red Rose, 1878

Oil on canvas, 15 x 10¹/₄ inches

Signed and dated 1878, lower right





A large drop of sun lingered on the horizon and then dripped over and was gone, and the sky was brilliant over the spot where it had gone, and a torn cloud, like a bloody rag, hung over the spot of its going. And dusk crept over the sky from the eastern horizon, and darkness crept over the land from the east.

—JOHN STEINBECK, *The Grapes of Wrath*



WILLIAM HART (1823–1894)

Early Autumn Gleam

Oil on canvas, 7 x 12 inches

Signed lower right





He always thought of the sea as “la mar” which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her. Sometimes those who love her say bad things of her but they are always said as though she were a woman. Some of the younger fishermen, those who used buoys as floats for their lines and had motorboats, bought when the shark livers had brought much money, spoke of her as “el mar” which is masculine. They spoke of her as a contestant or a place or even an enemy. But the old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favours, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought.

—ERNEST HEMINGWAY, *The Old Man and the Sea*



SAMUEL COLMAN (1832–1920)
Governors Island, New York Harbor, 1875
Oil on canvas, 11½ x 14½ inches
Signed and dated 1875, lower right



Low-anchored cloud,
Newfoundland air,
Fountain-head and source of rivers,
Dew-cloth, dream-drapery,
And napkin spread by fays;
Drifting meadow of the air,
Where bloom the daisied banks and violets,
And in whose fenny labyrinth
The bittern booms and heron wades;
Spirit of lakes and seas and rivers,
Bear only perfumes and the scent
Of healing herbs to just men's fields!

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU, *Low-Anchored Cloud*



JOHN WILLARD RAUGHT (1857–1931)

A Gray Day on the Plain, 1896

Oil on canvas, 9 x 12 inches

Signed and dated 1896, lower left





Long since, in this part of our circumjacent wood, I had found out for myself a little hermitage. It was a kind of leafy cave, high upward into the air, among the midmost branches of a white-pine tree. A wild grapevine, of unusual size and luxuriance, had twined and twisted itself up into the tree, and, after wreathing the entanglement of its tendrils around almost every bough, had caught hold of three or four neighboring trees, and married the whole clump with a perfectly inextricable knot of polygamy. Once, while sheltering myself from a summer shower, the fancy had taken me to clamber up into this seemingly impervious mass of foliage. The branches yielded me a passage, and closed again beneath, as if only a squirrel or a bird had passed. Far aloft, around the stem of the central pine, behold a perfect nest for Robinson Crusoe or King Charles! A hollow chamber of rare seclusion had been formed by the decay of some of the pine branches, which the vine had lovingly strangled with its embrace, burying them from the light of day in an aerial sepulchre of its own leaves.

—NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, *The Blithedale Romance*



GEORGE INNESS (1825–1894)

Pompton, 1877

Oil on canvas laid down on cardboard, 12⁷/₈ x 9¹⁵/₁₆ inches

Signed and dated 1877, lower right





Fair was she to behold, that maiden of seventeen summers.
Black were her eyes as the berry that grows on the thorn by the wayside,
Black, yet how softly they gleamed beneath the brown shade of her tresses!
Sweet was her breath as the breath of kine that feed in the meadows.
When in the harvest heat she bore to the reapers at noontide
Flagons of home-brewed ale, ah! fair in sooth was the maiden,
Fairer was she when, on Sunday morn, while the bell from its turret . . .
Wearing her Norman cap and her kirtle of blue, and the ear-rings, . . .
Handed down from mother to child, through long generations.

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW,
Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie



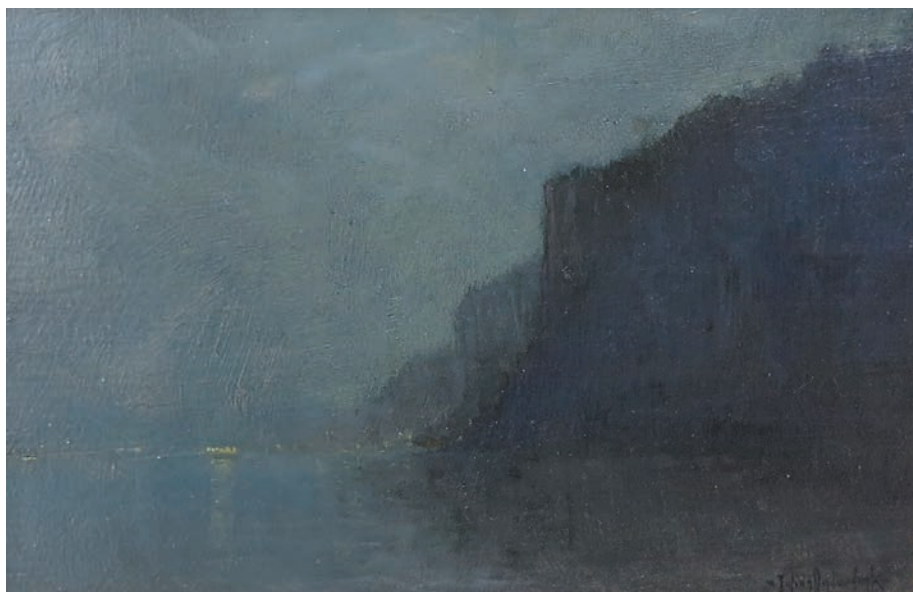
VIRGIL MACEY WILLIAMS (1830–1886)

