



# HAWTHORNE

## Fine Art

### **Sarah Rhodes Macknight (Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century)**

While little is known about the artist Sarah Rhodes Macknight she appears to have flourished during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Like many women artists she used her initials and went by ‘S.R. Macknight’ in order to conceal her gender. According to archival city directories, Macknight worked as an artist in New York City between 1877 and 1886. During those years she resided on West 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Fourth Avenue, and West 15<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>1</sup> Another clue can be found in the titles of her works such as *A Brittany Bonnet* and *Castles in Spain* which indicate that Macknight likely spent time painting in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

In 1877, Macknight contributed two works entitled *Mignon* and *Hilda* to the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.<sup>3</sup> The same year, she exhibited with the Brooklyn Art Association and was one of several artists including Julie Hart Beers, Maria R. Dixon, and Arthur Quarterly, to name a few.<sup>4</sup> In 1879, Macknight exhibited three works at the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design.<sup>5</sup> In 1880, she contributed a watercolor entitled “*A Butterfly*” to the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of the American Watercolor Society held at the National Academy.<sup>6</sup> The following year her works entitled *A Brittany Bonnet* and *The Gipsy Bride* hung beside important American artists including Susie M. Barstow and Jervis McEntee at the First Annual Exhibition of the Milwaukee Exposition Association.<sup>7</sup>

Macknight exhibited at the National Academy annually between 1880 and 1884. In 1881, her painting entitled *Lois the Witch – Salem, 1692* was included in the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of the National Academy.<sup>8</sup> The painting was inspired by *Lois the Witch*, a short story by English novelist Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) published in 1861. Set during the Salem Witch Trials, the story follows a young woman named Lois who leaves England to reside in America with her puritanical uncle following the death of her parents. Unwittingly, Lois gains affection of her male and female cousin which leads to

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<sup>1</sup> New York, New York City Directory, 1877, 1879, 1880, 1884, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Hastings Falk, *Who Was Who in American Art, 1564-1975*, Vol II: G-O (Madison, CT: Soundview Press, 1999) 2138.

<sup>3</sup> *Catalogue of the Forty-Eighth Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1877) 13, 15.

<sup>4</sup> “Art Association,” *The Brooklyn Union* (Brooklyn, New York), Mon, Dec 17, 1877, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Catalogue of the Fifty-Fourth Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design* (New York: National Academy of Design, 1879) 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Illustrated Catalogue of the Thirteenth Annual Exhibition of the American Watercolor Society* (New York: American Watercolor Society, 1880) 37.

<sup>7</sup> *Rules and Regulations and Classification for the First Annual Exhibition by the Milwaukee Industrial Exposition Association* (Milwaukee: Cramer, Aikens & Cramer, Printers, 1881) 77, 90.

<sup>8</sup> *Catalogue of the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design* (New York: E. Wells Sackett & Bro., 1881) 10.



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jealousy and outrage. The family accuses Lois of witchcraft, and she is imprisoned and hung.<sup>9</sup> A drawing by Macknight depicting the story's protagonist was reproduced in *American Art Notes* in 1881.<sup>10</sup>

In 1883, Macknight's "*The Pretty Page*" was illustrated in an issue of the *Art Interchange*.<sup>11</sup> She exhibited again with the American Watercolor Society in 1885 and 1886 during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Annual exhibitions held at the National Academy.<sup>12</sup> In 1887, Macknight exhibited *A Portrait* at the National Academy's Spring Exhibition.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Charles M. Kurtz, *American Academy Notes 1881* (New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co.,) 10.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> "Drawing Room," *The Art Interchange Vol. X. – No. 8 April 12, 1883* (New York: William Whitlock, Publisher, 1883) 89.

<sup>12</sup> *Illustrated Catalogue of the Eighteenth Annual Exhibition of the American Watercolor Society* (New York: American Watercolor Society, 1885) 18.; *Illustrated Catalogue of the Nineteenth Annual Exhibition of the American Watercolor Society* (New York: American Watercolor Society, 1886) 15, 39.

<sup>13</sup> Charles M. Kurtz, *National Academy Notes and Complete Catalogue Sixty-Second Spring Exhibition National Academy of Design* (New York: Cassell & Co., Ltd, 1887) 47.