



HAWTHORNE
Fine Art

LILIAN WESTCOTT HALE (1881-1963)

Portrait of a Lady (The Veil)

Pencil and charcoal on paper

9 x 7 inches

“[...] Then there is drawing for its own sake, done not to exhibit virtuosity when it has any real merit, but to fixate something believed to be beautiful. Such a drawing is complete within itself, whether or not it is related to a subsequent painting. Here belong Lilian Westcott Hale's charcoal drawings, composed as emotionally as a Japanese print and executed as lovingly as if each were to decorate a palace.”¹

Lilian Westcott Hale—born Lilian Clarke Westcott—was raised in Hartford, Connecticut. After studying at the Hartford School from 1897-1900, Hale was granted a scholarship to the School at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which she attended from 1900-1904. It was in Boston that Hale studied under William Merritt Chase (1849-1916), Edmund Tarbell (1862-1938), and Philip Leslie Hale (1865-1931)—the last of which she married in 1902. Hale's schooling, as well as her refined style, situate her squarely within the Boston School of American Impressionism. Hale's impressionistic paintings and charcoal drawings were immensely popular, and she exhibited consistently in Boston through the 1920s.

Hale's light touch and skilled handling of charcoal is readily apparent in such works as *Portrait of a Lady (The Veil)*. The softly rendered, delicate features of the woman are offset against the texture of the paper, which Hale has worked over to produce an eerie and ethereal sense of distance between the viewer and the subject. Hale's mixed treatment of graphite and charcoal produces the suggestion of diffuse light, a recurring motif in many of her paintings and drawings. While Hale's marks on paper are sketch-like and in-exhaustive, each gesture suggests a high level of detail; this dichotomy crystalizes her works somewhere between realized and imagined form, while her commensurate skill in both painting and drawing confirms her place as a talented exemplar of American Impressionism.

1 “Painters' Drawings at St. Botolph Club,” *Boston Herald*, March 29, 1914, 39.