



F. CHILDE HASSAM (1859—1935)

A Bather, Silver Beach Grass, 1918

Oil on panel

9 5/16 x 5 9/16 inches

Signed and dated lower right: Childe Hassam 1918;

on verso: Childe Hassam / 1918

PROVENANCE

E. & A. Milch, New York, New York

Mrs. C. F. (Emily Lynch) Samson, Scarborough-on-Hudson,
New York, acquired from above, 1928

Estate of Mrs. C. F. Samson

Mrs. R. Taylor, New York, daughter of Mrs. C. F. Samson
Newhouse Galleries, New York, New York, consigned
from above, 1978

The Jack Warner Foundation, Tuscaloosa, Alabama,
acquired from above, 1979

EXHIBITED

(Possibly) First Annual Exhibition of the American
Painters, Sculptors, and Gravers, E. Gimpel &
Wildenstein, New York, New York, November 3–22,
1919, no. 57 (as *Silver Beach Grass*)

First Annual Exhibition of the Society of American
Painters, Sculptors, and Gravers, Buffalo Fine Arts
Academy, Albright Art Gallery, New York, December
6, 1919–January 5, 1920, no. 29 (as *Silver Beach Grass*)

Exhibition by the Society of American Painters,
Sculptors, and Gravers, Detroit Institute of Art,
Michigan, January 15–25, 1920; The Art Institute
of Chicago, Illinois, March 9–April 1, 1920, no. 29
(as *Silver Beach Grass*)

Mildred Warner House Museum, Tuscaloosa,
Alabama, ca. 1990–2002

Westervelt Warner Museum of American Art,
Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 2003–11

An American Odyssey: The Warner Collection of
American Art, New Britain Museum of American Art,
Connecticut, April 1–July 3, 2011; Arthur Ross Gallery
at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia,



Pennsylvania, August 13–November 6, 2011;
Whispering Cliffs, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, December
2011–January 2014; The Frick Art & Historical Center,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March 1–May 25, 2014

LITERATURE

Diane Burrell, “The Mildred Warner House, American Art, American Spirit,” *Southern Accents* (November/December 1985): 65.

NOTE: This painting will be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of the artist’s work by Kathleen Burnside and Stuart P. Feld.

(Frederick) Childe Hassam (1859—1935) was a pioneer of the American Impressionist movement. His body of work comprises over 2,000 oils, watercolors, pastels and illustrations and after 1912, over 400 etchings and prints. Today, he is perhaps best known for his paintings that capture the excitement of New York City at the turn of century, such as his famous depictions of flag-studded Fifth Avenue during World War I, but his unparalleled skill at portraying the tranquility and beauty of the countryside with his bright, tonal palette and descriptive brushwork are considered to be some of his most sophisticated work.

Hassam was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts (now a part of Boston) to a prominent merchant family descended from the settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He initially trained as an apprentice to a wood engraver, and from the late 1870s to the mid-1880s created drawings for book illustrations—largely children’s stories—as well as illustrations for periodicals such as *Century* and *Harper’s* magazines. Beginning in the early 1880s, he attended evening classes at the Boston Art Club, where he studied under William Rimmer (1816—1879), an artist whose work would posthumously be shown in the groundbreaking 1913 Armory Show. Hassam had his first one-man show at Boston’s William & Everett Galleries in 1882, in which he exhibited his first body of non-graphic work, mostly bright watercolors strongly influenced by the Barbizon school. In 1883, Hassam opened his studio on Tremont Street and took his first trip to Europe accompanied by the American illustrator Edmund C. Garrett (1853—1929). Hassam painted many bright, illustrative watercolors during this trip, over 60 of which he exhibited in Boston upon his return to the city in 1884. By the mid-1880s, Hassam had established his reputation in Boston as a painter of urban street scenes in a tonal, atmospheric style.

In late 1886, Hassam and his wife, Kathleen Maud (née Doane), left Boston and travelled abroad for three years. The couple settled in Paris, and Hassam began classes with Gustave Boulanger (1824—1888) and Jules Lefebvre (1834—1912) at the Académie Julian. This period had great



implications for Hassam's artistic development; somewhat unusual in the circle of American artists there at the time, Hassam was attracted to the work of the French Impressionists, which was only beginning to find favor among American collectors at the time. When he and his wife returned to the United States in 1889, this time taking up residency in New York City, he had adopted the French Impressionist technique of broken, descriptive brushstrokes and a brighter palette in oils to depict his signature urban scenes.

Hassam was a widely acclaimed artist by the 1890s. His oeuvre, which had previously been dominated by urban scenes, now included pictures of the countryside inspired by his trips to New England during the summer seasons. He received recognition from several exhibitions held at major art institutions in the United States, such as the Philadelphia and Boston Art Clubs, the American Water Color Society, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the National Academy of Design, among others. With his work, as Barbara Weinberg, formerly of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, stated, "he achieved critical acclaim and commercial success, riding the great wave of enthusiasm for American Impressionism to fame and fortune."

Hassam and his wife returned to Europe in 1896, visiting England and Italy in addition to France. The artist further developed his style during this trip, which at this point was generally regarded as American Impressionist, increasing the brightness of his colors and further agitating his brushstrokes in the style of the French Post-Impressionists such as George Seurat who were gaining dominance at the time. When Hassam and his wife returned to New York City in 1897, he had reached his mature style that remained loyal to the Impressionist desire to depict the energy of the burgeoning industrial life, but also incorporated the vivid palette and aggressive, descriptive brushwork of the Post-Impressionists and Symbolists, a hybridity of expression that would solidify his legacy as an outstanding American artist.

