



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

CHARLES YARDLEY TURNER (1850—1919)

Saying Goodbye, 1881

Oil on canvas

27 x 17 inches

Signed with initials “C.Y.T” and dated '81 lower left

Provenance: Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, PA

No painter has been more successful in delineating the poetic side of American feminine character than C.Y. Turner. Mr. Turner has for some years distinguished himself by his refined and sympathetic rendition of some of the most charming female types of American poetry and fiction, and he has given us several important compositions in the same field . . . Thoroughly American in spirit as he is, Mr. Turner still owes the development of his art to European influences . . . While a painter of a realistic tendency, and in everything a devoted student of nature, Mr. Turner has never been content with the mere substance of things, but has modeled, modified and adapted them to his own imaginative and creative moods.

~Thomas B. Clarke, *The Catalogue of the Thomas B. Clarke Collection of American Pictures*

Charles Yardley Turner, known commonly as C.Y. Turner or Cy Turner, was an American painter and muralist. He was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1850. He graduated from the Maryland Institute of Art in 1870, located in his hometown, and then moved to New York City to enroll in the National Academy of Design. Following his graduation in 1875, he was a founder and early President of the Arts Student League (1879). Around 1880, he travelled to Paris to complete his training under Jean-Paul Laurens (1838—1921), Mihály Munkácsy (1844-1900), and Léon Bonnat (1833-1922). At some point in this early part of his career, Turner took to both calling himself and signing his name “C.Y.” because, as he explained in 1912 interview for the *Baltimore Sun*, “C.Y” made a combination that really had more



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

individuality that ‘Charles Yardley.’”¹

Turner painted *Saying Goodbye* while in France, where he typically continued to depict figures from American history—Puritans, Revolutionary War scenes, and Indians—but filtered through the aesthetic techniques of his Parisian teachers. Here, we see a mother and daughter from behind—Puritans, as suggested by their modest dress. The mother holds her daughter to her as they gaze into the distance, lingering over their farewell to an unseen individual—perhaps the child’s father? Turner’s palette is dominated by muted tones, a representation of the somber colors of traditional Puritan dress, as well as the ashen light of early morning in colonial America. Turner eloquently infused the painting with a poetic sense of longing and resignation, which his choice in presenting the mother and child as *Rückenfiguren*, or figures seen from behind, heightens.

Upon his return to New York City in 1882, he continued to exhibit with the National Academy. He assumed the role of President of the Salmagundi Club in 1883, which he held until 1889. Furthermore, he developed a significant reputation as a mural painter; he was the President of the National Society of Mural Painters from 1904—1909, a title he earned after major successes in his roles in the organization and decoration of various fairs. He was assistant director of decoration, under fellow muralist Francis Davis Millet (1848—1912) of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and then was the colorist for the entire 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. Below is a photograph of his studio during the organization of that exposition, showing he and his fellow organizers grouping the models for the exposition’s buildings.

¹ Charles Yardley Turner, quoted in *The Baltimore Sun*, November 25, 1912, p. 7.



HAWTHORNE Fine Art



Despite his success in New York City and abroad, Turner remained close to his ties in Baltimore, and eventually opened a second studio there. He became the director of the Maryland Institute of Art in 1912, where he began his studies half a century earlier. He also was commissioned to paint several murals in the city, including famous ones of the burning of the *Peggy Stewart* (a cargo vessel burned in retaliation for England's treatment of Boston following the Boston Tea Party) as well as of the purchase of Maryland, in the Criminal Court lobby of the Baltimore Courthouse. These murals joined his others in various government buildings the midwestern and eastern United States, including the Library of Congress, and the capitol building of Wisconsin.