



## HAWTHORNE Fine Art

### **CARLE JOHN BLENNER (1862-1952)**

The Richmond, Virginia-born artist Carle J. Blenner made quite a name for himself at the turn of the twentieth century as a Southern gentleman and portrait artist of much distinction, active in the artist circles of New York and Connecticut. Blenner studied painting at the Art School of Yale University before traveling to Paris, where he enrolled at the famed Académie Julian and studied under the French figure painters William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825-1905), Joseph Nicolas Robert-Fleury (1797-1890) and the symbolist painter Edmond François Aman-Jean (1858-1936).

Upon his return to America, Blenner took up primary residence in Orange, Connecticut, though he traveled to and exhibited frequently in New York—where he maintained a studio—and Boston. Over the course of his distinguished career, Blenner exhibited multiple times at the Paris Salon (1897, 1898, 1899), as well as regularly at the National Academy. He exhibited his work in at least two private shows at the Waldorf Hotel in New York city, in addition to group shows at the Carnegie Institute, the Boston Arts Club and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Blenner was awarded the Hallgarten Prize at the National Academy of Design in 1899, and an honorable mention at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, 1901.

Blenner was most well-known in his time for his portraits of New York society figures, European royalty (including the Duke of Cambridge), and celebrities—such as the English actor Arthur Bourchier, and the famous American opera singer Madame Nordica. Writing of Blenner's notoriety in 1901, J.A. Middleton observed:

In this country, Carle Blenner is looked upon as the most prominent portrait painter of the younger school. The “Blenner heads” are talked about, exhibited, admired, and purchased by connoisseurs. Celebrities of all kinds visit his studio, and desire to become his models or to possess some of his work, and his clientele increases in number and importance every season.<sup>1</sup>

In his later years, Blenner favored still lifes of exquisite floral arrangements. These meticulous compositions were highly praised, sought after, and exhibited widely. Though Blenner did maintain a cottage at Connecticut's Morris Cove-by-the-sea, where he painted a number of land- and seascapes, these works represent only a fraction of his output.

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<sup>1</sup> J. A. Middleton, “A Painter of Pretty American Women,” in *Pearson's Magazine*, vol. 12, 1901, p. 390.