An Italian Girl

Oil on canvas, 14 x 10 inches

Signed lower left





As usual dear Mother you were right! . . . The trip was a very long one, and towards the last we became heartily tired of it; the weather was delightful, and the vessel went smoothly across the Atlantic—when I say across I don't mean in a straight line for we wandered about and sideled [*sic*] along in the most extraordinary manner, finding ourselves in all sorts of latitudes and remaining in different parts of the Ocean for days, without any particular knowledge as to where we would go next!—Calm upon calm followed us, or rather kept up with us until we were nearly worn out with impatience; so you can fancy with what joy we saw the land!

—JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER to
ANNA MATILDA WHISTLER, 10 October 1855



JULIAN ONDERDONK (1882–1922)

Hudson River, Fort Lee Ferry, 1908

Oil on panel, 6¼ x 9 inches

Signed lower right

Signed again, inscribed with title and date, verso



The night was hot and sultry. Though the windows of the chamber were wide open, and the muslin curtains looped back, not a breath of air was stirring. Only the shrill chirp of the cicada and the muffled croaking of the frogs in some distant marsh broke the night silence.

—CHARLES CHESNUTT, *The Marrow of Tradition*



WILLIAM HART (1823–1894)

Montezuma Marsh, 1872

Watercolor on paper, 20¹/₄ x 30 inches

Signed and dated 1872, lower left



Yes, yes, we know it. But get up an hour earlier, fair reader; put on your broadest sun-bonnet, and your stoutest pair of gloves, and try the problem of health, enjoyment and beauty, before the sun gets too ardent. A great deal may be done in this way; and after a while, if your heart is in the right place for ruralities, you will find the occupation so fascinating that you'll gradually find yourself able to enjoy keenly what was at first only a very irksome sort of duty.

—ANDREW JACKSON DOWNING, *Rural Essays*



CLARK GREENWOOD VOORHEES (1871–1933)

Study for the Chadwick House

Oil on board, 6 x 8½ inches

Estate stamp verso





“Whereabouts are we now?” asked Frank, as they emerged from Fourth Avenue into Union Square.

“That is Union Park,” said Dick, pointing to a beautiful enclosure, in the centre of which was a pond, with a fountain playing.

“Is that the statue of General Washington?” asked Frank, pointing to a bronze equestrian statue, on a granite pedestal.

“Yes,” said Dick; “he’s growed some since he was President. If he’d been as tall as that when he fit in the Revolution, he’d have walloped the Britishers some, I reckon.”

—HORATIO ALGER, *Ragged Dick*



FRANK S. HERRMANN (1866–1942)

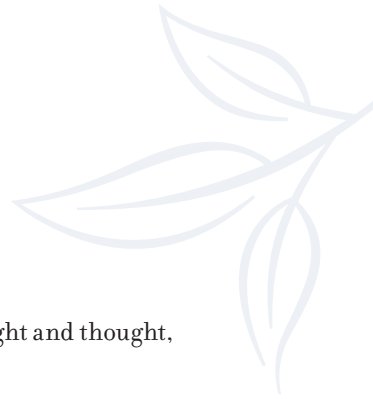
Union Square, circa 1925

Gouache on cardboard, 12¼ x 15½ inches

Signed lower right

Inscribed lower left: *Union Square—N.Y.*





I repaired to the park and sat in the moon shade. I thought and thought, and wondered why none could tell me what I asked for.

And then, as swift as light from a fixed star, the answer came to me. I arose and hurried—hurried as so many reasoners must, back around my circle. I knew the answer and I hugged it in my breast as I flew, fearing lest someone would stop me and demand my secret.

Aurelia was still on the stoop. The moon was higher and the ivy shadows were deeper. I sat at her side and we watched a little cloud tilt at the drifting moon and go asunder, quite pale and discomfited.

And then, wonder of wonders and delight of delights! Our hands somehow touched, and our fingers closed together and did not part.

After half an hour Aurelia said, with that smile of hers:

“Do you know, you haven’t spoken a word since you came back!”

“That,” said I, nodding wisely, “is the Voice of the City.”

