



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

Robert Vonnoh (1858-1933)

Haystacks

Oil on panel

12 ¾ x 16 inches

Signed at lower left

Robert Vonnoh's most direct influence was the renowned Impressionist, Claude Monet (1840 - 1926). Vonnoh was inspired by Monet's landscapes and his explorations of light and color through numerous series of paintings of a single subject in different seasons and times of day. Indeed, Vonnoh's *Haystacks* has a direct correlation to Monet's paintings of the same subject. Yet, while Monet prominently features one to two large haystacks as the dominant focus of his composition, Vonnoh places more emphasis on the vast fields and open skies of the rural landscape where large groups of haystacks line the countryside. Though Vonnoh embraced the Impressionist style, as seen in this painting of haystacks, his forms never went as far as his French counterparts in fully dissolving forms into pure light and color. Much like Monet, Vonnoh also produced numerous paintings of flowers, especially poppies, and frequently integrated figures into his landscapes. For example, Vonnoh's 1890 painting, *In Flanders Field* bears a strong resemblance to Monet's *Poppies* of 1873. It is also likely that Vonnoh was aware of Monet's paintings of flowers and waterlilies produced in his garden at Giverny.

Robert Vonnoh, an influential landscape and portrait painter, is recognized as one of the first American artists to bring European Impressionism to the United States. He was born in Hartford Connecticut to German-American parents, and was raised in Boston, where he began his art education at the Massachusetts Normal Art School in 1875. Here he studied under George H. Bartlett (1838 - 1923) and met Edmund Tarbell (1862 - 1938). After graduating in 1879, he began teaching at his alma mater, as well as the Roxbury Evening Drawing School and the Cowles Art School. In 1880, Vonnoh traveled to Paris to continue his training at the Académie Julian, where he studied under Gustave Boulanger (1824 - 1888) and Jules Joseph Lefebvre (1836 - 1911).

Vonnoh returned to Boston in 1884 and continued his distinguished career as a teacher at the Cowles School before moving on to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts the following year. Vonnoh encountered European Impressionism through two exhibitions held in the United States – the “Foreign Exhibition” in Boston in 1883, and an exhibition of French Impressionist art in New York in 1886. In 1886, he married Grace D. Farrell, and they traveled to Grèz-sur-Loing near the Forest of Fontainebleau in France for their honeymoon. The couple returned to France the following year where they remained until 1890. In France, Vonnoh's stylistic direction evolved as he became enamored with the impasto brushwork and pure unmixed colors



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characteristic of the French Impressionists. At this time, the French Impressionists were exhibiting their work at the Georges Petit Galleries and at Durand-Ruel. Vonnoh was likely influenced by his friendship with the Irish landscapist, Roderick O'Connor (1860 - 1940), who was also painting in Grèz-sur-Loing in the 1880s and had close associations with Vincent Van Gogh (1853 - 1890) and Paul Gauguin (1848 - 1903). Throughout his time in France, many of Vonnoh's paintings were accepted into the Paris Salon. He also sent work to the United States for a solo exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1889.

In 1891, Vonnoh returned to the United States and had a solo exhibition at the Williams and Everett Gallery in Boston the following year, which featured many of the paintings he had executed in France. He also began teaching at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, where he maintained a commitment to instruction in the academic style, but also fostered an appreciation for the Impressionist aesthetic among his pupils. He primarily taught portraiture and landscapes, and gained a loyal following among his students, many of whom became distinguished and prolific painters in their own right, such as Robert Henri (1865 - 1929), William Glackens (1870 - 1938) and John Sloan (1871 - 1951) who later formed the influential Ashcan School.

After the death of his first wife, in 1899 he married the sculptor Bessie Potter (1872 - 1955), who is featured in several of his garden landscapes. Around 1905, the couple traveled to the artists' colony at Old Lyme, Connecticut, which they would return to each summer for the next twenty-five years. They regularly exhibited at the Lyme Art Association.

During his time in America, between 1891 and 1907 and again from 1912 until 1920, Vonnoh was renowned as one of the foremost landscape and portrait painters in the country. Around 1925, Vonnoh's eyesight began to deteriorate and his health began to fail. He returned to Grèz-sur-Loing and died from a heart attack in Nice in 1933.