In the following decade, Hassam became increasingly distrustful of modern 20th century art. He helped organize the exhibition *Ten American Painters* at the Durand-Ruel Galleries in New York in 1898, which sought to exhibit work of contemporary artists in an environment that was less constrictive and more aesthetically diverse than that found in the academy. He explored more Symbolist and anti-naturalistic subject matter in his own work during this time, and although he considered these canvasses to be among his finest work, they were not as well received as his more naturalistic paintings. He travelled to Europe for the last time in 1910—11, during which he executed paintings that captured the energy of Bastille Day in Paris, works that would be precursors of his pictures of patriotic celebrations held in New York City during World War I.



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Childe Hassam, *July Fourteenth, Rue Daunou*, 1910, oil on canvas, 29x20 inches, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Childe Hassam, *Avenue of the Allies, Great Britain*, 1918, 1918, oil on canvas, 36x28 inches, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

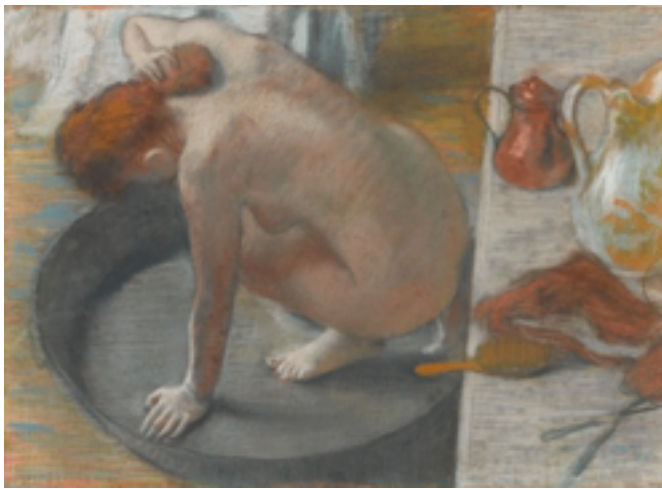
In 1914, at the age of 55, Hassam took up printmaking; he executed over 350 etchings and 40 lithographs, works that still adhered to the energetic and descriptive markings that characterize his paintings. He did not, however, give up oil painting; indeed, *A Bather, Silver Beach* was painted in 1918, and is a wonderful example of the artist's mature style in which he had been working for several years and in which he commanded with great confidence.

Executed in a palette of pastel blues, greens, and beiges, *A Bather, Silver Beach* communicates a calmness that Hassam sought after the bustle of the city and the tensions inspired by war, in this instance at Silver Beach, a community located on the banks of the East River in the Bronx neighborhood of Throgs Neck. His clear brushstrokes describe the energy of the object that they are depicting, a technique that he adopted from the Symbolists. Blue and white brushstrokes



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depicting water modulate horizontally across the canvas, the green brushstrokes reach to the top of the picture to reflect the blades of grass growing towards to the sun, and the layered brushstrokes of the nude woman wrap around her body and hair, infusing her figure with a living warmth. The subject reflects his continued adherence to Impressionist principles; Hassam voyeuristically captures his bather in a private, introspective moment characteristic of Degas' (1834—1917) bathers, but employs a palette and outdoor environment in the spirit of Renoir's (1841—1919) depictions of the same subject.



Edgar Degas, *The Tub*, 1886, pastel on cardboard, 24x33 inches, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Bather Arranging her Hair*, 1885, oil on canvas, 37x29 inches, Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass.

Despite his loose brushwork, however, Hassam's bather emanates a strong feeling of solidity within her environment, a situation that has led scholars to argue that the distinctions between Impressionism and Realism is not as defined in American art as it is in European art. *A Bather*, *Silver Beach* demonstrates the mastery Hassam exercised over his craft, a tour de force of expression communicated through a simple palette, minimal subject matter, and boldly descriptive brushwork. This painting is slated to be included in forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Hassam's work by Stuart P. Feld and Katherine M. Burnside.

Hassam spent the remainder of his life in New York City and East Hampton, where he purchased a summer cottage in 1919. Upon his death, his estate was left to the American Academy of Arts



and Letters, New York. The artist's instructions dictated that his works were to be sold to establish a fund for the purchase of American and Canadian artists' works for museum collections. Hassam was a member of the National Academy of Design, the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris, and the Munich Secessionists. In addition to the noted *Ten American Painters* show of 1898, Hassam exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in Paris (1889, bronze medal), and with Munich Secessionists (1905), at the inaugural Armory Show in New York (1913), and regularly at the Salon des Artistes Français and the Salon de la Société des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Since his death, there have been at least five large-scale solo exhibitions of Hassam's work mounted. Today, Hassam's work is in the collections of dozens of museums around the world, including: the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

Selected Bibliography:

Burnside, Kathleen M. "Hassam, Childe." *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 13 Jan. 2017. <<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T036852>>.

Weinberg, H. Barbara. "Childe Hassam (1859—1935)." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hass/hd_hass.htm (October 2004).

Weinberg, H. Barbara, Doreen Bolger and David Park Curry. *American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885—1915*. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994).