—O. HENRY, *The Voice of the City*



PAUL CORNOYER (1864–1923)

Early Evening, Empire Park, New York, c. 1910

Oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches

Signed lower left

In front of them was the square, containing a considerable quantity of inexpensive vegetation, enclosed by a wooden paling, which increased its rural and assessable appearance; and round the corner was the more august precinct of the Fifth Avenue, taking its origin at this point with a spacious and confident air which already marked it for high destinies. I know not whether it is owing to the tenderness of early associations, but this portion of New York appears to many persons the most delectable. It has a kind of established repose which is not of frequent occurrence in other quarters of the long, shrill city; it has a riper, richer, more honorable look than any of the upper ramifications of the great longitudinal thoroughfare—the look of having had something of a social history.

—HENRY JAMES. *Washington Square*



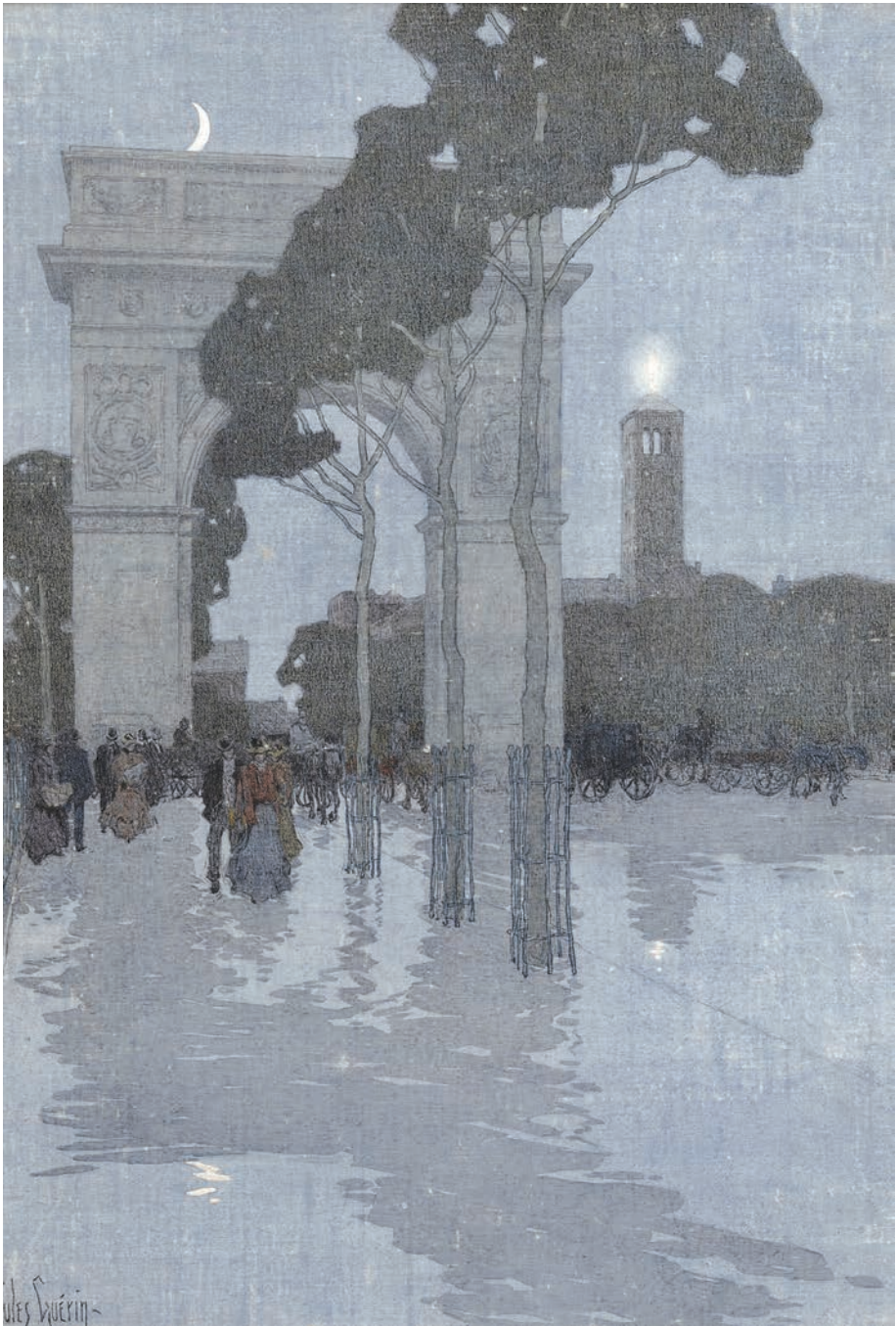
JULES GUÉRIN (1866–1946)

The Washington Arch in Washington Square, August 1902

Watercolor and ink on linen mounted to paperboard

27 x 19½ inches, Signed lower left





Jules Verin -



Screened from the mistral by somber curtains of beckoned cypresses, Italian in richness of foliage, the blossoming annuals (violet, purple, crimson, rose) riot up and down the scale—a symphony in color.

