



HAWTHORNE  
Fine Art

**CLAUDE RAGUET HIRST (1855–1942)**

Claude Raguet Hirst was the only American woman noted for painting hyperrealistic still lifes at the turn of the 20th century.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, Claudine Hirst studied at the University of Cincinnati School of Drawing and Painting. She adopted the masculine version of her name in the early 1870s as she began exhibiting. Moving to New York City in 1879, Hirst studied privately and built her reputation as a skillful painter of fruit and floral still lifes. She proved particularly skilled with watercolor.

Abruptly in 1890, Hirst began portraying objects associated with male pastimes. She also adopted the illusionistic technique called trompe-l'oeil (French for “deceives the eye”). Such subject matter and technique had long been the focus of male artists like William M. Harnett and John F. Peto. But whereas Harnett and Peto celebrated activities like hunting and pipe-smoking, Hirst critiqued masculine culture.

Throughout her career, Hirst also included books in her compositions. Many of these texts were by early progressive women writers. Unlike her male counterparts, Hirst rendered books with legible pages and illustrations, drawing viewers’ attention to the beliefs she is thought to have championed as a woman and an artist.

In her sixties, Hirst saw her exhibited works begin to receive widespread acknowledgment in the form of jury prizes and critical acclaim. She lightened her palette and rejected the pipes and masculine accessories from her earlier still lifes. She continued to paint and exhibit into her eighties, leaving a legacy of more than 100 still-life paintings.

**NMWA EXHIBITIONS**

Claude Raguet Hirst: Transforming the American Still Life, 2004

American Women Artists: 1830–1930, 1987

**SOURCE** for all of the above: National Museum of Women in the Arts:  
<https://nmwa.org/explore/artist-profiles/claude-raguet-hirst>