—AMY OAKLEY, *The Heart of Provence*



GEORGE WALTER DAWSON (1870–1938)

Path to the Alps

Watercolor on paper, 22 x 17³/₄ inches

Signed lower right



Where billow meets billow, then soft be thy pillow,
Oh weary wee flipperling, curl at thy ease!
The storm shall not wake thee, nor shark overtake thee,
Asleep in the arms of the slow swinging seas!
—JOSEPH RUDYARD KIPLING, *The White Seal's Lullaby*



ROSINA EMMET SHERWOOD (1854–1948)
Cynthia Holding Baby Ros, 1899
Pastel on paper, 8½ x 5½ inches
Signed and dated 1899, lower left



Where herons stalk, and the shy mallard hides
In stillest haunts, is the man-worker seen—
Even the sea must garner for his good.
Soon high and dark above the marsh and tides,
Stand the great hay-towers; as they loom and lean.
Like turrets grim to mark the solitude.

—JOHN FREDERIC HERBIN, *The Sea Harvest*



WILLIAM RICHARDSON TYLER (1825–1896)

Low Tide, Crab Gathering, c. 1870

Oil on canvas, 8 x 13 inches

Signed lower left





Tilly put down the old tea-pot, carefully poured out a part of the milk, and from her pocket produced a great, plummy bun, that one of the school-children had given her, and she had saved for her mother. A slice of the dry bread was nicely toasted, and the bit of butter set by for her put on it. When her mother came in there was the table drawn up in a warm place, a hot cup of tea ready, and Tilly and birdie waiting for her. Such a poor little supper, and yet such a happy one; for love, charity, and contentment were guests there.

—LOUISA MAY ALCOTT, *Aunt Jo's Scrap Bag*



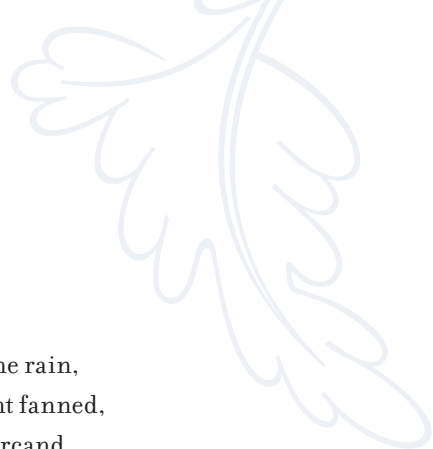
DAVID GILMOUR BLYTHE (1815–1865)

By The Fire, c. 1856

Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

Signed lower right





Thou comest, Autumn, heralded by the rain,
With banners, by great gales incessant fanned,
Brighter than brightest silks of Samarcand,
And stately oxen harnessed to thy wain!
Thou standest, like imperial Charlemagne,
Upon thy bridge of gold; thy royal hand
Outstretched with benedictions o'er the land,
Blessing the farms through all thy vast domain!
Thy shield is the red harvest moon, suspended
So long beneath the heaven's o'er-hanging eaves;
Thy steps are by the farmer's prayers attended;
Like flames upon an altar shine the sheaves;
And, following thee, in thy ovation splendid,
Thine almoner, the wind, scatters the golden leaves!

— HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW, *Autumn*



LAUREN SANSARICQ (b. 1990)
Forest Interior, Southampton, NY (Cow Neck Preserve)
Oil on panel, 18½ x 14½ inches
Signed lower right

The barn was very large. It was very old. It smelled of hay and it smelled of manure. It smelled of the perspiration of tired horses and the wonderful sweet breath of patient cows. It often had a sort of peaceful smell—as though nothing bad could happen ever again in the world. It smelled of grain and of harness dressing and of axle grease and of rubber boots and of new rope. And whenever the cat was given a fish-head to eat, the barn would smell of fish. But mostly it smelled of hay, for there was always hay in the great loft up overhead. And there was always hay being pitched down to the cows and the horses and the sheep.

—E. B. WHITE, *Charlotte's Web*



ARTHUR FITZWILLIAM TAIT (1819–1905)

The Pets, 1859

Oil on canvas, 18 x 14 inches

Signed lower left







HAWTHORNE
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FRONT COVER: Edmund Charles Tarbell (1862–1938), *A Summer Idyl*, c. 1890–93,
Oil on canvas, 32¼ x 27½ inches, Signed lower right and inscribed: To May & Arthur/Tarbell

BACK COVER: Edward Gay (1837–1928), *Under the Birches* (detail), 1872,

Oil on canvas, 30 x 20 inches, Signed and dated 1872, lower left

CATALOGUE DESIGN: Rita Lascaro